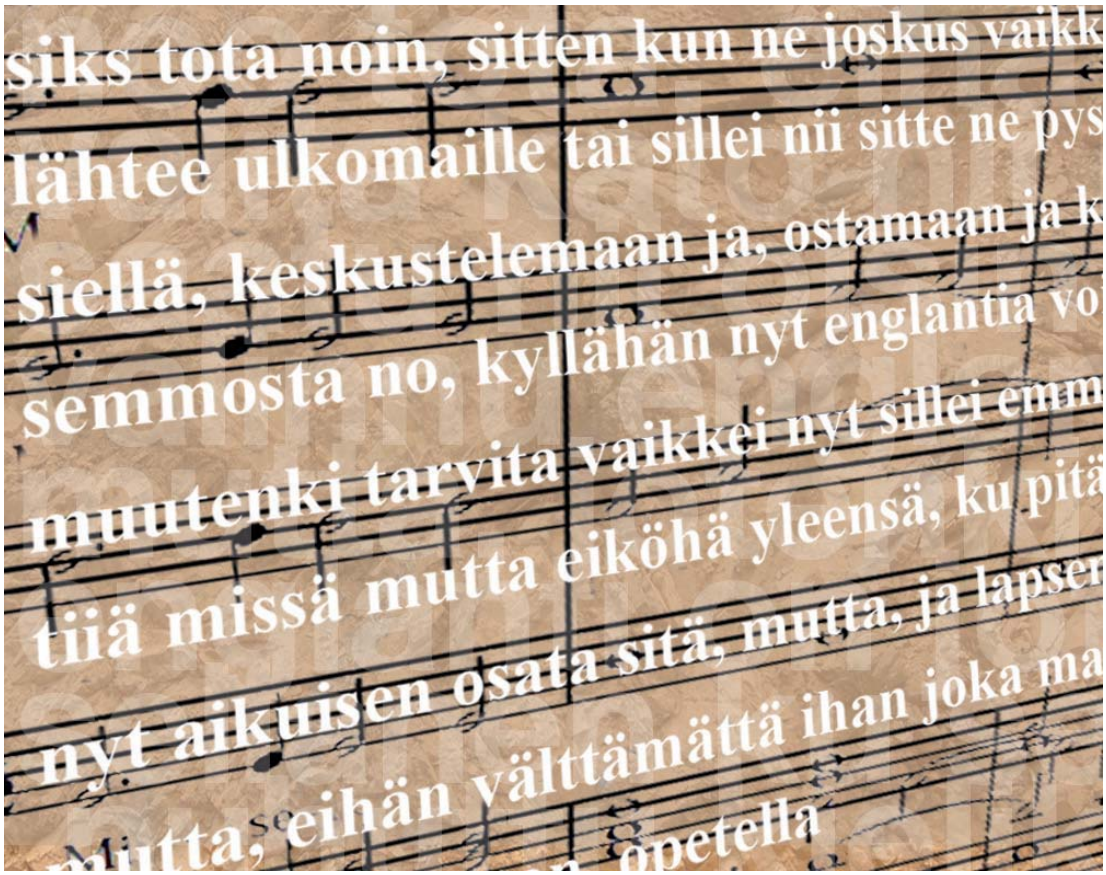
JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN HUMANITIES
116

Mari Aro

Speakers and Doers

Polyphony and Agency in Children's Beliefs about Language Learning



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2009

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ABSTRACT

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The study is a longitudinal case study that examines the nature and development of beliefs that Finnish L1 elementary school children hold about English and the learning of English. The data were produced using semi-structured interviews. The participants (N= 15) were interviewed in Year 1 (aged 7), Year 3 (aged 10), and Year 5 (aged 12). The data were analysed from three perspectives: for the content of the participants' beliefs, using the Bakhtinian notion of voice, and the sociocultural notion of agency. Data triangulation was thus achieved through the use of multiple theoretical and analytical approaches.

The findings showed that the learners' beliefs had both varying and repeated elements. The learners consistently said that, generally speaking, English must be learnt because it is needed abroad. However, their own motives for studying English varied considerably within the group and over time. While they said that the main use of English was speaking, they nevertheless considered reading books to be the most effective way to learn English. The influence of formal teaching practices in their beliefs was very clear.

Some of the learners' beliefs were modified over time as a function of their own increasing experience with language learning, reflecting their own voice; some appeared to be conditioned by authoritative voices. Their beliefs were thus polyphonic. The authoritative views regarding English learning also seemed to modify the learners' own experience: as accepted, ventriloquated cultural truths, they acted as a filter through which the learners saw their experience.

The learners' agency developed from co-operation with parents and teachers towards a more independent role in language studies. However, this process was not consistent for all learners: in Year 5 some learners began to portray themselves as passive recipients of teaching rather than as active students.

Keywords: learner beliefs, language learning, dialogism, voice, polyphony, agency

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FOREWORD

Phew, all done. Now, the thank-yous.

First, I would like to thank the young language learners who took part in this study for sharing their views with me and for making this study possible. It was a pleasure and a privilege to discuss language learning with you.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisors, Dr Riikka Alanen and Professor Hannele Dufva, for giving me the opportunity to work for their visionary projects, *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness and Foreign Language Learning* and *Dialogues of Appropriation*. Thank you for your support, enthusiasm and general brilliance, for sharing your expertise, for all the help and guidance, and for giving me a job. I am also grateful to my reviewers, Professor Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos and Dr Raija Elsinen, for their insightful comments and suggestions on this work.

Many thanks to the Centre for Applied Language Studies and the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä for their material and intellectual support. I have received grants from the Faculty of Humanities, the Centre for Applied Language Studies, as well as from the Finnish Cultural Foundation – thank you.

Helena Miettinen, my buddy, provided invaluable and high-quality Bed&Breakfast services when I travelled back and forth to see my supervisors here. After Jyväskylä and I were reunited, she has provided me with invaluable and high-quality company and entertainment over copious amounts of office coffee (as well as the occasional other beverage). Thank you for putting me up and for putting up with me.

With my colleague Minna Suni I've shared an office, information, computer problems, nebulous observations, references, and chocolate. Thank you for being my go-to guide on things academic and for proofreading the Finnish bits. And for the chocolates.

Much thanks to my friend Tuija Arola who has been endlessly and tirelessly encouraging, inspiring and supportive. She has read and commented on various versions of this work, patiently listened to me gripe about "the damn thing" for years on end, and, for some reason, always had faith that I would indeed finish my dissertation one day (goodness knows I didn't a lot of the time). Thank you for everything. Your friendship means the world to me. Muac!

My thanks to Arto Törmänen for the polyphonic cover art. Eleanor Underwood did a superb job proofreading the dissertation on a very short notice – thank you! I am also grateful to Karen Swartz for her help with English. All remaining goofs are mine entirely.

To my boys, Arttu and Roope: meow mew, rowr mew. *purr*

Kiitän vanhempiani Seija ja Raimo Aroa vankkumattomasta tuesta ja kannustuksesta, nyt ja aina. Omistan tämän kirjan teille.

Jyväskylä
March, 2009 mari

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1 INTRODUCTION

The current study looks at learner beliefs: more specifically, at the nature and development of beliefs that Finnish elementary school children hold about English and the learning of English. I examine how beliefs emerge in an interview using the Bakhtinian, dialogical and Vygotskian, sociocultural frameworks: particularly, Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) concept of voice and Wertsch's (1998) notion of agency. The study is a longitudinal case study, focusing on a group of young Finnish L1 learners of English through Years 1–5. The data were produced using semi-structured interviews when the participants were in the first, third and fifth years of school. They started studying English at school as their first foreign language in Year 3, at the age of 10.

The study is part of a larger project that also had a wider focus. The goal of the *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness and Foreign Language Learning* project was to shed light on the interaction between metalinguistic awareness and foreign language learning in context. This was done by examining the relationship between the learners' metalinguistic knowledge and their development of self-regulation. The project looked at young language learners' beliefs about language learning and also aimed at (re)conceptualising language transfer within a Vygotskian sociocultural and Bakhtinian dialogical framework. The project was funded by the Academy of Finland and carried out at the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä in 1999–2004. The study is also connected to the project *Dialogues of appropriation: Dialogical perspectives to language learning and teaching* currently underway in the Department of Languages of the University of Jyväskylä. The project is funded by the Academy of Finland and aims to further develop a dialogical, socio-cognitive approach to second and foreign language learning and teaching.

The current study focuses on the emerging voice and agency of the language learners and, content-wise, looks at how and why English is learnt, according to these learners. It is hoped that the results shed light on what the young learners' beliefs about language learning are like, what kinds of factors influence their beliefs, and how their beliefs emerge over the years.

2 LEARNER BELIEFS

Interest in learner beliefs[1] began in the field of applied linguistics in the early 1980's. Learner beliefs – the conceptions, ideas and opinions learners hold about language learning – have been studied from various perspectives and using a variety of terms. These include *learner representations* (Holec 1987), *learning culture* (Riley 1997), *metacognitive knowledge* (Wenden 1986a, 1987b), *learner's philosophy of language learning* (Abraham & Vann 1987), and *everyday knowledge of language* (Dufva, Lähteenmäki & Isoherranen 1996). In many cases, studies on learners' *knowledge of learning strategies* (e.g. Oxford 1990) could also be considered a form of belief research as they often focus on how learners perceive the effectiveness of various strategies – that is, their beliefs regarding language learning strategies. At times other terms may have been chosen precisely to escape the definition difficulties of the term *belief* – it can be seen as a somewhat vague concept and appears to come with certain unwanted connotations (as for example the belief/knowledge distinction found by Alexander and Dochy (1995); see chapter 2.1). However, the term *learner belief* is used in this study as it appears to be fairly well established. The perhaps less-than-definite nature of the concept may also work in its favour because the scope of the current study is wider – it does not focus only on learning strategies, for example, but seeks to explore the thoughts, opinions and concepts the participants have about the English language and English language learning.

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[1] While many people promote the use of the term *user* instead of *learner* in order to draw attention to the social factors of language learning, I have chosen to use the term learner throughout the current study. The reasons for this are threefold: firstly, the concept of learner beliefs is fairly well established in the field; secondly, the project of which the current study is a part focuses specifically on language learning, and it therefore provides the context also for the current study; and thirdly, because a distinction between learning and using English is one that the participants themselves appear to make.

2.1 Terms, definitions and reasons for interest

But what are beliefs, and why are they important? As always, the definition is already a comment on the subject. A dictionary definition provides a starting point. The Oxford English Dictionary web site defines the English[2] word *belief* for example as follows:

1. Mental acceptance of a proposition, statement, or fact, as true.
2. The thing believed; the proposition or set of propositions held true; in early usage, esp. the doctrines believed by the professors of a religious system, a religion. In modern use often simply = opinion, persuasion.

According to these definitions, beliefs indicate that individuals accept something as true. Beliefs also often form systems, as is the case with for example political and religious beliefs. However, while beliefs often get linked to things like religion, isms, personal convictions or superstitions, people do hold beliefs about a whole range of issues – from raising children and matters of health and illness, to the merits of different brands of orange juice.

As per the dictionary definition, beliefs are ideas that are considered to be true – it does not necessarily imply that the ideas actually *are* true in any objective sense. In everyday language use it appears that beliefs are often separated from knowledge. Alexander and Dochy (1995) conducted a study on how adults in the United States, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Sweden defined and conceptualised knowledge and beliefs. They found that knowledge tended to be described with words like "learned" and "factual", whereas beliefs were considered "subjective", "personal" and "unproven" (Alexander & Dochy 1995: 425). The people who participated in the study thus felt that knowledge was something that could be proven by some objective means, whereas beliefs had a subjective component to them. Knowledge was more likely to be based on something objectively factual; beliefs were often characterised by individual idiosyncrasy.

In scholarly contexts the line separating knowledge and beliefs is hazier. Knowledge is often considered to be a more all-encompassing concept, and knowledge and beliefs are thought of as existing on a continuum. In this context, beliefs become a form of knowledge rather than a class of their own. For example Nespor (1987), in his study of teacher beliefs, suggested that beliefs are distinguished from other forms of knowledge by four characteristics:

1) beliefs frequently contain assumptions about the existence or non-existence of entities, that is, *existential presumptions*;

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[2] The term "belief" is discussed here in English – terms obviously vary from language to language, and for example the Finnish term used in the study of learner beliefs is in fact *käsitys*, conception or idea, rather than *uskomus*, belief.

2) beliefs are often marked by *alternativity*, conceptualisations of ideal situations;
3) beliefs rely more heavily on *affective and evaluative components* than other types of knowledge; and
4) beliefs usually have an *episodic structure*; they are derived from personal experience or from sources like folklore.

Nespor's suggestion thus seems to be that other types of knowledge are more rooted in reality, more objective and based on perhaps more scientifically valid data than beliefs are – a view similar to the one presented by the participants in Alexander and Dochy's study of 1995. Kagan, who also studied teacher beliefs, defined them as "a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge" (1992: 65) and "tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions" (1992: 65) – suggesting that while beliefs may have strong effects they are not necessarily consciously recognised. It thus seems that even in scholarly discourse other forms of knowledge are generally taken to refer to something more factual, scientifically proven and formally learnt; beliefs tend to be considered more personal, are seen to have an affective component not found in knowledge, and do not necessarily hold up to scientific scrutiny. Sometimes beliefs may even be considered to be inferior to knowledge – based on assumptions rather than on something scientifically factual. However, Pajares (1992: 310), among others, maintained that there cannot exist any kind of knowledge without a certain element of judgement or evaluation[3]. The notion that knowledge is somehow purer than belief in this sense would therefore not hold up to scrutiny, either.

The distinction between knowledge and belief may be further complicated if we take a look at the kinds of things that generally qualify as knowledge. Let us take a simple statement like "Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world". Do we actually know this or did we read it somewhere and believed it? One could argue that knowing such a thing would, strictly speaking, require that we have personally measured every mountain in the world. Taking this to the extreme we could say that we can only know what we have experienced personally – and yet it is precisely the things based on personal and subjective experience that tend to get labelled "beliefs" rather than "knowledge".

According to many of the definitions, beliefs represent what an individual *considers to be true,* so comparing her beliefs to some kind of objective truth may be irrelevant. The beliefs an individual holds represent her reality – the way the world *is*, from her point of view. Whether her beliefs are scientifically proven or not is beside the point: for her, they are true.

One of the most important reasons for research into beliefs is that they appear to *influence human actions* in various ways. According to McDonough (1995: 9), beliefs can be important stimuli for action:

> …what we believe we are doing, what we pay attention to, what we think is important, how we choose to behave, how we prefer to solve problems, form the

[3] On the other hand, it is, of course, difficult to imagine people having strong emotions about 2+2=4, for example.

> basis of our personal decisions as to how to proceed. An important fact about this argument is that it is not necessary for these kinds of evidence to be true for them to have important consequences for our further development.

As beliefs essentially represent an individual's worldview, beliefs function as a filter, influencing one's perceptions of oneself, others and the world in general (e.g. Abelson 1986, Alvermann & Commeyras 1994, Lewis 1990). It also makes sense to act according to what one feels is true and real, so beliefs may be good indicators of the decisions individuals make (Bandura 1986, Nisbett & Ross 1980, Dewey 1933).

For better or worse, beliefs thus appear to influence an individual's actions somehow. This has made beliefs a point of interest also for scholars studying learning and teaching: how do the beliefs of teachers and students affect learning? At first, research focused more on teacher beliefs and examined how teachers' beliefs about language teaching influenced their teaching practices; it is assumed that the teacher's beliefs would also have an effect on how learners end up viewing and learning languages (e.g. Chapman 2001). The teacher was thus considered to have a great impact on how her learners' beliefs about language turned out and, consequently, how the learners went about learning a language.

Later on, however, the focus shifted from teachers to learners. As the views of the learner and of the process of learning changed, so did the emphases of research. According to Kalaja and Barcelos (2003: 1), the change reflected a more fundamental shift in the focus of language learning research: earlier, research had mainly concentrated on teachers and teaching, but now the focus moved to learners and their contributions to language learning. The learners' point of view and their subjective experiences began to be seen as important. It became apparent that no amount of theoretical knowledge by researchers and other experts influenced learning outcomes, because, as Riley (1997: 128) puts it:

> the issue is not one of finding the objective reality, the truth, but subjective reality, their truth. What [the learners] believe will influence their learning much, much more than what we believe, because it is their beliefs that hold sway over their motivations, attitudes and learning procedures.

Beliefs research built on an even earlier discussion of what characterises a good language learner: what are the traits (personality, attitudes, motivation etc.) that make language learning successful (e.g. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco 1978, Rubin 1975)? Learner beliefs began to be considered a learner trait that could influence the outcome of the learning process (Kalaja & Barcelos 2003: 1).

2.2 Previous research on learner beliefs about language learning

The different approaches to learner belief research use slightly different definitions of what beliefs actually are (and, indeed, whether the subject of the study is called "belief" at all). The definitions affect how beliefs are studied and how the importance of beliefs is viewed – in other words, what the design and the aims of the study are. Reporting on and evaluating the various studies and approaches is therefore challenging.

In her review article on learner belief research, Barcelos (2003) distinguishes three main approaches: *normative, metacognitive* and *contextual*. Her categories depend on the methodology chosen for the study, the definition of beliefs, and how the relationship between beliefs and actions is perceived. In her article, Barcelos weighs the advantages and disadvantages of each main approach, and argues that thus far research has mainly focused on describing beliefs rather than trying to understand their origins and their effects on language learning.

Kalaja (2003: 87), on the other hand, divides previous research into *mainstream* and *discursive* approaches, depending on the methods of study and the role given to language. According to Kalaja (2003: 91), the earlier, more cognitivist approaches viewed language as a mirror that reflects what goes on in the learner's mind – that words used more or less directly correlate with beliefs held. More recently, within discursive approaches, language has started to be seen as a means of constructing aspects of the social world, such as beliefs about language learning. The difference in approaches has consequences for the methodology and aims of belief research, as well as for how beliefs are conceptualised in more detail.

In the following, I shall take a look at how learner beliefs have been studied since the 1980's. The discussion of the various approaches is based on their attitude towards the individuality/contextuality of beliefs. I shall refer to the two main approaches as *cognitivist* and *discursive,* but look at the different approaches as existing on a continuum from more cognitivist and individualistic to more discursive and contextual, rather than as distinct categories. I shall also discuss *phenomenographic* approaches in a category of their own because of their stance on the individual/contextual question.

2.2.1 Cognitivist approaches

Within the cognitivist framework, learner beliefs are viewed as mental representations that learners can access and verbalise. They are often also considered to be rather static and stable in nature. As beliefs are viewed as stable and statable, they can be measured and quantified: participants in a study can be asked to fill out questionnaires regarding their beliefs, or to explain what their beliefs are like in an interview.

One of the pioneers in the field of learner belief research was Elaine K. Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988, 1999). She studied learner beliefs with the help of an

instrument she developed, the BALLI survey. The BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) is a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (see Horwitz 1985, 1987). Horwitz's respondents were US university students, both foreign students learning English as a second language and American foreign language students. In the questionnaire, the respondents reacted to statements on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Horwitz thus adopted a quantitative method based on a cognitivist view of beliefs.

Horwitz (e.g. 1987: 119) defined learner beliefs as preconceived notions students have about second language acquisition. Horwitz's aim was to describe beliefs and discuss the potential impact of the beliefs on learner expectations and strategies (1987: 122), as well as to find learner types and see if factors such as learner's country of origin, instructional setting, target language etc. affect the beliefs (1988: 284). According to Horwitz (1988: 284-285), the goal was not to attempt to classify student opinions as correct or incorrect, but to make both teachers aware of their students' beliefs and students aware of their own beliefs. She maintained that beliefs influence learner expectations and strategies and teachers should thus attempt to modify beliefs that can be an impediment to language learning. For example, students who expected to develop fluency in the target language within two years were probably destined for disappointment and were more likely to drop out of the class. In addition to expectations and strategies, certain beliefs – such as beliefs emphasising that you should not say anything in the target language unless you can say it correctly – were linked to foreign language anxiety; feelings of tension, apprehension and worry in a foreign language learning situation (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986). Banishing such debilitating beliefs would prove beneficial for the language learner.

The BALLI survey has later been used by several other scholars and also in other countries such as Korea, Taiwan and North Cyprus. Horwitz reviewed a number of the studies in her 1999 article. In the same article, Horwitz (1999: 575-576) also admitted that the BALLI survey perhaps does not address specific beliefs held for example by a particular culture: the purpose of the BALLI was to elicit commonly held beliefs, and results usually indicated that these beliefs were indeed commonly held. The majority of the respondents, regardless of cultural background, felt, for example, that some languages were more difficult to learn than others, and that children learned languages more easily than adults. There were some differences in opinions about learning strategies, however; answers varied widely among the groups especially with regard to the primacy of grammar studies or translation in language study. Horwitz (1999: 576) thus suggested that in order to make comparisons between different learner groups, the BALLI survey should be expanded, designed and targeted to specific populations.

The use of highly structured questionnaires, such as BALLI, as a data collection technique is connected to a cognitivist view of beliefs. As beliefs are viewed as something fixed inside of the learners' heads, the researcher can list

items on paper, have the learners mark down their reactions to the items, and calculate to what extent the learners hold these beliefs. Structured questionnaires are easy to administer even to large learner groups and provide very standardised data, but they also have their disadvantages, as Barcelos (2003: 15-16) points out. First of all, the researcher cannot be sure if all the participants interpret the items in the same way. For example, in a study by Sakui and Gaies (1999), it became apparent that some students had interpreted the item "I cannot improve my English by speaking English with my classmates" as referring to interaction outside of the classroom, not to group or pair work during lessons, as the researchers had intended. Secondly, the beliefs to be measured are pre-determined, so the exercise is more one of recognising and reacting to statements (see also Wenden 1987a: 593). As the learners cannot formulate their own beliefs, they may not be able to take up issues they feel are relevant. On the other hand, there may be statements the learners really have no opinion about, but they must nonetheless mark one down. It has also been noted (e.g. King and Bruner 2000, Huang, Liao & Chang 1998) that respondents tend to give answers that they feel would be appropriate and "correct". Last but not least, there is obviously the assumption that the structured questionnaire approach holds of the nature of beliefs themselves. Are beliefs really stable and fixed; and can you really find out what learners think by having them tick off boxes?

More recently, some researchers using structured questionnaires have started to combine them with other approaches in order to counteract some of the problems associated with the method. For example Elsinen (2001, 2004, 2007) and Cotterall (1999) devised questionnaires that included an open, written assignment. This way they provided the participants with an opportunity to express beliefs that were not covered in the questionnaire, and could analyse the data also qualitatively. Sakui and Gaies (1999), in turn, combined their questionnaire with interviews: they asked the students how and why they answered the questionnaire items the way they did. Later, during the interviews, the students reported that they were aware of many of the discrepancies in their questionnaire answers, but felt that the items were too limiting – they could not express their true thoughts in the questionnaire, as many of their answers actually would have included an "it depends" clause. Interviews thus gave the learners an opportunity to define their views in their own terms.

Another pioneer in the field of learner belief research is Anita Wenden (1986a, 1986b, 1987b, 1998, 2001). She started her research on the *metacognitive knowledge* of university students in the mid-1980's and has refined and revised her approach over the years. Wenden's approach draws upon theories of cognitive development (e.g. Flavell 1979, Brown, Bransford, Ferrara & Campion 1983) and learner strategies in second language acquisition (e.g. Bialystok 1978). The term metacognition was introduced by Flavell (1976) and means "the individual's own awareness and consideration of his or her cognitive processes and strategies" (Flavell 1979). It refers to the human capacity to be self-reflexive,

not just to think and know but also to think about one's own thinking and knowing. Wenden (1998: 515) defined metacognitive knowledge for her purposes as "knowledge about learning": it is a statable system of related ideas about learning that develops early and is stable in nature, though it may change over time. While Horwitz's studies focused on larger learner groups and comparisons between various groups, Wenden centres more on the individual level.

Wenden (2001: 45) maintained that even though research findings on language learners' metacognitive knowledge are often referred to as beliefs, beliefs are in fact a subset of metacognitive knowledge. Thus Wenden's term 'metacognitive knowledge' refers to both 'knowledge' and 'beliefs'. The difference between the two, according to Wenden (2001: 45, 1998: 517), is a qualitative one: beliefs are value-related and will be held more tenaciously, while knowledge is more factual and objective. According to Wenden (1998: 515), metacognitive knowledge influences students' approach to learning and the expectations they have about the outcome of the learning efforts. In her 1987 study, she showed how learners' theories of language learning affect their prioritising, choice of strategies and the criteria they use to evaluate their learning. In other words, metacognitive knowledge has an effect on the learning strategies language learners use. Wenden discussed the concept of metacognition further in her 2001 article and proposed that conscious regulation played a role in language learning. Metacognitive knowledge would thus be critical to self-regulation in learning as far as planning, processing and the learner's potential for autonomy were concerned.

As Wenden's definition refers to statable ideas, she used semi-structured interviews to gather data from her respondents, who were foreign adult students enrolled in an advanced English class. The use of interviews, according to Wenden (1987a: 593), provides data on more analysed and higher degree acquired metacognitive knowledge. This is because respondents need to articulate their views rather than simply recognise them, as is the case with highly structured questionnaires. Wenden's studies focused on what learners felt they could do to learn languages – in contrast to Horwitz's studies, which included statements regarding for example the effect of aptitude and age on language learning. Wenden thus only included prescriptive learning strategy statements in her analysis. Statements such as "you should practice speaking in English whenever you can" would be considered part of the respondent's metacognitive knowledge, whereas statements such as "language learning is unconscious" would be excluded (see Wenden 1987b:114). Wenden also pointed out (1987a: 585) that learners' metacognitive knowledge should not be confused with strategies learners actually use; while the responses offer a valuable insight into the respondents' strategic knowledge, they may be put into action in varying degrees.

Wenden's (1987b) data were subjected to content analysis in which any proposition or statement the learners made about how to best learn English was examined. Twelve explicit statements, which were considered to represent the

learners' prescriptive beliefs, were identified. Based on the views they expressed, the students were then grouped into three learner profiles: Use the Language, Learn About the Language, and Personal Factors are Important (Wenden 1987b: 104-109). Wenden (1986a: 188) also found that, in addition to strategies, interviewees were capable of talking about the language (designating), their proficiency in the language (diagnosing), the outcome of their learning endeavours (evaluating), their role in the language learning process (self-analysing), and how best to approach the task of language learning (theorizing).

Wenden's use of interviews provided the learners with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and thoughts in their own terms. The data collection technique was thus more open and flexible than the use of structured questionnaires. However, the beliefs were not contextualised: the content of the interviews was taken at its face value and considered to be a reflection of the beliefs and knowledge the learners had inside their heads. In this regard, Wenden, like Horwitz, approached beliefs from a cognitivist point of view. Wenden's studies were also made with self-directed learning (see Holec 1981, 1987, 1994) in mind, and it was hoped that the beliefs of efficient and successful students could be taught to less efficient students. Wenden therefore judged beliefs according to whether or not they promote learner autonomy – beliefs could consequently be better or worse.

In her studies, Oxford (1990) focused on language learners' knowledge of learning strategies. While she does not use the term beliefs, knowledge of and opinions about learning strategies can be considered a part of learner beliefs about languages and language learning. They can be seen to represent learners' beliefs about the effectiveness or appropriateness of various learning strategies. (As stated earlier, Wenden studied the learners' metacognitive knowledge, focusing especially on strategies, and considered beliefs a part of metacognition.) In her work, Oxford adopted an approach similar to Wenden's in her Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) survey; she, too, focused specifically on the strategies that the individual learner employs to learn a second language, but administered the study in the form of a questionnaire. Oxford (1990) also pointed out that research often overemphasized the metacognitive and cognitive strategies at the expense of affective and social strategies and included these latter strategies in her instrument. Oxford (1990) suggested that while these strategies tended to be overlooked by researchers, it also seemed possible that learners did not consider their own feelings and social relationships as relevant to the language learning process. In her study, she identified six major groups of foreign language learning strategies: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, memory-related strategies, compensatory strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. The learner chooses specific strategies to suit her learning style, which is influenced by sensory preferences, personality types, desired degree of generality, and biological differences (Ehrman and Oxford 1990). There are different versions of the SILL survey for students of different languages, and

the instrument has also been used in studies that correlate strategy use with variables such as learning styles, proficiency level, gender, and culture (Green & Oxford 1995, Bedell & Oxford, 1996, Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Wharton, 2000). Oxford and her colleagues have been working on a task-based questionnaire to complement the SILL (Oxford, Cho, Leung & Kim 2004) in order to study the effect of presence and task difficulty on the use of strategies – in other words, to better tackle the strategies informed by the immediate context.

The cognitivist approach studies learner beliefs in order to relate them to learner procedures. However, while it appears legitimate to assume that beliefs guide people's actions, research has not been able to show conclusively that actions are determined by beliefs. As for example Wenden (1987a: 585) has stated, learners' knowledge of learning strategies (including their beliefs) does not necessarily reflect their actions. Sigel (1992) has discussed this lack of correspondence from two viewpoints: firstly, beliefs may be expressed in various ways, and secondly, studies do not always take into account the influence of context. Sigel (1992) contends that unless beliefs are studied in context, the results of a study are unlikely to indicate a connection between beliefs and action. He recommends, for example, the use of self-reports that immediately follow a particular task and focus solely on that task. Beliefs should thus, in Sigel's (1992) opinion, be studied as specific rather than general constructs. In addition to the problems of methodology, there is a problem with definitions: are recognised beliefs (questionnaires) the same as instantiated beliefs, informed by context and born in social interaction? The crux of the problem is not necessarily that beliefs have little to do with actions, but that it is difficult to tap into the learners' beliefs on any general, stable level. For example, a study on teacher beliefs by Bingham, Haubrich, White and Zipp (1990, as quoted in Pajares 1992) found that many teachers, who rated the desegregated schools they worked in highly, still did not want their own children to attend them Their racial attitudes thus influenced one thing, but not the other – how good the same school was depended on the context.

In his review article on teacher beliefs and practices, Fang (1996) made similar observations to those made by Sigel (1992) about the reasons for the lack of consistency between beliefs and actions. However, he also brought up the influence of contextual factors from another point of view. Not only can the nature of the situation influence beliefs, but it may also affect practices. That is, it is not always possible to act according to one's beliefs because of contextual constraints. For example, Duffy and Anderson (1984) found that outside the classroom, teachers could clearly articulate their theoretical beliefs about instruction, but their actual instructional practices were regulated by the complexities of classroom life and were therefore not always consistent with their stated beliefs.

Children's beliefs about foreign language learning have received little attention within the cognitivist approaches. Most studies focus on the beliefs of university students or other adults. This may stem naturally from the

theoretical approach: cognitivist views often focus on acquired beliefs. This means that they perhaps assume that learners have already had learning experiences on which they base their beliefs, making first-time language learners less interesting as respondents, and perhaps also indicating that the beliefs of younger language learners are considered to be in a state of flux, less stable. Cognitivist studies are also often interested in promoting self-regulation of learning, which is more of a concern with motivated adolescents or adults who have chosen to study a language. Young children – like the ones taking part in the present study – may study a language because it is a school subject, because their parents want them to, and so on, but seldom because they have made their own, conscious choice to study it. Therefore studies focusing on strategy choices and self-regulation may not be so appropriate with younger learners.

2.2.2 Discursive orientation

The cognitivist approaches conceive of beliefs as something that learners have acquired and can now access and verbalise (or at least recognise); beliefs are something learners have stored as mental schemata in their heads before they start studying languages (as well as during the learning process), and are something that consequently affect their studies. Within the cognitivist framework beliefs appear to be relatively stable ideas, mental representations of language learning that the learners can put into words. Cognitivist approaches to research on beliefs have been criticised for some time, especially in the field of social psychology, the study of how people and groups of people interact (e.g. Potter & Wetherell 1987, Edwards & Potter 1992, Shotter 1993b, Edwards 1997). The criticism stems mainly from the role language is given in the cognitivist tradition: it is considered merely a mirror of what goes on inside the respondent's head (Kalaja 2003: 91). Within the cognitivist framework, language could thus be subjected to simple content analysis, where words would be taken at their face value as reflections of beliefs. The critics of cognitivist approaches maintain that language should be viewed as social rather than individual and mental.

Following this criticism, another way of conceptualising language and beliefs was introduced. According to Kalaja (1994: 56), within the "alternative", discursive framework, language began to be seen as both socially constructing – creating reality – and socially constructed, influenced by the power relations, attitudes, trends of ideas etc. within the community. Discourses would therefore be constantly changing, and so presumably would the beliefs of learners, depending on where, when, with whom etc. they are talking about their beliefs. The respondents' answers would therefore not solely be a function of their beliefs and ideas, but also of the context of interaction. At the same time, the perception of the role of the researcher changed, too: s/he was no longer seen as an objective analyst of "face-value" data, but an interpreter of contextual, unique speech. The data could be interpreted in various different

ways, and no ultimate truth about what learners "really think" can be found (cf. also Edwards 1993a).

More recent, discursively oriented researchers, like Kalaja (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2003; Leppänen & Kalaja 1997), thus adopt an approach emphasising the social nature of beliefs. Kalaja (1994: 56, 1994: 57) views beliefs as something socially constructed, variable, and context dependent. This approach therefore calls for naturalistic discourse data, either written or spoken (Kalaja 1995a: 197). At the same time, the focus of research shifts from what students supposedly *think* to what students *say* (Kalaja 1995a: 200). Kalaja (1995a: 198) points out that the beliefs a respondent expresses in a given stretch of discourse may not be simple statements or propositions – the kind elicited by more cognitive approaches – but complex and dynamic, shaped in that particular instance of interaction. A person may express very different views when talking with her friends than when talking with her teacher, or when writing a letter to the editor, for example. According to Kalaja (1995a: 200, 2003: 92), a discursive approach does not try to look beyond the text, for example an interview or narrative, it is studying. The approach does not try to infer what the respondent is thinking or to abstract higher levels out of the text, but makes the text its focus. The goal of the researcher is not only to try to find out what the beliefs in discourse are, but also to what ends respondents use these beliefs in talk or writing.

Discursive research is thus interested in both the constructions learners make and the functions of those constructions (Kalaja 2003: 92). The interpretation made by the researcher is one of many possible interpretations, so the scholar must be very specific and provide examples in order to convince the reader of the interpretation (Kalaja 2003: 92). A discursive approach questions whether learners have stable beliefs at all, and consequently refrains from discussing the influences of the expressed opinions on language learning: as discourses do not necessarily reflect what learners "really think", their beliefs cannot be related to what they do. Discursive belief research thus has different goals from the more traditional belief studies: while research into learner beliefs started with an interest in language learning and the effect beliefs might have on it, discursive approaches look at beliefs as a function of speech.

In addition to Kalaja's work, learner beliefs in the field of foreign language learning have been studied from various other viewpoints that could be considered discursive, including for example metaphor analysis (Ellis 2001, Kramsch 2003, Marchant 1992, Oksanen 2005), diary research (Nunan 2000, Hosenfeld 2003) and ethnographic methodologies (Allen 1996). According to Barcelos (2003: 20), the basic idea behind all of them is to study beliefs *in their contexts*.

The focus of discursive belief studies is thus not to establish connections between stated beliefs and learning procedures, for example, but to look at beliefs in spoken interaction or written narratives. Therefore, from the viewpoint of studying learner beliefs and their possible effect on language learning, discursive approaches have certain limitations. Context specificity and

the limited amount of data (as discursive studies are characteristically small-scale) make it difficult to apply the results in broader language learning contexts. Schwitzgebel (1999: 291) also noted that highly contextualist views do not offer a way of talking about an individual in general, just about an-individual-in-a-situation. He maintains, however, that the individual does bring something of her own to each situation, something that does not vary from environment to environment (or, at least, varies very slowly).

2.2.3 Phenomenographic approaches

Phenomenographical methodology is associated with Marton (1986) and his colleagues, and it focuses on how people conceive of and experience reality. The approach emphasises that there is no objective understanding of reality that could be considered a measuring stick for people's responses, so research is data-driven: the objective is to describe the qualitative differences in people's conceptions as conceptual categories (Säljö 1988). Phenomenography appears to sit somewhere between cognitivist and discursive approaches. Phenomenographers adopt an experiential, or a "second-order," perspective (Marton 1981): they look at individuals, some specific aspect of the world, and the relation by which the individuals describe that aspect of the world as it appears to them. With regard to learner beliefs, phenomenographers adopt a contextual, relational view, but they use learners' changing beliefs to look at a more stable construct. For phenomenography, relational *beliefs* give the researcher a glimpse of the more stable *conceptions* that produced the stated beliefs. It is these higher-level constructs, conceptions, that govern behaviour, such as learning strategies.

Säljö (1979) first categorised learner conceptions on learning and distinguished five categories of conceptions. Learning could be seen as:

1) a quantitative increase in knowledge,
2) memorising,
3) acquiring facts and skills to be retained and used later,
4) making sense and relating things to each other and to the world, and
5) interpreting and understanding reality in a different way.

Marton, DallAlba and Beaty (1993) have later added a sixth category: self development, learning as changing as a person. The categories represent a developmental hierarchy: they range from less efficient conceptions to more mature and advanced conceptions. Even though the approach is data-driven, the ready-made categories sometimes seem to lead to a need to make participants' answers fit into these categories. For example, in their study on pupils' ideas of learning, Berry and Sahlberg (1996: 22) reported that they did not choose a purely phenomenographic approach because their participants were 13-16-year-olds and their conceptions might therefore not be consistent with the categories created.

The phenomenographic term of conception could be defined as "systems of interrelated beliefs" (Klatter, Lodewijks & Aarnoutse 2001: 490). According to

Benson and Lor (1999: 471), who studied learner beliefs about language learning, three levels of analysis should be taken into consideration: conception, belief, and *approach*. The raw data phenomenographers work with – usually interview data – represent learners' beliefs, and these can be inferred directly from data (Benson and Lor 1999: 464). Conceptions, however, require a higher level of abstraction than beliefs; they are, in other words, deduced from the beliefs (Benson and Lor 1999: 464). Learners' beliefs are conditioned by their conceptions. The approach to learning, then, forms the level at which conceptions and beliefs function.

Phenomenographers do not view beliefs as fixed and stable; Benson and Lor (1999: 464) characterise them as "relational and responsive to context". Also the (somewhat strict-looking) categories defined by Säljö (1979) and Marton et al. (1993) include the assumption that conceptions are in a process of development – or at least they should be in order for the learner to become a better learner. According to Benson and Lor (1999), in order to modify beliefs the learner must also modify the underlying conceptions on which they are based – they offer no suggestions as to how this is done, however. In the phenomenographic approach beliefs are thus viewed in a way similar to the discursive approaches: beliefs are contextual and cannot be taken to directly mirror how the learner views learning. However, the phenomenographic approach also maintains that there are higher-level, more stable conceptions on which these changeable beliefs are based, and also that these conceptions range from less effective to more effective. Learners should thus be helped to develop towards more effective learning conceptions as defined by phenomenography.

The basic notion of phenomenography – describing and analysing experiences – has also been used in the field of learner belief research with less regard to the pre-defined categories. For example White (1999) adopted a very relational approach in her study on the expectations, changes in expectations, and emergent beliefs of novice self-instructed language learners. Following Sigel (1985: 351), she defined beliefs as "mental constructions of experience". Learners could thus only have beliefs about things they have personal experience with in one way or another. Ideas developed prior to experience are called expectations, and expectations are influenced by beliefs (White 1999: 443). White's longitudinal study focused on how adult learners viewed the process of self-instructed language learning over a period of 12 weeks. The three central constructs explaining individual differences that emerged from her data were locus of control (whether language learners feel their success is determined by external or internal factors), tolerance of ambiguity (how the learner responds to uncertainty in the language learning process), and viewing self-instructed learning in terms of learner-context interface (belief in the primacy of the unique dynamic between the learner and the context). During the study, most learners were able to modify their beliefs in a way that made solo learning more effective: their locus of control shifted from external to more internal, and they developed more effective methods for dealing with uncertainty.

Within the phenomenographic tradition, the language learner beliefs of children have not been studied extensively. However, there are a number of studies that focus on children's beliefs or conceptions about learning in general. Certain researchers working within the phenomenographic framework deem children less suitable as respondents, because respondents' conceptions are expected to fall into one of the pre-determined categories identified by Marton et al. (1993). Berry and Sahlberg (1996), for example, did not use a purely phenomenographical approach in their study of 14-15 year old pupils' ideas of learning; they alleged that teenagers are not necessarily able to give clear statements about their own metacognition because their conceptions of learning are still inconsistent (p. 22, 33). Their conceptions might therefore fall into several categories.

Several researchers have, however, used phenomenographic analysis even on data from young children and acknowledged that their answers may not be consistent with the conception categories. Klatter, Lodewijks and Aarnoutse (2001), for example, studied a group of Year 6 pupils and proposed that young children's learning conceptions should, in fact, be considered as the basic theories which may eventually evolve into "higher forms of learning conceptions" as defined by Marton et al. (1993). Klatter et al. (2001) found that children hold and can express beliefs about several aspects of learning in general, including the purpose of school, the demands of learning and their own mental activities. Interestingly, the researchers reported that they had attempted to formulate the questions at a non-contextual level "in light of the non-transparent nature of the construct of learning" (p. 512), but the children had often given very domain-specific answers. Klatter et al. (2001) ignored the contexts when categorising the answers, but intended to focus on the issue of contextuality in the next phase of their study. Also Pramling (1990) studied the beliefs children have about the process of learning: she interviewed Swedish pre-school children about their learning conceptions and analysed the data phenomenographically. She found that the children could indeed talk about their conceptions and that their awareness of their own learning could be further developed by activities based on a phenomenographically oriented approach to learning.

2.3 Summary

As seen above, the concept of belief has been defined in many different ways in the field of learner belief research. It refers sometimes to any ideas a learner has about learning in general or foreign language learning in particular, sometimes only to things the learner has personal experience of; often the focus has been specifically on learning strategies. The aims of the studies have also varied. Research on learner beliefs started from a definition very close to the one

provided by dictionaries: beliefs were considered implicit mental units that could be made explicit, and considered to influence actions.

In the field of research into beliefs about foreign language learning, studies were first conducted with the help of questionnaires. However, questionnaire studies were criticised for providing a ready-made set of beliefs that the respondents could only react to. Many felt questionnaire items were too restricting and that often the respondents would have liked to add an "it depends" clause. Interviews were introduced so that learners could voice their own beliefs in their own words and not be limited to what the researcher had made available – although it should, of course, be noted that the choice of interview questions poses certain limitations as well. Next, the idea that there were stable, general learner beliefs was brought into question. The idea that learner beliefs were context specific started to gain ground and studies started to focus on particular beliefs, studied in the relevant context. This could be done by studying beliefs in context, for example by eliciting self-reports during a learning task. The focus could also move away from teaching and learning almost entirely and beliefs looked at as functions of speech.

At the same time, studies have moved from large-scale questionnaire studies to small-scale interview studies, and even to individual level discursive analysis. The factors considered to influence beliefs vary accordingly. In large groups, beliefs are affected by cultural backgrounds, instructional practices, language teachers' views, age, professional status, and so on (Horwitz 1987: 119). On the more individual level, beliefs are influenced by for example observation of others and reflection of one's own experiences (Wenden 1999: 436) and, ultimately, the immediate context of interaction (Kalaja 1995b: 98). However, the context of an individual interview is always influenced by larger cultural and social factors, and, on the other hand, all respondents in large-scale studies are individuals in their unique contexts. All the different approaches to belief research thus contribute to the big picture of learner beliefs about language learning.

The present study focuses on the beliefs young learners hold about the English language and English language learning. In this study, a broad view of what beliefs are is adopted. Beliefs are here taken to refer to any opinions that the learners have regarding learning strategies as well as regarding the English language and language learning in general – issues that in other studies may have been looked at under the concepts of attitudes or expectations, for example. The scope is thus wider than in many previous studies and aimed at providing a more general idea of what learners think of the English language and foreign language learning.

The present study is based on *dialogical* and *sociocultural* theories. The two appear to bridge the gap between the cognitivist and the discursive approaches to belief research in that they have the potential to bring unity to the individual/social or contextual/cultural duality. In the following I shall first present the two frameworks and discuss how they can be used in the study of learner beliefs about languages and language learning.

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Dialogism

Dialogical thinking has been gaining ground in recent years especially in the fields of philosophy, literary theory and cultural theory, as well as linguistics. Dialogism is associated above all with the writings of the so-called Bakhtin circle. The dialogical philosophy of language was first formulated by writers such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986, 1990, 2004) and Valentin N. Voloshinov (1990/1929). Bakhtin himself was not a linguist but a literary scholar – he, in fact, preferred to refer to himself as a "thinker" (Lähteenmäki 2001: 19). As Dufva (2003: 137-138) points out, the philosophy of language is only sketchily pictured in his original writings. Voloshinov, on the other hand, made an extremely important contribution to linguistics – he was an early critic of Saussurean linguistics, for example – but his work was cut short by his premature death in 1936 (Dufva 2003: 138).

As Linell (1998) argues, dialogical linguistics certainly has many of the problems that face a new, unestablished field of study. Dufva (2003: 138) notes, however, that while dialogical linguistics may still expect to find a more explicit formulation, its main tenets already provide an important alternative to the mainstream, cognitivist view of language, cognition and beliefs. More recent contributions to the dialogical view of language, building on the works of the Bakhtin circle, include the works by Rommetveit (1992), Linell (1998), Wertsch (1985b, 1991), Markovà & Foppa (1990, 1991), Lähteenmäki (1994, 1998) and Dufva (1998, 2003).

In the following, I shall first present the basic terms and concepts used in dialogical language studies.

3.1.1 Dialogue, utterances and speech genres

The concept at the heart of dialogical thinking is *dialogue* itself. Speech, according to Bakhtin (1986: 71), can only be realised in the form of concrete

utterances, thoughts that have been given voice. Utterances are linguistic units that convey meanings – they can range from a short rejoinder to a scientific treatise. Utterances belong to a particular speaking subject. Furthermore, the meaning of an utterance, spoken by a particular person, is dependent on the context: according to Voloshinov (1990/1929), the word is the result of the interaction between the speaker and the listener. Meanings emerge in the active process of speaking and understanding (Voloshinov 1990/1929: 102), because the participants in the interaction in fact create the words and their meanings in the immediate situation. Think about how many different interpretations there can be for a word like "oh". The meaning of the word itself is difficult to define, but depending on the context it can be used to express surprise, joy, disappointment, avoidance and so on – and for the participants of the dialogue the meaning is usually crystal clear. According to Bakhtin (1986: 82-82), it is often possible to understand the *language meaning* of a sentence (such as "The sun has risen") and comprehend its possible role in an utterance, but the words only acquire their full *sense* in their context. Depending on the context, the words "the sun has risen" can for example mean that it is too early to get up, or that it is high time to get up. Utterances are entirely *contextual*. In one sense all utterances are therefore unique, defined by the immediate context in which the participants of the dialogue find themselves – a particular combination of factors that will never be repeated.

For example, if we were to observe how a child learns concepts and ideas related to foreign languages and language learning, say, from his or her mother, we would probably see that the mother does not simply list facts arbitrarily or recite them from a book. The topics arise as situations arise, and what the mother says for example about foreign languages depends on the situation. She might choose to give information she feels is needed in the situation, which means she will not necessarily cover the entire subject, just address the immediate concern. She may choose words she feels are appropriate to use with a child – explaining things simplistically, perhaps. If the mother were to discuss foreign language learning with another adult, she would probably use completely different words, forms and tones than when talking with her child. Similarly, when the child uses the words he or she has learnt in interaction with his or her mother, he/she is in yet another situation – a research interview, perhaps – and will talk differently from the way he/she did with his/her mother (as he/she is now *using* the words), *and* differently than his/her mother did in the original interaction. Spoken knowledge thus needs to be rebuilt in each interaction, and consequently each utterance is unique.

But even if utterances are in one sense unique, they also always have a bond with earlier utterances and interactions. The contextual nature of utterances does not mean that they can be completely random. As Emerson (1986: 24) notes, words must always recall earlier contexts of usage, otherwise they cannot mean anything at all. So, in addition to the immediate context, utterances are also defined by other utterances. According to Bakhtin (1986: 91), every utterance is a response to the utterances that preceded it in the particular

sphere of interaction. Every utterance also, in turn, presupposes a response. This is often true even in a very concrete sense – people tend to feel rather silly if nobody in any way responds to a comment they made – but Bakhtin also referred to a broader dialogue. Each word is associated with a particular context of use: ways of speaking typical of a given communicative sphere, like a profession, age group or a geographical or temporal location (Bakhtin 1981: 293). Thus, according to Bakhtin (1986: 60), while each separate utterance is individual, each sphere in which language is used develops its own, relatively stable types of utterances. These utterance types are called *speech genres*. Knowledge of speech genres provides us with the appropriate ways of acting and reacting in certain situations, so we can do so in a meaningful manner (Dufva 1998: 92).

The variety of speech genres also means that the natural state of every national language is in fact *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981: 270-272), "multilanguagedness". In this sense, there is no unified national language[4], but a rich diversity of more or less official social, regional and historical forms of a particular national language: dialects, slangs, jargons and other varieties, all changing over space and time. As Dufva (2003: 138) points out, language will produce diversity at every level: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical rules, idioms and so on. According to Bakhtin (1981: 210-271), language is governed by *centrifugality*, a force creating variety and diversity. On the other hand, language is also affected by the opposite force of *centripetality*. This force creates order and consistency so that linguistic expression remains sufficiently uniform. In the midst of the diversity and variety of language, speakers must still be able to mean and understand.

3.1.2 Voice and appropriation

According to Bakhtin (1981: 293), all words have a "taste" of the speech genres and contexts they belong to. Words and forms are socially charged: associated with different professions, social groups, individuals, age groups and moments in time. The inherently contextual nature of utterances is the key to one of Bakhtin's central ideas: that content and style are irrevocably intertwined, *that words always represent a point of view*. Utterances are not only about words and structures, but also about intentions, motivations and values (Bakhtin 1981: 293). The speech of real people in real life hardly ever consists of objective listings of words – like words in a dictionary. Words in speech are always used to convey meanings in their immediate contexts, and therefore spoken with a particular attitude and evaluation, and from a particular perspective. Words can be good or bad, beautiful or ugly, important or trivial. Depending on the speaker, the listener and the whole context of the interaction, capitalism can be admirable or despicable; dogs vile beasts or man's best friends; the English language a useful tool fostering communication or the end of global linguistic variety. One man's important word is another man's insignificant word. What

[4] Such an animal may, of course, exist in a political or institutional sense.

we learn in interaction are not neutral words, but value-laden words, ideological interpretations of what the world is like (Bakhtin 1981: 293). This idea of intention and worldview embedded in words is captured in Bakhtin's concept of *voice*.

Holquist & Emerson (1981: 434) have defined Bakhtin's concept of voice concisely as "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness". Voice, in other words, is Bakhtin's metaphor that answers the question "Who is talking?" In addition to the viewpoint of the speaker, a number of other things can be heard in a voice: voice, too, is defined by the speaking situation in its entirety. It is possible not only to hear who is doing the talking, but also to deduce who the words are spoken to, how the speaker feels about the matter he/she is discussing, how he/she assumes the listener will react to what he/she is saying, what the historical and social context of the utterance is like, and so on. The speaker thus *positions* him/herself with regard to both the content and his/her addressee (see Figure 1).

It is easy to hear, for example, whether a young language learner is explaining something to a close friend or to an authoritative teacher, even if we do not see the listener. The learner's voice reveals numerous details about the situation even when the topic remains the same.

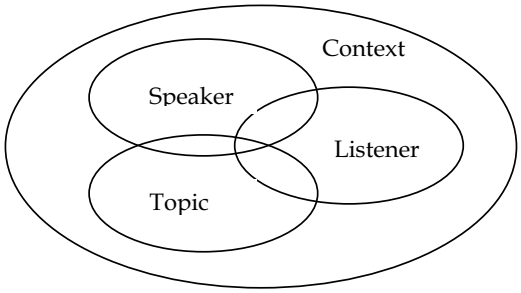

FIGURE 1 Speaker's positioned voice.

Words and knowledge have been acquired in their social contexts, "through the mouths of others" (Bakhtin 1986: 138). Because our knowledge comes from many different sources, it is multivoiced. Our words are socially charged, and "there are no voiceless words that belong to no one" (Bakhtin 1986: 124). Therefore, when we use words, they carry with them the voices of their previous users – if only because a speaker will necessarily invoke a particular social language and speech genre when producing an utterance (Wertsch 1991: 59). Voice and speech genre are thus intertwined but not the same thing – a speaker can use a particular speech genre but with his/her own voice mock it, for example. As we need to use words from the constant flow of dialogue, Emerson (1986: 24) argues that "every word raises the question of authority". Whose words are we speaking? When producing utterances, we engage in a process of *appropriation* – we use words from the mouths of others to serve our intentions. At the same time, we position ourselves with regard to those words:

we agree or disagree, praise or condemn, and so on. Through the process of appropriation, we constantly develop and redefine our own personal interpretive perspective or voice, which is a consolidation of many perspectives and voices or genres of others we have known (Bakhtin 1981: 348; 1986: 91-93).

There are different types of words that we must deal with in different ways. Bakhtin (1981: 341-342, 345) distinguishes three word types: words can be *authoritative, internally persuasive* or what could be called *irrelevant*. Irrelevant words are words that do not matter to us and do not touch us (Bakhtin 1981: 345), or perhaps reflect worldviews we prefer not to be associated with: we reject them as we feel we have no use for them. The characteristics of authoritative and internally persuasive words are probably familiar to us all from the school context: must we recite the words by heart, or can we retell them using our own words (Bakhtin 1981: 341)? Authoritative words are words of authorities: parents, teachers, adults. Bakhtin (1981: 342-343) uses the examples of religious dogmas and recognised scientific truths: one has to accept them and repeat them as they are. The speaker cannot enter into a dialogue with authoritative words. However, if we can retell others' utterances using our own words, their words are internally persuasive. Internally persuasive words allow us to use them in new ways and in new contexts; insert some of our own voice into them. Unlike authoritative words, internally persuasive words are open, dynamic and dialogical. Their meaning is still open, because they are still "half someone else's" (Bakhtin 1981: 345) – they come from the mouths of others and carry the undertones of their previous contexts. But half someone else's means that, at the same time, the words are half *ours*. Internally persuasive words thus have an inherent multivoiced quality. We can add our own voice to the words, but we must not entirely drown the original voice, as its characteristics must be saved for the creative dynamic of meaning to emerge (Bakhtin 1981: 341).

Internally persuasive words also have another characteristic; they can become our own words (Bakhtin 1981). In the process of appropriation, of using words in new contexts in creative ways, we might be able to *assimilate* the words, to populate them entirely with our own intention. From the speaker's point of view, the words no longer contain others' intentions: the voice speaking these words is the speaker's own. This also means that the meaning of these words is now in some ways closed to the speaker; they no longer have the dynamic, creative dialogue with other voices.

There are words that we do not particularly care to make our own, and then there are words that we would like to assimilate, but cannot. Words can be so full of other people's meanings that they "put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker" (Bakhtin 1981: 294). They resist appropriation despite the speaker's best efforts, and the words the speaker is using do not sound her own. As language is inherently populated with alien voices, transforming it into private property, forcing it to submit to our own intentions, is not an easy process (Bakhtin 1981: 294). The strongest voice heard in a given utterance is therefore not necessarily that of the speaker. If we use the words of

an authoritative voice, we cannot but accept and repeat them. In addition to these authoritative voices, Bakhtin (1981: 294) maintains that there are also words that remain alien and sound foreign when we use them. If the words we use are still full of other people's meanings, they still echo the other people's voices, and we are merely *ventriloquating* what others have said: our voice speaks *through* another voice (Wertsch 1991: 59). The contextual words are still serving the purposes of their other speakers (Bakhtin 1986: 294).

Our utterances are thus necessarily *polyphonic*, multi-voiced, and our own voice and worldview is a combination of the various word, utterance and speech genre types, and of our attitudes towards them. Such polyphony would also govern the speech of the young learners participating in this study: their answers may reflect the voices the learners have been in contact with, hint at their attitudes towards these other voices, and possibly reveal something about the multivoiced origin of their speech with regard to the English language and English language learning. Engaging in dialogue with them about these topics would also influence their speech further: our voice is constantly evolving and changing as we take part in new interactions and gain new experiences (Dufva 2003: 136). The process of development is propelled by our dialogue with other people and our environment, and it is never complete. This process, "inner monologue" (Bakhtin 1981: 345), continues all our lives. We are constantly (re)positioning ourselves with regard to other people (Wortham 2001: 147) and their words.

The learners participating in this study are thus appropriating others' words in voicing their views about English and English language learning. It may also be that their learner voices are in a particularly dynamic phase of development. The learners are young and acting in a multitude of new communicative activities; they are coming into contact with school and the classroom and all of the speech genres and voices that come with that environment, as well as learning how to interact with their classmates, how to be a pupil and a foreign language learner – and also how to be an interviewee, as the data in this study were collected in interviews. As the data are longitudinal, it may also shed light on how voices change and develop over the years.

3.1.3 Dialogism, cognition and beliefs

The present study deals with beliefs as cognitive phenomena. Both Bakhtin and Voloshinov had an interest in the human psyche and the nature of consciousness, Voloshinov through his interest in human language and also psychology, and Bakhtin as a thinker interested in human life and philosophical theory in general. When formulating his philosophy of language, Voloshinov also briefly discussed his view of the nature of language and the human psyche. To him, the individual experiences are manifested to the individual in *signs*, things of semiotic significance (Voloshinov 1973: 26, 28-29). These signs are formed in the interaction processes between socially organised people (Voloshinov 1973: 21). Voloshinov (1973: 26) argued that the human psyche is

an arena where individual experience and the outer world meet: a semiotic interface between the individual and the world. Subjective experience exists only in signs: it is "the semiotic expression of the contact between the organism and the outside environment" (Voloshinov 1973: 26). The individual psyche is constantly interacting with the world, in other words, it has a continuous dialogical relationship with what happens in the world (Dufva 2007). Thus the human psyche is formed through interaction with the world and other psyches, making it both social and individual in nature.

Bakhtin, in turn, saw dialogue not only as an act of conversation between two people, nor only as human communication using language, but dialogue is also an overall metaphilosophical principle of interaction, governing human existence. "Life by its very nature is dialogic" (Bakhtin 1984: 293) because dialogic relationships are an almost universal phenomenon that permeate all human speech, relationships and manifestations of human life (Bakhtin 1984: 40). According to Bakhtin (1986: 138), all knowledge is inherently dialogical in nature: the only way to be and to learn, according to dialogical thinking, is to interact with one's environment, both physical and social. This suggests that what people know is the result of the processes of interaction they have been involved in during their lives (Dufva 2003: 135). It is in dialogical interaction that our knowledge develops and emerges. According to Bakhtin (1984: 293), an individual participates in dialogue with his environment all through his life "with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds". An individual consciousness thus emerges and exists in social interaction with other consciousnesses. Morson & Emerson (1990: 218) note that Bakhtin viewed the "self as a conversation, often a struggle of discrepant voices". The constant dialogue with the environment results in an individual psyche that is also internally dialogical and polyphonic. Beliefs would thus appear to be doubly dialogical and polyphonic: if they are considered to be cognitive animals, they, as part of the psyche, have evolved in dialogical interaction, and engage in such dialogue again when they are talked about.

Although Voloshinov and Bakhtin both discussed cognitive matters, neither of them formulated a theory of cognition, nor do they appear to agree on everything. In Bakhtin's work, as Lähteenmäki (2003) has shown, there are certain arguments that may sound contradictory, both because he developed his ideas over a long period of time, and because of the editing and interpretation problems with those parts of his work that were not originally meant for publication. Bakhtin was also not always consistent with the use of his central terminology, making the interpretation of his works even more challenging. Furthermore, Bakhtin was clearly influenced by many other thinkers, but he did not always state where his citations came from (see e.g. Brandist 1997) and he has even been accused of plagiarism. Therefore, a contemporary dialogical view of cognition and beliefs will necessarily be an interpretation and application of Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's ideas; it is based on or inspired by the writings of the Bakhtin circle. While the works provide very fruitful ideas about language, cognition and human interaction, their main focus was elsewhere. Therefore,

the ideas and concepts used in this study are not necessarily applied with reference to the overall thinking of the Bakhtin circle. Dufva (2004: 22), however, suggests that one of the central arguments of dialogical thinking – *intersubjectivity* – can help us understand the roles of the individual and the social and prove fruitful when formulating a dialogical theory of cognition.

The fundamental principle of intersubjectivity, stemming from the idea of constant dialogue, implies a view of cognition that is very different from the mainstream *cognitivist* ideas. Dufva (2004: 22) notes that the main body of psychological and linguistic research in the second half of the 20th century is very individually oriented. In cognitivist approaches, the mind is seen metaphorically as a container in which knowledge is stored in the form of static representations or schemata. Within these approaches, knowledge is seen as an individual possession that is stable and relatively unchangeable (e.g. Wenden 1987a). According to Dufva (2003: 134-136), the cognitivist view relies on the Cartesian argument which considers the human mind to be autonomous and independent, only marginally affected by the external environment. There is thus a clear division between the individual and the social: cognitive processes happen "inside", social phenomena "outside". The role of social interaction in the development of the individual mind tends to be either ignored or dismissed (Dufva 2004: 22).

On the other hand, the idea of intersubjectivity also distinguishes the dialogical view from the alternative, *constructionist* approaches. Modern discursive psychology (see e.g. Edwards & Potter 1992) and constructionist social psychology (see e.g. Gergen 1994) adopt a viewpoint opposite to that represented by cognitivist approaches. They emphasise the role of the social and maintain that personality and self are essentially discursive constructions. In the most radical versions, the individual dimension is ignored and the individual mind has no role independent of the discourse.

According to Dufva (2004: 23), the dialogical perspective on cognitive phenomena is neither cognitivist nor constructionist. The principles of inter-subjectivity and dialogue necessarily mean that the role of the social is essential but that the individual aspect cannot be overlooked. From a dialogical perspective, the individual and the social are thus not opposites, but rather *complements* (Lähteenmäki 1996: 12), engaged in the continuous flow of dialogue.

So what is the view of cognition in the dialogical framework? This is a question Dufva (1994, 1995, 1998, 2003) has discussed extensively in her articles. She draws not only on the writings of the Bakhtin circle, but also on the work of researchers who argue for a non-Cartesian view of cognition. In a dialogical approach that does not draw a line between the individual and the social, or the mind and the environment, cognition must be viewed from a non-dualistic angle. Cognition is seen as a *systemic* phenomenon (see e.g. Järvilehto 1994). Cognitive functions do not take place in the brain alone, nor solely in the social sphere, but emerge in the systemic relationship between the individual and his/her environment. Cognitive phenomena thus happen in the system, which

consists of the individual (with his/her brain and body) and the environment. According to Dufva (1998: 89), this implies that studying cognition means studying the systemic relationship between the two components.

Dufva (2003: 134-135) suggests that systemicity, as well as the idea of continuous dialogue, also mean that cognition is *embodied* and *situated*. Cognition is tied not only to the environment, but also to its bodily context. Damasio (1996) argues that the human mind must be explained in terms of the organism as a whole – the mind cannot work independently of the body. Instead of viewing the mind as a property of a person, it should be seen as a systemic ensemble of the brain, the body and the world. This idea of embodied cognition also implies that it is necessarily a situated phenomenon as well. Individuals interact constantly with their physical and social environment so this is also where cognising takes place and develops – in the systemic interface between the individual and the world. Cognising occurs in time and space and this spatio-temporal context is necessarily present in the process of cognising[5]. According to Dufva (2003: 135), this also means that cognitive experiences also always bear the mark of the environment in which they took place – in other words, they are marked by *perspectivity*. Whatever individuals know and believe is the consequence of the interactions and discourses they have taken part in and been exposed to, and these situations are part and parcel of the knowledge individuals have.

Dufva (2003: 135) maintains that the idea of continuous dialogue also implies a view of cognition that is *dynamic*. This view appears to be related to Edelman (1992), who argues for a dynamic view of memory. He maintains that individuals cannot stop perceiving the environment, so their involvement with the world is constant. The never-ending flow of input not only adds something to the memory but also changes the existing organisation: new input is interpreted in the light of previous input, and previous input is compared to the new. Cognitive functions should not be thought of in terms of a stable data bank, but as a changing system or network. According to Edelman (1992), this dynamicity should also be reflected in word choices: it would be preferable to talk of 'remembering' and 'cognising' rather than 'memory' and 'cognition'.

Dufva does not discuss the notion of metacognition, "thinking about thinking" or knowledge of one's own mental processes. It would seem that from a dialogical viewpoint a clear distinction between cognition and metacognition is not particularly fruitful: the relationship between cognitive and metacognitive functions would also appear to be dialogical, blurring the boundary. Thinking about thinking would affect one's thinking, and the wonder of thinking would certainly give the individual something to think about. Talking about one's beliefs could also be seen as both a cognitive and a metacognitive process: the speaker would need to attend to his/her own thinking processes while processing the speech regarding the said processes.

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5 Edwards (1993a: 219) appears to bring together both the idea of dynamic systemicity and situatedness by suggesting that the processes of remembering and thinking should not be thought of as abstractions, but as systems of situated activities.

An individual's knowledge about languages and language learning has thus resulted from processes of interaction he/she has been involved in (Dufva 2003: 136). Continuous, dynamic and systemic cognising also implies that an individual's knowledge – including their beliefs – is in constant motion and susceptible to change as new information is appropriated. As knowledge originates in interaction, it also carries the marks of these interactions and the people involved in them: it is *multi-voiced* by nature, incorporating the different perspectives, voices, that the individual has interacted with (Dufva 2003: 136)[6]. The dialogical process of appropriating information also makes knowledge two-fold: it is both individual and social, unique as well as shared. As Dufva (2003: 137) points out, individuals are connected to the speech community and society around them, and therefore the discourses they engage in are common to these contexts. An individual's knowledge has been generated in terms of Others, as "multivoiced realities situated in culture" (Marková, Linell, Grossen & Salazar-Orvig 2007: 17). To take an example pertaining to the present study, the language beliefs of Finnish children are in some ways specifically Finnish as they are largely based on the discourses prevalent within Finnish cultural and linguistic contexts (cf. Bakhtin 1986).

On the other hand, each individual has their own unique position in the world. No two people will have exactly the same set of experiences, and even the participants of one and the same communicative situation experience it differently. We cannot see what is going on behind our backs, or what our facial expressions look like when we are talking with someone (Bakhtin 1990). At the same time, we *can* see what goes on behind the back of the person that we are talking with, and what he/she looks like at that particular point in time. Cognitive experiences are thus *positional*[7], which makes the knowledge reservoir of each individual unique.

A systemic, dynamic knowledge reservoir does not imply that people go around "carrying … in their heads ready-made explanations that merely await discursive opportunities to be revealed", as Edwards (1993a: 219) put it. There are no steady states of knowledge: the knowledge reservoir consists of *material* to be processed in interaction rather than some sort of static forms of beliefs themselves (Dufva 1995: 33). The appropriated knowledge "lies dormant in the mind" (Dufva 1994: 27) until it is awakened by, for example, a question. Dufva (2003: 137) suggests that a belief does not fully exist before it is formulated verbally and articulated. Verbalising one's beliefs again brings out the Janus-faced nature of beliefs – that they are marked by both stability and contextuality. Beliefs are stable in that they are based on the experiences

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6 This is not to say that beliefs are simply ideas and words we have appropriated from others – our own experiences obviously play a part in how we view things and feel about them. However, people can have beliefs even about things they have never experienced themselves (see e.g. Sakui & Gaies 1999: 480) and such beliefs may have been influenced by other people's beliefs – their words.

7 The terms positionality and perspectivity seem to be closely connected – if not inseparable – but do appear to refer to slightly different things; positionality implies a spatial position, while perspectivity refers to a more metaphorical, general stance or perspective.

remembered, but as they emerge in speech in the form of utterances they are subject to all the contextual factors of interaction. Talking about beliefs is essentially a function of the communication situation: the preceding utterances that prompted our response, the people present and their views on the topic, and so on.

Verbally formulated beliefs thus become inherently intertwined with voices and speech genres – they are formulated and processed in accordance with the cultural conventions of current talk and action (Edwards 1993a: 219-220). Speech genres are specific to time and place, and knowing how to use words and utterances appropriately is as important as the conveyed knowledge itself. Talking about one's beliefs also means taking stands, choosing perspectives and echoing the voices of others: content and form interlace. Adopting a dialogical view of language thus also means that beliefs reflect the various social and cultural practices, speech genres and voices that are present in the interactions in which people are involved (Dufva & Alanen 2005: 104). The children participating in this study have appropriated words and ways of speaking from others, and probably draw from this knowledge reservoir in order to be able to respond in contextually, socially and culturally appropriate ways to the questions posed to them.

The social origin of beliefs results in natural *polyphony*: they may reflect for example the individual, social and institutional viewpoints and voices the learner has interacted with (Dufva 2003: 143). Beliefs include personal experiences as well as for example the linguistic attitudes of the community, or the discourses of the school world (Dufva 2003: 138). The presence of the other (both all the Others the learner has interacted with during his/her lifespan and the Other evoking the belief – like an interviewer or a partner in casual conversation) means, as Dufva (2003: 140) points out, that it is impossible to capture a purely individual belief. A belief needs to be evoked by somebody or something in order for the belief to be articulated (Dufva 2003: 140). Dufva & Alanen (2005: 104) maintain that "the role of social interaction in both focusing and heightening the child's awareness is important."

Beliefs are thus *lived* and *experiential*, not abstract schemata of knowledge (Dufva 1998: 94). As the results of the *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness and Foreign Language Learning* project have shown so far (see Dufva 2003, Alanen, Dufva & Mäntylä 2006; cf. also Dufva, Lähteenmäki & Isoherranen 1996), when learners are interviewed about their experiences with and views about languages, many of the incidents they talk about have a strong emotional value, be it positive or negative. They recounted learning experiences involving strong emotions; anxiety, inferiority, pride in accomplishment. Why do they do that when most of the questions could equally well be answered in more neutral terms? According to Dufva (2003: 142), the answer is obvious enough: beliefs comprise both *rational* and *emotional* elements because awareness and emotion are intricately connected, as Damasio (1996) maintains. Beliefs about language learning are multifaceted; Dufva (2003: 143) describes them as a tangled web of personal experiences combined with views from society at large acquired

through hearsay, school instruction or the media. Beliefs are thus also good examples of interdiscursivity (Dufva 2003: 141). As it seems that the beliefs of adults are to a large extent based on their own experiences (see Dufva et al. 2006), it will be interesting to see what the results of the present study will be like: the participants are only starting their language learning careers and have had little personal experience of learning a language.

In a dialogical framework, beliefs emerge as a dynamic, polyphonic and experiential phenomenon. A dialogical view of cognising, emphasising inter-subjectivity, thus means that beliefs about language learning represent *subjective experiences* (Dufva 2003: 132). At the same time, they also represent *ways of talking about language*. Both content and formulation are important.

As yet, little research has been done on learner beliefs within a dialogical framework, based on Bakhtin's writings[8]. In many ways the dialogical approach stands in the middle ground between the cognitivist and the discursive. Beliefs are based on the experiences the respondents have stored in their memory, but the way they emerge in speech always depends on the context.

One study that does adopt a dialogical approach to beliefs about language and language learning is the study by Dufva, Lähteenmäki and Isoherranen (1996). The study focused on lay people's everyday knowledge of language. The respondents were adults with varying backgrounds; they were not necessarily studying a language at the time. The data were elicited by questionnaires, a group discussion and individual interviews. Dufva et al. (1996:31-36) argue for a systemic description of the mental (see Järvilehto 1994) and maintain that the individual and his/her context are inseparable. Mental knowledge therefore emerges in interaction and contains variation and change. It is based on the constant flow of stimuli between the mind and its environment. Dufva et al. (1996: 43-47) assume that knowledge is reflected in talk, but that the relationship between talk and knowledge is not a direct one. What the respondents say is layered and reconsidered, and it seemed, in fact, that the respondents "thought as they talked". This led the researchers to suggest that knowledge is not an organised system of facts, memories, beliefs, experiences etc. that is accessed: it is, in fact, potential that is processed. It is also influenced by context, for example the interviewer's wording of the question. Knowledge would thus be based on stored memories but ultimately created in interaction.

Also the present author's previous study on children's beliefs about languages adopted a dialogical framework (Aro 2001; see also Aro 2003, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2008), as did Väisänen (1997) in her study on the language learning beliefs of adult learners and community college teachers. Väisänen found that the more a person had studied and dealt with languages, the more able he/she was to talk analytically about it and the more aware of it he/she was. Sorvari (1995) adopted an approach closely resembling the dialogical approach of Dufva et al. (1996) in her unpublished thesis on children's knowledge of foreign languages in Year 3. She found that the children were

[8] For dialogical theoretical and practical concerns in foreign language learning and teaching, see Hall, Vitanova & Marchenkova (2005).

very aware of foreign languages, could name situations where language skills would be useful, and wanted to learn at least one foreign language. It appeared that most of the knowledge the children had had been acquired outside of the school context. Haapakangas (2008) looked at the language beliefs of pupils and their parents in a specialist language and culture school, where the pupils study three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) from Year 1, and where CLIL methods are used. She found, for example, that the term "mother tongue" had a special meaning for the parents, but for the children it appeared to be an unfamiliar concept.

The *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness and Foreign Language Learning* research project has also produced results about the beliefs children hold about languages and language learning (see Dufva, Alanen & Mäntylä 2001, Dufva, Alanen & Aro 2003, Alanen, Dufva & Mäntylä 2006, Alanen & Aro 2008).

3.1.4 Dialogism and the process of development

The concept of development is important in this study in two ways. Firstly, beliefs are considered to influence the language learning experience of the learners because what learners believe about the English language and language learning has a bearing on how they go about learning English and developing their learning skills and English skills[9]. The dialogical framework provides clues as to which beliefs learners may have appropriated or made their own: if a learner can voice his/her beliefs confidently and there are no overt Others' voices present, he/she probably has appropriated the words he/she is using; if the words appear to be ventriloquated, he/she may not be as comfortable using them. However, the dialogical framework does not relate beliefs to actions.

Secondly, as the study is longitudinal, it will also focus on how learners' beliefs about the English language and language learning are learnt and appropriated over the years – how their beliefs change and develop. Learners are subjected to new voices and experiences, and thus appropriate new information and new ways of talking about language.

However, dialogism does not directly deal with issues of learning and development: it focuses on the nature of issues such as speech and knowledge rather than the process through which they come to be. While Bakhtin's idea of appropriation certainly implies a form of development and change in how utterances are voiced, his writings do not cover the *process* of appropriation itself. In order to analyse the process of change, another viewpoint is needed to conceptualise this process more clearly.

As dialogical thinking is a framework that is in many ways philosophical rather than specific, it is possible to combine it with various different approaches. Over the past few decades, it has been used especially in conjunction with Vygotskian approaches, based on the writings of Lev Vygotsky. His work deals with development and activity, which the dialogical

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[9] Their learning experiences may well, in turn, influence their beliefs.

framework does not specifically look at. I shall therefore now go on to present the Vygotskian or *sociocultural* approaches.

3.2 Sociocultural approaches

Lev Vygotsky's (1896 – 1934) developmental psychology forms the basis of and inspiration for the various sociocultural approaches. Vygotsky was a developmental psychologist, whose writings covered numerous diverse topics, including language and thought, concept formation, the origin and development of higher mental functions, and methodology of psychological research. Despite being contemporaries, there is no indication that Vygotsky and Bakhtin were ever in direct contact. However, many scholars have noted that their ideas may complement each other (e.g. Marchenkova 2005, Johnson 2004, Kramsch 2004)[10].

3.2.1 Development of agency: from collaboration to independence

Dialogism, based on Bakhtin's writings, and the Vygotskian sociocultural approaches converge in their view of how the social level influences an individual's cognition. According to Bakhtin (1986: 138), the individual's language and his/her knowledge are fundamentally dialogical. Mental knowledge emerges and develops in interactional processes between the individual and his/her social and physical environment. All the knowledge we have, beginning with our own name, has come to us from other people (Bakhtin 1986: 138). The sociocultural approach agrees that language and knowledge are acquired in interaction with the environment. According to Vygotsky (1978: 57), the social level is the basis for all human action: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." Individuals learn first how to act in collaboration with others, and only later manage tasks independently – an idea which certainly resonates with Bakhtin's concepts of appropriation and voices.

Vygotsky (1978: 216) also maintains that the collaboration aspect is always present: a child who has learnt how to solve a mathematical problem at school with the help of the teacher, also solves his/her homework problems with the help of the teacher even though the teacher is not physically present. The teacher's help is contained in the child's solution even though the action seems to be planned and implemented independently. The process from collaboration to independence happens in the *zone of proximal development*: the distance between the actual developmental level and the level of potential development (Vygotsky 1978: 86). The actual level of development is determined by independent problem solving, while the potential level of development is

[10] For an opposing view, see Brandist 2007.

determined by problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Development in the zone of proximal development thus progresses from *other-regulation* – action regulated by other people – to *self-regulation*. The child is mastering his own *agency* and moving from collaboration to independence. While Vygotsky recognises individual agency, he regards it as socially organized. Bakhtin's notion of voice could well be thought of in terms of increasing agency and self-regulation: speaking first happens in collaboration with other voices. Later, when, for example, a learner has found his/her own voice as a language learner, speaking is done independently.

More recently, Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development has been given a more activity-related and open interpretation within the sociocultural approaches (see Wells 1999). Self-regulation is not an absolute but a relative phenomenon: the level of self-regulation of the child varies from one activity to another. Vygotsky also appeared to view the child's development as constantly progressing with the help of social interaction. Nowadays it is understood that changes do not always denote improvement: for example, if the child interacts with another learner who is less competent but has a more domineering personality, changes can also happen "for the worse" (see e.g. Tudge 1992).

3.2.2 Psychological tools

According to Vygotsky (1978), the human agent is not directly involved with his/her environment, nor does he/she react to it using merely inborn reflexes. The relationship between the individual and the objects of his/her environment is *mediated* by cultural symbolic artefacts the use of which each individual must master. These artefacts include systems of counting, measuring or patterning, works of art, and other symbol systems, as well as material artefacts such as pens, paper and so on (Vygotsky 1981: 137). Skills such as counting and writing are not learnt as objects, but as a means to an end.

Vygotsky (1978: 1-2) also wanted to call into question the assumption that the relations between the various mental functions, especially that between thought and the word, were fixed and unchanging. In addition to the material artefacts regulating actions between people and the environment, Vygotsky (1978: 55) argued that there were also tools functioning as a means of mediating and mastering one's internal activity. The most fundamental of these *psychological tools* is *language*, which mediates our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. With his colleagues, A. R. Luria and A. N. Leontiev, Vygotsky formulated a new theoretical concept to apply to human activity: the concept of artefact-mediated action (Vygotsky 1978: 40), *action mediated by cultural and psychological tools.*

Speech plays a double role in Vygotsky's theory: it is a psychological tool that helps organise cognitive processes while being one of these processes itself (1986). Speech undergoes development while operating on the development of other mental functions, such as perception, memory and attention directing. The basic tenet of Vygotsky's (1981) work is that the use of psychological tools

fundamentally transforms human action; they alter the entire process of mental functions rather than just facilitating functions that could have somehow occurred without the tools. The path of "...human action is fundamentally shaped and constrained by the mediational means it employs" (Wertsch & Rupert 1993: 230).

The use of psychological tools is mastered in the same way as all other functions in cultural development: in social interaction. The use of the foremost psychological tool, language, is clearly present in the development of children. When a child is solving a jigsaw puzzle for the first time, his/her mother may control his/her activities by pointing out which pieces to pick up and by telling the child where they should be put. This *external social speech* of the mother (essentially, the dialogue the child and the mother are engaged in) turns into the child's *private speech* – later the child may be seen to solve the jigsaw puzzle on his/her own, controlling the process by thinking aloud, talking to him/herself by echoing his/her mother's voice: "now I put this piece here". Or, to use the earlier example of mathematical problems and homework: the child may recall the teacher's instructions by saying them out loud, or by repeating them to him/herself as he/she solves the problem. The child's private speech will eventually become internalised into *inner speech*, private thoughts coded in language. According to Vygotsky (1986), our inner speech is "speech almost without words" (p. 244), "to a large extent thinking in pure meanings" (p. 249). In meanings, the sense of the word, "the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word" (p. 244), predominates over "literal" meaning – words are personalised and contextual rather than generalised concepts. Bakhtin (1986), of course, spoke of a similar difference albeit in the context of a dialogue between people: in dialogical terms, words are perspective and positional; they have a language meaning but only acquire their sense in their context.

The child's mental functions are thus coded in ways appropriated from others. These functions, in turn, influence an individual's relationship and actions with his/her environment. They affect what people pay attention to or ignore, how they see things, what they remember – these functions are the "intellectual tools of society" as Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü & Mosier (1993: 232) put it. Due to the sociocultural origin of psychological tools and the critical role language plays in them, these functions are superindividual in nature. This, as Shotter (1993a: 62) points out, means that the human psyche is not quite as private and inner as has often been assumed. Psychological tools enable people to master psychological functions like memory and perception in ways appropriate to their cultures – to be properly thoughtful and autonomous members of society, to see and to hear things as others do and to link their actions to those of others in acting in a socially intelligible and legitimate way (Shotter 1993a: 62). Shotter (1993a: 62) argues that transactions 'within' people are therefore similar to transactions 'between' people.

3.2.3 Vygotsky and metacognition

As noted earlier, many frameworks in the field of learner belief research consider beliefs to be a specifically metacognitive phenomenon – to deal with "thinking about thinking", awareness of one's own cognitive processes. In this section, I shall examine how the metacognition/cognition distinction has been discussed within sociocultural approaches.

Metacognition itself has been found to be a somewhat problematic concept. It has been considered fuzzy and vague, and for example Kluwe (1987) felt the concept should be abandoned altogether, while Brown, Bransford, Ferrara and Campione (1983) as well as Chi (1987) proposed that it should be considerably restricted. Brown (1987) suggests that the treatment of metacognition in fact has four strands: the literature deals with questions of *self-regulation, other-regulation, executive control,* and *verbal reports as data* (that is, whether people can verbalise their thinking and the way they control it). Part of the problem for Brown is that all these different strands are grouped under the single concept of metacognition. How Vygotsky's ideas could be used in the modern study of metacognition has also been a matter of some debate. For example Brown (1987) found that Vygotsky's ideas are applicable only in the development of self-regulation, and are not relevant to other issues dealt with in theories of metacognition.

Alanen (2003), however, points out that one of Vygotsky's main interests was the role of consciousness in human mental activity. Alanen (2003) suggests that many of the issues Vygotsky discussed under the notion of consciousness coincide with today's ideas of metacognition. In his article series, Bråten (1991a, 1991b, 1992) discusses the relationship between Vygotsky's ideas and the study of metacognition, and argues that Vygotsky's writings could be applied in a much broader way than Brown suggested. According to Bråten (1991a: 182), the vagueness of the concept of metacognition comes about because the concept actually refers to two things: metacognitive *control* or regulation, and metacognitive *knowledge*. According to Vygotsky, children's cognitive development is demonstrated by their increasing ability to control their own behaviour. Control is made possible as new psychological functions develop and children begin to use mediation: signs and tools. The most important of these mediating tools is language. Control and regulation of cognitive processes happen through language, as "[t]he development of higher psychological processes in the child is essentially an individualization and internalization of linguistically coded, social interaction" (Bråten 1991b: 312). Language is also the key to moving from other-regulation to self-regulation, from social speech through private, egocentric speech to inner speech. For Vygotsky (1986: 170), a child's conscious awareness of his/her cognitive processes – perceiving a process as remembering or memory, for example – also enables him/her to control the process, to use executive control; speech is an expression of the process of becoming aware (Vygotsky 1986: 30). In Bråten's view, Vygotsky thus emphasises both the importance of conscious reflection and the role of language.

Bråten also suggests that Vygotsky's ideas could bring unity to the concept of metacognition. Bråten (1991b: 319) maintains that part of the problem with verbal reports as data within theories of metacognition is that knowledge and control of cognition have been treated as two separate issues. He points out that in Vygotsky's view the two phenomena are inseparable. According to Bråten (1991b), Vygotsky emphasised an individual's conscious understanding of his/her own cognition; it is, in fact, the primary purpose of egocentric speech. Self-regulatory activities thus stem from conscious, language-mediated forms of self-regulation and ultimately result in knowledge of one's consciousness and self-regulation that is verbalisable.

Vygotsky (1986: 141) argues that lack of statable knowledge is related to problems of transfer: if the individual cannot formulate his/her conceptual understanding in words, he/she may have problems using certain conceptual operations in new situations. If it is accepted that an individual can plan and organise his/her cognising (like learning) with the help of word meanings, reflective access to these cognitive resources can be viewed as an integral part of the process. Bråten (1991b) argues that the development of self-regulation is linked to the development of awareness of cognition, and through awareness and conscious knowledge of one's mental activity, Vygotsky's ideas apply to all issues treated under theories of metacognition. However, Bråten does not deny that certain self-regulatory activities may be carried out automatically. The similarity between the first stages of the developmental process and the automated, high-level processes also implies that the only way to study the highest stages is to look at the process by which they were formed (Vygotsky 1978: 64).

Bråten's views of Vygotsky's ideas coincide with a dialogical view of cognition and metacognition, depicting them as interconnected layers of awareness and consciousness rather than two separate entities. Similarly, the relationship between metacognitive control and metacognitive knowledge could be seen as thoroughly dialogical and systemic.

3.2.4 The expanding toolbox: beliefs as tools

The sociocultural framework and its notion of mediation also provide a way of relating beliefs to action (in this case, foreign language learning).

In his work, Vygotsky concentrated on three types of mediators: sign, word and symbol. Later on, in Russian cultural-historical psychology (see Zinchenko 1995), another type of mediational means was added to the list: *myth* as a type of cultural narrative. The Vygotskian notion of tool has also been expanded in recent decades, with most of the work concentrating on signs and words. For example Kozulin (1998) has discussed the characteristics of psychological tools. Kozulin (1998: 86-87) suggests that in order for a mediational means to function as a psychological tool, it has to meet three criteria: its acquisition has to be intentional it must be generalised instead of contextual, and the learner must understand its function as an instrument of cultural meaning. If these criteria are not met, a mediational means may be

acquired as a content item, not a tool to be used (Kozulin 1998: 86); in other words, the learner may know about it but cannot use it appropriately. Kozulin thus adopts a narrow view of psychological tools. Kozulin appears to talk about deliberately taught, general tools, such as scientific concepts taught at schools. For Vygotsky, language is the fundamental psychological tool and, as Alanen (2003) points out, our first language is often not taught deliberately.

Alanen (2003) discusses Vygotskian ideas in relation to beliefs and proposes a broader view of the concept of tools. Alanen (2003) suggests that beliefs about language learning could be viewed as a specific type of mediational means, or, more accurately, mediational-means-in-the-making. According to Alanen (2003), beliefs could be seen as mediating human activity in the same way as signs, symbols and myths. Beliefs about language learning would thus mediate the way in which learners go about learning a language. Alanen (2003) suggests that while Kozulin's (1998) view of psychological tool appears to be narrower than that of Vygotsky's, it may shed light on why certain beliefs seem to influence a learner's actions while others do not. If the acquisition of the beliefs has not occurred intentionally and the learner has not grasped their meaning, they may be not get added to the knowledge reservoir as a mediating tool. In this case they are likely to become content items that are possibly repeated and ventriloquated, but do not have an impact on what the learner does in order to learn. Alanen (2003) suggests that beliefs are therefore in a state of flux, with some beliefs constantly being reshaped in social interaction and others used as tools. Some beliefs, according to Alanen (2003), could be seen as metacognitive *knowledge*, content items; others as mediational means that control cognising and thus form a part of metacognitive *control*. Beliefs can also be seen as contextual: they may be used in certain situations but not in others.

If learner beliefs function as a tool, they will shape the human action of learning. While Vygotsky emphasised the enabling aspects of tools, Wertsch (1998: 42) points out that mediational means can also constrain action. He uses the example of pole vaulting: earlier, the poles were made of bamboo and athletes were quite satisfied with them – bamboo was what had always been used and there was nothing to challenge the idea that it was the ideal material for the poles. When aluminium and later fibreglass poles were introduced, they were at first met with great resistance, even though the characteristics of the new materials helped athletes get better results. As Wertsch (1998: 42) points out, it sometimes takes a lot to change an individual's perspective, as people tend to take their perspectives for granted. Decisions to use certain tools are often made without any conscious thought. The notion of beliefs as tools thus also implies that learners can act "blindly", using as tools beliefs that do not work very well. When learners are made aware of their beliefs, they may begin to question them and possibly develop more efficient ones.

3.2.5 Neo-Vygotskian approaches to learning and development

Next, I shall take a look at how Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development has been used in various sociocultural theories focusing on learning and development. Vygotsky's ideas have influenced Western research in psychology and education since the early 1970's. Many researchers, like Wertsch (1991, 1998), Kozulin (1998) and Lantolf & Thorne (2006a, 2006b) have developed some of Vygotsky's ideas further within the various Vygotskian or sociocultural approaches.

Yrjö Engeström's *cultural-historical activity theory* (CHAT) expands on the original model of activity developed by A. N. Leontiev, Vygotsky's colleague and co-researcher. The original model viewed activity in terms of two components, the individual and the object, mediated by a mediating artefact. Engeström's scheme contained three interacting components: the individual, the object and the community. The relationships between the three components each have their mediating artefacts: *tools* (both material and mental) mediate between individuals and objects; *rules* mediate between the individual and the community (how subjects of activity must fit into the community); and a *division of labour* mediates the relationship between objects and the community (how the object of the activity relates to the community). The third generation activity model depicts two such activity systems interacting with each other. Acts are thus viewed within the context of an activity network – within the activity theory they are inherently linked to all the components of the system. More recently, Y. Engeström (2004) has also combined Bakhtin's ideas with his theory in order to analyse the interaction and formation of meaning in activity systems.

The leading Vygotskian, contextual approaches to mind and action also include *sociocultural approaches to learning*. Expanding Vygotsky's sociocultural psychology of child development, Rogoff (1990) characterizes the process of human development as *guided participation*. Guided participation refers to the interaction between people as they co-participate in culturally valued activities. Children learn how to be competent members of their community by actively taking part in meaningful activities, rather than by being told. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of *situated learning* challenges the assumption that learning "has a beginning and an end; that it is best separated from the rest of our activities; and that it is the result of teaching" (Wenger 1998: 3). Rather, it approaches learning as a social activity that evolves out of experiences in everyday life. The central concept and unit of analysis of the theory is community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998), a social entity with common practices and shared resources (a workplace, a classroom etc.).

Neo-Vygotskian ideas have also been used specifically in the study of language learning. In her research, Hall (1993, 1995, 1998, 2002) focuses on classroom discourse and second and foreign language learning. Her approach to learning is based on Vygotsky's view of learning and development as social collaboration between the more and less competent members of a group; "The ability to participate as a competent member in the practices of a group is

learned through repeated engagement in and experience with these activities with more competent members of the group." (Hall 1993: 148). She views language learning as a form of socialisation. She also emphasises the role of *social identities*: the sociocultural groups and institutions learners belong to and the roles they have all influence the language learning process.

Both activity theory and sociocultural theories of learning are interested in macrosystems of activity. As for example Engeström & Miettinen (1999: 10) note, the activity system is constructed as if the researcher were looking at it from above, with the help of system members engaged in the activity under study. The focus is on the activity system and the functions of that system rather than on acts or individuals acting within the system. Vygotsky's ideas have also been used to switch the point of view from "above the system" to "within the system" and to construct agency on a more individual level. In his sociocultural theory of mediated action, Wertsch (1985b, 1990, 1991, 1998) focuses on the individual acting in a sociocultural setting. Wertsch was also among the first researchers to combine Bakhtin's thinking with Vygotsky's.

Wertsch's approach combines an individual's unique actions with the inherent sociocultural situatedness of both individuals and their actions. Wertsch (1994, 1998) suggests that the idea of *mediation* is a natural link between action and sociocultural contexts, because it involves the tension between the mediational means provided by the sociocultural setting and the unique use of these means by individuals in particular situations. The question "Who carries out the action?" is approached using the notion of *mediated agency*.

Vygotsky's mediational means are products of sociocultural evolution and appropriated by groups or individuals as they carry out mental processes. Wertsch (1998: 24) argues that in order to understand human mental actions it is therefore necessary to go beyond the individual in isolation: actions and the socio-cultural-historical contexts in which they occur are linked through the mediating means of *cultural tools.* Wertsch, Tulviste & Hagstrom (1993) therefore maintain that the mediational means used, and thereby agency, are inherently tied to a sociocultural setting: mental functioning is shaped in ways specific to each sociocultural milieu. This means that an individual's mental processes are 'imported' social processes. This calls into question the assumption that agency somehow automatically belongs to an individual (Wertsch et al. 1993).

However, acts can only be initiated and carried out and mediational means used by an active, creative agent, so actions cannot be considered exclusively socially conditioned, either. The agents and the mediational means are inextricably linked: they cannot be viewed separately but together form the system of mediated action. The cultural tools that function as mediational means can be physical (e.g. the poles used in pole vaulting) or symbolic (e.g. syntax), but "they have an impact only when an agent uses them" (Wertsch 1998: 30). The agent cannot carry out the action without the cultural tool, but the tool by itself is also incapable of action: according to Wertsch (1998: 30), there is an "irreducible tension" between the two. Wertsch et al. (1993) therefore

suggest that in fact the irreducible unit of analysis for agency is "individual-operating-with-mediational-means", or 'mediated agency' for short: agent and means are inseparable. Wertsch maintains that a focus on mediated action and mediated agency makes it possible to study action in context, and sheds light on both the unique individual and his/her sociocultural setting.

Wertsch has put the notion of agency into practice for example in his 1998 publication in which he studies agency as it manifests itself in written, narrative texts. Different types of narratives can also be thought of as speech genres that need to be learnt in each community: they are typical ways of expressing things and vary as a function of time and place. One powerful form of such narratives is representations of a nation's history: how events, their reasons and consequences are described. In his 1998 study, Wertsch looks at historical texts as cultural tools and analyses how historical narratives depict the actions of European settlers and American natives. In this context Wertsch sees agency as expressing issues such as "Who initiated and carried out the actions in the narrative? ... Who did the acting, and who was acted upon?" (p. 92). Agency in this written context is examined from the perspective of Silverstein's (1980, as quoted in Wertsch 1998) propositional referentiality. According to Wertsch (1985a), it plays a central role in organising language as a mediational means, and can be studied using linguistic analyses of grammatical roles within clause structures.

In the present study, which focuses on learner beliefs, Wertsch's notion of agency could thus be viewed both in terms of speaking of one's beliefs and of using beliefs as tools in the language learning process. In the case of talking about the beliefs the question of "Who carries out the action?" could turn into the question "Who is doing the talking?" The learner is the creative agent using socioculturally situated and appropriated words – is he/she using his/her own voice and perspective or borrowing somebody else's? While Wertsch's application of agency in the example above deals with written narratives, a similar approach may also help in tracing the development of the learner's voice. The interplay of the various voices and the emerging voice of the learner him/herself may indicate the increasing self-regulation and agency of the learner. This level of agency would thus tie in with the Bakhtinian notion of voice.

If, following Alanen (2003), beliefs are looked at as tools mediating language learning, Wertsch's agency could be used to examine who the learners depict as active agents in the process of language learning: who do the learners bestow agency on in their beliefs, who is the active and responsible agent in their accounts of language learning? This level of agency would emerge in the content of the learners' beliefs.

4 DIALOGICALLY AND SOCIOCULTURALLY INFORMED VIEW OF LEARNER BELIEFS

While the dialogical and sociocultural approaches do seem to complement each other in their basic tenets regarding the individual and the social as well as their view of development (appropriation of voices/other-regulation and self-regulation), they appear to deal with these matters on a slightly different level. As Hicks (2000) has pointed out, the sociocultural approach may have difficulty understanding small, personal stories as it is biased towards systems and activities rather than individuals. The dialogical framework, on the other hand, focuses more on the individual and his/her speech acts.

Sociocultural ideas of self-regulation and agency provide useful tools for the conceptualisation of the dialogical process of appropriation of voices, as well as for the conceptualisation of how beliefs are connected to action. However, the notion of agency may need to be modified slightly to better suit the individual focus of a dialogical analysis. Sullivan and McCarthy (2004) have criticised the sociocultural account of agency from a dialogical point of view. A sociocultural view of agency is suited to studying how an individual makes use of cultural resources, gains power in a community, masters a means of mediation and so on, but may miss the affective and emotional aspects of the experience. Sullivan and McCarthy (2004) therefore suggest that the sociocultural view of agency needs to be enriched with individual sensibility: felt, lived experience. Agency could be approached in terms of the emotions and values other voices bring in the dialogues individuals are engaged in (Sullivan and McCarthy 2004: 306).

While Sullivan and McCarthy (2004) agree that cultural, social and historical contexts play a part in agency, they wish to emphasise the individual psychological dimension. They add Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, including the inevitable presence of the Other, to the concept of agency. As each individual occupies a unique place in time (Bakhtin 1990), they also construct accounts of their participation from that vantage point in order to understand that participation (Holquist 1993: xii). In addition to making sense of things that have happened, Sullivan & McCarthy (2004: 296) point out that we also

experience ourselves as always *potentially* beyond these actions. An individual can thus be conceptualised as looking in two directions: to past actions and our responsibility for them, and to the future, towards the potential. Bakhtin's idea of agency thus rests on the dialogue between responsibility and potential. As Morson (1991: 217) puts it: "for Bakhtin it is ultimately people who choose, create and take responsibility"; thus, according to Sullivan & McCarthy (2004: 297), a dialogically informed view of agency needs to place a responsive individual at the centre of the concept. Instead of a sociocultural, "bird's eye" view of an individual acting within a system, the focus shifts to the experiences of that individual: to how he/she feels and embodies agency (Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 294). The most important feature, according to Sullivan and McCarthy (2004: 307), of introducing the lived experience to agency is perhaps the reflexive experience of one's own agency: individuals have choice over how they value others, which brings questions of ethics and morality into the dialogues individuals have.

The dual tenets of responsibility and potential can also be reflected in the voices the individual uses. Sullivan & McCarthy (2004: 302-303) refer to Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoyevsky's character Nastasya Filippovna in "The Idiot". As the mistress of a businessman she is torn between the voices of condemnation and love. She anticipates the feelings of vindication and condemnation when dialoguing with others, and "quarrels" with both voices in an effort to find an undivided voice between the two opposing tones, to define herself more in her own terms. Her character shows how dialogues provide an individual with a range of options for who deciding she considers herself to be. Agency is once again seen as rooted in an individual's response to the Other (Sullivan & McCarthy 2004: 303) – we *author* ourselves in dialogue with others and in the reinterpretations they give; we sort out and orchestrate the various socially marked voices (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain 1983: 183) in order to make the self knowable in the words of others. Davies (2000), who discusses the concept of agency in humanistic and poststructuralist theories, agrees, defining agency as a sense of oneself as someone who can go beyond any one discourse, invent new words and concepts and imagine "not what is, but what might be" (p. 67). According to Vitanova (2005: 153), it is precisely this unfinalisability, the tension between what is and what might be, in which the potential for human agency is realised. Hicks (2000: 249) ties the notion of agency even more strongly to the notion of voice, and maintains that agency entails the ability to take the words of others and use them in a unique way.

Beliefs in this study are viewed from a dialogical and sociocultural point of view. From a dialogical perspective, beliefs emerge as a function of systemic cognising. An individual's knowledge is a result of the interactions he/she has been involved in, marked by perspectivity and positionality. While the social origin of beliefs makes them social and cultural, they are at the same time also individual, because each individual has unique experiences. The dialogical origins of beliefs are reflected in the individual's voice when he/she talks about his/her beliefs, because his/her words bear the marks of his/her experiences.

Beliefs are also dynamic: they are constantly reshaped as new information and new experiences are added to the knowledge reservoir. The sociocultural perspective helps us to examine the change and development that happens in beliefs. The voicework of beliefs can be seen to reflect the appropriation of new voices and perspectives. As Others' voices are appropriated, speaking about one's beliefs becomes more and more self-regulated. The progress of self-regulation may be reflected in agency: the more agency the speaker attributes to him/herself as the author of these beliefs, the better he/she has appropriated the words he/she is using. At the same time, he/she is constantly authoring him/herself in the dialogue with others and expressing him/herself and his/her agency as a language learning (and using) agent, acting in the world of language learning.

5 THE PRESENT STUDY

The data used in this study were collected during the project *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness and Foreign Language Learning*. The project was funded by the Academy of Finland and carried out in the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä between 1999–2004. The project was a longitudinal case study focusing on a group of young Finnish learners of English. Its aim was to define young language learners' beliefs about language learning, and also to (re)conceptualise language transfer within a Vygotskian sociocultural and Bakhtinian dialogical framework. The goal was to examine the relationship between the learners' metalinguistic knowledge and their development of self-regulation in order to shed light on the interaction between metalinguistic awareness and foreign language learning in context. The current study is thus a part of a larger project that had a wider focus.

The present study is also integrally connected to the project *Dialogues of appropriation: Dialogical perspectives to language learning and teaching* currently underway in the Department of Languages of the University of Jyväskylä. The project is funded by the Academy of Finland and aims to further develop a dialogical, socio-cognitive approach to second and foreign language learning and teaching.

5.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study is to qualitatively examine the beliefs of young language learners about English and English language learning. As beliefs about language learning appear to be a vital part of the language learning process, in-depth knowledge about them will contribute to our comprehensive understanding of language learning. Such knowledge is also seen to have important learning theoretical and pedagogical implications. In the analysis of the data, I shall describe both the content of the beliefs and the way the content was expressed in the interviews. Furthermore, as the data are

longitudinal, I shall examine the changes that took place in the children's beliefs over the years and discuss what the changes may tell us about the origin and development of the learners' beliefs.

5.2 Research questions

The first research question focuses on the content of the participants' beliefs. The analysis focuses on two main *topics*: why and how, in the learners' opinion, is English studied? I then examine what kinds of *themes* the children associated with the aforementioned topics in Years one, three and five.
Thus, the first research question is as follows:

1) **What are children's beliefs about the English language and the learning of English?** More specifically, I focus on the topics of *how* and *why* children think English is learnt. What themes do the children associate with these topics in Years 1, 3 and 5? Do their ideas about English and English learning change over time, and if so, how?

My second and third research questions concern the development of polyphony in learners' beliefs as well as the expressions of agency in learners' utterances. Voicework and agentivity are considered to reflect the appropriation of beliefs and to be connected to the development of the learner's voice as a language learner. I shall examine polyphony and agency in learners' beliefs in Years one, three and five, and focus on the following questions:

2) **Does the polyphony in the children's speech change from Year 1 to Year 5 when they talk about their beliefs about the English language and the learning of English?** If so, what kinds of changes take place? Whose voices are given room in the children's beliefs?

3) **How is agency constructed in the children's beliefs over the years?** To whom is agency attributed in the children's answers and in the process of language learning? How do the children voice their own agency as language learners?

5.3 Data collection and analysis

5.3.1 Type of data

As beliefs within the Bakhtinian approach can be considered to have both contextual and repeated features, it was considered preferable to study them through interviews. Questionnaires were not seen as well suited to the study of

beliefs within this approach, as beliefs are by definition polyphonic and dynamic, and it is very difficult to hear a voice in a ticked box.

The data collection procedure chosen for this study is the semi-structured interview (see e.g. Fontana & Frey 2000). Semi-structured interviews allow for conversational yet focused interaction. The interaction has a framework provided by the interview structure but the questions are not strictly worded, and some of the questions are created during the interview. This results in a more flexible way of interviewing, and enables the interviewer to probe for more information when needed and discuss issues as they arise in the interaction. The framework ensures that the same themes are covered with each participant, but each interview emerges as a unique dialogue.

5.3.2 Participants

The study involved 15 elementary school children – 7 boys and 8 girls – who speak Finnish as their first language and started studying English as their second language in Year 3. The children were interviewed in Years 1, 3 and 5. The project started out with 22 participants, but over the years some children moved or changed schools. In Year 3, there were 18 children left; in Year 5, 15. In the present study, I shall only examine the data from these 15 children who participated in the project from start to finish[11]. In the write up of the study, the participants were given pseudonyms, which were:

Girls: Annika, Eeva, Emma, Helen, Maija, Maria, Mervi, and Sanna
Boys: Aku, Jari, Jonne, Matti, Rauli, Sakari, and Valtteri

The present study is a case study. Case study research involves an intensive study of, for example, the background, current situation, or environmental interactions of a given social unit, such as an individual, a group, or a community (Brown & Rodgers 2002: 21). The group of these 15 children forms the case of this study: I shall, in other words, not look at each participant individually in the analysis, but examine what kinds of themes arise and what kinds of changes occur in the group.

5.3.3 Procedure

The children taking part in the study were interviewed on three occasions: in Year 1 (aged 7), in Year 3 (aged 10) and in Year 5 (aged 12). The first year interviews were not conducted by me; the third and fifth year interviews were.

In Year 1, the children were interviewed at some length about their language environment and experiences in general (see Appendix 1). These interviews were conducted by other researchers involved with the project, not by the present writer. The interviews took place at school during school hours,

[11] With the exception of one girl, Annika, who started at the school in the 2nd year and was therefore only interviewed in Years 3 and 5.

and the children were interviewed individually. The first year interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes. As the interviews were conducted in order to chart the children's language environment for the purposes of the *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness* research project, most of the first year data - reflecting the lives of the children - deals with the Finnish language. Because Finnish is not of direct interest in this study, I conducted a preliminary content analysis to determine which parts of the interviews related to the topics defined in research question 1. The first year interviews were thus only partially analysed for the purposes of the present study.

The third year interviews were conducted by me in November 2000 as part of my pro gradu thesis (Aro 2001). The 15 children were interviewed individually at school during English lessons. Each interview lasted 15-20 minutes. In their third year, the children were asked their opinions about the English and Finnish languages, the uses of these languages and language learning; the interview was a kind of inventory of what the children thought of the two languages and language learning in general (see Appendix 2). For the purposes of this study, the parts pertaining to the topics of research question 1 were reanalysed.

The fifth year interviews were conducted in March 2003. Again, the children were interviewed individually by me during English lessons at school, with each interview lasting approximately 15 minutes. The structure and topics of Year 5 interviews were based on the findings of the third year interviews. The results of the earlier analysis (see Aro 2001) had indicated that the children seemed to perceive "two Englishes" in the third year, as the following example from the third year data illustrates:

> − Mullon englanninkielisiä kaikki on englanninkielisiä nuo Play Station pelit. (…)
> MA: No onkos englannista ollu sulle jo jotai hyötyä, ooksää tarvinnu sitä jo jossai?
> − E.
> − *I've got in English all my Play Station games are in English. (…)*
> *MA: Well has English already been useful to you, have you needed it anywhere?*
> − *No.*
>
> Sakari Year 3

Even though Sakari had said that he played games that were all in English, he nevertheless reported that he did not use or need English for anything. It appeared that there was one English in the school context for learning and studying, and another one outside the school context to use and enjoy.

The interview framework for the fifth year interviews was therefore specifically formulated around certain principles. The interview questions focused on how and why the children think English is learnt, in order to see if "school English" and "recreational English" still appeared to be distinct entities in the fifth year.

On the other hand, the content of the children's answers in the third year appeared to some extent to depend on the wording of the question: for example, *people* seemed to have different motives for studying than the children themselves (Aro 2001) Were the discrepancies a result of what was actually

asked – would the answers differ as a function of general vs. second person questions (e.g. "Why is English studied?" vs. "Why do you study English?")? The possible effect of the wording of the questions was included in the interview structure by "double takes": within each of the topics, questions were asked in both a general form and in the second person form whenever applicable. The interview framework was constructed so that the general questions preceded the more detailed or personal ones, both in wording and in theme. In other words, the children would first be asked questions like "Why do people study English, what uses does English have?" and only later "What do you study English, what uses do you have for English?" The purpose of this careful wording of questions was to get at the voices and agency expressed in the answers, and to see how they varied with the content.

Also, the children were first asked broader and open questions, such as "What kinds of uses do you have for English at the moment", and only later more specific questions like "Do you play English-language computer games?" Firstly, the aim was to see what kinds of ideas children would come up with without any particular prompting and then compare them to the answers to the more detailed questions – that is, would the computer game players, for example, say that they play these games when asked the open question "What do you do with English?" Secondly, the aim was to see how the wording of the questions affected the answers: would the content differ between the general and the personal questions? Both of these factors might also, along with the content, affect the voices the children would choose to use. The fifth year interviews were thus designed on the basis of previous findings and required the interviewer to put some thought into how the questions were worded (see Appendix 3).

Within each topic, there were several questions regarding different aspects of the topic and further questions were asked during the interview whenever further probing seemed productive. The questions were not necessarily posed in the order given in the appendix, but the general question form always preceded the second person question.

5.3.4 Recording and transcription

The data consist of 44 semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 children in the first, third and fifth years of school. The interviews were audiotaped, listened to several times and transcribed. The transcribed data were then transferred to Atlas.ti software and coded. Atlas.ti was used in order to make it easier and more systematic to search for and compare specific themes and question forms in the data.

5.4 Framework for analysis

Data triangulation is achieved through the use of multiple theoretical and analytical approaches on longitudinal data. The participants' utterances are examined from three perspectives: content (themes associated with the research topics), and the voices and agency expressed in the answers. In the following, I shall discuss how each of these levels is analysed.

5.4.1 Content analysis

According to Alasuutari (1994: 30-39), the process of qualitative content analysis has two stages: simplifying/reducing the observations and solving the riddle. Observations need to be simplified so that the researcher can define his/her focus on the data: to combine the observations into a whole that can be managed. Alasuutari also maintains that there should be no exceptions: all rules or denominators should apply to the whole data. By riddle solving Alasuutari means the interpretation of the phenomenon under study, following the clues in the data.

In the present study the interviews were first read several times as whole texts to get an idea of what kinds of themes were brought up and what the central content of the interviews was. Then, the interviews were studied more carefully with an eye on the questions posed in order to locate the topics of why and how; the data were, to use Alasuutari's terminology, simplified. These topics now became the focus of the analysis, yet it was always understood that they were parts of a whole interview text, an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee – the parts focused on were not separated from their larger contexts.

Next came the analysis of the meanings conveyed by the participants within the defined topics in the interviews. The process of finding the interpretation of the phenomenon under study, particulary in interview data, has been discussed by Kvale (1996). His book focuses on qualitative research interviewing, and maintains that there are five approaches to interview analysis (1996: 187-204). Meanings can be:

1. *condensed*; the meanings expressed by the interviewees are abridged into a shorter form.
2. *categorised*, reduced to occurrences of a phenomenon (+ and -) or to a single number on a particular scale to indicate how strong the phenomenon is in the interview or answer.
3. *structured through narratives*, which refers to the temporal or social organisation of a text in order to bring out its meaning.
4. *interpreted*, using deeper and more speculative interpretations of the text through the framework of e.g. a particular theory.
5. *generated ad hoc*, where a variety of methods can be used on the material to bring out the meanings.

The approach adopted for the present study most closely resembled the first approach defined by Kvale. The children's answers within each topic were condensed into more concise themes (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 From topics to themes

Topic	Question-answer unit		Theme
Why?	MA: Minkäs takia ihmiset opiskelee englantia? - *Why do people study English?*	Aku:-Että ne osais puhua ulkomailla - *So that they would know how to talk abroad.*	**Speaking, abroad**
How?	MA: No mitenkäs englannin kieltä opiskellaan…? - *So how is English studied…?*	Mervi: Noo, ensiksi kannattaa tehä englanninkielisiä tehtäviä ja, lukee englantilaisia satuja vaikka, ja tämmösiä. - *Well, first one should do English exercises and, read for example English fairy tales, and stuff like that.*	**Written language: exercises, reading**

However, as Kvale (1996: 205) points out, analysis is not an isolated stage. The initial analyses were already beingmade when the interview took place: during the dialogue, both the interviewer and the interviewee made connections and interpretations and created understandings which all contributed to and shaped the interactional process of the interview. A similar dialogue then continued between the interview texts and the researcher. Transcribing oral speech into written text is a form of interpretation, entailing decisions such as how detailed the transcript should be, what to include in the written form (intonation, sighs, volume...?) and so on. Reading and rereading the texts was all about entering a dialogue with the data and assigning meanings to the transcribed words; deciding on what to call the themes was yet another analytical decision. After what many consider the "analysis proper" is over, interpreting and analysing continues in the choices made when the data are reported on. Analysis is in fact a process that permeates the entire interview procedure (Kvale 1996: 205).

5.4.2 Examining voice

As Wortham (2001: 70) notes, Bakhtin does not clearly define the types of cues used to accomplish voicing and ventriloquation. In order to analyse voice, it must first be defined further: what's in a voice? In what follows I shall take a brief look at how the concept of voice has been operationalised in previous studies, and outline my own approach to the analysis of voice in the present study.

While few studies using the concept of voice exist in the field of learner belief research, the concept of voice has been used in other related research.

These include studies of how a writer constructs his/her identity in academic writing (Ivanič 1998), and how university students represent themselves in L2 writing (Ivanič and Camps 2001) – in this latter case the focus of analysis was how the writers use lexical, syntactic and rhetorical choices to draw on specific "voice types" and therefore sound like representatives of particular groups. Studies have also looked at how reproduced voices affect interpretive frameworks in the informal interactions of school children (Maybin 1999), and how Russian teachers of Finnish conceptualise their relationship to the Finnish language in their life stories (Dufva & Pöyhönen 1999, Pöyhönen & Dufva 2007).

Wortham & Locher (1996) looked at voicing in the news to study media bias. Drawing on Silverstein (1993) and others, they extend Bakhtin's approach and describe five types of cues narrators use to index voices and to position themselves with respect to these voices. The cues are: reference and predication (that is, characterising the objects and people talked about), metapragmatic descriptors (e.g. "he whined" as opposed to "he said"), quotation (overtly referring to the quoted person), evaluative indexicals (utterances associated with certain groups of people), and epistemic modalisation (e.g. being a narrator with a "God's-eye-view" of events involving others). Their approach was thus more geared towards the voices of Others: how the voices of Others are represented and reacted to in narratives.

In his 2001 study, Wortham examined how an interviewee represents herself in an autobiographical narrative. In Wortham's study the approach to the interviewee's assertive and passive voices is close to how Wertsch (1998) used agency in his analysis of historical texts: Wortham looked at how the speaker talked of herself as either a vulnerable person who had things decided for her, or as an active, assertive person. Wertsch (1998) talked of the distinction "Who did the acting, who was acted upon?" when looking at historical narratives; the distinction would thus appear to work also on an individual level and further link agentivity to voice.

In their study, Karasavvidis, Pieters and Plomp (2000) examined learning using the notions of self-regulation, voice and appropriation. They analysed tutorial sessions where secondary school students were taught how to solve correlational problems and examined how the students appropriated the concepts used by the teacher during the session. The appropriation of these concepts is, according to Karasavvidis et al. (2000: 270), a sign of increasing self-regulation: they suggest that the development of self-regulation can in the dialogical framework be conceived of as the assimilation of the other's voice (in this case the teacher's) as part of one's own voice (the student's). This means that when the student has appropriated the right words and concepts, s/he has in essence learnt the task. The view of Karasavvidis et al. (2000) is supported by the observation that teachers often explicitly forbid students to explain things in their own words and emphasise that the point of the task is to acquire the appropriate way of speaking (Karasavvidis et al. 2000: 283, Edwards 1993a: 212).

Erickson (1999) had a similar setting in his study: he examined how newly qualified physicians appropriated "the voice of the physician" through interactions with older, more experienced physicians. R. Engeström's (1999; see also Engeström 1995) study also deals with the world of medicine. Using Bakhtin's concept of voice, she studied the social languages used and meanings created by doctors and their patients during a doctor's appointment.

Depending on the topic of inquiry, voice has been analysed in various ways. It may be viewed in terms of lexical and rhetoric features that resonate with a particular point of view. Voice has also been conceptualised in terms of quoting and reporting: using the voices of others in narratives. Studies focusing on the appropriation of voices have often looked at specific voices in the environment and examined how the speakers learn to use these voices – here, the concept of voice seems to become intertwined with speech genres.

In the present study, there is no predetermined "right way of speaking" to be appropriated or a norm to which the learners should aspire, as there is with studies that look, for example, at how the voice of the doctor is appropriated. It is also not possible to compare the learners' answers to what, say, their parents have said and trace their answers to these earlier interactions, since no such data are available. The focus of analysis here are the utterances themselves and the changes that possibly occur over the years. These changes are considered to reflect the development of the learner's voice as a language learner. The polyphony in the learners' answers is examined through several cues: the voice that can be heard can be brought about by the *content and formulation* of what they say: they may use a speech genre that indexes a particular group of people or sphere of language use, or use characterisations that reflect their point of view regarding the topic in question. The learners may use *Others' voices* both overtly (by quoting) and more covertly (by ventriloquating them, for example), or may clearly mark some answers as their own. The use of Others' voices versus one's *own voice* may become linked to the idea of agency as propositional referentiality: who do the ideas talked about refer to, who is made the subject of the utterance?[12]

5.4.3 Examining agency

Agency is in this study looked at on two levels. Firstly, it intertwines with the analysis of voice, as seen earlier. Agency in children's language has been studied by e.g. Maguire and Graves (2001). They studied multilingual, primary school children and examined the children's agency and voice, knowledge, and identity construction in L2 journal writing. In their analysis, they used agency

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12 Fløttum (2005) used the concept of polyphony in her study on how perspectives are manifested in academic research articles and appeared to equate voice and the subject or agent. She studied how the self (I/we) perspective and the other (you/they) perspective manifested themselves in the articles. It should be noted that Fløttum's polyphonic theory is not based on Bakhtinian ideas, but inspired by Ducrot's 1984 work *Le dire et le dit*. She therefore assumes that the voices have a hierarchical relationship, with the speaker having the dominant voice (Fløttum 2005: 41-42).

as a sign of the children's position as representatives of different languages and cultures. Agency was analysed on a very concrete and literal level: the subject of sentences. Maguire and Graves (2001) suggested that agents like *I* and *we* represent the child's own voice better than the agents *s/he* and *one* (or an impersonal agent). The use of the first person conveys the child's own opinion, act or feeling, whereas third person pronouns were seen as representing viewpoints the children did not identify with as strongly.

In the analysis of interview data, agency could be used to reflect who the voices belong to: who does the talking, who is responsible for what is said, who has authority and expertise in the matter discussed? A rigorous grammatical analysis cannot necessarily be applied to interview data – subjects and objects are units of written sentences, not spoken utterances. However, a similar approach did prove useful in the earlier analysis of the Year 3 data (see Aro 2001) where children often clearly stated whose words they were ventriloquating, thus making the source of the words the agent of their answer.

A longitudinal data set may shed light on how young learners appropriate beliefs about the English language, perhaps first ventriloquating Others' words and later rather using them more comfortably as their own. This process would tie in with increasing self-regulation: speaking about beliefs would occur more and more independently and less and less with the help of other voices. The notion that agency is related to learning and self-regulation receives support from findings in the field of memory research. A study by Hilary, Ratner, Foley & Gimpert (2002) focused on children's ability to recall actions. It seems that children often remember incorrectly that they themselves performed a task even though it was in reality performed by someone else. Ratner et al. (2002: 45-46) suggest that this is a sign of more effective learning and appropriation: recoding the other person's actions as one's own may help one to store information relevant to the task and result in a more complete understanding of why and how the task is performed. At the same time, it promotes the development of self-regulation, transferring responsibility for the task from collaboration to the individual. Re-coding of agent information would thus be one of the cognitive processes that promote learning. A similar process might be at work in talking about one's beliefs: others' words are perhaps first ventriloquated or quoted words that are "tried for size", but they may turn into "my" words and this might be reflected in the subject referred to.

Whereas the first level of agency deals more with how the speaking consciousness is expressed, the second level deals more with the content of the learners' utterances. Here beliefs are looked at as possible tools that mediate language learning, and the focus is on how learners portray their own role in the learning process. In order to examine how the children construct their own agency as language learners (as opposed to learners who are *talking about* language learning), the data are analysed to see who the active doers are[13]. Who

[13] The distinction between the learner as a speaker and the learner speaking of herself as the actor resonates with Hermans' (1996, 2001) dialogical discussion of the two components of the self, I and Me, based on James (1890/1902, as quoted in Hermans

did the children present as active agents in their answers and what language learning related activities did these agents do? Who was active in the world of English language learning and whose expertise was relied on and counted on? How did the roles of significant others and the children themselves change over the years? Is this level, too, linked to increasing self-regulation? This level is closer to how Wertsch (based on Silverstein 1980, as quoted in Wertsch 1998: 92) defined agency in his analysis of historical texts: who is acting, who is acted upon?

5.4.4 Authoring the self as a language learner

The data in the present study are thus analysed with an eye on three issues, which are inextricably interconnected in the learners' contextual utterances: when expressing the *content* of their opinions related to the topics of how and why English is learnt the learners cannot help but choose a *voice* and take a stand on *agency*, both on the level of speaking of their beliefs and on the level of describing their own agency as language learners (see Figure 2). What is said expresses both content (*what* is being said?) and formulation (*how* is it said?). As seen above in section 5.4.2, voice ties in with both of these aspects of the spoken; agency, in turn, ties in with both the analysis of voice (who is doing the talking?) and the analysis of the content (who is said to do the acting?).

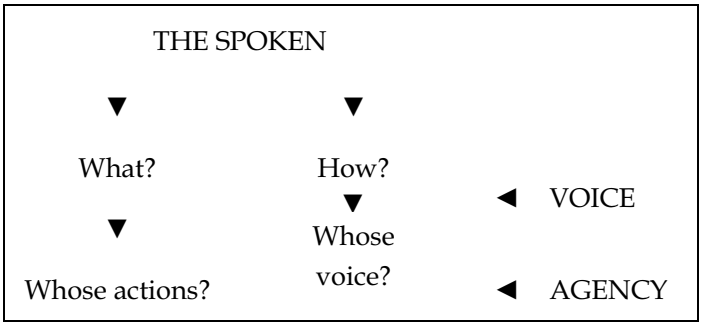

FIGURE 2 Aspects of analysis

Together the three foci of analysis form a picture of how learners author themselves (cf. Sullivan & McCarthy 2004) as language learners over the years, appropriating new knowledge, new voices, and their own agency.

1996). I is an author and Me an observed actor: the I author can construct a narrative in which the Me is a protagonist.

6 RESULTS

In this chapter I shall present the results of the present study. The first research question is dealt with in 6.1, where I look at the content of the learners' answers. In section 6.2 I shall examine the second research question concerning the voicework in the learners' answers. Finally, in section 6.3, I take a look at issues of agency.

6.1 Themes

The interview data from each year (first, third and fifth) were analysed using the topics of *how* and *why* English is studied. The themes associated by the participants with each of the topics are discussed below.

6.1.1 Year 1

When the Year 1 interviews were conducted, the participants had recently started school and were 7-8 years old. The interview sought to chart the children's linguistic environment, and included questions about the children's hobbies, their reading and writing skills, their relationship to the various media (television, newspapers etc.), possible experiences with foreign languages and so on. Questions about foreign languages and foreign language learning were thus varied and depended to a great extent on how much contact the child had had with foreign languages: whether they had travelled abroad, had friends or family members who spoke foreign languages, and so on.

6.1.1.1 Why is learning English important? A foreign thing

As the goal of the Year 1 interviews was to chart the children's linguistic environment, not all children were asked on a more general level how English skills could be useful or why knowledge of foreign languages might be

important. Most questions regarding foreign languages dealt with the children's personal feelings about learning foreign languages. The children who were asked about motives for learning English in more general terms were all agreed that English was primarily needed **abroad,** usually for **speaking**. [14]

(1) MP: No oisko susta tärkeetä sitte oppia jotain vierasta kieltä joskus?
- No joo, jos lähtee eri maahan ni ei osaa puhuu muuta ku suomee.
MP: Well do you think it will be important to learn a foreign language one day?
- Well yeah, if you go to a different country then you don't know how to speak anything but Finnish.
Aku Year 1

Aku said that learning a foreign language would be important *if one goes to a different country*, placing any need for a foreign language outside Finland, abroad. He also appeared to view language skills specifically in the light of oral communication, saying *know how to speak*. The end of his answer is a bit contradictory if we read it literally: Aku in fact appeared to say that it would be important to learn a foreign language because if one went abroad, *then you do**n't** know how to speak anything but Finnish* – the negative form suggesting one would not know how to speak anything but Finnish if one had learnt foreign languages! We could assume, though, that Aku meant that one would not know anything besides Finnish had one *not* learnt foreign languages. This interpretation would also suggest that Aku felt Finnish could not be used for communication in other countries. His position thus appeared to be that foreign languages were needed for communicating with people in other countries.

Some children found uses for foreign languages within Finland, too, linking them to **foreigners** rather than foreign countries:

(2) MP: Onks susta tärkeetä oppia vieraita kieliä?
- On, jos tulee Suomessa joku erimaalainen vastaan ja kysyy että mihin suuntaan mennee ni voi vastata ja voi sanoo sen kieleks että mitä siinä kyltissä lukee jos se ei ymmärrä.
MP: Do you think it's important to learn foreign languages?
- Yes, if in Finland a foreigner comes along and asks which way to go then you can answer and can say in his language what the sign says if he can't understand.
Emma Year 1

Emma felt knowledge of foreign languages would come in handy should one need to help out a tourist or other visitor and give them directions. In Emma's opinion learning foreign languages would be important *in Finland* in case *a foreigner comes along* and *asks which way to go*. Emma was apparently envisioning a foreigner trying to understand a sign as she described the task as *one can answer and can say in his language what the sign says* – the word *and* indicating that the sign and asking for directions were part and parcel of the same event. To be able to verbally communicate written instructions to a foreigner, one thus needed language skills. Emma did not think language skills would only be

[14] Notes on transcription: see Appendix 4.

useful when one actually travels abroad but pointed out that such skills might be needed closer to home, too.

6.1.1.2 Would you like to learn languages? Maybe later

When the young learners were asked about their own motives, the most common theme by far was that of the **future**. Most of the children did not think learning English in any way concerned them yet, even though they did know that foreign language studies would begin at some point in the future: at school or even only in adulthood. The children were very anchored in the present, and sometimes almost refused to discuss the issue - it was a thing of the future, and they would deal with it when it became reality.

(3) HD: Teillä koulussa, koulussa varmaan aletaan lukkee kolmannella luokkaa jo jottain kieltä niin mitä kieltä sä haluaisit, opiskella?
- En minä vielä tiedä.
HD: You at school, at school you'll probably start studying a language in the third year so which language would you like, to study?
- I don't know yet.
Maria Year 1

Maria was asked which language she would like to study come the third year, and she simply said: *I don't know yet*. She was apparently aware that she would be studying a foreign language as she used the word *yet*, suggesting that in the future she might have opinions about which foreign language to study. At the time of the interview, however, she just shrugged the question off – it was not relevant to her yet, and Year 3 was still years away.

Some children specifically placed English studies in the future, even as far as in adulthood.

(4) - … sitte, meillon niitä paljon nii emmä muista, ne on englanninkielinenki semmonen kasetti,
MP: Ihan totta.
- Ja kirja.
MP: Nii, ymmärrätkö sä niitä?
- En mullon se englanninkielinen kasetti on mun ja se kirja, isona ku mä opin englantia ni mä voin ehkä lukee sitä sitten.
- … then, we have a lot of them so I don't remember, they are in English too there's this tape,
MP: Really.
- And a book.
MP: Yeah, do you understand them?
- No I have the English tape is mine and the book, when l learn English when I'm big I can maybe read it then.
Emma Year 1

Emma was talking about an English-language story tape she had at home, and added she also had a book in English (perhaps a book accompanying the tape?). When the interviewer asked her if she could understand the tape or the book yet, she simply said she could not (*no*) but also appeared positive about the future, saying she this would no longer be a problem *when I learn English*. She

said she would learn English *when I'm big:* the time frame was thus quite vague and there is no way of telling how big Emma expected to be when she *can maybe read it*, her English-language book. She also seemed to think English skills were needed more with the book than the tapes as she used the verb *read* – perhaps the concreteness of the book with its pictures was more engaging than a tape full of talk she could not yet understand! The tape and the book thus appeared to be there waiting for Emma's English skills that were bound to develop as she got "bigger", and also represented a use for these skills – learn English, you can read books.

(5) MP: Oisko susta tärkeetä osata vieraita kieliä, haluutsä ite oppia sitten joskus?
- No isona mut, sillee niinku aikuisena meiän esimerkiks äitin ikäsenä, siinä kolkytseittemän kolkytkuus
MP: Do you think it is important to know foreign languages, would you like to learn one one day?
- Well when I'm big but, like when I'm an adult at our mom's age for example, about thirty-seven thirty-six.
Maija Year 1

Maija, in turn, did not mention any possible uses for English skills, but when asked if she would like to learn foreign languages one day, she could put a distinct timeframe for when she expected to start working on foreign language studies. She felt a suitable age for learning languages was *at our mom's age*, which would be *about thirty-seven thirty-six*. She associated foreign language skills with adulthood, *like when I'm an adult*, and was in no hurry to get working on them herself.

Sometimes a child would appear utterly **indifferent** to language studies. This may be a variation of the theme of the future; in this case the child just did not verbalise her thoughts that these issues did not concern her yet.

(6) MP: No tota, mitäs vieraita kieliä sä haluaisit oppia?
- No ei mulla silleen oo niinku mitään, mää tahtoisin niinkun, oppia tai tietää tai osata, mutta, kyllä kaikki on niinku ihan kivoja, sillee…
MP: So er, which foreign languages would you like to learn?
- Well I don't really like have any, I'd like to well, learn or know of or know, but, they're all like pretty nice, and that…
Maija Year 1

When asked which foreign languages would interest her, Maija gave an answer that could be seen as the verbal equivalent of shrugging one's shoulders. She began with *I don't really like have any, I'd like to… learn or know of or know*, suggesting there was no particular language she would like to study, or even have knowledge of and in. She then went on to modify her reply somewhat, pointing out it was not a question of downright disliking foreign languages: *they're all like pretty nice*. Perhaps Maija was really not in any way opposed to the idea of learning languages: she just had no opinions regarding the particular languages she would like to study.

Some children also brought up the theme of travelling **abroad** – they felt that English skills would be needed in other countries, thereby inferring that there was a distinct possibility they would be travelling abroad one day and would need some knowledge of foreign languages.

(7) HD: Alkaaks se kolkilla vai, topulla, mitä sä haluaisit tai ootsä päättänyt mitä sä haluaisit, haluatko ruotsia vai englantia tai?
- Mää ottasin englannin sitä tarvitaan niin monessa maassa.
HD: Mm, sillä pärjää /aika hyvin/
- /Amerikassa/
HD: Joo, haluatko käyä Amerikassa joskus?
- Joo, mun isosisko oli kesällä.
HD: Does it start in the third year or, in the second, which would you like or have you decided which one you'd like, do you want Swedish or English or?
- I'd take English it is needed in so many countries.
HD: Mm, one gets by /quite well/
- /in America/
HD: Yeah, do you want to go to America one day?
- Yeah, my older sister was there this summer.
Helen Year 1

Helen said she wanted to study English as her first foreign language because *it is needed in so many countries*. She thus placed uses for English skills abroad. The interviewer then agreed with her by saying that English is a language that would help one to get by well, at which point Helen finished the thought with a more specific location, *in America*. Her next comment revealed where this corrective might have come from: her older sister had visited the States and had actually studied there, as later became apparent. The older sister may therefore have given Helen the idea that English was useful in America. Both Emma and Helen seemed to link English skills primarily with an English-speaking country rather than a more general term like "abroad", although Helen also appeared to be aware of the more wide-spread use of English in *many countries*.

Sometimes it seemed the children were aware of the potential uses of English, say, when travelling, but they were just sceptical whether they themselves would have any need for a foreign language.

(8) MP: No tuota, haluisitko sä oppia jotain vierasta kieltä?
-Enpä oikein ku emmää käy ku jossain vuoden vaihteessa aina käyn, ni ei sitä tuu, sitte opittua ku yleensä ollaan vaan viikko.
MP: Niin, mut haluisitsä oppia jotain niinku koulussaki varmaan sit jossain vaiheessa?
- Emmää nyt tiiä tahtoisinko.
MP: Nii, voisko siitä olla jotain, hyötyä, oisko tärkeetä oppia vieraita kieliä?
- No ehkä ois mutta, eipä oikeen tiiä, ku ei niit tuu käyttäneeks kumminkaan ehkä.
MP: So er, would you like to learn a foreign language?
- Not really cos I don't really go to, just around New Year I always go, so you don't, really learn cos we're usually only there for a week.
MP: Yeah, but would you like to learn something like at school too at some point?
- I don't really know if I'd like to.
MP: Yeah, could it be somehow, useful, is it important to learn foreign languages?
- Well maybe it is but, don't really know, cos you will maybe not get around to using them after all.
Sanna Year 1

When Sanna was asked if she would like to learn a foreign language, she was not too keen: *not really*. Her family apparently took a holiday each winter (her experiences travelling were discussed during the interview) which is probably what she was referring to when she said: *cos I don't really go to, just around New Year I always go*. Interestingly, she appeared to associate learning languages with staying abroad, as she seemed to say that these trips were not long enough for her to *learn* the language: *you don't, really learn cos we're usually only there for a week* – one week was not enough to learn the language, so she had decided against learning altogether, it seemed.

The interviewer then pointed out that school was also a place where one could learn languages, and asked Sanna if she would not be interested in doing that "at some point". Sanna held her ground, saying *I don't really know if I'd like to*. Even in a different environment – at school as opposed to a foreign country – the thought of learning a foreign language did not appeal to her. The interviewer then switched to a more general mode, and asked Sanna if she thought learning foreign languages was useful or important. Now Sanna gave in a little, *well maybe it would be*, but then went on to voice her doubts about the virtues of language skills: *you will maybe not get around to using them after all*. Even if one took the time to learn a language, Sanna felt the skills might never be put to use. She chose the words *will not get around to using*, however, which might indicate that she could think of situations where foreign language skills could be used – she just doubted whether one would use them, *after all*. Perhaps her scepticism stemmed from her own experiences. She had after all travelled in many countries and had done perfectly well without knowing a foreign language – many people working in the tourist industry know a few words of Finnish, and, probably more importantly, her parents would most likely take care of communication for the whole family. Such experiences might then have been translated into Sanna's motivation – or lack thereof – for language studies. Another possible explanation is that Sanna, too, thought foreign languages were something adults concerned themselves with – they had nothing to do with her reality as yet.

Sakari talked of the **popularity** of English, both in terms of the number of speakers and the places where it could be used.

(9) HD:. Mites sä aattelet että teillä koulussa alkaa, kolmannella luokkaa joskus vieras kieli niin, minkä sä valitsisit jos sä saisit ite päättää?
- Englannin.
HD: Englannin, miks sä haluaisit englantia oppia?
- Ömm . Siks ku, melkein kaikki puhuu ja sillä pääsee joka paikkaan.
HD: What do you think, at school you'll start, in the third year sometime a foreign language so, which one would you choose if you could decide?
- English.
HD: English, why would you like to learn English?
- Erm. Because, almost everyone speaks it and it gets you everywhere.
Sakari Year 1

Sakari first declared which language he would choose: *English*. When asked why, he first took a moment to think about it, and then said it was because so

many others knew it, *almost everyone speaks it* – thinking about language skills in terms of *speaking*. Another reason for his choice was *it gets you everywhere*, which on the one hand appears to refer to different locations, *everywhere*, on the other, to the possibilities language skills might open up, *it gets you*. Sakari seemed to be quite confident that English would prove useful, although he could not give any specific reasons for saying so.

Sometimes the children's opinions regarding language studies seemed to be **socially motivated**: they wanted to be part of a group that knew English.

(10) MP: Haluisitsä oppia montaa kieltä sitten?
- No en tiiä.
MP: Mm, ainaki sitä englantia aluks, niinkö?
- Mm, ku isi ja äiti osaa jo.
MP: Ai ne osaa jo.
- Ja Niklaskin se mun isoveli, mun isoveljen nimi on Niklas.
MP: Would you like to learn many languages then?
- Well I don't know.
MP: Mm, at least that English to begin with, right?
- Mm, as my dad and mom already know it.
MP: Oh they already know.
- And Niklas too he's my older brother, my older brother's name is Niklas.
Emma Year 1

Emma was first asked if she would like to learn "many languages", and was a bit unsure: *well I don't know*. The interviewer – perhaps thinking that the word *many* was intimidating – then modified her question to refer only to one language, English, as the two had discussed it earlier (see example 4). Now Emma agreed, *mm*, and explained her reasons: *dad and mom already know it*, and then added *and Niklas too… my older brother*. This meant that Emma was the only one in her family who did not know any English, and she was thus looking forward to learning it, maybe so as not to be the odd one out.

Social motives could also have the opposite effect: someone who knew English could represent a group one did not want to associate oneself with, making English learning seem undesirable.

(11) MP: No oisko englanti semmonen mitä sä haluisit oppia sitte?
- En se on niin mamo oppii.
MP: Ihan totta, kuinni?
- On, yhet yhet päiväkodissa olevat, ne on mun kavereita, Sari, se on viisvuotias mut se osaa englantia.
MP: Well would English then be something you'd like to learn?
- No it's for sissies to learn.
MP: Really, how come?
- Yeah, these these children in the kindergarten, they're my mates, Sari, she's five but she knows English.
Jonne Year 1

Jonne was asked if he would like to learn English, and he immediately said *no*. The reason for this was that *it's for sissies to learn*. It seemed Jonne had no interest in being a sissy, sissies learn English, hence he did not want to learn it. He was then asked to elaborate on this: why was it that English was for sissies? Jonne's explanation was somewhat difficult to understand, but the gist of it

seemed to be that *Sari, she's five but she knows English* – perhaps *my mates in the kindergarten* had told Jonne about Sari, who was also in the kindergarten. Whatever the case, it appeared that because a five-year-old girl knew English, it was not something Jonne was interested in. Perhaps the fact that Sari knew English made him think that English was a girly language or something younger children dabbled with, and he decided that a boy soon to be seven years old would have none of it.

Finally, in a completely different vein, there was also the theme of youthful enthusiasm.

(12) MP: Mitäs vierasta kieltä sä haluisit ite oppia?
- Kaikki.
MP: Kaikkia noita, vai niin, jos sä yhen saisit valita nyt tossa varmaan kolkkiluokalla ni mitä//
- Viiskymmentäsataamiljoonaa puhetta mä haluan oppia.
MP: Which foreign language would you like to learn?
- All of them.
MP: All of them, I see, if you could choose one then like in the third year I think which//
- Fifty-hundred-million speeches I want to learn.
Matti Year 1

Matti declared he would quite simply like to learn *all* languages. Why choose one when you can have it all? The interviewer tried to make him choose just one to begin with, but Matti interrupted her and put a number on *all*: *fifty-hundred-million speeches I want to learn*. Interestingly, "languages" now became "*speeches*", suggesting Matti was looking forward specifically to speaking the *fifty-hundred-million* foreign languages.

6.1.1.3 How is English learnt? The Others and difficulties

Trying to determine how the children thought foreign languages would be studied and learnt proved challenging with the first year data. There were no questions asked regarding the process of learning, but some inferences can be made from what the children said "around the topic", so to speak. Many of them had already learnt a few words of English or some other language, and more often than not these nuggets of knowledge had come from an informal source, like parents and friends. The children were thus very aware that one could learn languages with the **help of other people**, regardless of the environment.

Most of the children had learnt a few words of English at home, with the help of their parents. Emma and Eeva had learnt some English from their parents, but they also had other kinds of sources of English:

(13) MP: Osaatsä puhua mitään muuta kieltä ku suomee?
- Osaan mä vähän englantia.
MP: Joo, missä sä oot oppinu?
-No mä oon kuullu ku äiti ja isi on puhunu. Sitte, kun on vähän isompi ni sitte (-), ku meillon englannin korttejaki.
MP: Teillon kortteja?
- Nii jossa on englannin sanoja …

MP: Do you know how to speak any other languages besides Finnish?
- I do know some English.
MP: Right, where have you learnt it?
- Well I've heard my mom and dad speaking. Then, when I'm a bit bigger then (-), as we have English cards too.
MP: You have cards?
- Yeah with English words…
Emma Year 1

Emma told the interviewer that she knew *a bit of English*, and said she had learnt it when *I've heard my mom and dad speaking*. She then went on to say something about her future plans, *when one's a bit bigger then*, but unfortunately some of her answer was inaudible – apparently she stayed with the topic of learning English, however, as she then said *as we have English cards too* and these cards had *English words* on them. Presumably the cards would play some kind of role in her English studies in the future, when she was *bigger*.

Eeva knew some English, too:

(14) MP: Mistä sä oot oppinu [englannin sanoja]?
- Äiti on sanonu ja sitte meillä on semmonen kirja.
MP: Yhym, minkälainen kirja?
- Jossa on kaikkia sanoja englanniks.
MP: Joo-o, ootsä ite sieltä opetellu?
- En ku mun äiti on lukenu sieltä.
MP: Where have you learnt [English words]?
- Mom has said and then we have this book.
MP: Mm hm, what kind of book?
- With all these words in English.
MP: Uh huh, have you studied it yourself?
- No my mom's read from it.
Eeva Year 1

Eeva had learnt English words because her *mom has said*, and she also added that they *have this book… with all these words in English*. Eeva herself had not read the book though; instead, her *mom's read from it*. Eeva thus had two kinds of resources for her English skills: there was her mother who could teach her, and she also knew the book would be useful as it contained English words. As yet, she had not studied the book though. Both Emma and Eeva thus had a written source of English they knew was there but did not use yet, and the verbal teaching of the parents took precedence. This is perfectly logical in the sense that the girls had just started to learn how to read at school - without the ability to read they could hardly make use of written material. Still, it was there and they seemed to be aware that it could be used in order to learn English, once they got the hang of reading and were a bit older.

Some children also had friends who knew a foreign language and had taught them a few words of it:

(15) HD: Mistä sä oot oppinu [saksaa]?
- No, yks Miska on tuolta luokalta ni, asunu pari vuotta Saksassa.
HD: Where have you learnt [German]?
- Well, this Miska from that class has lived a couple of years in Germany.
Helen Year 1

Helen had learnt a few words of German from *Miska from that class*, who had *lived a couple of years in Germany* and therefore knew some German – and had apparently shared his knowledge with the other children.

Some children had already participated in some form of more formal teaching:

(16) MP: No tiiätsä jotain vieraita kieliä?
- No jonkun verran mää englantii tiän kun meillä oli siellä Katolisten sisarten leikkikoulussa englannin tunnit, et siellä oli kaikkee englanninkielisiä leikkejä, et se sano vaan suomeks, ne säännöt, mutta, tota, sit me niinkun tehtiin ne englanninkielellä, kun se oli neuvonu säännöt.
MP: Well do you know any foreign languages?
- Well I do know English to some extent coz we had English lessons there at the Catholic Sisters' playschool, so there were all these English games, they just said in Finnish, the rules, but, er, then we like played them in English, once they had told us the rules.
Maija Year 1

Maija was in fact asked if she knew any languages as in "do you know any [names of] foreign languages" (in Finnish: tietää) as opposed to "do you know [have any competence in] foreign languages" (in Finnish: osata), but Maija took the question to mean whether she knew, had competence in any foreign language[15]. She explained that *I do know English to some extent* because she had been to the *Catholic Sisters' playschool*, where the children had had *English lessons*. The lessons had been quite informal as Maija described them as *there were all these English games*, so it seems instead of any formal teaching of vocabulary etc. the children had played games in English and learnt some of the language that way. Valtteri had some experience of English learning too: he told the interviewer he could say "no, 'yes' ja, sitte semmosii sanoja" *(well, 'yes' and, then these words*) in English, and reported that "mä olin ollu englanninkerhossa" (*I had been to an English club*) earlier. While both Valtteri's English club and Maija's lessons at the playschool were probably very relaxed and play based, they were nonetheless occasions that had been organised specifically for the purpose of teaching the children some English.

A topic closely related to the question of how English is learnt was whether the children expected language studies to be difficult. Again, the question was not posed to all the children, but those who answered it did seem to think that learning a foreign language would be very challenging.

(17) MP: Luuletko että op-, sä opit helposti vieraita kieliä?
- E.
MP: Mm, et se ois enemmänkin vaikeeta niinkö, mm, onks sun veli sanonu että se on, on vaikeeta?
- Ei, se oo sanonu mitään.
MP: Do you think that lear-, you will learn foreign languages easily?
- No.
MP: Mm, that it will be more on the difficult side right, mm, has your brother said that it's, is difficult?
- No, he hasn't said anything.
Emma Year 1

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15 Interestingly, many children interpreted the question in this way, taking the verb "tietää" to mean "osata", even though the distinction is fairly clear in Finnish.

Emma was quite clear about her opinion: she was asked if she expected to learn languages easily and she bluntly said *no*. The interviewer then tried to find out what caused her to think so, and asked if her older brother, who had already studied English at school, had told her that learning English would be difficult. Emma denied this: *no he hasn't said anything*. The interviewer then proceeded to ask Emma about the importance of language studies, so we did not find out any more about her belief that learning English would be difficult. There is no way of knowing why Emma felt English studies would not be easy, but she appeared quite sure of her position – there was no hesitation or modifiers, just a simple *no*.

Sanna was able to illustrate the challenges of language learning:

(18) MP: No luuletsä että jos sä opettelisit jotain kieltä niin sä oppisit helposti sitä, luuletko?
- Mm no en tiiä, kyllä siinä menis vuos, ainaki.
MP: Well do you think that if you were to study a language that you would learn it easily, you think?
- Mm well I don't know, I think it would take a year, at least.
Sanna Year 1

Also Sanna appeared to be quite sceptical when asked if she thought learning languages would be easy for her. She was not quite as direct as Emma, but started her reply with the hesitant *well I don't know*, possibly indicating that she did not think learning a language would be that easy ("well I don't know if it would be easy"). She then made her position clear: her estimate was that *think it would take a year, at least* – learning a new language would require at least a year's work. It seems from Sanna's wording that she considered one year to be a rather long period of time, and that anything that required that much work could not be considered easy.

6.1.2 Year 3

In their third year, all the participants in the study started to study English as their first foreign language at school[16]. The learners were about 10 years old at the time. The interview had been designed to provide a kind of an inventory about what the children thought about languages (Finnish and English in particular) and language studies. Approximately half of the questions dealt with the English language and foreign language learning. When the interviews were conducted, the young learners had studied English at school for about three months.

The topic of *Why is English studied* was approached by asking the children questions about the reasons people have for studying English as well as about how these skills could prove useful. The children were also asked questions about their own reasons for studying English, how they currently used English

[16] The procedures for choosing the first foreign language at school vary from one local authority to another and depend on the choices available at each school; starting English as the first foreign language in Year 3 is by far the most popular choice, however.

and how they thought it might be useful to them in the future. The questions on this topic varied quite a bit in the third year; some children were asked only a few questions about the topic, others as many as six questions.

6.1.2.1 Why do people study English? The English out there

The most common theme in children answer's to questions like "Why do people study English?" or "Why are English skills useful?" was that of **speaking abroad**. The children seemed to be very aware that English would be a good choice as a medium of communication outside Finland.

(19) MA: No minkäs takia ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- Öö, no iskä sano ainaki et sillä pärjää joka maassa, melkeen joka maassa.
MA: So why do people study English?
- Er, well dad at any rate said that you can get by with it in every country, almost every country.
Sakari Year 3

Sakari referred to the need for English skills when abroad: he echoed his father's words (*dad at any rate said that*) and said that English was a language that would enable you to *get by (*or *manage*) abroad. His first version was to claim that this was the case *in every country*, but he quickly modified his answer to *in almost every country*, suggesting that English skills would be very useable around the world even though there might be a few places where they would not help the traveller.

Some children approached the theme of using English abroad from a slightly different perspective. Maria, for example, seemed to view the need for English from the point of view of **understanding** speech rather than producing it:

(20) MA: No, minkä takia ihmiset opettelee englantia?
- Jos ne vaikka menis ulkomaille ni siellä, että, sitte jos sieltä kysyttäis jotai englanniks se ei ymmärtäis nii täällä pitäis opetella ne valmiiks ne sanat.
MA: So, why do people study English?
- If they for example went abroad then there, so that, if they were asked something there in English they wouldn't understand so they should learn the words here already.
Maria Year 3

Maria, too, placed the need for one's English skills in foreign countries, saying *if they for example went abroad*. But instead of referring to the need to speak there, she pointed out that *if they were asked something there in English*, people would need to *understand* and for that reason *they should learn the words here already*. In other words, in order to be able to understand what is being said abroad, people should prepare and learn English.

Many children also showed that they knew of the lingua franca status of English; that it was not necessarily the mother tongue of those one would need to speak it to, either.

(21) MA: Minkäs takia ihmiset opettelee englantia?
- No jos ne menee johonki maihin eikä ne osaa niinku muuta kielii nii ne voi puhuu niille sitä [englantia] kun ne osaa sitä.
MA: Why do people study English?

- Well if they go to some countries and they don't like know other languages then they can speak [English] to them because they'll know it.
Emma Year 3

Emma felt the need for English skills would arise when people *go to some countries*: they could speak English there if *they don't know other languages*. It is, however, difficult to tell which *they* it is that *will know* English at the end of the reply – (Finnish) people who have learnt English and can therefore speak it, or people living in other countries who will understand it. Still, it seems Emma found English to be a good choice for one's communication needs abroad. She also appeared to view English as a language one resorts to when one does not know any other languages.

Sometimes the need for English was connected to **foreigners** rather than foreign countries.

(22) MA: Mitä sillä englannin kielellä sitte voi tehdä?
- No jos vaikka, on tää, semmonen, turisti, englantilainen turisti täällä Suomessa ja sit se kysyy et neuvoo että, missä se on, nii sitte, osaa vastata siihen, ja neuvoo.
MA: What can one then do with the English language?
- Well if for example, there's this, like, a tourist, an English tourist here in Finland and then they ask for directions for where it is, so then, you know how to answer and give directions.
Mervi Year 3

When asked how English could be useful to those who had studied it, Mervi, too, referred to an instance where one might need to deal with spoken English. However, the setting was not abroad: Mervi talked of the possibility of meeting *an English tourist here in Finland* and how the tourist might *ask for directions for where it is*. The native Finn would thus need to *know how to answer it*. The reason Mervi gave for English studies was thus "closer to home"; instead of describing a Finn going abroad she figured English might come in handy in Finland, too. Interestingly, she specified that the tourist would be *English*, and seemed to thus link the use of English to English people, in particular.

The children also found other spheres of life where English skills might be needed; they were not always connected to foreigners or foreign countries. Many children brought up the theme of **working life** in their answers, often in connection with the idea of **adulthood**.

(23) MA: No minkäs takia ihmiset sitte opettelee englantia, mitä hyötyä siitä on?
- No pärjää sitte niinku, työ- työssä isona ja, osaa sitte niinku, jos tulee vaikka joku tulkki englannin tulkki ni, sitte osaa, sanoo ne, kääntää (sitä).
MA: So why do people then study English, how is it useful?
- Well then you can manage nicely like, at wo- at work as an adult and, then know like, if you become for example an interpreter an English interpreter so, then you know, how to say them, translate (it).
Valtteri Year 3

Valtteri brought up the theme of working life: *as an adult*, one might need English skills *at work*, as he put it. Valtteri talked about a very specific profession, namely that of *an English interpreter*, and about how one would then

need to *say them, translate it*, apparently referring to the English language. While Valtteri began his answer by talking about the more general concept of working life, the example he used was very specific; a profession in which knowledge of English really is what the work is about.

(24) MA: Minkäs takia ihmiset sitte opiskelee englantia, mitä hyötyä siitä niille on?
- Että jos ne, (kun) ne menee töihin nii sitte, jos joku kysyy niiltä että, tiiätsää mitää, mitä mitä tää tarkottaa, nii eli englantia täytyy oppia, ja sitä tarvitaan.
MA: Why do people then study English, how is it useful to them?
- So that they, (when) they go to work so then, if someone asks them that, do you know what, what what this means, so in other words English must be learnt, and it is needed.
Rauli Year 3

Rauli had a more vague idea about the requirements of working life: he felt that understanding English would be required if *someone asks them do you know what this means*, but did not really finish his idea – instead, he turned to a more general, vague reason for why English is needed and finished his answer with the slogan-like *in other words English must be learnt and it is needed*. Specific reasons aside, Rauli thus felt one *must* learn English because it simply is *needed* somewhere in working life.

Another theme the children associated with English studies and usefulness of English skills was that of the **popularity** of the English language: everyone is speaking it, so "people" should too.

(25) MA: No minkäs takia ihmiset sitte opettelee niin paljo englantia?.
- No ku s- se suosittu kieli ku sitä puhutaa esimerkiks Kiinassaki, tai jossaki ihmeellisissä paikoissa missä, muualla ku Englannissa ni, semmosta.
MA: So why do people then study English so much?
- Well cos i- it a popular language as it's spoken for example in China too, or in some odd places where, other than in England, so, there.
Jonne Year 3

Jonne first said that English is a *popular language*, and pointed out that it is even spoken *for example in China too* as well as *in some odd places*, not only *in England*. He seemed to refer to the lingua franca status of English: it is not only useful in strictly English-speaking countries. It should be noted, however, that the choice of words in the question (*why do people study English* ***so much****?*) might have given Jonne the idea of using the concept of popularity; essentially the interviewer suggested that English, indeed, is a popular language as so many people study it. Jonne might thus have taken up the interviewer's hint but he seemed to be able elaborate on the idea quite well.

6.1.2.2 Why do you study English? The English then

When the children were asked about their own reasons for studying English, the strongest themes of their answers indicated that their reasons were very here-and-now. Their reasons were also quite different from the reasons of "people", that is, the reasons the children gave when asked why people study English and why English skills might be useful on a more general level. As for

their own reasons, the most common theme in the answers was that of **learning**: the children reported they studied English so they would learn it.

(26) MA: Minkäs takia sää luet englantia?
- No että, oppis niitä englannin sanoja ja, muutenki.
MA: Why do you study English?
- Well so that, I would learn those English words and, other stuff.
Matti Year 3

Matti's reason for studying English was simply *so that I would learn*. He felt he needed to pick up *English words* along with *other stuff*. As a beginner in English Matti apparently had no grand plans for his English skills yet – first he simply wanted to acquire them.

Another strong theme in the answers was that of **choosing**. The children needed to start a foreign language in Year 3 and English was the favoured choice for some, while others felt they had less choice in the matter.

(27) MA: No minkäs takia sää luet englantia?
- …Ku, oli valinta ni pakko se oli joku valita.
MA: Joo, oisit sää halunnu jonku toisen kielen ottaa mieluummin?
- Een tää on ihan hyvä. Nyt aluks ainaki.
MA: So why do you study English?
- … Cos, there was a choice so we had to choose one.
MA: Yeah, would you have preferred another language?
- Noo this is fine. Now to begin with anyway.
Helen Year 3

Helen's reply to the question of why she studied English was somewhat nonchalant: *we had to choose one* so English was chosen. When asked if she would rather have started studying another language, she said however that English was *fine* and suggested it was a good first foreign language to study even if you later fancied something else: English was good *now to begin with anyway*.

(28) MA: No minkäs takia sää opiskelet englantia?
- Noo, äiti suositteli ja isi.
MA: So why do you study English?
- Weell, mom recommended it and dad.
Jonne Year 3

Jonne referred to significant others when asked about his choice of language: he said that he had chosen English because *mom recommended it and dad*. He had thus trusted the advice of his parents when choosing the language.

Maria had another motive:

(29) MA: No, minkäs takia sää opiskelet englantia, valitsitsää ite tuon englannin kolmannelle luokalle vai?
- Valitsin mää sen ite.
MA: Joo, miksää halusit just englannin kielen?
- Ku se on kaikista helpoin niistä muista ehkä.
MA: So, why do you study English, did you choose English yourself for the third year or?
- I did choose it myself.

MA: Yeah, so why did you want to take English?
- Cos it's the easiest of them maybe.
Maria Year 3

When Maria was asked if she herself had made the decision to take English, she said *I did choose it myself*, suggesting that English was in fact the language she wanted to study. When asked further about the reasons for her choice, Maria said this was because *it's the easiest* - referring to the English language. She seemed to consider English an easy language to learn and therefore a good choice for her first foreign language. Some of the children were thus more excited about the choice for their first foreign language than others.

Other themes that the children mentioned as their reasons for studying English were similar to those attributed to other people: travelling abroad, talking with foreigners and working life. From the children's point of view these reasons referred to the **future** and thereby to **adulthood**– not to uses the children might have for English skills already.

(30) MA: Minkäs takia sää opiskelet englantia?
- Jos mää meen johki maahan ku mä oon iso nii vaikka Englantiin nii mun täytyy oppi- puhua siellä englantia.
MA: Why do you study English?
- If I go to some country when I'm an adult then for example to England then I have to lear- speak English there.
Rauli Year 3

Rauli said he was studying English because he would need to *speak English* if he were to *go to some country … for example to England* – associating the English language specifically with England. He expected this to happen *when I'm an adult*; not any time soon.

(31) MA: Mitäs hyötyä sää ajattelet et sulle on englannin kielestä?
- No sitä käytetään niinku varmaa eniten niinku jossaki töissä tai tälläsissä.
MA: How do you think English could be useful to you?
- Well it's probably mostly used like at work or stuff like that.
Valtteri Year 3

Valtteri, when asked how English could be useful to him, chose to reply with a general observation about the uses of English: *it's probably mostly used at work*, indicating that he mainly expected English to be useful to himself once he entered working life. Although he did not explicitly refer to the future or adulthood, working life, from his point of view, was obviously not a current concern. He thus placed his own English needs in the future, and perhaps did not feel that English was useful to him quite yet.

When asked how knowledge of English could be useful to them, a strong theme was once again that of **speaking abroad**. The theme was, however, not as prominent as with the attributed "people's" uses for English. So, even though the theme was prominent, the children did not feel this reason was quite as relevant to them as it was to others.

(32) MA: Minkäs takia sinä sitte opiskelet englantia?
- No että jos (mä meen) vaikka Englantiin niin mä voin keskustella niitten englantilaisten kanssa.
MA: So why do you study English then?
- Well so that if (I go) to, say, England then I can have a conversation with the English.
Emma Year 3

When asked why she studied English, Emma went straight to discussing how she could put a knowledge of English to use. Emma reported she studied English in order to be able to *have a conversation with the English* should she one day *go to, say, England*. Emma's scenario for using English took place in England, but she did add *say*, which may indicate that while England was the most readily available example to her, she could have used another location, too. Also, while Emma's answer did not contain any references to work or the usual touristy situations of asking for directions, she did choose to use the somewhat official word *keskustella* (have a conversation, discuss), rather than, for example, *jutella* (chat, talk). This word choice gave her answer a slight air of seriousness – conversing in English with the English was no light matter.

Sometimes, however, the uses for English were distinctly more personal. When asked how English could be useful to him, Aku did place his need for English in another country, but for a very different reason than for example Valtteri above.

(33) MA: No mitäs sää aiot tehdä englannin kielen taidolla?
- Uusia kavereita.
MA: Joo, mistä sää aiot hankkia uusia kavereita?
- No jos mää muutan täältä Suomesta pois ni, sitte voi hankkia [kavereita] siellä jossai muualla.
MA: So what do you intend to do with your knowledge of English?
- New friends.
MA: Uh huh, where do you plan to get new friends?
- Well if I move out of Finland so, then I can get [friends] in that other place.
Aku Year 3

Instead of talking about work or the language needs of a tourist, Aku mentioned a social need: English could be used to make *new friends… if I ever move out of Finland*. Communicating in English is not just for doing business and asking for directions!

Another strong theme was very different from the theme of adulthood and foreign countries: it was the cosy and homely world of **recreation**. The children expected to use English in order to amuse themselves.

(34) MA: No mitäs hyötyä luulet että englannista on sulle?
- No, osaa myöhemmin puhua hyvin, sitä että, ja niin, jos tulee joku kirja, niin jota haluais, niinku nyt on Harry Potter vaa nelonen on englanniks nii sitte ku osais lukee sen, englanninkielisenä.
MA: So how do you think English will be useful to you?
- Well, you know how to speak [English] well later, that, and er, if there's a book, that you'd like to, like now Harry Potter four is only out in English, then you'd know how to read that, in English.
Helen Year 3

Helen first referred to the need *to speak [English] well later* - perhaps thinking about the demands of adult life – but then moved on to a theme that was much closer to her present day self: *if there's a book you'd like*. She was referring to reading books for pleasure. At the time of the interview the fourth Harry Potter book had just been released, but Finnish Potterists would still need to wait several months for the translated version to come out. Hence Helen pointed out that if you knew English, *then you'd know how to read that*. Never mind adulthood: Helen had found that knowing English was a skill even children could put to use.

Valtteri had also found a way to use English for recreational purposes after he was specifically asked if he used English anywhere outside school:

(35) MA: Onks sulle nyt jo ollu jotai hyötyä englannin kielestä ooksää käyttäny sitä jo jossai muualla ku koulussa?
- No oon kai mää sitä jossaki niinku, oon piirrelly ja ukoille nimiä nii sitte se on hyvä ku tietää englanniks niinku ja kaikkee tällästä, peleistä että ymmärtää niitä englanninkielisiä sanoja että osaa lukee että ymmärtää vähä että mihin pitää mennä ja jotai tällästä.
MA: Has English already been useful to you have you used it anywhere else besides school?
- Well I guess I have somewhere like, I've been drawing and when naming the characters it's like good to know English and all that, games in order to understand those English words so that you know how to read and understand a bit where you're supposed to go and stuff like that.
Valtteri Year 3

Valtteri had found that he did not need to leave the country or meet foreigners to use English; instead, he said *I've been drawing* and *when naming the characters it's like good to know English*. In addition, he also talked of *games*: it was useful to know some English in order to *understand those English words* because to play the game you needed to *understand a bit where you're supposed to go* in the game. Interestingly, such things did not come up when he was asked how English could be useful to him (see example 31 above) – it seemed that *using* English and its being *useful* were two different things.

Mervi also had ideas about the usefulness of English that were very close to home, combining social ambitions with communication needs. In fact, communication needs came up earlier in the interview, when she had been asked in more general terms how English could be useful. She first referred to speaking with foreigners (see example 22), but after this response she was asked if she could think of further ways in which English could be useful. Surprisingly, she then switched to the first person mode and talked of a very personal way in which knowledge of English could be useful to her:

(36) MA: Oisko siitä jotai muuta hyötyä vielä?
- Noo ((tauko)) emmä oikeen tiiä, tai oikeestaa sellai ku äiti ja isi yleensä, puhuu semmosii asioita englanniks mistä, mitä me ei oltais saatu kuulla ni, se meitä aina ärsyttää se mutta, nyt mää alan pian ymmärtämään. varmaanki.
MA: Could you think of some other uses?

- Weell ((pause)) I don't know really, or actually it's like mom and dad usually, talk in English about things, we shouldn't hear and, that always irritates us but, now I'll soon begin to understand, I think.
Mervi Year 3

According to Mervi, her *mom and dad … talk in English about things we shouldn't hear* – her parents thus used their English skills as a way of excluding the children from certain conversations. This, of course, *always irritates us*, as children are usually dying to know what it is that they are not supposed to know. Therefore learning English would give Mervi a distinct advantage: *now I'll soon begin to understand* what the parents are saying. English studies would thus enable her to "crack the code". She was on her way to becoming one of the people "in the know", like her parents.

Sometimes coming up with uses for their future English skills was difficult and the question was dismissed with a quick reply:

(37) MA: Mitäs hyötyä siitä sulle on et sä luet englantia?
- No sitte osaan englantia ((naurahtaa)).
MA: Joo, mitäs sää aiot tehä englannin kielen taidolla, aioksä lukea jotai tai hankkia kirjekavereita tai matkustaa Englantiin tai?
- Noo, no, vaikka mitä ((naurahtaa)).
MA: How is studying English useful to you?
- Well then I'll know English ((laughs)).
MA: Uh huh, so what are you going to do with that skill, are you going to read something or get pen pals or travel to England or?
- Well, well, all sorts of things ((laughs)).
Annika Year 3

First, Annika referred to the immediate concern of learning English: she said she was studying English because then she would *know English*. When the interviewer tried to propose some possible uses for her English skills, Annika simply said she would do *all sorts of things* with her English skills and would not give an example. Perhaps she had not really thought about such uses yet and, like Matti (see example 26), was first and foremost interested in learning and figured she would attend to the uses as needs arose. She therefore preferred not to commit herself to any of the uses the interviewer suggested to her.

6.1.2.3 The countable school work

In Year 3 the children, who had started their English studies only a few months earlier, were asked various questions about their studies: what their lessons and homework are like, if they did anything "extra" at home, what they felt was difficult about learning English, and so on, in order to get an idea of how the children went about the business of learning a new language. The children seemed to feel the goal was to learn how to speak English, but their learning activities dealt mostly with written language – both in the classroom and outside it. Many also relied on the help of significant others when they ran into problems with the English language.

The children were first asked to describe what studying English at school was like; was it similar to for example studying mathematics or somehow different? Many of the children commented that English was different from the other subjects they were learning because of the language itself – you needed to **speak a different language** in class.

(38) MA: Millä tavalla [englannin opiskelu] on erilaista [kuin matematiikan opiskelu]?
- No siinä niinku puhutaa paljo enemmän ku matematiikassa vaan kirjotetaan kirjaan niin, englannissa on paljon pelejä ja kaikkee tällasta.
MA: How is [studying English] different [from studying maths]?
- Well we like talk a lot more than in maths where we just write in the book so, in English there's lots of games and stuff like that.
Valtteri Year 3

According to Valtteri, in maths class pupils mostly *just write in the book*, but during English class, they *talk a lot more*. English classes also featured *a lot of games and stuff like that*. First and foremost, however, he associated English classes with talking. Valtteri seemed to feel that, compared to maths, English classes were more varied and perhaps even more interactional because of the talking – the description he gave of the maths class suggested that it was lonely book work and not much else.

While classroom activities and the nature of English studies were often described in terms of speaking, homework was understandably a more book-bound activity; it consisted of reading and doing **written exercises** in the exercise book, that is, the traditional type of homework.

(39) MA: No, minkäslaisia kotitehtäviä te saatte enkusta?
- No me saadaan semmosii sopivia läk- tehtäviä.
MA: Onks teillä kirjotustehtäviä vai pitääks teijän opetella sanoja vai /minkälaisia/?
- /Joo/ semmosia rastittaa meidän pitää rastittaa tai sitte, kirjottaa mitä, mitä tota, lempileluja, ja, kirjottaa näitä välisanoja ja, ja näihin vihkoihin kirjotetaan jotai, liimataan värejä tai jotai semmosia, (on täällä) tehty.
MA: So, what kind of homework do you get in English?
- Well we get like good homew- exercises.
MA: Do you get writing exercises or do you have to learn words or /what are they like/?
- /Yeah/ like tick the boxes we have to tick boxes and then, write which, which er, favourite toys, and, write these words in between[17] *and, we write something in these exercise books, glue on colours or something like that (we've) done (here).*
Matti Year 3

Matti said first that the homework given was simply "sopiva" – literally the word “sopiva” means suitable, fitting or appropriate, and Matti may well have meant that they get a suitable *amount* of homework, not too much of it. When asked to provide more details, he listed several activities, all of which dealt with written language and writing, such as *we have to write … favourite toys… words in between… in exercise books*. When compared to the children’s explanations of what happened in the English classroom, it thus seemed that whereas the

[17] "Words in between" probably refer to gap-fill exercises.

activities in the classroom revolved around speaking English, homework involved mainly the written language. Matti also interestingly described the activity of *tick[ing] boxes* – from the teacher's point of view the object of the exercise was probably to understand written English and indicate the correct choice, but in Matti's account it simply became a matter of ticking a box.

Many children also viewed homework and English studies as a function of something **countable** – sometimes learning English seemed to be a function of exercises done or pages studied, rather than a function of content as such.

(40) MA: Osaaksää jo paljo puhua ja kirjottaa englantia, mitäs te ootte täs oppinu?
- No, ollaan me niinku hirveesti niitä sivujaki menny eteenpäin ja kaikkee tällasta.
MA. Do you already know how to speak and write English, what have you learnt here?
- Well, we've like gone through a whole lot of pages too and all that kind of stuff.
Valtteri Year 3

Valtteri was asked what kinds of things had been covered in class during the autumn, and he responded with *we've gone through a whole lot of pages too*, viewing their course in terms of pages in the book rather than in terms of the content covered. When Santeri (in example 101) was asked to describe what the class had learnt in English class during the autumn, he answered *we've only had one exam so far*. Perhaps Santeri felt they had not made a lot of progress yet and put it in terms of exams: if there had only been one, perhaps they had not learnt very much. Still, Santeri seemed to feel exams would be a good way to describe what had happened over the autumn. Like exercises and pages of a book, exams are something you can simply count.

Some children viewed countable things from a slightly different perspective – instead of thinking of learning in terms of pages and exercises, they felt learning the language was a question of learning **words**.

(41) MA: Osaaksää selittää millä tavalla [englanti] on erilaista?
- Matikassa pitää laskee, ja siinä, tota, pitää, niinku, opetella sanat.
MA: Can you explain how [studying English] is different?
- In maths you have to count, and in [English], er, you have to, like, learn words.
Eeva Year 3

Eeva described English as being a subject where one has to *learn words*, making the vocabulary items the focus of learning. When Helen was asked what the children had learnt over the autumn, she answered they had had "no, kaikenlaisia ruokia ja, eläimiä ja, ja nyt on leluja" (*well, all sorts of food and, animals and at the moment toys),* in other words, that they had learnt names for various things; individual words.

Some children, then, took their descriptions of English studies one step higher from the word approach:

(42) MA: Mitäs te ootte oppinu tässä syksyllä?
- Kaikki mitä niinku että mikä sun tai että mikä nimi on ja, minkä ikäne ja, kaikki värit ja numerot ja, eläimiä ja.
MA: What have you learnt now over the course of this autumn?

- All kinds of things like what's your name or what one's name is and, how old and, all colours and numbers and, some animals and.
Maija Year 3

Like Helen, Maija too told the interviewer that they had learnt *colours and numbers and, some animals* – they had learnt to name things – but she also said they had learnt some phrases: *what one's name is and, how old*. She thus referred to a "higher" level, if you will: in addition to individual words they had also learnt phrases.

(43) MA: Minkälaisia asioita te ootte täs oppinu?
- No kissaa koiraa ja, lehmä ja, mikä on monikko ja mikä ei ja, tämmöstä.
MA: What kinds of things have you been learning?
- Well cat dog and, cow and, what's a plural and what's not and, stuff like that.
Jonne Year 3

Jonne started by listing vocabulary items too, *cat and dog and, cow*, but then went on to tell the interviewer they had learnt *what's a plural and what's not*, using the grammatical term "plural". In addition to individual words he had thus also learnt grammatical vocabulary that could be used when talking about the individual words, like cat and dog.

In addition to books and words, the teacher was also considered to be an important factor in learning.

(44) MA: No mitenkäs sitä [englantia] sitte oppii että osaa?
- No, opet on sitä varte et ne opettaa.
MA: So how does one then learn [English] so one knows it then?
- Well, teachers are there for teaching.
Mervi Year 3

Mervi, in fact, appeared to attribute the learning process entirely to the teacher in this answer: when asked how English is learnt she said *teachers are there for teaching*. Her answer seemed to suggest that one learns English simply by being taught, as she did not refer to anything the learner him/herself might need to do.

6.1.2.4 Homework and recreation

The children were also asked how they go about the business of learning English outside the school environment. The question was first worded "Do you do anything extra connected with English studies at home?" but it quickly became obvious that the children understood the question in terms of homework: some of them said they might do an extra exercise just to be on the safe side when they had forgotten which exercises they were supposed to do, others said simply "no". The question thus needed to be made clearer; it seemed that the children would in most cases only think of studying English in terms of school work unless specifically asked about leisure activities such as playing computer or Play Station games or watching television. These activities sometimes also came up in connection with completely different questions.

As with school activities, the theme of **written English** was strong also when home activities were described. Most of the things the children did outside the school context involved written English: the activities ranged from rather school-like exercises to making use of television programmes. Emma had a wide range of leisure activities connected to the use of English; the first ones to come up were activities involving cards and books.

(45) MA: No ooksää jo puhunu englantia jossai muualla kun koulussa?
- Noo, kotona mää äitin kanssa vähä o opetellu (niistä),
MA: Joo, /se onki hyvää harjotusta/
- /ku meillä on/ englantilaisten kielisii noita kortteja ja sit meil on semmosii, kirjatehtäviä, kotona.
MA: Joo, ooksä tehny sitte niitä aina, vapaa-aikana?
- Joo me sitä korttipeliä pelataa harvoin mutta sitten tota nii me mää teen yleensä niitä englanninkielisii tehtävii niistä kirjoista.
MA: So have you already spoken English outside of school?
- Weell, at home with mom I've learnt a bit (from the),
MA: Yeah, /that's good practice/
- /cos we have/ these cards in the language of the English and then we have these, book exercises, at home.
MA: Yeah, so you've been doing them then, in your free time?
- Yeah we seldom play the card game but then er like we I usually do those English exercises in the books.
Emma Year 3

When asked earlier if she did anything extra at home, Emma had said she would sometimes do an extra homework exercise by mistake– in maths. Her leisure activities involving English became apparent later in the interview, when she was asked if she had ever spoken English outside school. She first said she practised English at home with her mother: *with mom I've learnt a bit* – she thus received help from a significant other. She then went on to explain that they did not simply chat in English; instead, they had *these cards in the language of the English and then we have… book exercises*. Emma did not explain how the English-language card game works, but as she brought it up when she was asked about speaking English, it maybe involved talking as well as reading the cards – it is still safe to assume that the cards did have something written on them, too (why else would they be dubbed *cards in the language of the English?)*. There was of course a chance that the *book exercises* she referred to were suggestions for discussion exercises, but Emma's next comment made it clearer that they probably were written exercises: *we I usually do those English exercises in the books*. She started by saying *we* (presumably as in "me and my mother" as she had just talked about the two of them playing the card game) but immediately corrected herself and changed the person to *I*. She then explained she *did* the exercises that were *in the books*, suggesting that the exercises were autonomous work with the book – perhaps not far from actual homework, in fact.

Helen also said her "extras" involved written English and a book:

(46) MA: No teeksää sit kotona jotai ylimäärästä englannin kielen kans, onks sulla vaikka jotai englanninkielisiä kirjoja tai sarjakuvia siellä?

- No mulla oli yhessä vaiheessa kirjastosta lainassa semmonen nii kirja jossa mää josta mää luin niitä.
MA: Joo minkälainen kirja se oli, mist se kerto?
- Se oli niinku oli semmonen niinku tavallaa laste englannin sanakirja semmonen, Opi englantia Akun kanssa.
MA: So do you then do anything extra with the English language at home, do you have for example English language books or comics there?
- Well at one point I had this book borrowed from the library a book where I from which I read them.
MA: Yeah what was the book like, what was it about?
- It was like a kind of an English dictionary for children it was, Learn English with Donald.
Helen Year 3

Helen described the book she had as *an English dictionary for children*, and the book seemed a bit more informal than either her English school books with their vocabulary lists or the exercise book Emma (see example 45) used at home. Helen said *at one point I had this book borrowed from the library* so she may well have got the book herself, voluntarily, and instead of being an exercise book or a school book, it was *for children*, and featured the cartoon character, *Donald [Duck]*. The book, in fact, does not have exercises at all but contains English comics and vocabulary lists, hence Helen said she had *read them* instead of, say, writing something down.

Many other children were involved in recreational activities that were distinctly different from school activities, even when they involved written language. Computer and Play Station games were very popular with the children, and most of them had these games in English.

(47) MA: Ooksää koskaan ennen opiskellu englantia ennenku nyt?
- Oon.
MA: Millon sä oot opiskellu englantia?
- Ku mulla oli semmonen tietsikkapeli.
MA: Aijaa, minkälainen se oli, oliks se englanninkielinen?
- Joo.
MA: Have you ever studied English before?
- Yeah.
MA: When did you study English?
- See I had this computer game.
MA: Oh I see, what was it like, was it in English?
- Yeah.
Rauli Year 3

Rauli said he had played computer games in English; this came up very early in the interview, when he was asked if this was the first time he had studied English. *I had this computer game* therefore, in Rauli's mind, constituted studying English, so he seemed to feel that playing an English language game was in fact useful as far as learning English was concerned.

(48) MA: No teeksää kotona jotai ylimääräistä englannin kielen kans, onks sulla vaikka jotai englanninkielisiä tietokonepelejä tai lehtiä tai kirjoja tai?
- Mullon englanninkielisiä kaikki on englanninkielisiä nuo Play Station pelit.
MA: Okei. Ooksää niistä oppinu paljo englantia?
- Vähä.

MA: So do you do anything extra with English at home, do you have for example some English language computer games or magazines or books or?
- I've got in English all my Play Station games are in English.
MA: Okay. Have you learnt a lot of English from them?
- A bit.
Sakari Year 3

Sakari, in turn, reported that *all my Play Station games are in English*, so he had a recreational use for the language, too. When asked if playing the games had taught him any English, he was cautiously optimistic: he had learnt *a bit*.

While most children felt that any useful extras in their English studies were in the written form, Emma had discovered an oral source, too:

(49) MA: No ooksää huomannu vaikka että ku sää vaikka katot televisiosta jotai englanninkielistä sarjaa tai kuuntelet jotai englanninkielistä laulua et sää oisit sieltä jo, niinku ymmärtäny sanan sieltä ja toisen täältä?
- No, yleensä ku mä katon englanninkielisiä teeveeohjelmia nii sieltä mä oon oppinu englantii, kauheesti.
MA: Joo, ku näkee kuitenki sen tekstityksen siinä /ni/,
- /nii/ sitte joka sanoissa mää katon aina ku mää katon nauhotetuilta englantilaisilta ni, sitte aina mää siitä, ku mää kuuntelen sen viimesen sanan niin mää sieltä tekstistä katon sen viimesen sanan niin mää sitte niinku tavallaan opettelen lausumaan sitä.
MA: So have you noticed that when you for example watch some series in English on television or listen to some English language song that you might have already, like understood a word here and there?
- Well, usually when I watch TV programmes in English then I've learnt English, a lot.
MA: Yeah, when you see the subtitles there after all /then/,
- /yeah/ then every word I always watch when I watch taped English then, there I always, when I listen to the last word then I look the last word up in the subtitles and then like, kind of learn how to pronounce it.
Emma Year 3

Emma was actually asked if she had found studying English useful so that she could already understand the English in pop songs or on television shows better; however, her answer revealed that she also used television programmes as a tool of learning and that with the help of television programmes *I've learnt English, a lot*. She then described her approach: she would watch *taped English*, *listen to the last word* and *learn how to pronounce it* by comparing it to the subtitles in Finnish, *I look the last word up in the subtitles*. This would enable her to learn from spoken English as opposed to from words printed in a book, which may have been the reason why Emma specified she would learn how to *pronounce* words this way. Unfortunately, this method does not necessarily work because the last word of the original, English sentence is often not the last word in the Finnish subtitles, due to differences in sentence structure in the two languages. But it was a very creative idea, making use of something Emma would probably do in any case – watching television.

Although such activities as playing computer games were very popular, many children felt they did not help one to learn English. It was more common to think about it the other way around: the English one learns will help one with these activities, not vice versa.

(50) MA: Ooksää jo tarvinnu englannin kieltä jossain, oot sä käyttäny sitä jossain muualla ku koulussa?
- No vähä oon tietokonepeleissä ni lukenu.
MA: Have you already needed English anywhere, have you used it anywhere outside of school?
- Well I've read some in computer games.
Helen Year 3

Helen, when asked if she had used English outside of school, told the interviewer that she had *read* English *in computer games.* Unlike reading the book in example 46, which constituted an extra in English studies, computer games were something for which Helen *needed* the English skills she had acquired.

Some children were openly sceptical about their ability to put their English skills to use just yet, or of being able to learn from these recreational activities. Many of them expressed the sentiment that they would need to learn more in order to be able to do things like read comics in English.

(51) MA: Teeksää kotona jotai muuta sitte englannin kielen kans et lueksää jotai sarjakuvia englanniksi tai kuunteleksää englanninkielistä musiikkia tai?
- Mä en oikein viel ymmärrä niitä kaikkia sanoja mitä (siellä on).
MA: Do you do anything else then with English do you for example read comics in English or listen to English language music or?
- I don't really understand all the words (there) yet.
Maria Year 3

When asked if she read anything for pleasure in English or listened to English language music, Maria answered *I don't really understand all the words yet*—suggesting she did not. Perhaps she had looked and listened enough to know she did understand some words, as she specified she did not understand them *all*; whatever the case, it appeared she wanted to learn more before trying to put English to use, even if it was just flipping through a comic. Putting her English skills to use in her free time was still a thing of the future.

Sanna was not convinced about the usefulness of television as a tool for learning English, and analysed the problem in quite a sophisticated manner:

(52) MA: Ooksää oppinu telkkarista jotai uusia sanoja? Jota ei oo vielä tunnilla käyty?
- No ei sitä sillai oikeen pysty oppimaan ku se on vähä semmosta että ku, ne tekstit aina tulee yleensä siihen ja, mut sittehä ne puhuu kuitenki nii että, sieltä, ja sitte ku ne lisää siihen esimerkiks sellasia sanoja ku in tai on tai jotai sinne päin ni. Sitte.
MA: Have you learnt any new words from television? That you haven't had in class yet?
- Well you can't really learn like that cos it's like when, those texts usually always come there and, but then they still talk like, from there, and then as they add these words like in or on or something like that so. Then.
Sanna Year 3

When Sanna was asked if she had learnt any new words by watching the television, she appeared to reject the idea –not only for her own part but on a more general level. Instead of talking about how *she* would not be able to learn

new words that way, she opted to express it more generally (*one cannot learn*), suggesting that what she was saying was really more of a general truth than merely her own experience. Her somewhat convoluted explanation began with *those texts usually always come there and, but then they still talk like, from there*. This seemed to suggest some kind of discrepancy between the English speech and the Finnish subtitles as she used the words *but* and *still*, but it is difficult to see what Sanna actually meant. She then went on to make a perfectly clear and valid point: *they add these words like in or on*, referring to the English preposition system. Sanna – unlike Emma in example 49 – thus seemed to be aware that the way sentences are constructed in Finnish and English is different, and that it might be difficult to make connections between the English speech and the Finnish subtitles when one only had a limited knowledge of English.

Another prominent theme that arose in the children's accounts of their English-related activities at home was that of **significant others** at home. Many children said they could count on a parent or an older sibling to help them – as Emma did in example 45 – be it with their English homework or with understanding a computer game.

(53) MA: Mites sitte niissä peleissä jos tulee vastaan semmonen sana mitä sää et ymmärrä nii mitä sä teet?
- No mää pyyän äitiä auttamaan ku seki on hyvä englannissa ilmeisesti ni.
MA: What if in the games there's a word that you can't understand then what do you do?
- Well I ask mom to help coz she's also good at English apparently so.
Valtteri Year 3

Valtteri was talking about his English games, and told the interviewer that if he came across a word he could not understand when playing, he would *ask mom to help.* She was a good candidate for helping him out because, according to Valtteri, *she's also good at English apparently*. When Sakari (see example 119) discussed what was easy and what was difficult in English learning, he said help was near should he forget how an English word is spelled: he said *I ask dad* for help. Perhaps Sakari was thinking about facing this problem at home with his homework, as he obviously would not be able to ask his father for spelling instructions in class!

Some children had also found help elsewhere; they could look for information they needed regarding the English language quite independently, too.

(54) MA: Mitäs sää sitte teet ku tulee semmonen ihan vieras sana siinä pelissä eteen?
- Kysyn isältä, tai katon sanakirjasta. Yhen kerran mää niinku luin pitkät pätkät sanakirjan avulla mikäs sana tuo on, ja mää sitte katoin kirjasta.
MA: What do you do when you come across a word you don't know in the game?
- I ask dad, or check the dictionary. Once I like read a long stretch of text with the help of the dictionary what's that word, and then I looked it up.
Helen Year 3

Helen described her strategy for dealing with new words in computer games. First she, too, relied on a significant other: her first choice was to *ask dad* what

the word was. She did, however, have another method, too: she could also *check the dictionary*. Helen appeared to be quite comfortable with using the dictionary; she reported how *once I … read a long stretch of text with the help of the dictionary*. Even though a quick question to dad might have been her favourite method, she had also found a way to deal with the problem on her own – *what's that word, and then I looked it up*.

6.1.3 Year 5

In Year 5, the young learners had studied English for about two and a half years. The interview was designed to focus on the topics in the first research question, so the fifth year interviews yielded the most data.

The topic of *Why do people study English* was approached by asking the children questions about the reasons people have for studying English as well as about the uses English skills might have. The children were also asked about their own motives for learning it, how they currently use English and how they think it might be useful to them in the future.

6.1.3.1 Why do people study English? On speaking to foreigners, adulthood, and learning

When asked why people study English, the general consensus among the children could be summarised in Aku's words:

(55) MA: No, minkäs takia Aku ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- Että ne osais puhua ulkomailla.
MA: So why is it Aku that people study English?
- So that they know how to speak abroad.
Aku Year 5

This was the main theme that emerged in the children's answers to explain the reasons people have for studying English: **speaking English with speakers of other languages in foreign countries**. The children thus found that people have a need to go abroad and talk to people there, and that English would come in useful in such a situation. These ideas were expressed in different ways that were sometimes very specific. Speaking could be approached from a very concrete perspective, as Annika approaches it below:

(56) MA: Minkä takia ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- Hömh, no, ehkä siks … (kun ne) joskus vaikka lähtee ulkomaille tai sillei nii sitte ne pystyy siellä, keskustelemaan ja, ostamaan ja kaikkee semmosta.
MA: Why do people study English?
- Erm, well, maybe because… (when they) for example go abroad sometime or something so then they can, discuss with people there and, buy things and all that kind of stuff.
Annika Year 5

Annika thus identified the need to speak with the kind of activities one might engage in when visiting another country; instead of talking about speaking

English in some sort of abstract way she viewed the language as a tool with which to accomplish things. When one knows English, according to Annika, one *can discuss* and *buy* things when abroad.

That English was the appropriate tool for accomplishing communication with foreigners seemed to be rather obvious to the children. Some of them, like Sanna below, referred specifically to the status of English as a lingua franca when talking about its usefulness as a tool of communication in other countries:

(57) MA: Alotetaanpas tämmöisellä yleisellä kysymyksellä ku minkä takia ihmiset opiskelevat englantia?
- No, varmaan sen takia että, pärjää sitte helpommin täällä, ulkomailla (että), (ku on sitte) helpompi, puhua niitten kanssa, että jos ei osaa paikallista kieltä.
MA: Let's start with a general question, namely why do people study English?
- Well, probably because, it's then easier to get by there, abroad (so that), (so it'll be) easier, to talk to them, if you don't know the local language.
Sanna Year 5

The children thus knew that Finnish cannot necessarily be used when communicating with foreigners – something they were not all sure about in Year 3 – and that English has the status of being the common foreign language among foreigners. Sanna pointed out that English might be useful even in countries where it is not spoken, saying that with English one would *get by* even if *you don't know the local language*. Mervi, in turn, put the matter more clearly by stating that "aika monessa maassa ihmiset puhuu englantia" (*in quite a lot of countries, people speak English),* and therefore knowing English would mean that "sitte pystyy niinku keskusteleen ihmisten kanssa" (*you can like have discussions with people*). The children thus showed great faith that English would work as a tool of intercultural communication and of getting by more or less anywhere abroad.

Another implication of this theme seems to be that, according to these children, language learners expect to visit other countries in their lifetime – the children seemed to talk about visits abroad as if they can be taken for granted, they are inevitable. Many of them, like Annika above, said ***when*** *they go abroad* instead of *if*, or made other kinds of references that appear to indicate that going abroad is bound to happen. Sanna said that *it's then easier to get by there, abroad* and that *it'll then be easier to talk*, both in the present tense (which in Finnish also functions as the future tense; in this case the word "sitte", *then*, could be considered to refer to the future). Similarly, also Mervi stated matter-of-factly, *then you can talk to people* – no ifs or buts about it, and using *then* to refer to the future. References to the future appear to be closely connected to the second major theme of the beliefs regarding reasons and uses for English studies.

The second frequently mentioned theme, which may in fact be the basic theme behind the theme of speaking abroad, was that of **adulthood**. English was talked about again as something one needs when one is grown-up, something that grown-ups are expected to know. This theme was often discussed in connection with the first theme of speaking English with foreigners, as in Rauli's example below:

(58) MA: Eli Rauli alotetaanpas tämmösestä kysymyksestä ku että minkä takia ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- Noo että ne sitte isona osais, jos tulee joitai englantilaisia.
MA: So Rauli let's start with the following question, why do people study English?
- Weell so that they then know it as an adult, if some English people come.
Rauli Year 5

Rauli did not specify any particular situations or take up the theme of travelling abroad, but his answer does deal with the theme of communicating with foreigners. His answer seems rather to indicate that one might need to speak to foreigners in Finland too, as he talks of English people who might *come*[18]. Perhaps Rauli is thinking about tourists, perhaps something to do with work, but regardless of the specifics, he states that the need arises *then as an adult*. It may be that this was in some way the reasoning also behind examples 55-57: the time frame is not clear but perhaps the children felt that adults need to go abroad and thus English must be learnt, or even that the word *people* in the question referred to adults. Annika was even more straightforward with her opinion that English is something adults need:

(59) MA: Missä sitä englannin kielen taitoa tarvii, missä paikoissa?... Voiks sitä puhua ihan kaikkialla ulkomailla?
- No, eiköhä yleensä, ku pitäshän nyt aikuisen osata sitä, mutta … ja lapsenkin mutta, (eihän) välttämättä ihan joka maassa, sitten kuiteskaan, opetella.
MA: So where could one need some knowledge of English, in what kinds of places?... Could one speak it everywhere abroad?
- Well, I suppose usually, I mean an adult should know it but… and a child too but, (they still don't) necessarily study it, in every country.
Annika Year 5

Her statement *I mean an adult should know (English)* is quite uncompromising: she viewed English skills as an unquestionable characteristic of adults, even using the strengthening –hän ending in the word *should*. Furthermore, she seemed to feel this was a universal obligation, referring perhaps to the lingua franca status of English, as she points out that, regardless of the need to know English, *they still don't necessarily study it, in every country*. Another explanation for this could be, of course, that the end of her answer should be read as some kind of dismissal of the need for English: it may not work as a tool of communication after all, if one's interlocutor has not studied it.

Some of the children also associated the need to learn English with work and studies, again suggesting that English is needed in adulthood.

(60) MA: Minkäs takia Valtteri ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- No että sitte ku vaikka menee töihin nii osaa palvella erimaalaisia ihmisiä ja, sitte soo, muutenki hyödyllistä osata monta eri kieltä jos vaikka menee ulkomaille nii osaa pyytää palveluita ja sellasia.
MA: So why Valtteri do people study English?
- Well so that when you then get a job you know how to serve people from different countries, and then it's, useful also in other ways to know many different languages if for example you go abroad you can ask for service and stuff.
Valtteri Year 5

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[18] Rauli also associates English with "englantilaisia", *English people*, rather than considers it a lingua franca, which was quite uncommon in Year 5.

Valtteri raised the possibility that one might encounter people from different countries in the adult world of working life (*when you then get a job*). English skills might therefore be a requirement for being able to do one's job, like if one has to *serve people from different countries*. The other side of the coin for Valtteri was the event of *go[ing] abroad*, where one might need to *ask for service* oneself. Again, language was viewed as a tool for getting things done. However, Valtteri was not as confident as some of the other children that English would be enough: he pointed out that knowing *many different languages* might be needed when travelling abroad.

The theme of **learning** was also to some extent present in the children's answers. Some children took the question quite literally and answered like Eeva did:

(61) MA: Minkäs takia ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- No että ne oppis sitä.
MA: Why do people study English?
- Well so that they'd learn it.
Eeva Year 5

For Eeva, the reason people study English was simply the immediate concern to *learn it*. She did not extend her answer to include any uses for these skills.

6.1.3.2 Why do you study English? On growing up, school and obligations

As for the personal reasons for studying English, the main themes in the answers were the same as in the answers for the general question. The children reported that they were studying English for when they visited a foreign country in the future – combining both the themes of **adulthood** and the need to **speak to people abroad**:

(62) MA: No minkäs takia sinä opiskelet englantia?
- No määki halua, jos mää vaikka meen ulkomaille joskus nii, sit mää osaan puhua niitten ihmisten kanssa.
MA: So why do you study English?
- Well I too want, if I for example go abroad some day so, then I will know how to talk to those people.
Mervi Year 5

Mervi reported that the reason she was studying English was that she would need it *abroad*; she referred to the future by saying *some day*. Mervi also stated clearly that English would be used in order to *talk to those people*. Jari shared similar sentiments, answering that he studied English "sen takia että mää voisin käyttää sitä sitte, ulkomailla" (*so that I could then use it, abroad*). He too said English would be needed abroad "sitte", *then*, at some point in the future, but he chose a vaguer verb, *use*, to describe what English would be good for.

The answers were understandably not very precise: many of the children probably did not have any plans for travelling abroad any time soon, and even those that may have had such plans would most likely be travelling with their parents or other adults, who would be responsible for the talking, using and

conversing in English. Travelling abroad and needing to be able to speak English may not have been an immediate concern to the children at this point in their lives. Some children made this point more explicit, emphasising that English skills were something that they would need as grown-ups, without any specific mention of travelling.

(63) MA: No minkäs takia sää opiskelet englantia?
- No et sit aikuisena osaa englantia ((naurahtaa)).
MA: So why do you study English?
- Well so that when I'm grown up I'll know English ((laughter))
Annika Year 5

When asked why she herself was studying English, Annika responded *so that when I'm grown up I'll know English*, implying that English is something adults need. She did not mention any specific needs, so it appears that she continued the theme she had started earlier when asked why people study English (see example 59); the content of the answer was essentially the same. As Annika appeared to take adults' need for English for granted, she was studying English so that she will know it when the need arises as an adult. When asked this same question, Helen put some more of herself in her answer by starting with "mä haluun oppia sitä" (*I want to learn it*) and then giving the reason: "että on helpompaa sitte isona" (*so that it's easier for me when I'm an adult*). Helen, too, thus implied that English would be needed in the adult world.

While speaking abroad and adulthood were popular answers to the question "Why do you study English?", another theme was equally popular: the theme of **obligatoriness**.

(64) MA: No minkäs takia sää opiskelet englantia?
- Noo siks koska sitä on pakko opiskella.
MA: So why do you study English?
- Well coz it's compulsory.
Valtteri Year 5

Valtteri put his reason for studying English quite bluntly by simply stating *coz it's compulsory*. Maija echoed Valtteri's sentiments by saing: "no, sehä oli sillei pakollinen" (*well, it was like obligatory after all).* She softened her answer slightly with the moderating "sillei" (*like*) before pointing out the fact that English is a "pakollinen" (*obligatory*) subject *after all*. Like Valtteri, Maija seemed to imply that studying English was something that was decided for them: the children were "subjected" to English lessons from without.

Obligatoriness is, of course, objectively speaking the "correct" answer to the question. English is an obligatory school subject, and the children have to study it whether they want to or not. It is therefore no wonder that some children struggled to come up with uses and reasons for knowing English: they may never have thought about such things, as their immediate concern with the English language had perhaps revolved around getting through the classes and passing their tests. That was the reality of English studies as it presented itself to these children. Perhaps knowing English would appear in a different light

only when the children grew older and entered the world of adults, who travel abroad, have jobs that require language skills and need to speak to foreigners. A similar reason may also have been behind the answers of those children who simply answered this question with "emmä tiiä" (*I don't know*). A kid's gotta do what a kid's gotta do.

6.1.3.3 How can English be useful to you? On the future, and the games we play

The children mainly associated using English with travelling abroad and with the challenges and obligations of adulthood. These themes seemed to be reflected in the children's answers to the questions dealing with the children's current use of English and their ideas of how English could be useful to them. Interestingly, many of the children appeared to understand the two as being two different things: *using* English did not necessarily mean that they perceived it as *useful*.

When asked how English was useful to them, most children referred to the themes of adulthood and speaking abroad – themes they had earlier reported as uses of English and reasons for studying English– and thus concluded that English was not really useful to them yet.

(65) MA: Mitäs hyötyä englannin kielestä on sulle?
- No jos (minä) ulk- meen sitte isona ulkomaille.
MA: How is English useful to you?
- Well if (I) abr- go abroad then when I'm grown up.
Rauli Year 5

Rauli said English would be useful to him when *grown up* and referred to a place where English skills might come in handy, *abroad*. Rauli may have associated the usefulness of English quite strongly with travelling abroad, as he said *if I go*, hinting that skills in English would really only be useful abroad. He did not specify a function, however, unlike Eeva, who said English might be useful to her if "sitte jos joskus vaikka tarvii englantia nii osaa puhua sitä" (*if you need English one day then you will know how to speak it*). Eeva felt English skills were something she might *need* in the future, saying a need for English might arise *one day*. She also associated usefulness with speaking English, *knows how to speak it*. Eeva thus seemed to hold on to the idea that English is something adults need and something that is spoken.

Some of the children did find English useful already, however.

(66) MA: No mitäs hyötyä englannista on sulle?
- Katoo, meil on tuttuja Ruotsissa ja mä en osaa ruotsia nii sit mää voin niitten kanssa puhua englanniks.
MA: So how is English useful to you?
- See, we have these friends in Sweden and I don't know Swedish so then I can talk to them in English.
Mervi Year 5

Mervi based her answer on the idea that English is for speaking abroad (or at least with foreigners), she has *friends in Sweden* and she could now *talk to them in English* as she did not know Swedish. Unlike Eeva and Rauli (see example 65), however, Mervi did not seem to be talking about an incident in the distant future; her answer, firmly in the present tense, suggested that meeting these friends could perfectly well happen at any time, proving that English skills were indeed useful.

Valtteri was one of the very few children who regarded their own use of English as the basis for its usefulness: he described what he actually used English for in his everyday life.

(67) MA: No mitäs hyötyä englannista on sulle?
- No mää ymmärrän niinku ku jos mää pelaa jotai, tietokonepelejä nii niistä ymmärtää sitte melkein kaikki ja … jos jää vaikka joku sellane elokuva tai joku pikkunen ohjelma missä ei oo tekstityksi- nn tystä nii siitä ymmärtää sen yleisjuonen kumminki sillee.
MA: So how is English useful to you?
- Well I understand like if I play something, computer games so then you can understand almost everything and, if there is like a movie or a little programme that doesn't have subtitles then you can understand the overall storyline anyway.
Valtteri Year 5

Valtteri said he would *play… computer games* and said English was useful as *you can understand almost everything* when playing. He also pointed out that English would help with a *movie* or a *programme* without *subtitles*, as one would *understand the overall storyline anyway*. He was most likely referring to English-language movies and programmes and to how one would understand enough of the spoken language to be able to keep up with what was happening.

6.1.3.4 Do you use English, need it for anything, and what's the difference?

If the most important reason to English is talking to foreigners abroad, it is understandable that many of the children did not feel that they used English anywhere. The exception to this was, understandably, school: English lessons were a weekly occurrence for the children and were referred to in the interview.

(68) MA: Onkos sulle englannist hyötyä nyt tällä hetkellä käytäksää tällä hetkellä englantia johonki?
- No englannin tunneilla (nyt) tietysti, vähäsen.
MA: Is English useful to you at the moment, do you use English for anything now?
- Well in English lessons (now) of course, a bit.
Matti Year 5

Matti reported that he used English at school, *in English lessons*. He, too, had mentioned speaking abroad earlier (see example 110), but also seemed to consider studying a form of English use, even adding *of course*. However, he did also add *a bit* at the end, so he may not have been referring to all activities in lessons; as English was viewed as something to be spoken, Matti may have been thinking about, for example, dialogue exercises, where the children would

speak English. Such activities would perhaps constitute using English, while, say, gap-fill exercises would not.

(69) MA: No tota, öö mitäs hyötyä englannin kielestä on sulle tällä hetkellä? /Käy/täksää sitä jossain?
- /No/, emmä just nyt käytä missää että.
MA: Well, er how is English useful to you at the moment? Do you /use/ it anywhere?
- /Well/, I don't use [it] anywhere right now so.
Sanna Year 5

Sanna simply stated that *I don't use [it] anywhere right now*. If Sanna, too, thought that the use of English means speaking it with foreigners (as example 57 seems to indicate) she may have meant that there simply were no foreigners in her life at the moment, nor had she any plans to travel abroad any time soon. On the other hand, she also specified that she does not use English *right now*, which raises the question of the time frame. Did Sanna think of that day, that week, or the near future, instead of the more general "at this point in your life" the interviewer had thought of when using the phrase "at the moment" in the question? Perhaps some further probing might have revealed more about Sanna's current use of English – or perhaps Sanna thought English would prove useful when she grew up.

Another theme that often came up was that of pen friends and letter-writing, a deviation from the theme that the use of English denotes speaking.

(70) MA: No tarviiksää englannin kieltä johonki tällä hetkellä?
- No koulussa ainaki ja sitte, mulla oli semmonen kirjeenvaihtokaveri Ranskassa nii sille piti kirjottaa englanniksi.
MA: So do you need English for anything at the moment?
- Well at school at least and then, I had like a pen-friend in France so I had to write to her/him in English.
Eeva Year 5

Eeva began by mentioning the need to use English at school, *at school at least*, presumably referring to English lessons. She then brought up a more personal experience and said *I had like a pen-friend in France*, and reported that *I had to write to him/her in English*. Writing letters in English thus constituted using the language in Eeva's opinion. Interestingly, Eeva spoke of her pen-friend in the past tense (*I had*), so it is not clear if the two were still in contact. However, the letter writing experiences were apparently sufficiently close to the time of the interview that she deemed them worth mentioning.

The school had foreign visitors (exchange teachers from Spain and France) around the time of the interview, and they merited a mention in many answers too: after all, English is a language in which you can talk to foreigners:

(71) MA: No tarviksää sitä englannin kieltä johonkin tällä hetkellä?
- No sinne tunneille.
MA: Joo//
- Ja nyt meil on espanjalaisia ja ranskalaisia täällä koulussa käymässä niin, niitten kanssa jos haluaa jutella niin siihen sitte.
MA: So do you need English for anything at the moment?
- Well for lessons.

MA: Yeah//
- And now we have Spanish and French [people] visiting here at school so, if you want to talk to them then for that.
Mervi Year 5

Mervi, too, first mentioned the somewhat obvious: *well for lessons*, referring to the use of English at school. She then continued in the school world and talked about *Spanish and French [people]* who were *visiting* the school, and pointed out that *if you want to talk to them then for that*. The English language thus functioned as a tool of communication, should one wish to have a chat with the foreign visitors.

Some children reported that they did use their English skills for communicative purposes – though not with foreigners. Perhaps this is why these children first denied using English anywhere, and only then added their experiences; they may have felt that as English was a language that one used to speak to foreigners abroad, their own uses were not as appropriate.

(72) MA: Noo tarviksää englannin kieltä jossakin just tällä hetkellä?
- En.
MA: Et käytä sitä missään.
- En, /pait/si joskus välkillä.
MA: /Joo/, aha, mitä te välkillä sillä teette?
- Me puhutaan joskus mun kaverin kanssa.
MA: So do you need English for anything at the moment?
- No.
MA: You don't use it anywhere.
- No, /exc/ept sometimes in the break.
MA: /Yeah/, ah, what do you do with it in the break?
- I sometimes speak [it] with my friend.
Emma Year 5

Emma initially said that she did not need English, but then added that she did use it *sometimes in the break*. When asked how she used English in the break, she replied *I sometimes talk with my friend*. Emma thus used her English skills in the school environment, but voluntarily, in the break (interestingly, she did not refer to lessons at all – perhaps studying English did not constitute using it in her opinion). Whether Emma and her friend mocked the language or felt using it was cool is not known, but they were playing around with the English language nonetheless, putting it into use in their own lives. Maija (see example 107) used English outside school, too, at home. While she, too, started by saying that *I don't really need it as such*, she went on to say that she sometimes used English when *when (I) want to go somewhere and my little sister can't come along*. She would then *tell my mom*, indicating "in English", and as her little sister apparently did not know English yet, she would not understand what was being said – and Maija could go on her merry way without her little sister tagging along. Maija seemed, in a way, to use English to associate herself with the more adult group of people who know English and to exclude her little sister, who did not know the language yet. However, such a use did not *specifically* stem from a *need* for English.

Children thus seemed to feel that they did not "specifically need" English for anything at the time of the interview and it was mostly seen as a school subject. Jari's answer to the question may highlight how even the other children viewed their own use of English:

(73) MA: No tota, onkos englannista sulle nyt tällä hetkellä jotai hyötyä, käytäksää sitä jossai?
- No ei tällä hetkellä, mutta, varmaan tulevina vuosina kylläkin.
MA: Well er, is English useful to you at the moment, do you use it anywhere?
- Well not at the moment, but, I probably will in the coming years.
Jari Year 5

If English really was something the children primarily associated with the adult world (as well as with speaking abroad), it was no wonder they did not feel as if they had any "real" use for it yet. Jari said that he did not use English *at the moment*, but added *I probably will in the coming years*, suggesting that while using English was not relevant to his life now, the need for English skills might (and *probably* would) arise in the future.

However, one of the most interesting points about the answers to the question "Do you have any uses for English at the moment?" was what was *not* mentioned. Later on in the interview the use of English was discussed in many more specific ways: most notably, the children were asked whether they played English language computer games or Play Station games, and the vast majority of them said yes. Most of them also listened to English language pop or rock music, and all the children watched English programmes on television (although most of them did say that they did not listen to the language but relied on subtitles). Still, few children mentioned any of these things when asked if they used English in any way yet.

Sometimes it also seemed (see e.g. example 72) that the word "need" suggested to the children that the interviewer was after something more grand and important than what they were doing with English. Perhaps this, too, is an extension of the idea that English is to be spoken abroad and that is what one *needs* it for. It seemed that the best way to find out what the children did with English was to ask precisely that. Maybe the computer games and television shows would have made it into the children's answers had the question been posed more directly, without the suggestion of a pressing *need* for English?

6.1.3.5 How does one learn English? On the power of the printed word

The theme most strongly associated with how one learns English was that of **written language**. The children's answers to questions about how English is learnt indicated that English learning was mostly viewed as a literary pursuit – predominantly a question of reading; printed texts, lists of words, dictionaries and school books.

(74) MA: No, mitenkäs englantia opiskellaan jos joku haluaa oikei hyvin oppia englantia nii mitä sen kannattaa tehdä?
- Lukee niitä sanoja ja harjotella kirjottamaan niitä.

MA: Well, how does a person study English if they want to learn English really well what should they do?
- Read the words and practise how to write them.
Emma Year 5

Many felt the best way of learning English was to *read*[19]. Emma also specified what one should read – *the words* – and added it would also be a good idea to *practise how to write them*. Eeva's answer was concise: when asked what one should do in order to learn English, she said "Kannattaa lukee paljo" (*One should read a lot*). Both girls thus conceptualised the business of learning through written language, and reading in particular.

Other children associated the learning process not only with reading, but also with school books: the stuff to be learnt was to be found in the book.

(75) MA: Mitenkäs englantia opiskellaan et jos oikein hyvin haluaa oppia englantia niin mitä sillon kannattaa tehdä?
- No lukee kaikki kappaleen sanat ja sellasii, (yleensä) kaikki mitä on tullu nii tosi hyvin, sellasta.
MA: How does a person study English if they want to learn English really well what should they then do?
- Well read all the vocabulary for the chapter and so on, (generally) everything that [has been taught] really well, like that.
Annika Year 5

Annika was quite explicit with her references to school: she talked about the *vocabulary for the chapter* that would be found in the English text book. She also specifically referred to lessons and teaching by saying that one should also read *everything that has been taught* (literally: *everything that has come,* been dealt with), and do it *really well*, too. Maija, in turn, said that in order to learn English one should "No lukee läksyt ja sitte, ää, osata, paljon sanoja ja tämmösiä, ja kaikki kielioppiasiat" (*Well read your homework and then, er, know, a lot of words and stuff, and all the grammar).* She pointed out that one should read one's *homework* diligently and that it would also be a good idea to *know a lot of words… and all the grammar* – both things that are taught during English lessons at school. Maija and Annika both used the verb *to read* as an answer to the question "what should one do in order to learn". They also closely associated learning with school. Learning was thus discussed in terms of reading and in connection with text books, chapters and writing.

Another strong theme was the theme of **teaching** – teachers, school and courses. Many of the children felt that in order to learn English one should have someone teach one.

(76) MA: Mitenkäs englantia opiskellaan et jos oikein hyvi haluaa oppia englantia niin mitä sillon kannattaa tehdä?
- No sitte kannattaa mennä opiskelemaan sitä kouluun.

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19 It should be pointed out, however, that the verb "to read" can in some cases be used as an equivalent for the verb "to study" in Finnish; it is therefore not always clear which of the two the children mean. On the other hand, the fact that reading is used to mean studying of course speaks volumes about the way in which studying and learning are conceptualised!

MA: How does a person study English if they want to learn English really well what should they do?
- Well they should go study it at school.
Sakari Year 5

In Sakari's opinion the best way to learn English was simply to *go study it at school* – he did not speak out in any way about how the studying itself would take place, only that it would happen at school. Helen answered along similar lines, saying that in order to learn English one should "Mennä jollekki kielikurssille missä on hyvät opettajat" (*Go on a language course with good teachers*). She too felt that an arranged *language course* would be the ticket and added that *good teachers* were needed too. Both Sakari and Helen, in fact, appeared to attribute learning to external factors at this point, focusing on the environment of learning, and not talking about how the learner him/herself could further their own learning.

However, the theme of written language appeared to take precedence even when children initially talked of the importance of school and teachers: when the children were asked if it was possible to learn English without the help of a teacher, the way to go, according to the children, was to refer to books and other written sources.

(78) MA: Voikos englantia oppia ilman opettajaa?
- Voi.
MA: Mitenkäs se onnistus ilman opettajan apua?
- No ottaa vaikka jonku paperin missä on sanoja ja sitte, lukee niitä vähä aikaa ja sitte, laittaa ne piiloo ja, yrittää niinku, niis on niinku ne, vieressä sellaset ihme, mitä ne o suomeksi sitte (ja --).
MA: Can English be learnt withouth a teacher?
- Yes.
MA: How could it be done without the help of a teacher?
- Well one can for example take a piece of paper with words on it and then, read them for a while and then, hide them and, try like, next to them are like those things, what they are in Finnish then (and ---).
Sakari Year 5

When asked how English could be learnt without the help of a teacher, Sakari gave a detailed description, apparently for learning words: one starts with *a piece of paper with words on it* – probably referring to English words – and *read(s) them for a while*. He then went on to point out that the Finnish equivalents would be next to the English words: *next to them… what they are in Finnish* and never really got around to explaining what it was that one was *try(ing*) – most likely he meant trying to remember the English words when the Finnish equivalents were shown. Sakari thus seemed to feel that the most important thing to do if one did not have a teacher around was to memorise English vocabulary. Aku, when asked how English could be learnt without the help of a teacher, put his answer very succinctly: if one wanted to learn English without a teacher, they should "Ostaa enkun kirjan" (*Buy an English [text]book*). He thus indicated that whatever was to be learnt would be found printed in the book.

A third theme, brought up by only a few children, was the usefulness of extra-curricular activities, doing something of one's own accord outside the classroom and unrelated to homework obligations:

(79) MA: Mitenkäs englantia opiskellaan et jos oikein hyvin haluaa oppia englantia niin mitä kannattaa tehdä?
- Noo, ensiksi kannattaa tehä englanninkielisiä tehtäviä ja, lukee englantilaisia satuja vaikka, ja tämmösiä.
MA: How does a person study English if they want to learn English really well what should they do?
- Well, first they should do English exercises and, read for example English fairy tales, and stuff like that.
Mervi Year 5

Mervi started with the idea that going to lessons would be useful: she said that *they should do English exercises*, tying learning to school and books, and specifying that this was what one should do *first*. She then went on to say that another useful activity would be to *read English fairy tales*, which could be thought to be a way of practising one's English skills outside the classroom; note that also Mervi considered reading to be a worthwhile activity and thus felt that language in its written form would be particularly useful in learning. Jari took another position and answered "No, opiskella paljo ja, kuunnella jotai, ohjelmia ja sitte, siitä osais sitte jotaki, ymmärtämään (tai jotain vastaavaa)" (*Well, study a lot and, listen to some, programmes and then, you could begin to, understand (or something like that)).* In addition to the vague *study*, which most likely refers to reading and revising for tests, he added that it would be a good idea to *listen to some programmes* in order to learn how to *understand* English. He thus made a clear reference to spoken language.

The fact that very few children mentioned activities outside the classroom cannot necessarily be taken to mean that the children did not feel that doing such things in one's free time might not be useful. It may be that as the interviews were done at school, during English lessons, and started with questions about studying, the children immediately interpreted this question to mean school-related activities. Questions about the children's use of English in their free time were asked only later.

6.1.3.6 How do you study English? On classrooms and teachers

The emphasis on both written language and the world of school was also evident when the children were asked how they themselves studied English. Often the children explained what was done in class and what kinds of things they had as homework.

(80) MA: No mitenkäs sää opiskelet englantia?
- No, englannin tunneilla siellä, tehdään työkirjatehtäviä ja, kirjotetaan vihkoon uusia asioita ja, kotona mää sitte luen niitä, kirjotettuja ja, teen kaikenlaista, mitä, tunnilla on opetettu.
MA: So how do you study English?

- Well, during English lessons we, do exercises in the book and, write new things down in the exercise book and, at home I then read them, the things written down and, do all sorts of things, that, were taught in class.
Helen Year 5

Helen's answer was firmly rooted in the literary school world. She started with lessons where the pupils *do exercises in the book and write new things down in the exercise book*, both writing activities. At home Helen said she reread what she had earlier written in class, *read them, the things written down*. She finished off with the vague *do all sorts of things,* so it is not certain whether she was referring to reading, writing or speaking, but she did define her "all sorts" by saying that they were *that were taught in class* – presumably she thus meant looking back over what had been done in class. Maija also gave a short description of what studying English was like: "No koulussa ne kaikki mitä tunnilla tehään ja, sitte kotona läksyt ja, tietenki kokeita sitte" (*Well at school I do everything we do in class and, then at home I do the homework, and then of course exams).* All the activities she described - *everything we do in class, homework, exams* – were part and parcel of studying English at school.

Here the theme of teaching also emerged: in this context it appeared to mean that learning simply depended on what the teacher did.

(81) MA: No, mitenkäs sää opiskelet englantia?
- . Sillei että opettaja opettaa.
MA: So, how do you study English?
- . So that the teacher teaches.
Sakari Year 5

After a pregnant pause, Sakari put his strategy for learning English very briefly: *the teacher teaches*. He did not take any active role himself and gave the impression that he was just there to be taught.

6.1.3.7 English outside the classroom: on play and study

At the end of the interview, the children were asked about various ways in which English might be used outside of the classroom; as said above, few children volunteered these ideas when asked about how English could be learnt. They were asked whether they play computer or Play Station games, listen to English language music, read English comics or books and watch English language television programmes. Not surprisingly, the answer given to virtually all of these questions was yes. The children's opinions regarding the usefulness of these activities in learning English were divided, however. Some children were not particularly optimistic, as they felt learning would require a kind of **deliberateness** not necessarily present in extra-curricular activities done just for fun:

(82) MA: Kuunteleksää ollenkaan sitä englanninkielistä puhetta vai lueksää vaan tekstejä?
- No joskus kuuntelen joskus mutta, mm, kyllä siitä ehkä silleen on hyötyä että niinku siitä kuulee mutta, ei siinä kun niinku kattoo nii ei siinä tuu sillee ajateltua että, niinku jotai englannin tunteja (tai silleen).

MA: Do you ever listen to the people talking English or do you just read the subtitles?
- Well sometimes I listen sometimes but, mm, it might be useful in that you hear from it, but, you don't, like when you're watching it you don't think about, like English lessons (or anything like that).
Eeva Year 5

Eeva pondered over the usefulness of English-language television programmes when asked about her own activities – she figured *it might be useful in that you hear from it*, probably meaning you hear English being spoken. However, Eeva did not think that *watching it* – television – would help after all, because when watching, *you don't think about English lessons*. She thus implied that in order to learn from the English in television programmes, one should actively think about *English lessons*, learning. Helen discussed whether listening to English-language music could be useful for learning English: "Nno voi siitä jos on kiinnostunu siitä nii sitte voi olla mutta, jos sitä vaan kuuntelee nii ei se sitte auta" (*Well it can be if you're interested but, if you just listen to it then it doesn't help*). She thus felt that listening to English lyrics *can be* useful, provided that *you're interested* in it. *If you just listen to it*, without the required interest, it would not be of any use; *then it doesn't help*. Interest would seem to amount to some kind of attention not present in "just listening". Helen and Eeva felt that activities like watching television or listening to music were not useful, because when one is doing them, one is having fun and not concentrating on the language. Learning was thus considered to at least require attention, if not to be a downright serious business.

Although many children viewed leisure activities as useful, their opinions were clearly divided between the value of written and spoken forms of English. Computer games and reading were considered potentially helpful, listening to music and watching television programmes were not. Emphasis on the idea that learning takes place predominantly through the written form of the language was thus evident here, too. The most helpful form of English language entertainment, according to the children, was Play Station or computer games. Many of the children had found they had themselves learnt something new when playing.

(83) MA: No tota luuleksää et noitten tietokonepelien tai pleikkaripelien pelaamisesta vois olla hyötyä enkun opinnoissa?
- Joo kyllähän sitä sitten ku, niinkun, jotain pelaat ja, sitten tota noin, tulee joku semmonen mitä et tiiä nii tulee sit ehkä helposti katottua jostain et mitä tai kysyttyä et mitä se tarkottaa ja sitte osaa aina jotai lisää ja, sillei.
MA: Well er do you think that playing those computer or Play Station games could be useful in one's English studies?
- Yes I mean you do when, like, you're playing something and, then like, there's something you don't know you might look it up or ask what it means and then you know something more again and, like that.
Annika Year 5

Annika felt that when playing, if one encounters *something you don't know*, *you may well* do something about it, *look it up or ask what it means*. This way, *then you know something more again*. Valtteri agreed when asked whether computer

games could be useful: "On oikeestaan niistä oppii sitte niinku, jos tulee joku sana vastaan ni sit voi kysyä vaikka vanhemmilta että mitä se tarkottaa ja sitte oppii taas sanan" (*Yes they are actually you learns from then when, like, if there's a word then you can ask for example your parents what it means and then learn a word again*.). Computer games *actually* are useful, because *you learn from them*. An example of such learning would be *if there's a word*, apparently a word you do not know, *you can ask for example your parents what it means*. After one's parents have provided the answer, *then (you) learn a word again*. Many children thus seemed to feel that computer games might be helpful because one needs and wants to understand what is going on in order to be able to play the game. This would give one the impetus to find out the meaning of words one does not understand and thus provide an opportunity to learn new words, even if what one wants to accomplish is to defeat the enemy or to solve the riddle, not to learn English.

Reading books or comics was considered useful for learning English, too, even though very few of the children had done it themselves. This is probably why the answers were often more vague than the answers that involved computer games.

(84) MA: Voisko tommosesta lukemisesta olla enkun opinnoissa jotai hyötyä?
- Mm no siitä vois olla aika paljonki.
MA: Joo miten se on hyödyllistä?
- No ku siinä tietysti voi oppia uusia sanoja, ja, muutenki.
MA: Could that kind of reading be useful for one's English studies?
- Mm well it could be useful quite a bit.
MA: Yeah how could it be of use?
- Well coz you can learn new words of course, and, in other ways, too.
Jonne Year 5

Jonne said that reading English books or comics might be helpful, because *you can learn new words of course*, in addition to the vague *in other ways, too*. When asked the same question, Jari was more cautious and said "Kyllähän siitäki saattaa olla apua" *(Well it too might be useful).* When asked what one might learn by reading, Jari said: "No, kaikkee erilaisia lauseita mitä sitte, voi vaikka käyttää ulkona (ja), ku puhuu" *(Well, all different kinds of sentences that you could then, like use outside (and), when talking).* By reading books or comics one could learn *all different kinds of sentences*, and then *use outside… when talking*. The literary activity of reading for pleasure would lead to competence in spoken English, according to Jari.

The children were far less optimistic about the learning opportunities provided by spoken (or sung, as the case may be) English. The oral language of television programmes and pop music was not considered to be as useful.

(85) MA: Luuleksää et siitä televisio-ohjelmien katselusta vois olla hyötyä enkun opinnoissa?
- Emmää oikeestaan että, si- sillee että, ku mää luen niitä sanoja että mä en yleensä kuuntele sitä englannin kieltä siinä, nii sitte, ei siinä oikee mulle oo hyötyä.
MA: Do you think watching English language television programmes might help in one's English studies?

- I don't really in that, like, when I read the words I don't usually listen to the English in it, so, it's not really useful to me.
Jonne Year 5

Jonne talked of English language television programmes and used himself as an example: watching television was not helpful to him because *when I read the [subtitles]… I don't usually listen to the English*, suggesting that you should really do both – pay attention to the language and read the subtitles to see how they compare – in order to learn something from the programmes (Eeva, of course, made a similar point in example 82). Maija, in turn, did not think listening to music sung in English would be very helpful: "Mm, emmää tiiä ku jotkut laulaa iha älyttömän nopeesti nii ei sit niistä kerkeä saaha mitää selvää" (*Mm, I dunno coz some sing so ridiculously quickly that you can't make out at all what they are saying.)*. Perhaps the children needed to see the word to get a grasp of it and to be able to translate it with the help of a dictionary (or to show it to a family member); spoken language is not tangible in the same way and it might be difficult to guess how a given word is written if one has only heard it sung, hence making it difficult to find in a dictionary. Oral forms of English language entertainment also do not require understanding in the same way as reading or playing games do: one can perfectly well listen to music even if one does not understand the lyrics, and English television programmes have Finnish subtitles. There is thus also less motivation to pay attention to the English language forms.

The children's opinions about which extracurricular activities help one's English studies is in harmony with how they perceived studying and learning English in general. Written language and reading were considered to be beneficial, as in books and comics, and in games where directions and other information are usually written (even if the same information is often spoken too and can be heard over loudspeakers), whereas spoken English was considered a little too challenging to deal with.

6.1.4 The whys and hows of English learning from Year 1 to Year 5

In this section I shall summerise the themes found in the data and how the themes changed and developed over time within each topic: *Why?* and *How*? The *Why?* themes here are divided into "general" and "me" in accordance with whether the question was asked in in general terms (why do people study English; why is English useful?) or in the second person singular (why do you study English, how could English be useful to you?). The two ways of asking the question, whether accidentally, as in Year 3, or deliberately, as in Year 5, did produce fairly consistent differences in the themes taken up by the children in their answers. The two aspects of why are thus dealt with separately.

6.1.4.1 Why, generally speaking

There were virtually no changes in the themes mentioned in connection with the general *Why*? topic from the Year 1 to Year 5 (see Figures 3-5). The themes

the children mentioned when attributing reasons to why "people" study English or how English could be useful were always the same: speaking with foreigners and adulthood. There were minor changes in the subthemes, however: for example a subtheme of adulthood, working life, was not mentioned in Year 1 but made an appearance in Year 3 as well as in Year 5. In Year 5 some children associated travelling also with work, not only recreation, and they extended the usefulness of English explicitly from speaking to also understanding English. While the themes remained the same, they did thus appear to become more specific. Instead of a general statement like “one needs English to speak abroad", the children started to come up with more concrete examples of why one might end up abroad and need to speak there. It seemed that in Year 5 working life often emerged as a theme connecting adulthood and speaking with foreigners.

It thus seems that the germs of these conceptions were there from the beginning and that they kept growing over the years as the children accumulated more information. The more general statements began to include more concrete ideas about why English is useful – what a general statement like "so they can speak abroad" actually meant in practice.

FIGURE 3 Themes accociated with the Why/general topic in Year 1

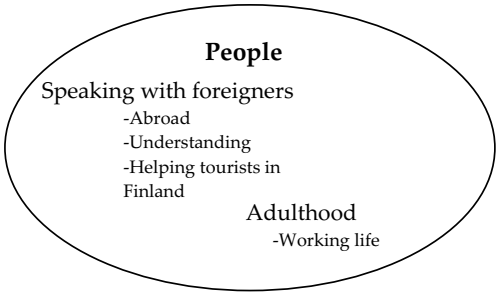

FIGURE 4 Themes accociated with the Why/general topic in Year 3

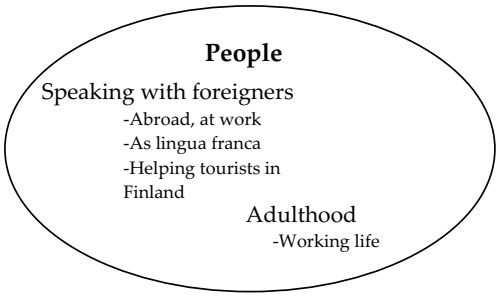

FIGURE 5 Themes accociated with the Why/general topic in Year 5

6.1.4.2 So why do you?

The children's own reasons for studying English (or more specifically, their answers to questions asked in the second person singular on this topic) did change over the years, not least in the sense that they began to talk about their motives in the first place. The learners started to attribute reasons for their studies in Year 3; in Year 1 most of them still had a very casual attitude towards the idea of studying English. In Year 1 (see Figure 6), the motives the children talked about were very similar to the general reasons they gave, like speaking abroad; the difference was that the children felt that these reasons by and large did not affect them yet: they were a thing of the future. Many children were also indifferent with regard to English studies, which may be another way of seeing them as something that was not yet relevant. There was also the theme of group membership, either in the sense that the child's significant others all knew English and he/she wanted to become part of the knowers' group too, or because it was perceived that English knowledge was something that one would need at some point in one's life anyway – or in the sense that it was undesirable to know English as someone, for whom the child apparently had no respect, knew it!

In Year 3 (see Figure 7), the beginning of English studies came up in connection with the children's motives: while the children still talked about future English needs that might arise, they also pointed out that they studied English because they had to *choose* a language in Year 3 anyway. Current demands in their lives thus added to the more theoretical reasons that mainly related to the future. Another current motive that made its way into the children's answers was the use of English in their free time: many children played computer and Play Station games and some looked forward to reading in English. Apart from these additions, the themes remained the same, although the idea of what need there might be for English in the future did become more extensive.

The Year 5 answers were very interesting as the theme of *choice* had now become the theme of *obligatoriness*. In Year 3 the children presented the matter in more positive terms, as it were: true, they did have to choose a foreign language, but still there was a more open attitude towards it, the word choices emphasising options and their own choices. By Year 5 English had turned into a compulsory subject, and the children talked of it more in terms of something given from without, something that was beyond their control and that they were in a way subjected to. This need not mean that the children resented English studies, necessarily: it is after all true that English was an obligatory school subject for them and they may simply have recognised the fact that this was the primary reason for their studies. The motives involving adulthood and working life seemed still far away, and they were also secondary to the present necessity of making it through school: current needs thus seemed to outweigh future prospects. Other current concerns included recreational needs, which had also expanded a little from Year 3, and these now featured things like television programmes and international pen-friends. The theme of group

membership had also changed in that the children now viewed themselves more as members of the group in the know and even used English to exclude for example younger siblings from their conversations. It seemed that at least one of their aspirations had thus become reality, and instead of yearning to be in the group of those who knew English, the children now flaunted the fact that they *were* in the group. (see Figure 8)

Regardless of the Year, there was always some overflow from the general reasons to the personal over the years. The children gave similar reasons for their own studies as they attributed to people in general, most notable being the theme of speaking with foreigners (see Figures 9-11). Over the years their own reasons for studying English and needs for English appeared to become more similar to those of "people": as adulthood crept closer, the adult uses of English perhaps began to look relevant to the children, too. The demands of working life appeared in Year 3 and sometimes became the link connecting adulthood and the need for English. Speaking abroad also began to be linked with the future more specifically, and also with working life. The future and its demands thus became a common factor, connecting general reasons with the reasons with which the children themselves identified.

It appeared then that, over time, the "general" themes influenced the "me" themes. The learners began to use the core ideas of *speaking abroad* and *working life* also as their own, primary reasons for learning English. While the two theme groups did converge, they also remained distinct in certain ways: when the learners were asked about the motives *people* had for studying English, recreational language uses never got a mention. The new reasons that appeared over time as the learners were asked to explain why they themselves studied English did not affect the general reasons: the reasons of *people* and *me* always remained separate to some degree.

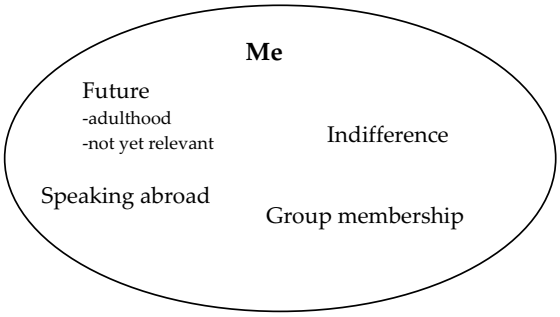

FIGURE 6 Themes accociated with the Why/you topic in Year 1

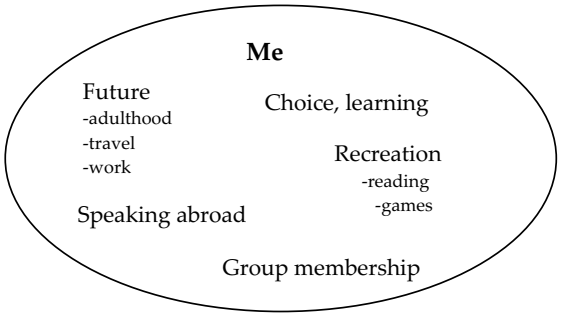

FIGURE 7 Themes accociated with the Why/you topic in Year 3

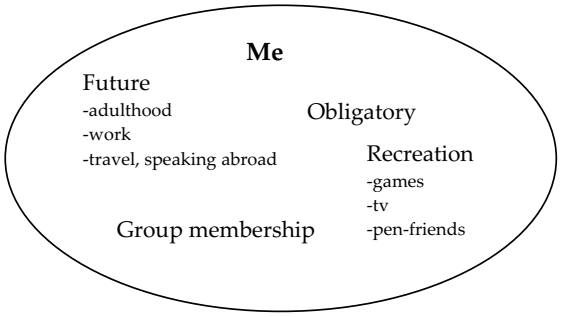

FIGURE 8 Themes accociated with the Why/you topic in Year 5

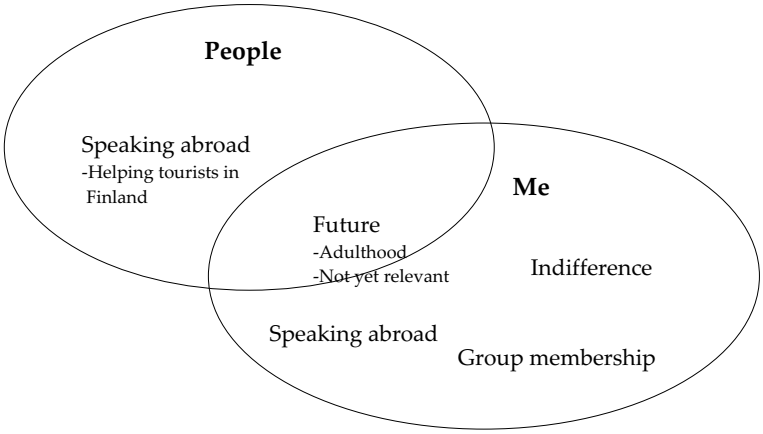

FIGURE 9 Overlap of themes accociated with the Why topic in Year 1

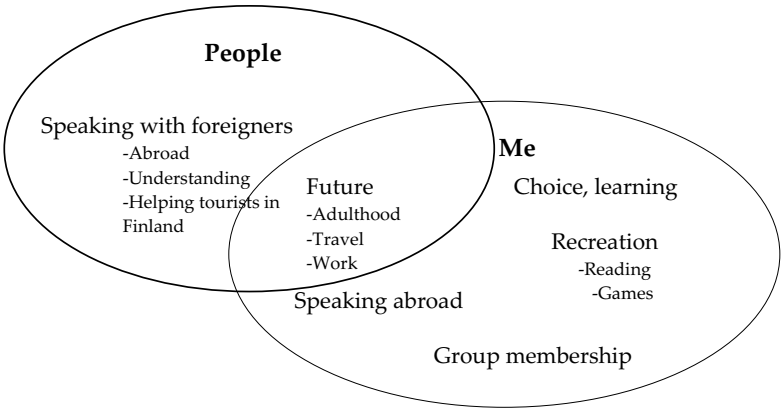

FIGURE 10 Overlap of themes accociated with the Why topic in Year 3

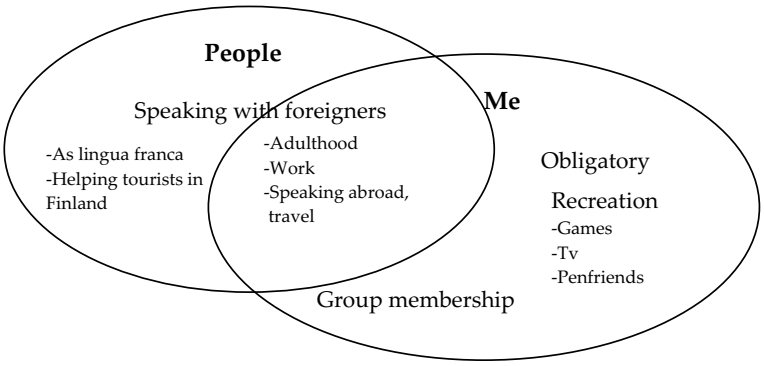

FIGURE 11 Overlap of themes accociated with the Why topic in Year 5

6.1.4.3 How is English learnt?

Changes within the topic "How is English learnt?" appeared to follow the children's life experiences with foreign languages and English studies. They changed from carefree travel and English clubs in Year 1, to the more organised language classes at school in Years 3 and 5 of school. As time passed, the themes brought up became more and more closely associated with school and its activities. Also the sources that were considered relevant for the learning of English became more and more bookish over time, while the role of other people diminished (see Table 2 for a summary).

TABLE 2 Summary of themes associated with the How topic in the first, third, and fifth year

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>1st Year</th><th>3rd Year</th><th>5th Year</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">How</td><td rowspan="2">- Significant others teach
- Books, cards
- English clubs, lessons
- Learning English is difficult</td><td>At school:
- Speak another language in class
- Homework: writing
- Countable units: pages, exercises; words
- Learn grammar
- Teacher teaches</td><td>General:
- Read: homework, words, grammar; also for recreation
- School, teachers
- Books, exercises
- Study hard
- Also a function of talent</td></tr>
<tr><td>At home:
- Help from significant others
- Written materials: cards, books, dictionaries
- Computer games
- TV</td><td>You:
- Attend classes
- Do homework
- "Teacher teaches"
- Computer games
- Reading
- Significant others can be consulted</td></tr>
</table>

In Year 1, the children's ideas about language learning were rather vague, but also very open; they included many things in the children's lives that featured English in one way or another. English could be learnt in various places and by various means; one could have another person teach one, attend an English club or use a card game. The role of other people was quite prominent: parents would teach their children some English, or the children would learn a few words from a friend who knew a foreign language. Even the written material mentioned (books, cards) were usually put to use in co-operation with a significant other. Most of the children expected to learn a foreign language at some point in the future and appeared to be aware that it would come up at school, but at the same time, they seemed fairly sure that learning English would be difficult. While the children appeared to feel that many and varied

things could help one to learn English, the most common answer to "how" was still: we'll see, it's in the future.

In Year 3, the children's ideas revolved around the world of school and were very concrete, closely connected to their recent experiences with learning English. Learning English was mostly conceptualised through the structures of school work: chapters, books, words, exams. When asked about using or studying English at home, most learners talked about homework - an extension of school work. The young learners did not bring up recreational English much unless specifically asked, and the idea that school was the place for learning and offered the tools for learning was quite strong. Some children appeared to be very comfortable with using English, and many played computer games or Play Station games in English. Such uses were, however, considered to be more fun than educational. One of the most important resources for learning English appeared to be the learners' significant others: the learners often borrowed the views of their parents, quoting their words, and the learners reported that their parents or older siblings helped them with their English studies. In addition to the growing influence of the teacher at school, family members still had a role to play in helping the learners learn English.

Over the years studying English became ever more closely associated with school. In Year 5 usually only the teacher was mentioned as a significant person in the language learning process, in addition to the learner him/herself. The role of parents and other helpers had thus diminished and they were typically only presented as a possible source of help should help be needed. Also the activities at home became more and more defined by school work: most discussion regarding the learning of English outside the classroom centred round homework. Also, even the more recreational uses of English at home seemed to be influenced by the school world and its emphasis on written language. The written text in computer games and books was considered far more relevant for learning than the English heard on television or in music; memorising and translating printed words may have felt more like "real studying" than the fleeting spoken words that they would not necessarily even be able to spell. By Year 5, learning English had thus become almost determined by the practices of school: school and the picture it gave of English and language learning had become the norm through which other activities were seen. Learners started to portray the learning of English as taking place more and more definitely at school and through school-like activities. In their 2005 study, Dufva & Alanen show how the teacher's words in the classroom emphasised the importance of books and texts; Dufva & Alanen (2005: 105) note that the school context does not simply add to the children's knowledge reservoir but also modifies it. This certainly seemed to be true also in the data of the present study. As the learners gained more and more experience of classroom life, their descriptions of language learning began to focus more and more on written texts and school activities, and at the same time, they also became more and more alike. The ideas mediated by school practices seemed to override other ideas (Dufva & Alanen 2005: 104).

The role of significant others changed from the first to the fifth year. In Year 1, significant others were teachers and knowers: they knew English (or some other foreign language) and had perhaps taught the children some words or expressions. In Year 3, the significant others still had a prominent role to play: the children often referred to them when answering questions. Often they appeared to be the source of the children's answers, someone "in the know" who the children appealed to in their answer. It was also evident in the children's answers that many significant others gave the children practical help with their English studies, functioning as living dictionaries, helping to do exercises and giving vocabulary tests. While the actual teaching now belonged to the teacher in the classroom, the significant others also continued to play a part in the children's learning process. In Year 5, the children had become even more independent in their English studies. The significant others were still there in the background, but had now become resources to turn to in need: their help was now solicited, not constant. In some cases it seemed that the children even considered themselves fellow English knowers; speaking English with their parents and thereby excluding younger siblings.

The themes that come up in the interviews reflect the events and environments of the children's lives. In Year 1, the world of experience of English consisted mostly of each participant's family and the occasional contact with English, and then gradually widened to include school, computers, books, and other things, as well as one's own experiments with using English. This varied world of experiences is also reflected in the *polyphony* in the learners' answers; in the voices used and heard.

6.2 Voices

In the previous section, the content of the data were analysed, with an eye to what the children said. In this section the data are examined from another perspective: the focus is on *how* the children said what they said (cf. Dufva & Pöyhönen 1999). What kinds of voices can be heard and how does the polyphony change over the years? Which speech genres are privileged in the learners' answers? How do the learners gradually appropriate and use the voice of the language learner?

6.2.1 Year 1: carefree outsiders

At the time of the first year interviews, the participants were 7-8 years of age. The interviews had a very personal feel to them. The interviews started with questions about the child's home and family, and continued with a very clear focus on the second person singular. Most of the questions were specifically presented in a way that emphasised the children's own thoughts and experiences. There were very few general questions "testing" the child's knowledge about languages.

6.2.1.1 Look what I can do

The children's answers often followed the interviewer's lead: as most questions were presented in the second person singular, the children happily chatted about their own experiences and often added anecdotes featuring their friends and families. Sometimes the answers even appeared to turn into long stretches of stream of consciousness, moving this way and that.

(86) MP: N tota, mitäs vieraita kieliä sä haluaisit oppia?
- No ei mulla silleen oo niinku mitään, mää tahtoisin niinkun, oppia tai tietää tai osata, mutta, kyllä kaikki on niinku ihan kivoja, sillee, pienenä mää ihmettelin, että, miten ne voi ymmärtää niitten omaa kieltä, kun mää luulin että, ei oo niinku muuta kieltä kun suomi että miten ne voi ((naurahtaa)), ymmärtää sitä mitä ne puhuu.
MP: So er, which foreign languages would you like to learn?
- Well I don't really like have any, I'd like to like, learn or know of or know, but, they're all like pretty nice, and that, when I was little I wondered, that, how can they understand their own language, coz I thought that, there like is no other language besides Finnish so that how can they ((laughs)), understand what they're saying.
Maija Year 1

When asked which foreign languages she would like to learn, Maija first shrugged the question off by saying that all languages were *pretty nice*, and then went on to tell a story about herself and how she had wondered about speakers of other languages when she was younger: *how can they understand their own language*. She explained that she had *thought that, there like is no other language besides Finnish*. The question thus sparked a memory that was related to her answer and she went ahead and told the interviewer about it, perhaps to show that even though she did not have an opinion about foreign languages, she had learnt a great deal, and at least she no longer thought that Finnish was the only language in the world! Even when answering essentially "I don't know", she thus brought out her own increasing expertise and voice.

Such long stretches of personal, first-person accounts (also often featuring the child's family) were very common in Year 1; the children volunteered all sorts of information in addition to (or even instead of) the actual answer to the question posed. They would often talk about something related to the question that they were comfortable talking about, instead of, strictly speaking, answering the question. Their words were personal and strong and they happily engaged in the conversation. The utterances often appeared reflect confidence and a carefree attitude: they were straightforward and direct, and there were very few pauses and little hesitation. Some children already voiced their budding expertise in matters related to foreign languages:

(87) HD: … oisko susta kiva opetella, englantia?
- Joo ku mä osaan.
HD: … would you like to learn, English?
- Yeah coz I know it.
Sakari Year 1

Sakari was asked if he would like to learn English and his answer was short and confident: *yeah coz I know it*. He thus indicated that learning English would be

no big deal seeing as he already knew some. Sanna, in turn, discussed her favourite TV shows with the interviewer:

(88) MP: …niin just, näähän on, se on saksankielinen se Elämää se vain,
- Niin on.
MP: ja Dallas on//
- Se on englannin, mutta niis on tota niin tekstit.
MP: Ja sä kerkiit lukee ne?
- Niin, mä oon kauheen nopee lukemaan.
MP: … right, these are, it's a German show, the Elämää se vain[20]*,*
- Yes it is.
MP: and Dallas is//
- It's in English, but they have like these subtitles.
MP: And you manage to read them all?
- Yes, I can read really fast.
Sanna Year1

Sanna made it known that she was very aware of which language was spoken in the TV shows – she confirmed the interviewer's suggestion that the first series was German (*yes it is*) and interrupted the interviewer when she referred to the TV show *Dallas*, pointing out *it's in English*. Sanna thus brought her knowledge of the shows to the fore, and also added that the fact that they were in a foreign language was not a problem as *they have ... subtitles*. The interviewer then checked if Sanna could read them – she was, after all, in Year 1 and many children learn to read only during the course of the first school year. Sanna replied very confidently: *I can read really fast*. Like Sakari, she seemed to be quite proud of something she knew how to do, and had no problems announcing it to the world. Sakari and Sanna were thus both voicing their expertise in foreign languages and were eager to show that they knew what kinds of skills were valued (knowledge of English, knowing how to read) at school, or perhaps in the world in general.

6.2.1.2 I'm still little

While some children already embraced the idea of themselves as language learners, many were yet not very familiar with foreign languages. These children resisted taking on the position of a language learner or a pupil, and tended to talk of language studies as a thing of the future, using the voice of a "child" rather than that of the school-going "learner", so to speak. In many cases the children would answer the questions by essentially saying "I don't know". Interestingly, the children often appeared to be quite sure of themselves even then.

(89) MP: No oiskos susta sitten kiva oppia jotain vierasta kieltä, vaikka niitä kieliä mitä ne sun kaverit puhuu, saksaa tai?
- Eipä tiiä vielä.
MP: Joo just, mikä sustois semmonen kiva kieli mitä sä haluisit sitte joskus oppia?
- En nyttekään vielä tiiä ku on vielä pieni.

[20] The original name of the German series was *Jede menge Leben*.

MP: So do you think it would be nice to learn a foreign language like those languages your friends speak, German or?
- Dont know yet.
MP: Uh huh, which language do you think would be nice which one would you like to learn then one day?
- I don't know now either cos I'm still little.
Aku Year 1

Aku had a few friends who apparently were bilingual, and he had just been talking about them – hence the interviewer's reference to his German-speaking friends. Even with his international social circle, Aku was not interested in language learning: he said that he had not formed any opinions yet: *don't know yet*. The interviewer then reformulated the question, suggesting that Aku would, indeed, be studying languages one day and that now the question was only which language he would prefer. Aku would not budge: he repeated his initial stance, *I don't know yet*, adding the rather delicious *now either.* In Aku's opinion, nothing had changed from the previous question, and now he spelled out the reason too: he did not know yet, because *I'm still little*. Learning a language was not something he worried about yet – it was not for *little* kids to think about. He was very adamant about not knowing and briskly pointed out the reason for not knowing: quit bothering me, your question does not concern me yet. Similarly, Maija, in example 6, dismissed the question and said becoming a language learner was something she would be doing in the distant future, *at our mom's age for example, about thirty-seven thirty-six*. Both Aku and Maija thus seemed to resist adopting the voice of a learner that the interviewer was trying to coax out of them. They indicated it was not relevant for them yet and maintained the voices of children who were *still little* and not *big* yet. A foreign language was somebody else's language, not theirs.

6.2.1.3 Learners in the bud

Some children already had experience of language teaching and learning and could talk about foreign languages more like a language learner.

(90) MP: Onkse sun täti opettanu sulle sitte espanjaa?
- Eiku, tarhassa tota, tarhassa oli samalla espanjan kurssilla meiän opettaja, niin se opetti meille.
MP: Has your aunt taught you Spanish then?
- No it's, in kindergarten like, in kindergarten our teacher was at the same time on a Spanish course, so s/he taught us.
Valtteri Year 1

Valtteri knew some words and expressions in foreign languages and talked of how he had learnt them. He had earlier mentioned that his mother's sister knew Spanish, but Valtteri said that he knew Spanish because *in kindergarten our teacher was at the same time on a Spanish course, so s/he taught us*. Similary, in example 20, Maija explained that *coz we had English lessons there at the Catholic Sisters' playschool… then we like played them in English*, positioning herself as a learner during the lessons in a group of fellow learners. Maija and Valtteri thus

talked of their experiences as participants in a learning activity, positioning themselves as and using the voice of a learner. These experiences also affected the speech genre the children chose: they used words specific to learning situations (*lessons, teacher, taught*). Maija's account also reflected the speech genre of the school in another way: the teacher, *she,* had authority during the lesson to spell out the rules and expect the children to follow them (*we … played them … once she had told us the rules)*. The institutional authority that she expressed emphasised Maija's voice as a learner.

Language skills had also been acquired less formally, from parents.

(91) HD: Osaatsä jotain sanoja [englanniksi] vai?
- Osaan.
HD: Joo, mistä sä oot oppinu?
- Iskä on opettanu.
HD: Do you know some words [in English] or?
- Yeah.
HD: Right, where did you learn?
- Dad taught me.
Sakari Year 1

Sakari let the interviewer know that he knew some English (see example 87). When asked how he had learnt English, Sakari referred to the actions of another person, his parent: *dad taught me*. So did for example Eeva in example 14: *mom has said*. Eeva also talked about a book that was significant for her learning, *we have this book*. She was then asked if she studied the book herself, and she said no, adding *my mom's read from it*. While the children knew some English, it seemed they still did not see themselves as language learners. They voiced themselves as children who had "happened upon" some knowledge of English, not as active participant-learners.

6.2.1.4 Voices of authority

Some children appeared to look forward to learning languages and had already decided what they wanted to do and why. In example 7, Helen reported that she wished to study English. Her reason for doing so was *it is needed in so many countries*. Her grounds for choosing English were thus presented in a general, matter-of-fact form. It was not a personal wish or an opinion that caused her to choose English, but rather a statement of a perceived fact – as English was useful, it would be a good idea to study it. Helen then went on to point out that English would be useful specifically *in America*, finishing the interviewer's utterance. The interviewer then asked her if she wanted to visit America one day, possible thinking this was part of Helen's motivation for studying English. Helen briefly said she did (*yeah*), and then added *my older sister was there this summer*. She might have added this information because it was relevant to the topic of travelling to America that was being discussed, but it may also be that it also revealed Helen's source for her answers: perhaps she had organised her ideas about the needfulness of English around her sister's experiences and stories. She might have thus been using her sister's words about the matter.

Helen's answers still appeared fluent and confident, so she may have appropriated the ideas of the usefulness of English quite well – she could talk about it in general terms instead of overtly appealing to her sister's words.

A formal voice was frequently heard in connection with the why topic, as with Helen's example above. Even when the question was posed as a personal one, many children made a general statement as a reason for wanting to study a foreign language (most often, English). In example 9, after Sakari had said he would like to learn English, he was asked why. He first hesitated a bit but then appealed to its status, *almost everyone speaks [it]* and therefore *it gets you everywhere*. In fancier terms we could maybe say that Sakari meant that English is widely-spoken and useful around the world. Eeva echoed similar sentiments:

(92) MP: Onks susta tärkeetä osata jotain vierasta kieltä, oisko se hyvä juttu?
- Joo.
MP: Joo-o, miksköhän?
- Jos menee jonnekin ni.
MP: Do you think it's important to know a foreign language, would it be a good thing?
- Yeah.
MP: Uh huh, why is that?
- If one goes someplace so.
Eeva Year 1

Eeva seemed to be groping for a similar idea by saying that English would be needed *if one goes someplace.* Her explanation was somewhat vague but it did suggest the idea of *going* to a *place*, so she may well have referred to travelling – perhaps groping for a reason she had heard used but had not quite grasped yet. She also appeared to stop in mid-sentence, ending it with "ni", *so*. Both Sakari and Eeva thus used words rather uncertainly, using vague words like *almost, everywhere* and *someplace*. It might be that they were still unsure as to what these ideas meant (Who is everyone? Where is someplace?), and therefore had some problems appropriating the words. Their answers seemed to reflect an alien voice, a voice the children were ventriloquating.

Such answers are an example of what Dufva et al. (1996: 44) call a "ready-made opinion". They are widely accepted and commonly known "truths" of a given socio-cultural community that can be verbalised quickly. They echo the voice of the "truth" of the community rather than that of its speaker – the voice of society, so to speak. Helen's reason for wanting to study English (see example 7) certainly seemed to echo such a voice. Her statement *it is needed in so many countries,* could be seen as a very typical idea in Finnish society: English is useful, it is needed; "of course everyone studies it". Sakari's and Eeva's ideas about the reasons for wanting to learn English looked very much like a slogan similar to the one Helen used, although they could perhaps not put it quite as elegantly as Helen did. This may be because they had not really grasped the ideas they were expressing: the voice and speech genre they were appropriating still appeared to be in quotation marks and stood out of the dialogue. It thus seems that the children were already aware of such "correct answers" to more general questions and knew that this would be the time to use them. For some

this voice of society felt more comfortable than for others: Helen could put herself and her own voice into the answer (*I'd take*) whereas Sakari and Eeva settled for ventriloquating. Words appeared to resist appropriation and sounded foreign in their mouths (Bakhtin 1981: 294).

In Year 1, the children were more likely to use a very personal voice to answer every question, tending to shrug off general questions and offer personal stories instead. However, the personal stories often showed them as having learnt something, knowing something now they did not know before. Perhaps they decided that as the interviewer was so interested in languages they should try to co-operate, even though most of them had few ideas about or interest in language learning yet. The children's own voices were strong and uncomplicated, whether the voice chosen by each child was that of a child with no interest in languages yet or that of a budding language expert. These voices appeared to pose no difficulties.

Some children did use more formal ways of answering, however, usually with cultural slogans like *you can get by with [English] in every country.* The only hesitation and vagueness was heard in some of these answers where the children tried to use an Other's voice, ventriloquating the voice of society (or their parents, or some other authority). At the same time, this shows that the children knew that there was a time for such a speech genre and were eager to speak in an appropriate manner: to act and voice themselves like an interviewee. They could already appropriate a range of voices, ventriloquate Others' voices and reconstruct utterances available to them in order to answer the interviewer's questions (cf. Bakhtin 1986: 96). Most children, however, still resisted adopting the voice of a language learner.

6.2.2 Year 3: novices

While knowledge may be power, in the case of these interviews it seems the phrase "he who increases knowledge increases sorrow" was more appropriate. Surely, in "objective" terms, the children knew more about foreign languages in Year 3 than they did in Year 1, but answering had in many cases become more of a challenge now. The participants were also obviously asked different kinds of questions that may have been more demanding: this time the questions concerned the nature of languages, differences between Finnish and English, and strategies for language learning. The children, now 9-10 years old, had also become more aware of the demands of school, the future, learning, etc. as a result of their learning experiences. While they realised that the voice of the child was no longer appropriate, they did not always feel confident yet in their new role as language learners. Perhaps this was why the carefree confidence of the Year 1 was often replaced with quotations, hesitation and shoulder shrugging.

6.2.2.1 Quotations

As the children were sometimes less than sure of their answers, they often appealed to others' words. In Year 3, the voicework of the children's' answers was in these cases very clear. There were plenty of overt voices that were explicitly quoted.

Sakari, in example 19, repeated his father's words when asked about people's motivation for studying English. He gave his source, *dad said,* and then reported what his father had said: *you can get by with it in every country*. Perhaps Sakari felt that he needed to also distance himself from the answer somewhat as he added the hedging *at any rate* to his answer. The addition seemed to place him in a position where he was really just reporting what he had heard, not necessarily committing himself to the words. The reference to the original source could in itself also be seen as transfer of responsibility. On the other hand, the voice of a parent helped the children to answer the question they were asked – surely, from a child's point of view, what a parent says constitutes a good answer? In this sense such quoting was, in fact, not much different from the standard academic practices of referring to other authors, name-dropping in everyday conversations etc.; people tend to be very keen on showing it is not just they who think so.

In the following example, Maija, too, appealed to the words of a significant other, but later also appeared to make an attempt to appropriate them better, use them as her own:

(93) MA: No luuleksä että jos englantilaislapset opiskelis suomea et sois niille helppoa vai vaikeeta?
- No on ne niille varmaan aika vaikeeta ku mun isi on sanonu et suomen kieli on sillee tosi vaikeeki.
MA: Joo, mistä syystä se johtuu että suomen kieli on vaikee kieli?
- Emmää tiiä.
…
MA: Miksihän se [rannalla-sanan oppiminen] vois olla vaikeeta?
- Suomen kieli on muutenki niin vaikea, ainaki joillekki.
MA: Well do you think that if English children studied Finnish that it would be easy or difficult for them?
- Well it must be quite difficult for them cos my dad has said that the Finnish language is like really difficult too.
MA: Yeah, what makes Finnish a difficult language then?
- I don't know.
…
MA: Why would [learning the Finnish word "rannalla"] be difficult?
- The Finnish language is just so difficult, at least for some.
Maija Year 3

Maija first gave her answer to the question, and then backed it up by appealing to her father's words. She felt *they [Finnish studies] must be quite difficult for them [English-speaking people]* because her father had said something to make this seem like an appropriate answer: *my dad has said that the Finnish language is like really difficult too*. Even though Maija first answered the question, she did feel the need to refer to her father's words and used them to "back up" her initial

response. She did not try to make these words her own, but offered an overt quote, gave credit where it was due. Next, she was asked what it was that made Finnish a difficult language, and she merely said *I don't know*. This could be seen as strengthening the interpretation that the previous answer was more of a mechanical repetition of what she had heard: she did not know the reasons or reasoning behind the comment but was merely repeating it.

Later in the interview, Maija apparently did attempt to appropriate her father's words and use them as her own by repeating the same idea about the Finnish language being difficult. The Finnish word "rannalla" (*on the beach*) was being discussed and she was asked to estimate whether learning it would be difficult for a speaker of English. She said it would be and said this was because *the Finnish language is just so difficult*. She felt the need to postfix them with the uncertain *at least for some*, however. Perhaps these words did not really make sense to her, so she decided to modify the answer a bit. She had not fully appropriated this belief about the Finnish language, and so the voice heard in the second answer was essentially still her father's, and Maija's own voice could perhaps be heard in the addition she made. It may also be that the addition was a hedging comment: Maija had had to confess earlier that she did not know why Finnish was a difficult language, and while she still felt her father's words had to be an appropriate answer to the question, she might have felt it necessary to modify it, make it less definite.

6.2.2.2 Borrowed voices

At other times there seemed to be an alien voice echoing in the child's answer even if there was no overt reference to another person – and even when it would have been difficult perhaps even for the child him/herself to be able to say who it was that had said so. When first asked about people's motives and the usefulness of English, Annika said:

(94) MA: No minkäs takia ihmiset opettelee englantia mitä hyötyä siitä o ihmisille?
- Noo, ((naurahtaa)) tää on vaikeeta, no ((naurahtaa)).
MA: So why do people study English how is it useful to people?
- Weell, ((laughs)) this is difficult, er ((laughs)).
Annika Year 3

At first it seemed she would not be able to come up with an answer – commenting simply how difficult the question was – but a few questions later in the interview she seemed to continue with the same topic and, after stumbling over her answer a little, brought up the theme of popularity:

(95) MA: No miksi sää valitsit englannin kielen [ensimmäiseksi vieraaksi kieleksi]?
- Noo tota, eihä me saatu valita kato nii mutta jos ois saatu nii oisin varmasti valinnu englannin kielen mutta, (…) jotenki se sitte on, englanti on jotenki sellanen ku se on niin puhuttu kieliki että.
MA: So why did you choose English [as the first foreign language]?
- Weell er, see we didn't actually get to choose but if we had then I surely would have chosen English, but, (…) it's somehow so, English is somehow a language that is so widely spoken too so.
Annika Year 3

Annika was asked about her choice for the first foreign language, and after pointing out that they could not really choose, she reported that she would have chosen English. She then went on to explain why, and after some hesitation (*somehow it is like*) she finished her answer by saying *it is so widely spoken too*. The term *widely spoken language* sounded very official and seemed to stand out from the rest of her answer – it is as if she was using the term as an explanation without being sure what it meant, exactly. She knew such a term could be used as a reason for wanting to study English, but her hesitation (words like *somehow*, *like*, leaving the ending of the answer open with *so*) gave the impression that the choice of words felt foreign in her mouth. Perhaps she was not quite sure how the fact that English was widely spoken actually made it a good choice, but had heard the reason used and resorted to it as the interviewer kept pressing her.

Also, in example 24, Rauli started to answer in a very concrete and colloquial way, *they go to work so then, if someone asks them that*, but then appeared to be unsure how to finish his answer, stumbling slightly over *do you know whaat, what what this means*. Perhaps he could not think of a concrete question for the purported inquirer to ask, in keeping with the example-like answer he had given so far, so he decided to end his answer in a completely different manner: *English must be learnt, and it is needed*. The ending sounded very different from the rest of his answer – it appears he resorted to answering with a slogan, a "ready-made opinion" (Dufva et al. 1996: 44).

An alien voice could also be used quite skilfully, without sudden changes or uncertainty, as Eeva does in the example below.

(96) MA: Minkä takia ihmiset opettelee englantia?
- Että ne voi puhua jos ne esimerkiks muuttaa tai käy jossain maassa, niin että ne osaa puhuu.
MA: Why do people learn English?
- So that they can talk if they for example move or visit a country, so they know how to talk.
Eeva Year 3

Eeva's reply was quite fluent and natural, and includes rather detailed information about how and why one might put English to use: references to other countries and talking there. Her answer appears to be similar to Rauli's reply in example 24: it is the "correct" answer to this general question within this sociocultural community, a widely used and repeated slogan. Interestingly, even though she could use the "slogan" very fluently, she did not feel that this belief applied to her, as we shall see below.

6.2.2.3 Me and people

Later in the interview, Eeva was asked about her own reasons for studying English. Her difficulties in answering these questions illustrate another common phenomenon in Year 3: the effect the form of the question had on the

content and voicework of the answers. What *they* did did not necessarily factor in what *I* did.

(97) MA: No minkä takia sää opiskelet englantia?
- Että mää oppisin sitä.
MA: Okei, no mitä sä aiot englannin kielellä tehdä?
- Emmää tiiä.
MA: No entäs sitte myöhemmin elämässä kun sä oot aikuinen ja, iso ihminen, niin mitäs sää sitte englannin kielellä teet?
- ((tauko)) Emmää tiiä ((tauko)) Mä en tiiä (oikeestaan).
MA: So why do you study English?
- So that I'd learn it.
MA: Okay, so what are you going to do with it?
- I don't know.
MA: Well what about then later in life when you're an adult and, grown up, so what will you do with English then?
- ((pause)) I don't know ((pause)) I don't know (actually).
Eeva Year 3

As seen in example 96 above, *people* may well, according to Eeva, study English because they may visit a foreign country or move abroad. Eeva's personal world view, however, did not contain travelling or relocating abroad. These replies – *I don't know* three times over – reflected Eeva's own voice more: she herself did not know what uses she could have for English and therefore her immediate motivation was just to learn it.

Jonne had no problems finding an answer to the general "Why is English useful?" question either (see example 25). However, when asked how he himself could use English:

(98) MA: No missä- mitä sää aattelet mitä sää voit sillä englannin kielellä tehdä?
- ((tauko)) En tiiä.
MA: Well where- what do you think you can then do with the English language?
- ((pause)) I don't know.
Jonne Year 3

Some learners, like, for example, Maria in examples 20 and 104, took the slogan and used it as an answer for the personal question too; appropriated the words for yet another purpose. Jonne, however, paused, thought about the matter, and finally said he did not know what he could do with knowledge of English. He did not use the slogans of society by replacing an impersonal statement with the first person – his own voice, like Eeva's above, had to admit it did not know how English could be useful to him. Other people's reasons were different from the learners' own – when answering the general question these learners were ventriloquating other people's voices, repeating what they had been told or had heard. When confronted with a direct first person question, it appeared they had not appropriated these answers as their own, nor did they have any other ideas. These reasons thus did not feel internally persuasive for them: they knew how to answer a general question, find the "correct answer", but there were no such answers available for personal second person questions. Perhaps the children looked at general questions as "test questions" where they had to know the answer, and realized a formal, impersonal answer or a slogan was the

way to go. These general answers were "known", but when the same topic was made personal, about the learners themselves, they sometimes had no idea what to say. It seems that asking the learners why "English is learnt" or why "people learn English" may therefore reveal little to nothing about the learners' own motives for studying it.

It is also interesting that the "I don't know" answers were much more uncertain than they were in Year 1. Whereas in Year 1, the children who said they did not know tended to state it matter-of-factly, in Year 3 the dunno's were tinted with a lot of hesitation, pauses, and soft voices (physiological ones, that is). Comparing the two years, it almost seemed that many children in Year 1 appeared to think they did not *need* to know the answers yet. Perhaps in Year 3, as the children had attended school, answered teachers' questions and already studied English, they felt they *should* have known the answers, and were thus somewhat embarrassed to admit they did not. This seems to indicate that the young learners were aware of the need to use a new kind of voice – to find the answers, to know how things applied to them as learners of English.

6.2.2.4 What I think

On the other hand, the difficulty of finding answers was balanced by the emergence of their own opinions, appeals to their own expertise. In Year 3, a new way of expressing one's beliefs came to the fore, namely the phrase "mun mielestä" (literally "*from my mind*", usually rendered into English as "*I think*" or "*in my opinion*") – the phrase was hardly ever used in Year 1. In Year 3 the children now sometimes appealed to their own experiences and thoughts, and specifically pointed out they were expressing their opinions, speaking their own mind.

(99) MA: Onks sun helpompi muistaa miten sanat kirjotetaan ku miten ne sanotaa?
- No kyllä ne on helpompi mun mielestä muistaa (kirjotettuna).
MA: Do you think it's easier to remember how the words are written than how they are said?
- Well in my opinion they are easier to remember (written).
Helen Year 3

Helen was discussing the grapheme-phoneme differences of the English language and said that she found remembering the written forms easier: *they are easier I think*. She thus appeared to be talking of her own experience, which had led her to answer the question in this way. Rather than for example relying on somebody else's views of what was easy and hard in English, she trusted her own expertise and used it as the grounds for her answer.

Valtteri, too, spoke "from his mind":

(100) MA: No ajatteleksä et englanti on helpompaa ku vaikka ruotsin kieli?
- No on se mun mielestä vähän helpompaa vaikka mä en oo kyllä ruotsia opetellukkaa mutta.
MA: Joo, miks sää ajattelet et se ois helpompaa?
- No, se kuulostaa jotenki vähä erikoiselta se ruotsin puhuminen että, kyllä kai seki on sitte helppoo kun sitä ossaa että.

MA: So do you think that English is easier than say Swedish?
- Well I do think it's a bit easier even though I haven't studied Swedish but.
MA: Uh huh, why do you think it is easier?
- Well, it sounds somehow a bit peculiar the Swedish speech so that, I guess it too is easy when you know it so.
Valtteri Year 3

Valtteri talked of his opinion of the English language compared to other languages and said that *I do think it is a bit easier* than Swedish which he was asked to compare it with – in fact quite unfairly, because he had never studied Swedish, as he pointed out at the end of his answer. He then said why he felt Swedish might be harder than English: *it sounds somehow a bit peculiar*. Even though Valtteri said he expected English to be only *a bit* easier and made it clear he could not really compare the two, he still framed the answer as his own opinion, *I* think this. Some of the young learners thus had enough confidence in themselves as language learners to offer their own experiences and views as answers.

6.2.2.5 Schooled voices

In Year 3 the children also voiced their role as language learners by using the speech genre of school, for example, school-specific terminology.

(101) MA: No osaaksä jo paljon puhua ja kirjottaa englantia, /minkäs/laisia asioita te ootte oppinu?
- /Mm/, no vähän kaikenlaista.
MA: Joo, mitäs teil on tässä syksyllä nyt ollu?
- Mm, meil on tullu nyt vasta yks koe.
MA: So do you know how to speak and write a lot of English, /what/ kinds of things have you learnt?
- /Mm/, well a bit of all kinds of things.
MA: Uh huh, what have you been doing now during the autumn?
- Mm, we've only had one exam so far.
Santeri Year 3

Santeri talked of English specifically as a school subject, defining what they had learnt so far in terms of *only... one exam*. Aku chose a similar, numerical way to describe homework, saying they would typically get *three or two exercises* to do at home. These word choices perhaps reflected that in their opinion such units were important. As the results discussed in section 6.1.4.3 suggest, studying English at school appeared to the learners to be a function of books and exams, and therefore it made sense to them, as language learners, to describe their efforts in those school-specific terms (see also Dufva, Alanen & Aro 2003, Dufva & Alanen 2002).

The speech genre of school could also be constructed in another way: the children could discreetly refer to institutional authority.

(102) MA: Minkälaisia tehtäviä siitä annetaan kotitehtäviksi?
- Yleensä pitää harjotella sanat, tai sillee.
MA: What kinds of exercises do you get as homework?
- Usually you have to practise the words, or something.
Eeva Year 3

One of the most common ways to voice the institutional authority of the school, and probably more specifically, of the teacher, was the idea of *having to*. Eeva described the homework given in English class as follows: *usually you have to practise the words*. Instead of a more neutral way of describing homework Eeva thus talked of the obligations pupils have: they are given things they have to do. She had also appropriated the English homework-specific terminology of *practising words*.

Matti talked about studying English and maths at school:

(103) MA: No onks englannin opiskelu sun mielestä erilaista ku vaikka matikan opiskelu?
- No on se nii, jotenki erilaista ku, joutuu s- vaikka sanomaan toisille (ja), matikassa saa ite päättää mikä, mikä on vastaus. Englannissa pitää olla kaikki niinku oikee, niinku matikassaki.
MA: So do you think studying English is different from say studying maths?
- Well yes it is, somehow different coz, you have to s- for example say to others (and), in maths you get to decide by yourself what the answer is. In English everything has to be like correct, like in maths too.
Matti Year 3

According to Matti, in English classes *you have to... say to others*; and at school *everything has to be like correct*. In addition to *having to*, Matti also pointed out that the goal was to do everything *correctly,* as defined by the school. Both Eeva and Matti were thus using the voice of the obedient learner who is aware of what is expected of him or her (cf. also Maybin 1999).

6.2.2.6 Future users

While the children were now often using the voice of the language learner and even describing their own views and experiences, the voice of the language user was still reserved for the future:

(104) MA: Osaaksää ajatella että mitä hyötyä sulle siitä on et sä osaat englantia?
- ((tauko)) No jos mää vaikka, menisin Englantiin ja sitte joku puhuu siellä nii sitte määki voisin vastata siihen (englanniks).
MA: Can you think of ways in which English skills could be useful to you?
- ((pause)) Well if I for example, went to England and then someone talked there then I would be able to answer them (in English).
Maria Year 3

Maria needed a pause to compose her answer, which also involved an *if*: *if I for example, went to England*. The question "How could English skills be useful to you?" was presented to Maria immediately after she had been asked why people study English, and after taking a moment to think about it, she basically repeated the same answer she had given to the previous question (cf. example 20), just changing the person: she said she might need English if she *for example went to England* and *and then someone talked there*. She would then need to *answer it*. This time, instead of the vaguer term *abroad*, she decided to go specifically to *England*, but again she intended to be on the receiving rather than initiating end of communication: she said she needed English in order to be able to *answer*

people, not for example to ask them for something. In example 33, Aku's plans for his English skills involved *new friends* and the situation in which he would need to make new friends was an *if*-sentence: *if I move out of Finland*. He in a way did not see himself as a user of English yet but indicated he could think of a situation in which language skills could become useful.

These explanations were very close, content-wise, to the general reasons the children gave as to why studying English was useful (see section 6.1.2.1). They were very reminiscent of society's slogans like "English is necessary in today's global world" and "English is a must when travelling abroad", and some of the children also used them as their own motives for studying. It almost seemed as if the children were trying the ideas on for size by using the same answers and placing themselves as the agents. With the pauses and the uncertainties (*"some place", "someone"*) the answers did appear slightly, well, iffy, but all in all the children seemed comfortable with these voices – perhaps because they spoke in tentative *if*-utterances to begin with. It should also be noted that if-sentences were a common way of answering questions regarding the uses of English (see section 6.1.2.2), so the use of the form may also have been a function of the content (voice and meaning are, after all, intertwined). The children were already comfortable answering such questions as language learners, but felt that the voice of the active language user was a thing of the future.

The Year 3 interview answers reflected the multivoiced nature of the children's conceptions and of the origins of their knowledge reservoir in many ways. In Year 3, the children did not have much personal experience of English language or language studies, so they referred to the words of their significant others and used these authoritative voices in place of their own. Perhaps the others were also mentioned as some kind of reinforcement of the children's words: the child was not just making this up, it was something a parent said – and surely what a parent says constitutes a good answer. Such quotations were not used in Year 1, perhaps because the children did not feel the need to speak as language learners yet. They may have felt that they got by quite well by using their own voice as children, as future learners, or by referring to the voices of society prevalent in their environment. The voices of society were also often skilfully used as answers to general questions that appeared to "test" the learner's knowledge of English and English language learning. In Vygotskian terms (Vygotsky 1978), the learners could thus not yet speak in a self-regulated manner: they needed the help of others to answer the questions. Their own voice spoke through these other voices.

The voice of the language learner was a thing of the future for many children in Year 1. In Year 3, the voice of the language user appeared to be in its elementary stages: it was not a voice the children were necessarily comfortable with yet. They would often base their own answers on the voice of society, thinking of using English in terms of the slogans they were familiar with (English is needed abroad, at work, and so on.). If such slogans associated using English with, say, adulthood and foreign countries, it was, of course, difficult

for the children to consider themselves users of English – either now or even in general. This led to either very tentative answers or to simple I-don't-know's when the children were asked about their own use of English.

On the other hand, even though the children often relied on others' words and slogans, they were also clearly starting to formulate their own voice as language learners in Year 3. They would sometimes frame their answers as their own opinions, and already occasionally referred to their own experience of language learning that was accumulating and influencing their voices. They had learnt how to voice their role at school by answering questions as obedient pupils in the classroom (*we have to; must be correct*) and using special school English vocabulary (*exam, practise, exercise* etc.) – tokens of school discourses.

The polyphony in the children's answers had thus diversified. They no longer resisted positioning themselves as learners, as they had done in Year 1. They now had more resources available to them and could use a number of voices: they would appeal to the authoritative words of both parents and society and also bring forth their own, tentative voice of the budding language expert.

6.2.3 Year 5: learner-users

At the time of Year 5 interviews, the participants were 10-11 years old. The young learners had become more comfortable with the various voices they used, and ventriloquation had become less obvious. They also used more and more of their own viewpoints and experiences in answering the questions, and could also express themselves more elaborately – provide examples and details, for example. The learners were now clearly developing their own voice and take on language studies.

6.2.3.1 Appropriated authority

Direct quotations like the ones used in Year 3 (see section 6.2.2.1) were not used at all in Year 5: the children no longer attributed their words to other people. Since Year 3 the children had learnt how to phrase and justify their answers without the help of an overt other voice.

(105) MA: Minkä takia ihmiset opiskelee englantia?
- On helpompaa olla ulkomailla tekemisissä muitten ihmisten kanssa ku voi puhua jotai sellasta aika yleistä ja yhteistä kieltä ja, sitte, siitä on muutenki apua, monissa ammateissa.
MA: Why do people study English?
- It is easier to interact with other people abroad when you can speak some like fairly universal and common language and, then, it also helps, in many professions.
Helen Year 5

Helen answered the question fluently and elegantly and used some fairly sophisticated terminology, referring to a *universal and common language* and talking about how English is needed *in many professions*, for example. While the theme of the answer to the general Why question was the same as before

(talking abroad/with foreigners), Helen could now elaborate more on what it actually meant to know English and what one could do with it. Similarly Valtteri, in example 60, talked of the details of language use. He first referred to working life, and instead of simply stating that English might then be "needed", he gave an example: knowing English would mean that *you know how to serve people from different countries*. Talking to people abroad had also found a concrete instance: *if you for example go abroad you can ask for service*.

Instead of the vaguer and more general terms used in the first and the third year interviews, the young learners could now elaborate on what the themes discussed might mean in practice and provide details and examples. Their answers were also longer than before: more details and explanations naturally translated into more words.

Appropriated authoritative voices also appeared to have more of an effect on the learners' opinions and how they viewed English studies and use. When Jari was asked about why English was studied, he, along with many other participants, echoed society's recognised reasons: he said people studied English so that they would "pärjäis, Euroopassa, tai maailmalla" (*get by, in Europe, or out there in the world*). He also defined knowledge of English as "Osaa puhua, englantilaisten kanssa tai amerikkalaisten kanssa" *(Know[ing] how to talk to English people or American people*). So again: English is needed abroad and for speaking. Jari was then asked:

(106) MA: No tota, mites sitte jos käyki nii ettei, koskaa lähekkää ulkomaille, nii onks siitä sitte mitää hyötyä et osaa englantia?
- No, ei mun mielestä.
MA: ... Onkos siitä sitte mitää hyötyä et osaa lukea englantia?
- ((tauko)) No, onhan seki taito.
MA: Well er, what if what happens is that, one never goes abroad, can knowing English be somehow useful then?
- Well, not in my opinion.
MA: … Is it in any way useful to know how to read English?
- ((pause)) Well, I suppose it too is a skill.
Jari Year 5

When asked if English would be useful even if the person knowing it never went abroad, Jari simply said *not in my opinion*. Similarly, he was rather sceptical about the usefulness of English reading skills: after giving it some thought, he conceded that *I suppose it too is a skill*. It seemed as if authoritative beliefs might in a way have defined what Jari said about these things: if it is accepted that English is used to *speak* to foreigners *abroad*, then logically *not* travelling abroad or being able to *read* English would mean that English was not being put to good use.

Authoritative voices not only affected opinions about the general characteristics of English and its uses: it seemed they sometimes defined how the young learners viewed their own language use.

(107) MA: No mitäs hyötyä sulle on englannista, englannin kielestä?
- No, ei mulle vielä siitä mitää, /hyötyä/ oo ollu.
MA: /Joo/, no millonkas sulle vois olla siitä jotai hyötyä?

- No varmaa sitte ku opiskelee tai, menee jonnekki ulkomaille ni.
MA: No tarviksää englannin kieltä johonkin tällä hetkellä?
- No, emmää sitä nytte, varsinaisesti tarvi mutta joskus jos jotai pikkusiskon kaa, semmosta että haluu johonki ja pikkusisko ei voi tulla mukaa nii äitille sanoo se (englanniksi), sit ei sisko ymmärrä.
MA: So how is English, the English language useful to you?
- Well, it hasn't been, /useful/ to me yet.
MA: /Yeah/, so when do you think it might be useful to you?
- Well probably when I go to college or, somewhere abroad so.
MA: So do you need the English language for anything at the moment?
- Well, I don't really, need it as such but sometimes if there's something with my little sister, so that I want to go somewhere and my little sister can't come along so I say it to mom (in English), then my sister won't understand.
Maija Year 5

When asked if English was useful to her, Maija said *it hasn't been useful to me yet.* She then went on to explain when she expected English to be useful: later on in life, *when I go to college or, somewhere abroad.* Maija was then asked if she needed English for anything at that particular time in her life, and she said *I don't really, need it as such.* She then explained that she did use English occasionally when she needed to communicate something to her mother so that her younger sister would not understand: *I say it to mom (in English), then my sister won't understand* (cf. Alanen & Dufva 2005). It appeared that her own personal, day-to-day uses of English were not important enough for such big words as *useful* and *need* – to need and use English, one needed to be far more official, international and adult.

6.2.3.2 Voices of experience

In Year 5, the learners already had over two years' experience of English studies. This began to be reflected in their voices: they started to rely on their own experience when talking about learning English and used it as grounds for their answers. They were beginning to gain more confidence that their own experience and views were relevant for the answers.

Helen discussed the possible usefulness of English language TV programmes for one's English studies:

(108) MA: Ku sää katot niitä englanninkielisiä televisio-ohjelmia nii kuunteleksää sitä englantia vai lueksää vaan tekstejä?
- Enimmäkseen mää luen ne tekstit ei siinä kerkiä keskittyyn molempiin.
MA: Luuleksää et semmosesta vois olla hyötyä enkun opinnoissa että kattoo tämmösiä englanninkielisiä televisio- ohjelmia?
- Ei siitä ainakaa mulle oo. Voi siitä jollekki olla.
MA: When you watch English language television programmes do you listen to the English or do you just read the subtitles?
- Mostly I read the subtitles there's not enough time to concentrate on both.
MA: Do you think that it might help in one's English studies if one watches English-language television programmes?
- It's not helpful for me anyway. It might be for some.
Helen Year 5

Helen was first asked if she listened to English when watching TV programmes or simply read the subtitles. She said she *mostly* read the texts, because *there's*

not enough time to concentrate on both. When asked if she felt watching English language TV programmes might help in one's English studes, she said *it's not helpful for me anyway*. She appeared to be referring to her earlier answer, where she had stated she did not have the time to both read and listen: this also seemed to indicate that she felt that finding the time to pay attention to both might have helped. However, she further emphasised that she was talking about her own experience by acknowledging that others might have a different experience and they find TV programmes useful: *it might be for some*.

Jari was asked about the usefulness of English language programmes, too:

(109) MA: Luuleksää että, kun kattelee semmosia englanninkielisiä ohjelmia sitte nii luuleksää et siitä vois olla hyötyä enkun opinnoissa?
- Mmh . Emmää kyllä usko.
MA: Joo.
- Emmää ainakaa opi kyllä siitä paljoo.
MA: Do you think that, when someone watches English language programmes do you think it might be useful for their English studies?
- Mmh . I don't think so really.
MA: Yeah.
- I for one don't learn much from it.
Jari Year 5

Like Helen, he seemed to be sceptical about the usefulness of English language programmes, answering *I don't think so really*. He then went on to provide a reason for his misgivings: *I for one don't learn much from it*. His opinion about the usefulness of TV programmes thus appeared to be based on his personal experience, leading him to say that he did not think the programmes could prove helpful. He, too, pointed out that he was talking about himself, adding *I for one*.

It is interesting that while the learners began to use their own experience as part of their rationale, they also began to allow room for other kinds of experiences. This was not the case in Year 3 (Aro 2001), where the young learners had seemed more inclined to think that what they experienced reflected what others experienced. If Finnish children found learning English difficult, then it stood to reason that English children would find learning Finnish difficult. Some of the learners even felt that if Finnish children studied English, this probably meant that English children studied Finnish (Aro 2001) [21]. In Year 5, the learners spoke of their experience more clearly as specifically their own, personal experience, and did so using their own voice, more openly now recognising a variety – or a polyphony, one could say – of experiences.

The learners did not only refer to their own experiences when asked for their opinion about how to learn English. Their experience also began to

[21] This detail may also serve to illustrate children's egocentrism, as reported e.g. in Brédart's (1980) study on how children perceived communication problems. She found that 8-12 year old French children had a hard time understanding that their mother tongue was a foreign language to foreigners. Interestingly, the 10-year-olds in the present study had no such difficulties: they could discuss Finnish as a foreign language, as seen above, but they did seem to feel that their own experiences would probably apply universally.

provide them with answers to more general questions, for example in the *Why?* topic.

(110) MA: Miten siit on hyötyä että osaa englantia?
- No osaa vaikka tilata jotai ruokaa tai sitte, sitte jos ostaa jotai ni, osaa, pyykysyä paljonko se maksaa.
…
MA: Minkäslaisissa paikoissa sää muistat et sä oot törmänny englantiin nyt vaikka viimesen viikon aikana?
- Emmää viimesen viiko aikana mutta, en muista kuinka kauan siitä on mutta karin- Curaçaolla (törmäsin englantiin)…. lentokoneessa tilasin ite ruokia ja.
MA: How is it useful for someone to know English?
- Well they can for example order some food or then, then if they buy something so, then they can, ask how much it costs.
…
MA: In what kinds of places have you come across the English language say during the past week?
- Not during the past week but, I can't remember how long ago it was but (when I was) in Curaçao (I came across English) … I ordered some food on the aeroplane by myself and.
Matti Year 5

When Matti was asked how English was useful, he did not use the general slogan along the lines of *talking to foreigners*. Instead, he gave specific examples of communicative activities: *they can for example order some food* and *ask how much it costs* when one buys something. Later on in the interview, when asked if he had come across English, Matti talked about how he had been to Curaçao. He mentioned that he had *ordered some food on the aeroplane by myself*, most likely in English, but left the explanation at that. However, it seems plausible that the things he had listed earlier – ordering food, asking how much things cost – were exactly the kinds of things he might have done during his holiday in Curaçao. Rather than simply ventriloquating the slogan, he used more elaborate and detailed descriptions, possibly based on his own experience.

6.2.3.3 Success stories

Armed with their increasing know-how in the English language, some learners appeared eager to point out that they had learnt a thing or two and were no longer complete novices with regard to the English language. For example, in example 67, Valtteri talked of how he *play[s] computer games* and said English was useful as *one understands almost everything* when playing. He also pointed out that he could watch movies and TV programmes without *subtitles*, as he could still *understand the overall storyline anyway*. Even though the answer was modified by an *almost* and instead of understanding everything in a movie he could follow the *overall storyline*, Valtteri's answer was certainly a can-do answer. He emphasised the things he could do now that he had learnt English.

Also Jonne talked confidently about his increasing English skills. While Valtteri talked about how English skills were useful to him, Jonne described how his hobby of playing computer games helped him in his English studies:

(111) MA: Onkos niistä tietokonepeleistä hyötyä englannin kielen opiskelussa?
- No (voi että) tietysti saa, yleen- ainaki mää tiiän paljo enemmän sanoja ku, mitä siel ees lukee että välillä jos joskus kysytää sanaa nii voi olla että kaikki ei tiiä sitä sanaa ku mää.
MA: Are computer games of help when studying English?
- Well (you can) of course get, usuall- at least I know a lot more words than, what there are written so that occasionally if sometimes [the teacher] asks a word it can happen that not everyone knows the word that I do.
Jonne Year 5

When asked if computer games were helpful in one's English studies, Jonne used himself as an example and said that *I know a lot more words* thanks to playing games. He said that what *sometimes* happened was that when *[the teacher] asks a word it can happen that not everyone knows the word that I do*. It seemed that computer games had given Jonne an edge: he knew words other learners did not and could occasionally flaunt his skills in front of them (cf. Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio 2007).

In Year 5, some learners began to voice themselves as one of the people in the know. They had discovered how to use their English skills and noticed how and what they had learnt. Sometimes they would even join the ranks of the knowers in order to exclude others, as Maija did in example 107. Her mother knew English and Maija herself used to be outside the group of those who know English. Now she had learnt enough to be able to communicate with her mother in English to keep her little sister out of the loop, as example 107 indicates. In Year 3, Maija had quoted her father's words (see example 93), but she had now become more of an equal with her parents: she would engage in a dialogue in English with her mother, instead of relaying information about English received from her, for example. Instead of speaking with the help of her parent's voice about the English language, she could now speak the English language herself.

The learners were gradually accumulating the experience and skills needed to think of and voice themselves as young people who not only studied English, but also knew and used it.

6.2.3.4 Speaking like a student

By Year 5, the learners were becoming increasingly fluent in "student speech". Their school-specific terminology had expanded and the learners could speak of learning activites in more detail. Maria described her learning as follows:

(112) MA: No, millä tavalla sää ite opiskelet englantia miten- mi- minkälaisia asioita sää teet koulussa ja kotona?
- No tunnilla me tehään kaikkee enkun tehtäviä sitte, puheharjotuksia ja sitte kotona kans niitä, pitää suomentaa ja, tehtäviä.
MA: Well, how do you yourself study English how wh- what kinds of things do you do at school and at home?
- Well during lessons we do like English exercises then, speaking exercises and then at home too the, must be translated into Finnish and, exercises.
Maria Year 5

In addition to the basic (written) *exercises*, Maria talked of *speaking exercises* and how they would *translate into Finnish*. The more general ideas of practising and reading that were used in Year 3 (see section 6.1.2.3) had now been replaced by more specific terms. The voice of the obedient pupil yielding to the institutional authority of the school and the teacher was still strong: oral exercises, homework and translations were something one *must* do (cf. Maybin 1999).

Mervi's description added to the repertoire of terminology of English learning and also gave clues as to which activities were worthy of explanation and which had been done to death:

(113) MA: No mitenkäs sää opiskelet englantia minkälaisia asioita sää teet koulussa ja kotona?
- No, meillä o aina kaikkia kuuntelutehtäviä ja, sit meijän pitää esittää joku, tai meillä on aina joku satu ja sit meijän pitää se ryhmän kanssa lukee ja, ja, sitte, meillä on ihan tavallisia kotitehtäviä sitte englanniks.
MA: Well how do you learn English what kinds of things do you do at school and at home?
- Well, we always have these listening comprehension exercises and, then we have to perform a, or we always have a fairy tale and then we have to read it with the group and, and, then, we have just ordinary homework then in English.
Mervi Year 5

Mervi added the term *listening comprehension exercises* to the pool of English learning terms and also talked about other oral activities, such as having to *read [it] with the group… a fairy tale* – the verb *perform* earlier on suggested this meant reading it aloud. Homework exercises had become *just ordinary homework* – nothing much to talk about and apparently self-explanatory. In Mervi's answer, again, many things *have to* be done.

Both Mervi and Maria also consistenly used the first person plural *we* in their answer, even though the questions were posed in the second person singular. The use of *we* positioned them as one of the pupils: one learner in a group of learners, engaging in the process of learning in the classroom. This reference to group membership further reinforced their voice as language learners. The learners often used the first person plural also in Year 3, but there the form was suggested by the fact that the questions were posed in the second person plural. In Year 5, many learners chose to talk of *we* even when asked about how they personally went about learning English (cf. Maguire and Graves 2001). This seemed to emphasise their group membership and thereby make them sound even more like pupils and learners.

In Year 5, the learners used many new token terms, like *pronunciation* and *revise*, to describe what learning English involved. Their ability to specify what studying English involved had thus increased from Year 3, where learning was mostly described simply in terms of reading, chapters, books and exercises. Using this special vocabulary, referring to institutional authority and talking of learning in terms of "we the pupils" all contributed to the participants' voices as language learners.

6.2.3.5 Using English

In Year 5, the learners began to talk of themselves not only as learners of English, but as users of English, too. Some learners said they only needed English "in class" and did not use it yet, suggesting that learning English in the classroom was not the same as using it. A few others mused over how English helped them play computer games or follow TV programmes. Maija (example 107) used English to convey messages to her mother so her sister would not know what was being talked about. Matti (example 110) seemed to emphasise his accomplishment of ordering food on the aeroplane by adding *by myself* – he had been a self-regulated English user who had not needed to rely on the help of others.

Those who had spoken English with foreigners appeared to be particularly keen to point out their experience. Like Matti earlier, these learners often brought the experience up when asked about whether they had come across the English language over the previous week, even though the events described might have taken place quite a while ago.

(114) MA: Minkäslaisissa paikoissa sää oot- muistat että oisit törmänny englantiin nyt vaikka viimesen viikon aikana?
- En mä nyt viimesen viikon aikana kyllä.
MA: Joo no entäs joskus aikasemmin muistusko semmosta tilannetta mieleen?
- Mää olin tuolla, SPR:n nälkäpäiväkeräyksessä rahaa keräämässä nii siellä sitte, yks englantilainen tuli (vastaan) niin sille piti sitte selittää että, mistä on kysymys.
MA: In what kinds of places have you- can you remember where you have come across the English language say during the past week?
- Well not during this past week no.
MA: Yeah well what about earlier can you think of a situation?
- I was at the, Hunger Day fund raiser for the Red Cross and there was, an English person so I then had to explain to them, what was going on.
Sanna Year 5

Sanna's first answer *well not during this past week* seemed to indicate that she did have something to share outside this specific timeframe. She then explained that she had earlier been at the *Hunger Day fund raiser for the Red Cross* and had come across *an English person*, and she had needed to *explain to them, what was going on*. She had apparently not only understood what the foreigner wanted to know, but had also been able to communicate to him what was happening.

Sometimes these user experiences cropped up in other places, too, when something about the question awoke a memory:

(115) MA: No jos ajatellaan vaikka et sää lähet täältä tonne keskustaan kävelemään ja sää kävelet vaikka kävelykatua pitkin niin tuleeko siellä missään englantia vastaan?
- Tulee jotku, nuoret vaikka puhuu että, on joku vaihto- oppilas tullu käymään ni, mää kuulen kaupungilla joskus englantia ja, mutta kerran kesällä niin tuli, joku lenkkeilijä kysy multa englanniks jotai ja, mää vastasin ku mää en, mää osasin mut mää en osannu, mää ymmärsin sen jutun mut mää en osannu sit vastata siihen niin mää sanoin sit jotain, ihan outoa.

MA: Well if you think about leaving here and walking from school towards the city centre and you walk along say the pedestrian street, would you come across English anywhere there?
- Yes some, teenagers may be speaking like, there's an exchange student visiting or, sometimes I hear English in the town and, but once in the summertime there was, a jogger who asked me something in English and, I answered coz I didn't, I knew but I didn't, I understood it but I didn't know how to answer it so I just said something, really weird.
Mervi Year 5

Mervi was asked about instances of English in the city centre, and first told that *some teenagers may be speaking it* and *there's an exchange student visiting*: she might sometimes hear English being spoken. Like most learners, she appeared to pay attention only to spoken English – the written English of, for example, advertisements plastered across the city centre seemed "transparent" and invisible, or did not count. After these more general musings, Mervi proceeded to describe a particular incident, prefacing the story with *but once*. She had met *a jogger* who had *asked me something in English*. She had understood what was asked, *I understood it*, but unfortunately she did not know what to say in reply: *I didn't know how to answer it*. Even though she *just said something, really weird*, she still wanted to talk about the meeting with the jogger who spoke English and emphasise that she had understood what had been asked. Being able to say something back, even if it was weird, was perhaps no small feat either.

Almost all the instances of using English that the young learners gave involved speaking English outside the classroom. While they all studied English at school and many of them, for example, played English language computer games, these activities usually did not come up when the learners were asked if they used English for anything (see section 6.1.3.4). It appears that the authoritative belief, found already in Year 1 data, regarding the reasons for English studies was very powerful. One needs to study English in order to be able to speak to foreigners, and consequently this is what English is *used* for. The learners' own experiences seemed to be defined by this authoritative view: they almost exclusively reported that they had used English only if they had spoken it with a foreigner.

In Year 5, the accumulated experience of learning and also of using English was reflected in the voicework of the learners. They were now clearly voicing themselves as language learners who knew a thing or two about the English language.

One of the most obvious changes from Year 3 was the absence of quoted voices: the overt quotes of the third year had become covert quotes in the fifth. Now the learners no longer overtly referred to others and the Others' voices were altogether less obvious. The authoritative voices, cultural truths found already in Year 1 data, were, however, virtually unchanged. This was particularly true for the big *Why?* question: the children had agreed since the Year 1 that the reason for studying English was to be able to speak to people abroad (or to foreigners anywhere). Interestingly, the formulation of this belief had become more and more uniform: in Year 3, many learners still gave explanations and individual examples about the theme, but in Year 5, almost all

the learners answered in a rather formulaic, slogan-like form, using the verbs *speak* or *talk*, and terms *abroad* and/or *foreigners*. It seemed that the belief had been well and truly appropriated and had even become automated to some extent – the correct answer to the question to be delivered on demand.

Answers in which the learners were positioning themselves as the agents by using phrases like *I think*, *in my opinion,* or *to me* were becoming more common in the fifth year interviews. As the Others' voices were becoming less evident, the learners' own voice was coming to the fore. This could also be seen in the way in which the learners began to use their own experience in their answers: instead of drawing on the words of others, they now relied more on their own experience, feelings and viewpoints to answer the questions posed to them. It seemed that the answers provided by authoritative voices could be delivered with more confidence, however, as most of the hedging was done in connection with their own experiences (*I at any rate, for me anyway*, and so on). On the other hand, there was all in all far less hesitation, hedgings and dunno's in the learners' answers now than in Year 3.

The overall increased confidence was coupled with an increased sensitivity to the diversity of experience. In Year 3, when the learners used their own experiences as the basis of their answers, they also often indicated that whatever they felt and experienced was probably what other people did, too (Aro 2001). In Year 5, the learners started to acknowledge that what works for them does not necessarily work for others, or what did not work for them might still be helpful for others.

In Year 5, the learners had become more adept at answering in a self-regulatory manner. Quotations had disappeared completely and the learners had now appropriated various speech genres and voices to use when being interviewed. They could speak without the overt help of others and began to use their own voices and opinions more confidently. The answers had also become longer: the learners could elaborate on, for example, what a slogan like "English is useful abroad" could mean in practice, or describe their learning strategies. They had also appropriated the speech genre of the school, using phrases like *in class we have to* (in reference to institutional authority, voicing themselves as obedient pupils) and a wide variety of learning-specific terms like *pronunciation*, *translate* and *revise.* The resources available to the learners had become more varied, and they had learnt to ventriloquate a range of voices in order to answer the interview questions appropriately: to be more neutral and detached when asked general, knowledge questions, and to have opinions as well as grounds and reasons for their opinions when asked personal questions.

6.2.4 Who is doing the talking?

The participants were interviewed in the Year 1 when they had no experience of formal language studies; in Year 3, when they had just started studying English as their first foreign language; and in Year 5, when they had studied English at school for more than two years. Over the course of these five years, the learners

began to develop their own take on language learning in the interviews: their learner voice started to emerge.

6.2.4.1 The emerging voice of the language learner

In Year 1 the participants came across as mostly carefree and in many cases also confident, because they were using their own voice of a child. While they seemed aware that they would in all probability study foreign languages one day, many did not voice themselves even as future language learners. They appeared rather unconcerned about language studies; it was not a part of their reality. Some children did have experience of language learning, however, and others had already appropriated cultural ideas about the usefulness of language studies, usually from their significant others. The experiences and words of significant others did appear to factor in more than cultural slogans: knowing English because their parents or older siblings knew English was more important than reasons related to travelling abroad, for example. The learners' voice was thus an uninterested one, or that of the future learner, spiced with ventriloquated voices of significant others and society.

In Year 3, the interview was more geared to addressing the participants specifically as language learners. There were more knowledge questions about language learning along with questions focusing on the learners' opinions. As the learners' own voice as a language learner was still in its early stages, Others' voices were often used to answer questions. The words of significant others were often quoted overtly so as to make it clear that the learner was appealing to Other's words. Ready-made opinions were ventriloquated, and school discourses began to appear in the answers, too. It was also clear that the learners were eager to start developing their own viewpoints, as they began to mention their own experiences and ideas. The learners' beliefs had become more polyphonic, a result of the increasing number of resources they had at their disposal when answering questions.

In Year 5, the voicework of the learners' beliefs had developed depth rather than diversified further. The participants' learner voice was emerging based on the same voices that had been evident since the first and especially the third year: voices of significant others, societal "truths", school discourses, the learner's own experiences. The learners had become more fluent in appropriating these various voices. The ventriloquated voices of others had become less evident – they could be appropriated without quotation marks, so to speak – and the learners were likely to appeal to their own experience whenever applicable. The learners were more likely to use *I*-forms and talk about themselves, but also used more slogan-like, statement-of-fact answers. The choice appeared to be influenced, quite naturally but certainly not solely, by the question posed to them. In Year 5 they could more fluently and appropriately answer both personal questions and general questions, whereas in Year 1, all kinds of questions were likely to elicit a personal account; in Year 3, they tended to come up with a quoted or ventriloquated account based on

Others' words. Along with personal experiences, the fifth year learners began to use the voice of a language user, too.

TABLE 3 Summary of the voicework in the learners' answers

Year 1: **carefree outsiders**	Year 3: **novice learners**	Year 5: **learner-users**
• Voice of a child: language learning a thing of the future • Confident mini-expertise • Tentatively ventriloquating authoritative voices	• Quote significant others, ventriloquate authoritative voices • Begin to appropriate school talk • Begin to bring forward their own opinions • Attempt to speak as language learners • Using English a thing of the future	• Use a learner's voice and authoritative voices more confidently • Begin to bring forward their own experience, also of using English • Present their own opinions more freely • Fluent in school talk

Over the years and with increasing experience the learners' beliefs began to echo the voices they had come into contact with and the foreign language related events they had experienced. By Year 5, the learner's own voice was a combination and adaptation of various voices: authoritative cultural truths, institutional discourses, and the learners' own, individual experiences. The participants had started to talk about their beliefs with the help of others and the others' voices, and over time appropriated these other voices to be able to express their ideas in a more self-regulated manner. They had thus expanded their agency to take the words of others and use them in a unique way (cf. Hicks 2000). The help of others was still contained in their beliefs, as shown by their polyphonic quality. In the polyphony of the learners' beliefs, the role of authoritative voices turned out to be particularly strong.

6.2.4.2 Voicing through authority

Ready-made opinions and cultural truths in the learners' beliefs were in evidence already in Year 1. These slogan-like statements were used as justifications both for the learners' own words and for the motivations attributed to other people, were often presented as obvious, and appeared to be taken for granted. It seemed they were very much authoritative ideas: one had to accept them and repeat them as they were.

Authoritative ideas were an easy answer in the sense that they appeared to be readily available and easily verbalisable. The Finnish slogans regarding the importance of language studies had apparently been appropriated from parents very early on. Later, the voice of the school appeared to gain ground,

too. Dufva & Alanen (2005: 104) note that institutional discourses mediated in language teaching seem to very strong and may easily override the children's own, less articulate observations: this certainly seemed to be the case when the learners were asked about learning practices. It was also interesting that these ventriloquated voices were usually delivered very confidently, whereas the learners' own experiences were often hedged by adding *at any rate, anyway*, and so on. There appeared to be an authoritative belief for both the *Why?* and the *How?* topics, which then went on to have an effect on the answers given within each topic.

For the *Why?* topic (see Figure 12), the authoritative belief was that *English is needed for speaking to foreigners abroad*[22]. The belief appeared to have a ripple effect on the entire interview. If English was needed abroad, then, consequently, not leaving the country would mean that one's English skills were not put to use. If English was used to talk to foreigners, then playing English language computer games did not constitute using English. If using English meant speaking it, then writing skills were irrelevant. It was as if the authoritative belief was used as a lens through which other ideas were produced and the learner's own actions viewed.

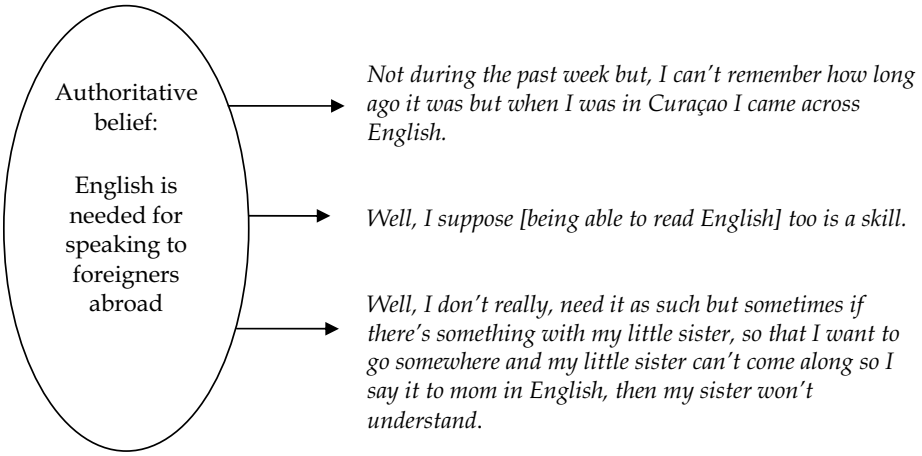

FIGURE 12 Why English is needed: the authoritative belief and its reformulations

For the *How?* topic (see Figure 13), the authoritative belief was that *English is learnt through books, primarily at school*. Many learners felt that in order to learn English, the first and foremost thing was to go to school or to find a teacher. The book part appeared to be even more powerful, however. Books, words and reading were very much in evidence in the learners' answers. While the learners were open to the idea that activities outside the school context might help one to learn English, these activities would certainly need to be in written

[22] The idea that the speaking would need to happen abroad did begin to fade over time, but was still expressed even in the Year 5.

form – spoken language or songs would not do, and a vocabulary list would be very much appreciated.

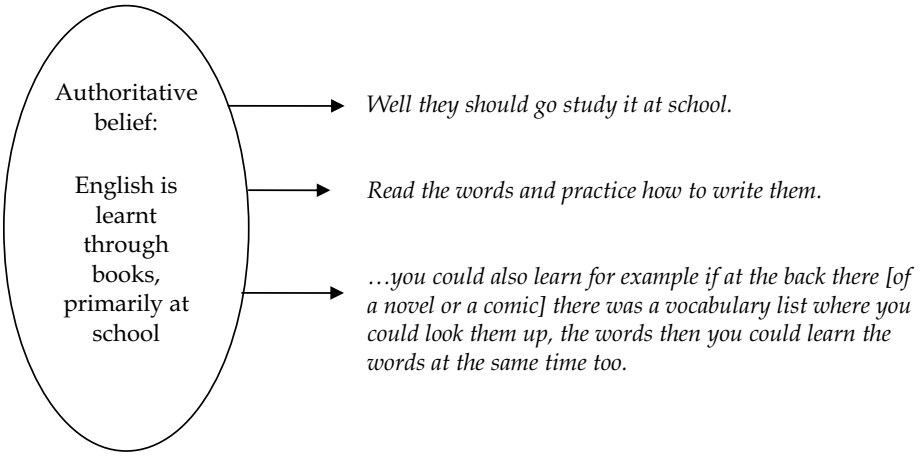

FIGURE 13 How English is learnt: the authoritative belief and its reformulations

Put together, the authoritative beliefs regarding language learning (through written language) and eventual language use (speaking English) resulted in a somewhat contradictory idea of how learning would lead to use. As the participants all reported that the reason for English studies was to be able to speak it, they were also asked how one would learn to specifically speak it:

(116) MA: Mitenkäs sitä englantia oppii sitte nimeomaan puhumaan? Onk siinä jotai erityistä keinoo?
- No jos lukee joitai sanoja ja sitte, joitai lauseita (nii niistä).
MA: How does one learn to specifically speak English? Is there a special trick to it?
- Well if you read some words and then, some sentences (so from them).
Rauli Year 5

As learning is something one does with the help of books, then, in order to learn how to speak, *you **read** some words*. It appeared that many learners were not consciously aware of the different modalities and their differences – in this context, English was English was English, and one learnt it by reading in order to use it by talking.

Both of these beliefs were talked about very early on and did not seem to lose their popularity over the years. Even though the learners began to bring up their own, more personal opinions and experiences over time, the question is raised whether these voices, too, were spoken through the authoritative truths – whether these authoritative beliefs prevented the participants from perceiving learning opportunities, language affordances and resources outside school and books, or from seeing themselves as users of English in their daily lives.

6.3 Agency

In this section the data are examined to see how the children construct their own agency as language learners (as opposed to learners who are *talking about* language) in the context of the research interviews. The data are analysed to see who the active doers are in matters relating to English language learning. Who does the learning and where does agency lie in language learning? Who do the children present as active agents in their answers and what language learning related activities do these agents do? Do the roles of these agents change over the years?

6.3.1 Year 1: observing and reporting

In Year 1, the children often talked about their significant others. They did not directly report the words of these significant others, but rather described something the others had done. It appeared that the children felt that these references were important for their answers as the participants themselves were in most cases not actively involved in the world of foreign languages yet. Helen (see example 7), for example, talked about how she would like to study English as it is *needed in so many countries*, for example *in America*. She then went on to add that *my older sister was there this summer*, pointing out that her sister was familiar with this world of experience. Similarly, Sakari wanted to bring his father's expertise to the interviewer's attention:

(117) HD: No sanotsä muutaman maan?
- Öö Ruotsi sitte Englanti,(- Arabia), mun iskä muuten on käyny siellä.
HD: Well will you name a few countries?
- Er Sweden then England, (- Arabia), my dad has been there by the way.
Sakari Year 1

Sakari, when asked to name some countries, started with the more familiar countries for Finnish children (*Sweden, England*) but then named *(-) Arabia.* He immediately pointed out that this was a country where *my dad has been*. This seems to indicate that his father's visit to the country was also the source for this bit of information – Sakari knew this thanks to his father. Interestingly, Sakari had mentioned earlier in the interview that he had been to Sweden but felt no need to point that out when naming Sweden. Perhaps he thought that was already covered, or perhaps such first-hand information had led to certainty with regard to Sweden being a legitimate answer to this question, whereas naming a country he had only heard his father talk about merited a bit of background information, namely mentioning his father. Like Helen, it seemed that he wanted to point out that he was close to expertise and agency in international matters, if not quite a participant in them yet.

As most children had not studied foreign languages yet, they naturally could not talk of themselves as active, language learning agents at this point. They did, however, want to emphasise that many of the people close to them

were. Even if the children themselves did not have the expertise, at least they intimately knew people who did.

(118) MP: No tota, tiiätsä osaaks sun äiti tai isä jotain vierasta kieltä?
- No ne osaa melkein kaikki kielet.
MP: Well er, do you know if your mom or dad knows some foreign language?
- Oh they know almost all languages.
Aku Year 1

Aku was probably quite confident that his parents knew a thing a two about languages – he said they *know almost all languages*. Jonne, on the other hand, did know someone with a great deal of competence and agency in the English language (see example 12). Unfortunately, this person was a five-year-old girl, so he opted to say that he personally did not want to learn English as the language was clearly *for sissies*. Whether agentivity in English was a positive or a negative thing depended on the agent.

The children who already knew some English were not very comfortable assuming responsibility and agency in their learning. Usually agency lay where expertise lay. When Eeva, in example 14, was asked how she had learnt English words, she placed the agency clearly on her mother: *mom has said* and *my mom's read from it*. She thus attributed her own knowledge to her mother, downplaying her own role in the learning process. She did not depict herself as having really done anything: her mother had done the work and she had absorbed what had been said. Sakari, too, described how he had learnt English by saying simply *dad has taught me* in example 91.

When asked how they had learnt English, both Sakari and Eeva referred to the actions of another person, a parent who they considered responsible for the fact that they knew some English: *dad has taught*, *mom has said*. Sakari and Eeva thus seemed to place the agency of their language learning process with another person – it appeared that they felt that what the teacher had done was more relevant than their own actions. They did not talk about listening to or remembering what they had been taught, or even specify that their parent had taught *them,* but simply explained what their parents had done in the process. The children positioned themselves as recipients of their parents' actions. The expertise still lay with the parent-teachers and the children's own agency in the learning process was limited: the learning activities were still other-regulated.

It is also interesting to note that neither Sakari nor Eeva could read very well at the time of the interview (when asked about their reading skills, Sakari said he could read *some words*; Eeva said she could read *syllables*). Perhaps the idea that active *learning* would require *reading* already had an influence on how they perceived the learning process. Whatever the cause, the participants did not describe themselves as active agents in the language learning process even when they were in some ways involved in it. Most of them, of course, were not, and naturally talked mainly about the actions of their significant others.

6.3.2 Year 3: collaborative efforts

In Year 1 the children had tended to present the parents as the active agents of the learning process, *mom read, dad taught,* as seen in the previous section. In Year 3, when they began their English studies, agency began to be allotted more and more to the learners themselves. For example Emma, in example 45, now chose to present herself as more of an equal: *I've been learning… **with** mom*, appearing to emphasise the co-operation between the two of them when they were engaged in the learning with *these cards* and *book exercises*. The learning experience thus became something *we*, Emma and her mother, did together.

Even if the children were still unsure of their voice and agency as language learners, their significant others were certainly no longer the sole agents of language learning. The siginificant others still had the expertise, but they were more often presented as helpers in time of need.

(119) MA: No, mitäs sää sitte teet ku sä et muista miten joku sana kirjotetaan?
- Kysyn iskältä.
MA: So, what do you do when you can't remember how to spell a certain word?
- I ask dad.
Sakari Year 3

When the children had problems with their English studies or a question about the English language, they would go to their parents. Sakari's solution, when confronted by an English word he did not know, was to *ask dad*. Valtteri,for his part, said that he would *ask mom to help* when he had a problem, because *she too is also good at English* (see example 53). While their parents knew more and could therefore offer assistance, agency had now switched to the children themselves, *I ask*, and parents and their knowledge had become the object of the children's actions. Parents no longer *taught* but *were asked* for help: the children thus appeared to be more in control of their language learning than they were in Year 1. While the expertise still lay with the significant others, agency had shifted more to the novice learner.

In Year 3 the expertise and experiences of the significant others were thus used for the children's benefit: the parents and older siblings were not necessarily teaching the children any more, but had become a valuable aid in the children's learning process. They had changed from active teachers or esteemed experts into sources of knowledge and practical help, as it were. The children now presented themselves as more active agents of the learning process than in Year 1: now they asked for help and used their parents' knowledge, which presented them as the ones responsible for their learning.

Parents were, of course, not always around. In the classroom, the learners also turned to their peers for assistance. Annika reported that their English teacher talked English a lot in class and she said she did not always understand what the teacher was saying: especially "ne sivunumerot on sitte vähä vaikeet" (*the page numbers are a bit difficult*). What was a learner to do?

(120) MA: Mitäs sää sitte teet ku sä et ymmärrä jotai [mitä opettaja sanoo englanniksi]?

- Noo katon vaikka vaikka kaverilta vierestä et mitä kaikkee ne tekee.
MA: So what do you do then when you don't understand something [that the teacher says in English]?
- Weell I will like check my friend next to me like what sorts of things they are doing.
Annika Year 3

Annika would *check my friend next to me… what sorts of things they are doing* and in all probability do the same. She thus relied on the shared resources of the classroom and her classmates: a more capable peer had surely understood what they had to do, so in order to keep up, Annika used her peer's understanding.

Interesingly, the teacher was usually not mentioned as a source of help, nor did the children say they ever asked the teacher for clarifications. She was often considered the main source of learning (along with books), however.

(121) MA: Tota voikos sun mielestä englantia opiskella ilma opettajaa?
- No, jos o ennenkin lukenu englantia ni ei siinä välttämättä tarvii opettajaa, mutta jos alottaa ni ei siinä päl- pärjää ilma opettajaa.
MA: Er do you think it's possible to study English without a teacher?
- Well, if you've studied English before then you don't necessarily need a teacher, but if you're starting then you can't really mat- manage without a teacher.
Matti Year 5

Matti appeared to have very definite views about the importance of teachers. He said it might be possible to study English without the help of a teacher *if you've studied English before*, but as far as beginners were concerned, *you can't really manage without a teacher*. He thus suggested that while the learner's own skills and agency were needed, the help of an expert was indispensable. Mervi put even more emphasis on the teacher's role. Her answer (see example 44) to the question of how English is learnt was simply: *teachers are there for teaching.* In this instance Mervi handed responsibility over to the teacher, and voiced herself as a passive recipient. Mervi thus presented learning as something that was mainly a function of the teacher's actions.

The participants appeared to be learning how to learn in Year 3 data. They were still acting in collaboration with others rather than managing the tasks independently; appropriating the actions and activities needed in the learning process from other people, like for example their significant others. In Year 1 data the learning actions of the participants were very much regulated by others, so much so that most of them attributed no agency to themselves when talking about language learning related issues. In Year 3, the learners were beginning to take control over their own agency and move gradually from collaboration towards independence as language learners.

Some learners, however, were already acting in a rather self-regulated way in Year 3. Helen, in example 54, did mention her father as her first line of defence if she did not understand a word in the game she was playing. But she also had another resource: *or [I] check the dictionary*. Instead of relying only on the help of more capable others, she could also help herself more independently: *once I like read a long stretch of text with the help of the dictionary*

what's that word, and then I looked it up.[23] She helped herself so to speak, and chose something she could use agentively in order to help her understand the language.

6.3.3 Year 5: divergent agents

The role of significant others as helpers in the learning process continued in Year 5. As in Year 3, the children said that they would ask their parents or older siblings for help, or explain how these others helped them in other ways.

(122) MA: No mitenkäs sää opiskelet englantia, minkä/laisia asioita sää teet/
- /No mää luen niitä/, sanoja sieltä kirjasta ja sitte opiskelen niitä, sitte välillä jos on vaikka jotku kokeet ni äiti sitte kyselee mitä mun pitää sanoo sitte ne oikei ja, kertoo miten ne kirjotetaa.
MA: So how do you study English, what kinds /of things do you do/
- /Well I read the/, words from the book and then study them, then sometimes if there's like a test then mom asks what I have to say them right then and, tell how to spell them.
Valtteri Year 5

Valtteri told the interviewer how he studied English, and first talked about what he himself did: *read the, words… study them*. He then pointed out that under certain circumstances, *if there's like a test*, his mother would help him prepare: *then mom asks* him to pronounce and spell words. Emma, when asked how she handled the occasional problems when playing English-language computer games, said "No jos mä en osaa sitä sanaa mää kysyn mun isoveljeltä" (*Well if I don't know the word I ask my older brother).* She positioned herself as the agent who asked her *older brother* for help when she felt that *I don't know the word*. While her brother was more knowledgeable in English, he was a source of information that Emma could use; an object of Emma's agency, as it were. Parents and other significant others thus continued to lend a helping hand for the learner agents, but overall there were less references to these outside helpers than in Year 3.

As the participants had begun to take on more agency, they were particularly keen to present themselves as English language speakers. For example Jari wanted to present himself as a language using agent:

(123) MA: Joo onko muualla [kuin tunnilla] tullu vastaan [englantia viime viikon aikana]?
- No ei oo kyllä viime viikon, aikana tullu.
MA: Joo no entäs sitä ennen oiskos siellä joku semmone, mikä muistuis mieleen?
- No ei oo ku kesällä kylläkin mutta.
MA: No mitäs kesällä tapahtu?
- No sillon moltiin Euroopassa ni, sillon siellä hirveesti, jou'uttiin puhumaa.
MA: Yeah have you come across [English] anywhere else [but the classroom over the past week]?
- Well not during the past week, no.
MA: Yeah well what about before that are there any instances that spring to mind?
- Well no except in the summer yes but.
MA: Well what happened in the summer?

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[23] Of course, a dictionary, too, is an aid devised by more capable others.

- Well we were travelling in Europe so, then there we had to, speak a lot.
Jari Year 5

One got the feeling from the initial answers that there was something Jari was dying to tell, but it seems he was not quite sure if he could bring the matter up, as the original question *did* refer to the past week, and summer had been months earlier. He finally said that they *were travelling in Europe* and that *there we had to, speak a lot*. Jari was very eager to talk about his experience of using the English language, but he did so with the help of others in this case: ***we*** *had to speak a lot*. As seen in earlier examples (114, 115), bringing up these English speaking experiences was common in Year 5, and most learners referred solely to themselves as the English speakers in their story.

The learners began to use their own experiences as the basis for their answer in Year 5 (cf. example 110), and this could be seen as another sign of increasing self-regulation and appropriation of agency. As their experiences accumulated and their learner voices began to emerge, they seemed to also gain the courage to think that their experience and voices mattered and could be used in the context of a research interview as valid answers to the questions. Their competence began to shift from social sources to self sources.

However, while the overall expression of self-regulation and agency had increased, attributed agency in language learning *in the school context* varied considerably in the learners' answers in Year 5 data. In Year 1, the differences were a natural function of their language learning experiences or lack thereof; in the third, the majority of learners talked about language learning in collaborative terms. In Year 5, the differences between the learners had grown: some learners still emphasised collaboration in one way or another while others had moved closer to independence. Helen, for example, appeared to be quite good at describing her learning efforts, as shown by example 80. She could list several activities and appeared very involved: *we do exercise in the book, write… in the exercise book, I… read, I do all sorts of things*. She thus painted herself as a very active agent in the learning process. Mervi also appeared to take active responsibility for her learning. After describing what they did in class, she was then asked:

(124) MA:Teeksää mitään sitte niinkun muuta kun niitä läksyjä kotona?
- Joo, no, mää varmaan luen englantia nii mää luen englantia ja sitte, ää kirjotan aina vihkoon jotai sanoja ja, tämmöstä.
MA: Do you then do like anything else besides homework at home?
- Yeah, well, I suppose I read English yes I read English and then, er write some words in the exercise book and, stuff like that.
Mervi Year 5

Like Helen, Mervi presented herself as the agent: *I read English, I… write in the exercise book*. Both girls could put verbs in their sentences and positon themselves as the doers of language learning.

In example 81, Sakari, on the other hand, seemed to pass all responsibility for learning over to his teacher. When he was asked how he studied English, he said, after a moment of silence, *so that the teacher teaches*. After this he was asked

what he did at home in order to learn English, and he said simply "Läksyjä" (*Homework*). Instead of making himself the active agent of his studies, he chose to present the teacher as the active agent and did not even use a verb in connection with the noun *homework* – the overall effect was that of a passive learner who chanced upon teaching and homework.

One of the most interesting instances of the agency variation was when the learners were asked if they thought they were good at English, and then asked to ponder why some did well and others not so well at English.

(125) MA: Ooksä hyvä englannissa?
- No emmä nyt sillee ehkä oo (välttämättä)
MA: Joo, mistä se sitte johtuu että, jotku on hyvä ja jotku on vähä huonompia?
- ((tauko)) No ((tauko)) No toiset harjottelee sillei eri tavalla et ne sit oppii e-tota nopeemmin sitä.
MA: Are you good at English?
- Well I'm like perhaps not really (necessarily).
MA: Yeah, why is it that, some are good and some do a bit worse?
- ((pause)) Well ((pause)) Well others practise like differently so that then they learn E-er it faster.
Maria Year 5

Maria said she did not feel she was doing particularly well in English, *I'm like perhaps not really*. When asked why some did do well, she had to think about her answer for a while, and then said *others practise like differently*, which made them *learn… it faster*. The difference between the high-achievers and the low-achievers was thus a qualitative one: those who did well practised *differently*, and consequently learnt *faster*. Maria did not explain how the practices might differ. When Sakari was asked if he did well in English, he said "No en nyt tiiä" (*Well I don't know really*). His explanation, after a moment's thought, for why some learners did better was "ne on varmaan harjotellu vaa enemmä" (*they must have simply practised more*). Unlike Maria, he seemed to think the key to doing well was quantitatively doing *more*.

There were also learners who felt they were doing pretty well in English. Interestingly, their ideas about why there were differences in how well learners did had very little to do with the actions of the learners themselves.

(126) MA: Ooksää hyvä englannissa?
- Oon mää aika hyvä.
MA: Joo, mist se johtuu et toiset on parempia englannissa ku toiset?
- Mm, joillaki on vaan erilaisissa, aineissa, ne sopii niille paremmin ja, oppii helpommin (ja tällee).
MA: Are you good at English?
- I am pretty good.
MA: Yeah, why is it that some are better at English than others?
- Mm, some simply have in different, subjects, they suit them better and, learn easier (and stuff like that).
Helen Year 5

Helen admitted that she was *pretty good* at English. As for the differences between learners, Helen said *some simply have in different, subjects, they suit them better and, learn easier*. Doing well in English appeared to be a function of an

inborn talent or some other characteristic that *some simply have*, which made them *learn easier*. Helen's explanation did not include any activity on the part of the learner: whatever it was that helped some people learn English faster, not everyone had it. Sanna, too, said she was "aika hyvä" (*pretty good*) at English. When asked why it was that some people were better at English than others, she was at a loss: she said "En (mä) oikeen tiiä että kai se sitte on, en mä oikein tiiä" (*(I) don't know really I suppose it's, I don't know really)*. She started by saying she did not know, went on to have an idea she could perhaps suppose, but decided to stick with not knowing, after all. This was possibly an issue Sanna had never thought about, but the idea that the learner's own actions might be a factor did not make it into her answer.

Sakari and Maria did not see themselves as particularly successful English learners. They also said that those who were successful did something that less successful learners did not: the high achievers practised in a different way, or more. Helen and Sanna, on the other hand, both said they did well, but did not say it was because they worked hard, practised more, or practised better: for them the secrets of success were far more mysterious than mere work or practice. Of course, there may be cultural factors at play: blowing one's own trumpet is not a very Finnish thing to do, so to have a learner say that she is good because she works harder and better at things than others is not, in fact, very likely. It is interesting, however, that the self-proclaimed low achievers, who also had a hard time describing activities related to language learning, as shown by example 81, attributed success to learner actions, while the high achievers did not.

According to McCombs (1989) and Schunk (1994), self-regulation also incorporates factors like holding positive beliefs about one's abilities, valuing learning and its outcomes, and experiencing positive affects (like pride and satisfaction) from one's efforts. It did appear that none of these were true of those learners who said they did not do well in English – the statement itself suggesting that they did not hold positive beliefs about their own abilities.

6.3.4 Learner agency and agents of learning

According to Vygotsky (1978: 57), "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level": the development of self-regulation moves from collaboration to independence. The data from the first year children to the fifth year ones reflected the development of self-regulation and agency of the learners as their competence moved from social sources to self sources.

In Year 1, the learners were primarily observing and reporting the foreign language learning actions of others. This was true even when the children themselves were involved in language learning in some way: they attributed agency to their significant others rather than to themselves, and presented themselves as the object of these actions. In Year 3, the learners had moved more clearly towards collaboration: they often described learning as a joint

effort with an adult or a more capable peer. The teacher provided the material to be learnt but was not presented as a source of help.

In Year 5, the learners began to present themselves as more and more active in the learning process. The significant others were still present, but were now more in the background: they could still be consulted, but their assistance was not as prominent as in Year 3. In many ways the learners had moved towards self-regulation: they were often capable of presenting themselves as active learners and users of English. The differences between the learners had increased considerably from Year 3 with regard to how they portrayed themselves as *learner* agents. Some learners appeared very active and confident, while others very much relied on collaboration, or even presented themselves as the objects of others' (the teacher's) actions. Some learners even seemed to have taken a few steps backwards from Year 3, where learners still appeared eager to develop their learning skills.

On the other hand, some of Year 5 learners who said they were not doing well in English were ready and willing to talk of themselves as active *users* of English. It is interesting to note that within the school context they appeared passive and other-regulated, but outside the school (and its institutional structures, the classroom environment, teacher direction, exercises, exams and evaluating grades), they could see themselves as active agents interacting with and through English. All in all, the learners' self-regulation increased noticeably over the years, but it developed in different ways in different areas.

Based on the Bakhtinian and Vygotskian frameworks, and the results of their own study, Karasavvidis et al. (2000: 287) proposed that learning and the development of self-regulation have three main dimensions. Learners can appropriate:

1. the genre, and know how to talk about the matter under study using the appropriate terms, style and syntax;
2. the activity, where they know what steps need to taken, when and how;
3. the principle, which refers to higher understanding: the learners understand the rationale of the activity.

According to Karasavvidis et al (2000: 287), learners can have differing competency levels in each component. They may therefore have appropriated seven different combinations of these components: activity, principle, genre, activity and principle, activity and genre, principle and genre, or all three. While the dimensions in Karasavvidis et al. (2000) refer to the learning of a specific task (in the case of their 2000 study, correlational problem solving), they could also be applied to the appropriation processes that the present study focuses on and shed light on why and how the expressed self-regulation varies among the learners.

Following the categories suggested by Karasavvisis at el. (2000), we can look at the development of self-regulation from three perspectives. In this study the participants could thus appropriate genre: ways of talking about and

describing learning English; the activity itself of learning English: how and what to do in order to learn; and the rationale for studies: why and how doing certain things or doing things in a certain way contributes to learning outcomes. It did appear that while the participants' self-regulatory skills increased in total over the years, there were great differences in how the different components were appropriated. In Year 5, the learners were all relatively capable of using the genre of English studies, but some of them had a hard time describing the activities. Some learners perhaps did do the activities expected of them in the school context, but were simply going through the motions without really grasping the principle behind the activities. A few students, however, appeared to express their understanding of the rationale as well, as Helen (see p. 105) did when she pointed out that if one wished to learn English when watching television programmes, one should specifically pay attention to learning, be mindful of it, rather than just passively sit and listen. In Sullivan & McCarthy's (2004) more dialogical terms, these takes on agency could tell us about how the learners conceptualised their responsibility in the things that had happened in their learning and using of English and how they conceptualised their potential as future users of English.

6.4 Summary

The data revealed how the learners participating in the present study conceptualised learning and using English through the three interconnected layers of content, voice and agency. The results showed that the learners' beliefs had both varying and repeated elements. The answers to general questions about English language learning (such as the general *Why?* questions) appeared to be appropriated early on and changed very little. On the other hand, the learners' experiences affected their opinions about e.g. the effectiveness of different learning methods, even when they fairly consistently echoed the discourses of school. In the learners' answers, learning activities usually involved written language, whereas using English was associated with speaking it. Over time, the contents of the learners' beliefs appeared to become more and more similar, suggesting the influence of authoritative views they had all encountered – the school context and Finnish society at large – which gave them ideas about what a language learner is like and what language learning and using are all about.

In addition to a description of the content of the learners' beliefs, the voicework in their beliefs was also examined. The polyphony of their beliefs gave clues as to where their beliefs may have come from, who had influenced the learners' ideas about language learning, and whose voices were privileged. Authoritative voices appeared to have a powerful effect on how the learners talked about language learning. While, over time, the learners' own expriences

began to gain ground in their beliefs, the authoritative views seemed to affect how these experiences were interpreted.

The voicework also showed how the learners authored themselves as language learners in the dialogue, responding to Others. When answering the interview questions, they were evaluating and using the various voices they had come into contact with while also interacting with the Other that was present, the interviewer. The development of their own voice as a language learner was shown in that the voices of others became less and less evident over time. This also ties in with Hicks' (2000) notion of agency: of the ability to use the words of others in a new way.

Expressions of agency in the learners' beliefs showed that, over time, they were moving from other-regulated learning to a higher degree of self-regulation. By Year 5, however, there were great differences within the group, with some learners picturing themselves as active participants in the learning process and others describing themselves as merely being taught. However, even the passive learners sometimes talked of themselves as active *users* of English in their free time. The notion of agency was thus multidimensional: the learners could embody their own agency through voicework in their speech but also express their agency as learners and users of English in their descriptions of activity.

7 DISCUSSION

The present study looked at the learner beliefs of young Finnish L1 learners of English. Their beliefs were studied from a dialogical and sociocultural point of view using semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the data brought together three interconnected aspects of the learners' beliefs as they were expressed in the learners' answers: content, voice and agency.

The original idea behind the study was to focus on the development of the learners' beliefs and their expressed voice and agency specifically as a progress: to chart how their learner voices and their agency as language learners became progressively stronger, so to speak. It emerged, however, that voices and agency got richer and more diverse: they changed and developed in more dimensions than just the one.

7.1 Critical considerations

"All research leaks" (Nunan 2000)

Before discussing the implications of the results, certain limitations of the study must be pointed out. It is important to note how the design and the methodology of the study restrict its scope and consequently affect the results.

The study of beliefs itself is in many ways problematic. When using interviews, we can obviously only study what the participants say. Looking at beliefs, which are considered to have a cognitive component, through dialogue raises the question: "How far can we take children's conceptual formulations as evidence of what and how they think?" (Edwards 1993b: 207). The present study did not look at what the learners *think* or what they *do* – it looked at what the learners *say* they think and do. As a dialogical view of cognition suggests, and also for example Edwards (1993b: 210) points out, words always have a history and remembering is a dynamic process that is part and parcel of conceptualisation. The learners taking part in the present study may have been

making up explanations and answers to questions they had never thought about before, relying on words they were remembering, and picking and choosing reponses they felt were appropriate, rather than revealing their own thoughts (cf. Edwards 1993b: 222). As Block (2000: 759) points out, the participants adopt voices in response to the questions: these voices might or might not represent the learners' thoughts or what they would choose to say in another context.

On the one hand, this is what the notion of voice helps to disentangle, to some extent: at the very core of a dialogical analysis of interview data is the idea that learners verntriloquate and appropriate words of others. One of the most interesting issues was precisely to see what kinds of others' voices were privileged and trusted. On the other hand, analysing voicework in the learners' answers was challenging since only the answers were available: in order to more reliably track whose voices were used the researcher should ideally have had access to all the dialogues the learners were engaged in over the years (and even before the study began) – a massive and very nearly impossible undertaking. As it stands, the researcher had to trust herself as a speaker of Finnish and a member of Finnish society to identify, for example, the cultural slogans used, or the terminology prevalent in the Finnish school context. However, as Mishler (1986: 115) notes, there are several viable interpretations of the data, and the different theoretical perspectives generate different questions – these do not compete as rival explanations as such.

Another challenge with the interview method is the flip side of its strength: when learners are asked to verbalise their conceptions, they can choose what to say and how to say it, but, on the other hand, they have to choose what to say and how to say it. Being asked questions in the context of an interview may mean that the participants sometimes leave out aspects of their conceptions that are not easily verbalisable. It may thus be that we only hear of those beliefs that are readily available and that the participants are more conscious of. Certain participants may also wish to get off easy and provide the shortest answers possible, even if they could have talked about the issue asked about in great depth. The learners' answers were no doubt affected by a number of factors, ranging from how their day (week, month, year) had been to how they felt about the interviewer and the interview itself. While the researcher defined the interaction in her own mind as focusing on the learners' beliefs about English language learning, each learner answered the questions, naturally, as a whole person with a history, family, friends, experiences, moods, feelings, attitudes, the lot. The business of English language learning is never severed from the business of living in general, and neither is the research interview. In addition, studies using visual belief elicitation techniques such as drawing or photographs (see e.g. Kalaja, Alanen & Dufva 2008, Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta 2008) have shown that the chosen modality also affects the results. Some learners may thus be more comfortable with talking, while others prefer to express themselves visually, and different aspects of learner beliefs may be accessed through different means.

Also, the interviews probably had a school context bias, as that is where all the participants were learning English. Many interview questions directly dealt with the school environment, and the interviews were conducted during English lessons at school. This may well have steered the interviewees towards thinking that the interview was specifically about them as learners of English at school, and may consequently have affected their answers.

Therefore, as a research interview is a dialogue, there is the problem of meaning construction in general. Whose concepts and understandings are used – are the learners and the interviewer talking about the same things (cf. Pöyhönen 2004)? We can never be sure if the learners actually understood the questions in the way the interviewer intended. As meanings of utterances are never closed and fixed, neither is the aim of the questions self-evident. This has been noted by a number of researchers: for example Tynjälä (1999) only asked one question (albeit a broad one) and could create numerous categories for the answers received.

One should also remember that asking questions about the learners' beliefs may well actually affect their beliefs. The participants were interviewed three times over the course of this particular study, and took part in the *Situated Metalinguistic Awareness and Foreign Language Learning* research project for six years, in all. How did this continuity influence their views of foreign language learning? Perhaps the beliefs of these young learners were different because they were taking part in the study; it would at least have directed their attention to languages and learning more often than that of most of their peers, if nothing else. This may well have some effect on their view of these matters, too.

The present study was a case study involving fifteen Finnish learners of English. The size of the group obviously limits the generalisability of the study, which, on the other hand, is certainly not even the goal of small-scale case studies, or qualitative studies in general. The goal was to describe and analyse learner beliefs qualitatively, and to this end, the small group of participants and the semi-structured interview method worked well. Looking at fifteen individual learners as one group also posed certain problems. It did not feel sensible to give particular numbers ("seven out of fifteen children said") about such a small group when reporting on the popularity of certain themes, for example, but writing about them in terms of "most learners said" or "many learners said" may have come across as too vague. Of course, each learner also had his or her own unique course of development. Even if a group *overall* changes in a certain way in a certain aspect over the course of five years, an individual learner in that group may not. Melting the richly varied paths of these fifteen learners into one group movement was therefore challenging at times.

Lastly, there is the basic dilemma facing qualitative, interpretative studies: how to evaluate the results that are essentially a result of "the researcher interpreting the interpretations of the researchees" (my translation, Syrjälä, Ahonen, Syrjäläinen & Saari 1994: 96)? Another researcher would perhaps have

analysed the data differently, paid attention to different kinds of details and found other interpretations for the data; the readers of the present study may have their own ideas about what the interview excerpts given here may mean. Research always takes after the researcher.

7.2 Implications and future research

The beliefs of young language learners turned out to be as interdiscursive and multifaceted as those of adult learners (cf. e.g. Dufva et al. 1996): they, too, were "a tangled web of personal experiences combined with the views from society at large acquired through hearsay, instruction at school or the media" (Dufva 2003: 143). The young learners started out by echoing Others' voices and speaking in collaboration with others, but moved towards self-regulation over the years. Their own experience as English language learners and users began to gain ground in their answers. Dufva at al. (1996) found that adult learners often recounted storied involving a strong emotional value for them, even when the question could have been answered in more neutral terms. The present study offered an intriguing glimpse of how these stories may originate: the young learners participating in the present study were eager to tell their personal stories, share their pride in their accomplishment when they had spoken English, and also confess to their feelings of inferiority in the classroom.

The results show that learner beliefs about foreign language learning do influence each other and are dynamic, but that there are authoritative beliefs that appear to have great staying power and great influence. The conceptions of the learners seem to build on earlier conceptions, and, as shown by studies looking at adults' beliefs (e.g. Dufva et al. 1996), the learners' own experiences are very important in that they shape their conceptions further, and perhaps more strongly than Others' words ever can. As Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989: 36) noted, representations that arise out of activity cannot easily (or maybe at all) be replaced by descriptions. The same may be true for learner beliefs in the sense that no amount of talk about the positive effects of listening to English being spoken can convince a learner who has experienced that they get nothing from it. Then again, it may be that the initial experiences were perceived through an authoritative belief that affected the learner's actions, expectations and attitudes; perhaps the learner, who feels they cannot learn anything by listening, has been conditioned to think so by an authoritative belief which says that learning comes through reading. There is still a lot to be discovered regarding how beliefs and actions interact.

The way agency was constructed in the learners' answers yielded some very interesting results. Overall, the learners moved from other-regulation and collaboration to self-regulation and independence. However, certain learners appeared to pull away from the activity of language learning altogether in Year 5, depicting themselves as passive recipients of teaching, while others talked of

themselves in very active terms[24]. It was also interesting to note that the learners who said that they were not doing well in English were in the passive recipient camp and were also often unable (or unwilling) to describe learning activities in their answers. This is something that would merit further research. It is still early days in the language learning careers of these learners, of course: too early to say how their language skills will develop or what kinds of English speakers and users they will be later in life, nor is it realistic or necessary to expect every learner to be interested in foreign languages. Nonetheless, it appears worrying that certain learners sound so defeated after only 2+ years of studying a language. If negative experiences and feelings begin to accumulate, they may lead to a downward spiral for the learner, where each unhappy incident, possibly fuelled by negative expectations, reinforces the negative feelings. Further research is also needed to see if there are certain beliefs that these learners hold before they start studying foreign languages that might affect their learning experience and activities.

On the other hand, the observation that certain learners seem to give up on English studies might also suggest that we need to take a look at pedagogical solutions and possible re-evaluate them. While it is not realistic or even sensible to expect all learners to be interested in foreign language learning, the English language is omnipresent in today's Finland, and the interviews showed that all young learners used English in one way or another in their lives (Play Station games, computers, TV entertainment…). These recreational uses, which came quite naturally to them, did not always seem to get linked to English as a school subject. Perhaps English teaching at schools should somehow be better connected to the vast world of English use outside the school context, so that the gap between the two Englishes could be minimised. At the same time, further research could look specifically at learners' agency as language learners at school versus language users in their free time; it may be that the two aspects are simply separate.

The results indicated that the words of significant others were very important for the first and third year children, and that these important voices often ventriloquated society's truths. Later on, as the learners started to study English at school, the discourses of school became very influential. The authoritative voices of society in general and school in particular probably contributed to the fact that the learners' answers, content-wise, became more and more alike over the years, especially in the more general, knowledge-testing type of questions. However, even though content and voice are intertwined, the same content could be delivered in various different ways: with enthusiasm or indifference, for example. When using words that echo the voices of others, the learner must take a position with respect to those others. Finding one's own voice requires positioning oneself with respect to other speakers whose words (and thereby their relational stances and viewpoints)

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[24] One should note, however, that, again, what was looked at was talk about actions, not the actions themselves – we cannot tell if these learners were passive or active in practice.

one ventriloquates and appropriates. It is important to note that a learner's voice can also be passive and uninterested. It does not imply that the learner has no voice of their own, as such a stance would suggest that only confident, talkative and probably high achieving learners have a learner's voice to begin with.

It would also be interesting to focus on what kinds of ideas and voices disappear or cease to be privileged over time. It would seem on the basis of the results of the present study that they are the ones that do not coincide with the authoritative ideas that are appropriated early on. On the other hand, over time learners will come into contact with yet new voices, some of which could turn out to be authoritative ones in the long run. All in all, adopting a longitudinal approach, as was done in the present study, would shed more light on the dynamic nature of beliefs.

Longitudinal studies are scarce in the field of belief research, as are studies looking at the beliefs of children. As the present study was a small-scale case study, both of these aspects certainly deserve to be looked at more extensively through research. Nisbett & Ross (1980) proposed that the earlier a belief is incorporated into an individual's belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter: such beliefs affect perception and strongly influence the processing of new information. Therefore, with time, early beliefs become stronger and stronger. If this is the case, there is all the more reason to focus more on the beliefs of young learners. Examining the beliefs of children might also contribute to the study of adults' beliefs as it would provide information about where and how adults' beliefs may have originated and developed. The concept of belief itself still deserves more thorough treatment, and needs to be developed and defined further within the dialogical framework. As beliefs appear to have pedagogical implications, also language learning itself needs to be looked at from a dialogical perspective and pedagogical solutions suggested.

Insofar as the reason for studying learner beliefs is that they are taken to influence how learners learn, it should, of course, be noted that the present study did not look at learning results or measure the language skills of the participants in any way. In order to tap into the words/actions connection, belief studies could be conducted combined with analyses of, for example, classroom interaction or other language related activities of the learners. Looking at the learners' grades might also indicate correlations between learner beliefs and learning results, but this would require deciphering what the grades, in fact, measure. However, it would appear that at least the young learners participating in this study did equate their English skills with how well they were doing at English at school – and that this, in turn, appeared to be reflected in some of their beliefs (cf. section 6.3.3). More research is needed to see if there was something in their beliefs earlier on that might have had an effect on how their English learning experiences turned out.

Another detail involves the role of English: it seems that most studies on learner beliefs look at learners who either study English as an L2 or speak English as their L1. Further research should also focus more on other language

combinations: the special role of English as today's lingua franca and world language may have an effect on how the research participants view foreign language learning when English is a factor.

It also appears that, while branding beliefs as right or wrong is not productive, certain beliefs may prove debilitative and hinder learning. As seen earlier (see section 6.2.4.2), it would seem that particular authoritative ideas may for example prevent learners from perceiving learning opportunities or lead them to have perhaps overly definite views of what constitutes "proper" use of English. It might be better to try to make learners aware of these limiting views and try to offer them more open ones.

All in all, the notions of voice and agency do appear to offer useful new tools for examining learner beliefs: polyphony, and particularly the notion of authoritative voices, may shed more light on which beliefs are likely to have an effect on learning, and the notion of agency may help provide a link between speech and action. Together, the dialogical and sociocultural frameworks can help disentangle how and why certain learner beliefs powerfully influence learning.

Examining learner beliefs and their relation to what learners do continues to be vital, because beliefs, essentially, represent the learners' worldview and perspective on the activities of language learning and using. Learners' beliefs provide them with perceptual filters which, in turn, have important consequences for their actions – because believing is seeing.

YHTEENVETO

PUHUJAT JA TEKIJÄT. POLYFONIA JA AGENTIIVISUUS LASTEN KIELENOPPIMISKÄSITYKSISSÄ

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee suomalaisten alakouluikäisten lasten käsityksiä englannin kielestä ja sen oppimisesta. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan lasten käsitysten pitkittäiskehitystä peruskoulun ensimmäiseltä luokalta viidennelle. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella alakouluikäisten lasten käsityksiä englannin oppimisesta dialogisesta (bahtinilaisesta) ja sosiokulttuurisesta (vygotskilaisesta) näkökulmasta. Tämäntyyppisestä näkökulmasta oppijoiden käsityksiä ei ole aikaisemmin juuri tutkittu.

Käsityksiä on syytä tutkia, koska ne vaikuttavat ihmisten käyttäytymiseen. Käsitykset esimerkiksi oikeasta ja väärästä, hyvästä ja pahasta tai järkevistä ja huonoista tavoista tehdä asioita muodostavat perustan toimillemme. Käsitykset voivat siksi kertoa paljonkin siitä, millaisia päätöksiä ihmiset päätyvät tekemään. Tästä syystä tutkijat ovat kiinnostuneet myös kielenoppijoiden käsityksistä. Tieto oppijoiden omista, kielten oppimista koskevista käsityksistä on tärkeää, sillä ne voivat vaikuttaa monin tavoin siihen, miten he opiskelevat ja oppivat kieliä.

Aikaisempaa tutkimusta kielenoppijoiden käsityksistä on tehty etenkin kognitiivisen psykologian viitekehyksessä, jolloin niitä on pidetty varsin pysyvinä, oppijan päänsisäisinä ominaisuuksina. Aineisto on koottu usein kyselylomakkeiden avulla, eikä rastitettujen ruutujen ja päänsisäisten käsitysten suhdetta ole aina problematisoitu. Toisaalta käsityksiä on voitu pitää puhtaasti tilanteissa syntyvinä, kuten on tehty diskursiivisissa suuntauksissa. Niissä käsityksiä on tutkittu sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen funktioina liittämättä niitä lainkaan kielenoppimiseen. Kielenoppijoiden käsityksiä on siis tutkittu pääasiassa kahdelta kannalta: joko ne on tulkittu yksilölliseksi, varsin muuttumattomaksi ominaisuudeksi, tai vuorovaikutukselliseksi, jatkuvassa muutostilassa olevaksi sosiaaliseksi puheeksi.

Dialogisuus perustuu ns. Bahtinin piirin kirjoituksiin, joihin lukeutuvat mm. Mihail Bahtinin ja Valentin Vološinovin teokset. Dialogista näkökulmaa voidaan pitää siltana kognitivistisen ja diskursiivisen näkökulman välillä, sillä sen mukaan tiedon voi ajatella olevan sekä tilanteista että pysyvää, ja niin yksilöllistä kuin yhteisöllistäkin (Dufva 2004). Dialogisuuden perustana on dialogin käsite. Bahtinin (1986: 138) mukaan kaikki tieto on pohjimmiltaan dialogia, vuorovaikutusta. Se, mitä ihmiset uskovat ja tietävät, on seurausta niistä vuorovaikutustilanteista, joihin he ovat osallistuneet toisten ihmisten ja ympäristönsä kanssa (Dufva 2003). Näin yksilön käsityksetkin ovat peräisin hänen ainutlaatuisesta henkilöhistoriastaan eli niistä tilanteista, joissa hän on toiminut, ja niiltä ihmisiltä, joita hän on tavannut. Vaikka tiedon synty-mekanismi on pohjimmiltaan sosiaalinen, kahdella ihmisyksilöllä ei ole täsmälleen samoja kokemuksia. Tieto on siis aina positionaalista, kunkin yksilön omasta ajallisesta ja paikallisesta näkökulmasta koettua (ks. Bahtin 1986). Koska jokaisella on ainutlaatui-

nen henkilöhistoriansa, myös jokaisen tietovaranto on uniikki. Tiedon dialoginen alkuperä siis tekee opitusta tiedosta yhteisöllistä, jaettua ja sosiaalista, mutta samalla kunkin oma ainutlaatuinen asema maailmassa takaa tiedon ainutkertaisen luonteen.

Oppimistilanteet jättävät tietoon jälkensä; koska suuri osa tiedosta on saatu ”toisten suiden kautta” (Bahtin 1986: 138), sen mukana on omaksuttu myös kunkin puhetilanteen näkökulmia ja perspektiivejä. Koska kaikki sanat – ja siis myös lasten käsitykset – ovat peräisin muilta ihmisiltä, niissä kaikuu toisten *ääniä* (Bahtin 1986: 124). Dialogisuudessa ääni on näkökulman metafora: se heijastaa puhujan perspektiiviä ja maailmankuvaa (Wertsch 1991: 51). Äänen käsite vastaa siis kysymykseen “kuka puhuu?” Oppijoiden käsitysten moni-äänisyyttä eli polyfoniaa tarkastelemalla päästään käsiksi siihen, mistä heidän käsityksensä ovat peräisin ja millaiset äänet niihin ovat vaikuttaneet, sekä siihen, keiden ääniä he pitävät tärkeinä. Samaten voidaan tutkia, miten heidän oma äänensä ja näkökulmansa kehkeytyy vuosien varrella omien kokemusten karttuessa.

Dialoginen näkökulma ei kuitenkaan ota kantaa kehittymisen kysymyksiin. Siksi dialogisuuteen yhdistetään tässä tutkimuksessa myös Lev Vygotskin kirjoituksiin pohjautuvaa sosiokulttuurista näkökulmaa.

Vygotskin (1978) mukaan lapsen kehityksessä kaikki toimintamuodot esiintyvät kahdella tasolla: ensin interpsykologisesti, yksilöiden välisessä sosiaalisessa vuorovaikutuksessa, ja vasta sen jälkeen yksilöllisesti, intrapsykologisessa muodossa. Toiminnasta selviydytään siis ensin taidoiltaan edistyneemmän henkilön tarjoaman sosiaalisen tuen avulla ja vasta sitten itsenäisesti. Tämän ajatuksen voi käsityksiä koskevassa tutkimuksessa yhdistää myös Bahtinin äänen käsitteeseen: ensin kielistä puhuminen tapahtuu toisen ihmisten avulla ja heidän ääniään käyttäen, ja ajan myötä oma, itsenäinen näkökulma vahvistuu.

Vygotskin näkemyksen mukaan oppiminen tarkoittaa sitä, että yksilö omaksuu toimintaa välittävien symbolisten tai konkreettisten välineiden käytön. Konkreettisia välineitä ovat esimerkiksi kynä, laskin tai tietokonesovellukset, ja symbolisia puolestaan kielioppi, matemaattiset järjestelmät ja kirjoittaminen. Välineiden käyttöä ei opita niiden itsensä vuoksi, vaan keinoina jonkin päämäärän saavuttamiseen. Vygotskin (1978) mukaan tärkein kaikista välineistä on kieli: se on psykologinen väline, joka opitaan muilta vuorovaikutuksessa ja jonka avulla organisoidaan kognitiiviset prosessit, kuten muistaminen ja havaitseminen. Alanen (2003) on ehdottanut, että myös kielenoppijoiden käsityksiä voitaisiin pitää eräänlaisina oppijoiden toimintaa välittävinä välineinä – ne olisivat siis kielenoppimisen työkaluja.

Bahtinin ja Vygotskin ajatuksia yhdisti ensimmäisten joukossa James V. Wertsch. Wertsch (1998: 92–95) muun muassa tutki *agentiivisuuden* eli toimijuuden käsitteen avulla, millaisen kuvan historialliset tekstit antoivat historian tapahtumista: kuka esitettiin toimijana, kuka toimien kohteena? Toimijuuden käsitteen valossa voidaan oppijoiden käsityksiä koskevassa aineistossa havainnoida paitsi käsitysten moniäänisyyttä – kuka sanoista on vastuussa ja miten oma ääni kehkeytyy vuosien kuluessa – myös oppijoiden toimijuutta kielenoppijoina: kuka oppijoiden käsityksissä esitetään aktiivisena toimijana oppimis-

prosessissa ja kuka oppimisesta on vastuussa. Jos käsitykset nähdään toiminnan välineinä, millainen rooli oppijoilla itsellään käsityksissä on?

Tutkimus on pitkittäinen tapaustutkimus, johon osallistui viisitoista nuorta suomalaista englanninoppijaa. Aineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoitujen haastattelujen avulla. Osallistujia haastateltiin heidän ollessaan ensimmäisellä, kolmannella ja viidennellä luokalla. Osallistujat aloittivat englannin opiskelun ensimmäisenä vieraana kielenään peruskoulun kolmannella luokalla.

Tutkimuskysymykset ovat:

> 1) Millaisia ovat lasten käsitykset englannin kielestä ja englannin kielen oppimisesta? *Miten* ja *miksi* englantia lasten mielestä opitaan? Millaisia teemoja lapset yhdistävät näihin kysymyksiin ensimmäisellä, kolmannella ja viidennellä luokalla? Muuttuvatko lasten käsitykset englannin kielestä ja sen oppimisesta ajan myötä, ja jos muuttuvat, miten?
>
> 2) Millaisia ääniä lasten englannin kieltä ja sen oppimista koskevissa käsityksissä kuuluu? Muuttuuko käsitysten moniäänisyys tutkimusaikana ja jos muuttuu, miten? Keiden äänet saavat tilaa lasten kielenoppimista koskevissa käsityksissä?
>
> 3) Miten agentiivisuus rakentuu lasten käsityksissä tutkimusvuosien aikana? Ketkä esitetään kielenoppimisen prosessin aktiivisina toimijoina? Miten lapset ilmaisevat omaa agentiivisuuttaan?

Aineiston analyysissä ensimmäisen tutkimuskysymyksen *miksi*-kysymykset jaettiin kahteen kategoriaan: miksi englantia yleisesti ottaen opiskellaan, ja miksi oppija itse kertoo opiskelevansa englantia. Yleiseen kysymykseen annettujen vastausten teemat eivät muuttuneet juuri lainkaan ensimmäisestä luokasta viidenteen: osallistujien mukaan englantia opiskellaan, koska sitä tarvitaan ulkomailla ulkomaalaisten kanssa puhumiseen. Heidän omat syynsä englannin opiskelemiseen vaihtelivat sen sijaan suuresti. Ensimmäisellä luokalla suurin osa oppijoista ei katsonut kielten opintojen vielä koskevan itseään: se oli jotain, mitä he tekisivät joskus isompina. Kolmannella luokalla oppijat puhuivat paljon siitä, että englannin kieli oli valittu ensimmäiseksi vieraaksi kieleksi ja siksi sitä nyt opeteltiin. Myös aikuisuuden kielitaitovaatimuksista oltiin tietoisia: oppijat sanoivat tarvitsevansa englantia aikuisena töissä ja matkoilla. Viidennellä luokalla kolmannella luokalla korostunut valinnaisuus oli muuttunut pakoksi. Monet oppijat sanoivat opiskelevansa englantia, koska sitä oli koulussa pakko opiskella. Myös tulevaisuuteen liittyvät tarpeet tuotiin edelleen esille. Toisaalta oppijat puhuivat myös vapaa-ajalla käytettävästä englannista, etenkin tietokonepeleistä ja televisio-ohjelmista. Englannin osaajien joukkoon kuulumisen teema tuotiin myös esiin joka luokka-asteella. Ensimmäisellä ja kolmannella luokalla oppijat ilmaisivat halunsa kuulua englannin osaajiin – äiti ja isä sekä vanhemmat sisarukset kun heihin jo usein kuuluivat – ja viidennellä luokalla monet tunsivat jo kuuluvansa tähän joukkoon.

Ensimmäisellä luokalla ne lapset, jotka kertoivat osaavansa vaikkapa muutamia englannin sanoja, kertoivat oppineensa ne vanhemmiltaan tai muilta aikuisilta. Myös englanninkielisiä kirjoja ja muita kirjallisia lähteitä mainittiin, mutta niitä oli käytetty yhdessä jonkun aikuisen kanssa. Kolmannella luokalla koulumaailma näkyi *miten*-kysymysten vastauksissa selvästi, sillä oppijat pu-

huivat paljon opettajasta, tunneista ja läksyistä. Usein he hahmottivat oppimista usein laskettavien yksikköjen kautta: opiskellut sanat ja kappaleet tai tehdyt kokeet kuvastivat opittua. Viidennellä luokalla koulun tarjoama kuva opiskelusta oli oppijoiden käsityksissä yhä vahvasti läsnä, ja tunnit, oppikirjat ja ahkera opiskelu olivat säilyttäneet asemansa englannin oppimisen avaintoimintoina. Jotkut oppilaat pitivät hyödyllisenä myös koulutöiden ulkopuolella tapahtuvaa englannin kielen kanssa toimimista, kuten tietokonepelien pelaamista ja lukemista.

Muodollisen opetuksen tarjoamat oppimisen mallit näyttivät siis vaikuttavan paljon oppijoiden käsityksiin. Koulun mallista kenties johtui myös se, että vaikka oppijoiden mielestä englannin oppiminen oli tärkeää siksi, että sitä osaisi puhua ulkomaalaisten kanssa, heidän mielestään paras tapa oppia englantia oli lukeminen – kirjoja pidettiin englantitietouden päälähteenä.

Toisessa tutkimuskysymyksessä tarkasteltiin oppijoiden kielenoppimista koskevien käsitysten polyfoniaa. Oppijoiden ääni kehittyi kouluvuosien aikana huolettoman ja jopa englannin kielestä piittaamattoman lapsen äänestä englannin opiskelijan ja käyttäjän ääneksi. Jotkut oppijoiden käsityksistä muuntuivat ajan myötä heidän lisääntyvien kielenopiskelu ja -käyttökokemustensa myötä. Nämä kokemukset vaikuttivat myös oppijoiden oman äänen kehkeytymiseen. Toisaalta käsityksissä kaikui autoritäärisiä ääniä, joita toistettiin vuodesta toiseen lähes samankaltaisina. Näitä olivat yhteisössämme tunnustetut ”kulttuuriset totuudet”, kuten ”englantia tulee oppia, koska sillä pärjää ulkomailla”, ja koulumaailmasta omaksutut näkemykset, kuten kirjojen ja lukemisen tärkeys kielenoppimisessa. Autoritääriset äänet näyttivät myös vaikuttavan oppijoiden omiin kokemuksiin ja niiden tulkintaan: koska englannin kielen käyttäminen merkitsi autoritäärisen käsityksen mukaisesti kielen puhumista ulkomaalaisen kanssa, ei englanninkielisten tietokonepelien pelaamista pidetty englannin käyttämisenä.

Kolmas tutkimuskysymys koski agentiivisuutta. Tapa, jolla oppijat kuvasivat omaa agentiivisuuttaan, kehittyi vuosien varrella yhteistyöstä vanhempien kanssa yhteistyöhön opettajan kanssa ja usein myös itsenäiseen toimintaan englannin kielen opiskelussa. Viidennellä luokalla oppijoiden toimijuuden ilmaisut alkoivat kuitenkin eriytyä. Osa oppijoista esitti haastatteluissa itsensä hyvin aktiivisina opiskelijoina, mutta toiset vaikuttivat selvästi passiivisemmilta kuin kolmannella luokalla: he kuvasivat itsensä opetuksen ja opettajan toimien kohteina eivätkä aktiivisina toimijoina.

Tässä tutkimuksessa oppijoiden käsityksiä englannin kielestä ja sen oppimisesta tutkittiin siis kolmelta kannalta: käsitysten sisällön, Bahtinin ääni–käsitteen ja Wertschin agentiivisuus–käsitteen kautta. Tulokset ovat kiinnostavia paitsi käsitystutkimuksen myös kielipedagogiikan kannalta. Kielenopetuksessa olisi tärkeää ottaa entistä paremmin huomioon oppijoiden käsitysten vaikutus kielenoppimiseen. Moniäänisyyden valossa päästään monipuolisesti tarkastelemaan, mitä oppijat kielenoppimisesta sanovat ja miten: Millaisia elementtejä toistetaan ja mitkä asiat muuttuvat vuosien varrella? Millaisissa kysymyksissä oppijoilla on vahva oma ääni ja millaisissa kysymyksissä he tukeutuvat auktoriteettien ääniin? Koska autoritääriset äänet näyttivät vaikuttavan

suuresti esimerkiksi siihen, mitä oppijat pitivät englannin ”oikeana” käyttämisenä tai tehokkaana oppimistapana, olisi paikallaan keskustella oppijoiden kanssa heidän käsityksistään ja niiden mahdollisista vaikutuksista oppimiseen. Toisaalta vaikutti myös siltä, että oppijoiden omat kokemukset olivat tärkeitä tekijöitä niin oman oppijaäänen rakentumisessa kuin agentiivisuuden omaksumisessakin. Mahdollisuuksia tarjota kaikille oppijoille onnistumisen elämyksiä englannin luokassa voitaisiin tutkia tarkemmin, sillä englanti kouluaineena ei näyttänyt aina yhdistyvän oppijoiden mielessä siihen englantiin, jota he käyttivät vapaa-aikanaan. Hyvinkin erilaiset agentiivisuuden ilmaisut osallistujien vastauksissa puolestaan osoittavat, että kunkin oppijan kohdalla voisi olla tarpeen myös käydä läpi esimerkiksi erilaisia itseohjautuvuutta tukevia tekijöitä.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview structure
Year 1

Topics:

1. Family (name, age, siblings, relatives in Finland and abroad)
2. Hobbies
3. Learning to read and write (do you know already, how do you learn, is it fun, important etc.)
4. Books and reading as a hobby (do you read books, comics etc., go to the library, have a favourite book…)
5. Magazines (do you read magazines, subscribe to any, read ads…)
6. Computer (do you have a computer, do you use it etc.)
7. TV, videos, movies, radio, music (what do you watch on TV, what kinds of movies do you like, what is your favourite kind of music...)
8. Foreign languages (have you ever been abroad; know any languages, like to learn a foreign language; is it important, do you think it will be easy etc.)
9. Variation within language (written/spoken language, talking right, colloquial expressions, dialects)
10. Games, jokes, nursery rhymes (what kinds of games do you like to play, do you know any nursery rhymes, like to tell jokes etc.)

APPENDIX 2

Interview structure
Year 3

STUDIES
How have English studies started, how do you feel about them?
Why a different teacher for English?
Does the English teacher only speak English? Explain things in Finnish? Have there been things you haven't understood?
Is studying English different from say maths? How?
Homework?
Do you do something extra?

EASY/DIFFICULT
What has been easy/difficult?
What can you already say/write?
Which is easier: writing or speaking? in English, in Finnish.
Does English in the classroom sound different from English e.g. on TV?
Is English easier or harder than German/Swedish/Chinese?
Is Finnish easy or difficult?

USES OF ENGLISH
Where is English spoken?
Why do people study English, how is it useful?
Why do you study English? Where do you need it? What can one do with English?
Have you used English outside of school?
What kinds of things can you say/write?
Has English already been useful? (e.g. TV programmes, music – understand more?)
How can English be useful later in life?
Where is Finnish spoken?
What do you do with Finnish?
Is it a problem if you only know Finnish?

ENGLISH AND THINKING
Do you think English children know Finnish?
(Do they study Finnish?) Why (not)?
Do you think English children dream in English?
Have you ever thought in English, e.g. in English class?
If you were to travel to Greenland… would you understand what was said? Would the locals understand you?
Do you think all Finnish words have an equivalent in English?

Vocabulary examples:
A CAT KISSA
What is the ′a′? Why is it there? Is just ′cat′ the same thing? How would you teach the difference to an English child? Do you think he would find it difficult?

ON THE BEACH RANNALLA
How are these different? How would you teach the difference to an English child? Do you think he would find it difficult?

HE /SHE HÄN
How are these different? Do you find it difficult to remember which one to use? How would you teach the difference to an English child? Do you think he would find it difficult?

APPENDIX 3

Interview structure
Year 5

1) Why is English studied?
Why do people study English? Where and how can English skills be useful?
Why do you study English? Where and how do you use English now/in the future?
Uses of speaking/reading/writing/understanding English?

2) Where is English studied?
What should one do in order to learn English?
What do you do in order to learn?
    At school/at home
In what kinds of places can you find English?

3) How is English studied?
What should one do in order to learn English?
What do you do in order to learn English?
    At school/at home
        TV?
        Pop music?
        Computer/PS games?
        English language books?
Why are some people good at English, others not?
Are you good at English? Why (not)?

APPENDIX 4

Notes on transcription

. One dot indicates a short pause.
… Three dots indicate words that have been left out; usually a string of stopgap inserts such as er or umm, or stuttering when the speaker is trying to find the word s/he is looking for. The omissions should thus not affect the meaning of the quote.
(…) Dots within parentheses between two phrases indicate that something has been omitted between the phrases; these are typically probing questions.
(---) Lines within parentheses indicate word/s that could be not heard at all.
// Indicates where one speaker interrupts another.
(että) Words in parentheses were spoken unclearly.
((nauraa)) Words in double parentheses indicate action or tone of voice, e.g. a long pause or laughter.
[englantia] Words in square brackets have been added to make it easier to understand what is being referred to