

Can English become a dominant language for late Finnish-English bilinguals? A case study.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Jokainen meistä tarvitsee sujuvan kielen jokapäiväiseen kommunikaatioon ja ajatteluun sekä kielellisen identiteetin luomiseen. Nimitys tällaiselle kielelle on ensimmäinen kieli, jonka roolin yksikielisillä hoitaa useimmiten äidinkieli. Yksikielisyys on maailmanlaajuisessa mittakaavassa kuitenkin melko pieni ilmiö verrattuna kaksikielisyteen. Siispä ei ole itsestään selvää, että juuri ensimmäinen oppittu kieli tai äidinkieli on ensimmäinen kieli.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, voiko Englannista tulla ensimmäinen kieli sellaisille kaksikielisille suomalaisille, joiden lapsuus on ollut pääosin suomenkielinen. Sen selvittämiseksi haastateltiin kahta suomalaista, jotka olivat haastatteluihin mennessä viettäneet kolme vuotta englanninkielisessä maassa. Asiaa selvitettiin kartoittamalla haastateltavien kielellistä taustaa ja kielellistä identiteettiä kolmen vuoden kohdemaassa oleskelun jälkeen. Tutkimusaineistoa käsiteltiin tapaustutkimuksena.</p> <p>Tuloksen osoittivat, että englannin kielestä voi tulla lähes äidinkielen veroinen kieli suomalaisille, joista on tullut kaksikielisiä vasta aikuisiällä. Oleskelu englanninkielisessä maassa ei kuitenkaan takaa tällaista identifioitumista, sillä muutkin muuttajat vaikuttavat siihen, kuinka vahva side toiseen kieleen muodostuu. Tutkimuksen osanottajilla oli äidinkieleen vahva sidos, jonka he halusivat myös säilyttää.</p>	
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Table of Contents

1 Introduction	3
2 Bilingualism.....	5
3 Language and Identity	8
4 The present study	11
4.1 Research Questions.....	11
4.2 Participants and Method	11
5 Results and analysis	13
5.1 Definition of bilingualism.....	13
5.2 Linguistic identities of the participants	14
6 Conclusion	18
Bibliography:	20
Appendix: the interview questions.....	21

1 Introduction

Mother tongue is something that everyone has. In countries with plenty of mainly monolingual speakers, such as Finland, a mother tongue is a basic assumption of life: almost everything is communicated through the first language, connections to most people are established through it, it is a part of every area of life. Despite the fact that many Finns use only their first language, monolingualism is actually a rare phenomenon on a global level. Even in Finland, there are indigenous peoples like Sami, who do not speak Finnish as their first language and bilingual people such as Swedish Finns, for whom the question about languages is much more complex than for those who can happily use only one language that they have metaphorically or in actuality gained from their mothers.

Despite the fact that English is typically the first foreign language in Finnish schooling, English language remains a foreign language for many, as the linguistic community in Finland is mainly Finnish and there is not much need to use English outside school. It can be argued that Finns develop a very strong identification with their first language. The term first language means the language that is acquired first. Usually it is the same as mother tongue, and these terms will be used interchangeably in the present study unless specifically mentioned. The term 'native tongue' is in turn used to refer to the language used in the country where childhood is spent. Thus, it is usually interchangeable with the first language, but not necessarily with the mother tongue as mother can come from a foreign country.

The importance of the first language is indisputably great for those who do not have similar proficiencies in other languages. Exceptions such as English immersion education has been studied (McCambridge 2007), and in such cases it has been discovered that English, a foreign language, has for some become even stronger than the native Finnish. However, one can also later face other areas of life which require use of additional languages. For example, one can find a job in a foreign country or one can find a spouse who does not share the same first language. The present study is concerned with this process of becoming bilingual after having a mainly monolingual childhood and education. In particular, it is interested in discovering whether English as a second language could become more dominant than Finnish as the first language.

Bilingualism is a well-known and researched phenomenon and a very large field of study. Out of all possible languages, English is the most likely second language for a Finn to adopt. In the present case study, two Finns participated by participating in a semi-structured interview. Both participants

came from monolingual Finnish families and had stayed three-years in an English-speaking country in their adult age at the time of the interviews.

The present study is structured in the following way. First, theories explaining bilingualism and life of a bilingual and their identification with two or more languages are presented. Second, the method of research, the participants and analysis of the data and are introduced. Third, the results of the interviews are reported and discussed and conclusions are drawn from them.

2 Bilingualism

The notion of bilingualism must be taken into consideration in order to examine the relationship between mother tongue and second language closely. As Grosjean (2008) has shown, bilinguals are unique speaker-hearers, who use two languages for different purposes. A great majority of the inhabitants of the world are by default bilingual and studying bilinguals with a monolingual paradigm as a point of departure will not provide very fruitful results. Before going any further, it is important to define both bilingualism and monolingualism, which have been subjects of controversy in previous decades (Dewaele et al. 2003: 2-3) and which have led to conflicting results in studies in bilingualism.

Grosjean (2010: 4) gives a useful definition for what a bilingual is: "Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives". The present study is based on this definition and it will also take into account three additional points that Grosjean makes. First, it is important to remember that the definition emphasizes the fact that two languages are used in everyday life. Thus, the native speaker ideal, which has also served as a standard for studying a bilingual person's proficiency, is not in the focus of interest, because bilinguals do not necessarily have equal command of grammar and fluency in both languages (Grosjean 2010: 20). Second, Grosjean (2010: 4) mentions that having a strong dialect concurrently with the official version of the language also defines one as a bilingual. This is an additional point, which is important to bear in mind when considering bilingualism as such, even though it is not a very central aspect for the present study. Third, the definition of bilingualism does not exclude the possibility of having more than two languages. For the sake of convenience, this is also applied in the present study: the notion of multilingualism is also included when the terms bilingual or bilingualism appear.

Having the definition of bilingualism, it is interesting to examine and compare monolingual and wholistic views on bilingualism (Grosjean 2008: 9), the former of which has led to plenty of common misconceptions like the notion of "semilingualism" or being "in-between languages". From the monolingual viewpoint the role of the mother tongue is obviously indispensable and bilinguals have been attributed plenty of myths that make sense only in terms of monolingualism: for example there are few "true" bilinguals and they possess perfect language proficiencies, bilinguals do not have accents in their languages, they are good translators, they have split personalities and the list goes on (Grosjean 2010: 15). Furthermore, Dewaele et al. (2012: 2-3) confirm Grosjean's observation that the whole notion of bilingualism was indeed considered problematic a few decades ago. In addition, the native speaker ideal has reinforced the monolingual

viewpoint in foreign language teaching, which might have increased the acceptability of the monolingual paradigm for a common audience. However, this viewpoint has also been questioned in recent times (Andreou and Galantomos 2009).

As monolingualism as a point of departure for studying bilinguals has been refuted, another paradigm for studying bilinguals is needed, which in turn allows examining the role of the first language. A useful principle called "A wholistic View of Bilingualism" has been provided by Grosjean (2008: 13-21). First, the wholistic view is based on the assumption that a bilingual is an integrated whole instead of two monolinguals in one person. Grosjean mentions a revealing analogy associated with biculturalism, which is not the same as bilingualism, to explain his principle further: for example, a Mexican-American is not two monoculturals inside one person but he or she rather blends different aspects of both cultures. Second, the bilingual is a competent user of languages, therefore the comparison with the native ideal does not work as languages develop according to the needs of individuals and the environment. Proficiencies in the languages "will be extremely domain specific, hence the "fossilized" competencies of many bilinguals" (Grosjean 2008: 14) Third, a wholistic view is needed for assessing bilingual communicative competence. This point as such provides an insightful tool for evaluating the relationship between first and second language. In fact, according to Grosjean's principle, bilinguals do not have only one first language. Rather they have two, which cannot be separated from each other. Thus, the wholistic view does not wholly explain the role of the first language for those who have entered bilingualism first through foreign language teaching at schools and only then chosen the bilingual path in their lives. Finally, Grosjean argues that the notions of semilingualism and alingualism are results of research conducted with the monolingual paradigm and reflected, for example, in mixed speech. However, from the wholistic viewpoint, mixed speech is completely normal and fulfills a bilingual's communicative requirements.

Grosjean (2008:22) also introduces another model that is useful for studying the impact of the second language: According to the complementarity principle bilinguals have different functions for different languages. Indeed, if all facets of life could be covered in one language, there would be no reason for knowing two languages. Grosjean lists some consequences which must be taken into account before considering the complementarity principle further. First, proficiency in any language develops "precisely" according to the needs for that language. This means that total fluency, the native speaker ideal in other words, is rarely developed. The first point as such could prove that language skills that are equal to those which a monolingual attains are not necessarily essential for one's needs. It should be noted, however, that it cannot be taken for granted that one has a language

that can be used without stress caused by low proficiency (Pavlenko 2011: 5). Second, it should be noted that bilinguals do not necessarily have a wide knowledge of vocabulary pertaining to certain domains in both languages (Grosjean 2008: 23). However, this should not be interpreted as showing weakness in proficiency. A weak point in the complementarity model is the fact that it does not cater to all conceptions, judgements and personal affections that one might have about languages, such as the importance of inner speech or thinking in a particular language. Traditionally it has been

The influence of the first language on the second language has been investigated widely (Grosjean 2008: 27). Despite this, Grosjean proposes that the second language can influence the competence in the first language. He has formulated a concept called language restructuring to explain how language skills can be adapted to meet new and different linguistic needs. In the process even competence in the native language can change (Grosjean 2008:33).

3 Language and Identity

In order to reach a closer insight into one's conceptions about the first language and bilingualism, the present study also benefits from the notion of language and identity. This section will also address the significance of the first language, which is supposedly very important for one's construction of linguistic identity.

According to Khatib and Ghamari (2011), languages provide foundations for identity construction. The concept of identity in turn helps us know "who we are and how social identities are negotiated" (Khatib and Gamari 2011: 1). However, it should be noted that language does not determine it; languages are rather constituted by and constituting the social contexts to which they belong. In addition, identity can be defined as feeling close similarity or affinity towards something. Thus if one identifies with a certain language, one feels affinity towards it. The negotiation of linguistic identity becomes even more interesting when one shifts from monolingualism to bilingualism. This negotiation involves plenty of unconscious choices at a very practical level of language use. For example, the choice of language is probably most affected by the level of proficiency if there is a possibility to choose between two or more alternatives. This choice in turn may determine linguistic identification.

Stay in the target language country is a variable that arguably affects identification with a language most: If one moves to a country where one's first language is spoken only by few people, there might not be so many opportunities to use the first language. As a result, the use of a second language and proficiency in it should increase. However, Zhaohong (2003: 12) argues that even in the target language country one might develop what is called fossilized language competency. He lists some causal variables that might lead to fossilization, including focus on content instead of form, avoidance and lack of acculturation (Zhaohong 2003: 25-42). Interestingly satisfaction of communicative needs is also on the list, which gives an alternative viewpoint for the complementarity principle: instead of bilingualism, it leads to fossilization, which in turn may lead to weak identification with the second language.

Choice of languages is one of the most visible aspects of negotiation of identities in environments where social power relations are unstable and unequal (Blackledge and Pavlenko 2003). The role of languages in constructing identities is not straightforward, but they have become visible with the help of globalization and expansive use of media technologies. According to Blackledge and Pavlenko, on one hand languages can mark national or ethnic identities. On the other, languages can

be symbolic capital or a way to establish social control. The authors proceed to profess that linguistic practises in studying negotiation of identities might not even be suitable in regions where power relations are relatively stable (Blackledge and Pavlenko 2003: 19). Finland might look like it on the surface. However, the widespread myths about bilingualism (Grosjean 2010: 15) and the importance given to mother tongue (see for example Vienonen 2006), suggest that there are some, albeit often covert attempts at imposing 'the mother tongue' ideology. It should be noted that the aim of the present study is not to contest the importance of acquiring at least one language well. Rather, it aims to examine whether there is something indispensable in the first language, something that cannot be replaced by any other linguistic means.

Another way to examine linguistic identity is inner speech (Pavlenko 2011: 242). Inner speech can be defined as activity occurring in the brain that has an identifiable linguistic code. In terms of language cognition, inner speech is important but it does not cover all 'thinking'. Pavlenko reports studies that conclude that while the first language is the preferred code for inner speech, a language learned later can also take this role. She also states that inner speech is an underresearched area of inquiry even though its importance to bilinguals themselves is great. Pavlenko (2011: 4-10) reviews how individuals react to inner speech after moving to environments where different languages are used. To some, inner speech is the key for thinking and the loss of inner speech in the first language is considered as losing important ways to interact with the environment. Moving to new linguistic environments does not automatically correlate to the switch of the code of inner speech, but it may be different for those who have already attained strong proficiency in that language. The role of inner speech was given attention in McCambridge (2007), who discovered that English had become the thought language for those who had been through English immersion education, in other words schooling in English.

The role of the first language, or alternatively mother tongue is also important when examining the relationship between the first and second language. Mills (2003) has studied the role of the mother tongue from mothers' perspective. She argues that "definitions of the phrase, 'mother tongue', are neither straightforward, nor unproblematic" (Mills 2003: 162). For example, the term mother tongue may easily bring context and gender stereotyping. Mills' study focused on what mother tongue reveals about one's sense of self. She concludes her study stating that language notably contributed to the diversity of her informants' identities. The associations carried by the term mother tongue were also important for his informants, who were all mothers. Mills describes mother tongue as a metaphor, which aptly "expressed the mothers' complex feelings concerning their languages and their hopes for their children". Mills shows that the notion of mother tongue, or first language is

worth investigating. The present study differs from Mills by not focusing on mothers' perceptions, as not only mothers have a connection to mother tongue. Rather, it will examine how those who have acquired mother tongue in monolingual conditions and gone through many processes, including learning a new language to a great extent, view the role of the first language and its relation to the second language and linguistic identity.

In addition, Mills (2003) acknowledges the importance of the first language, which is closely linked in the development of one's personality and emotions. This could be further explained by the complementarity principle (Grosjean 2008:22): If there is only one language in childhood, that language covers the domain of childhood. However, Mills (2003) discovered her Pakistani informants to have multiple identities. For example, the mother tongue was not a desired language for education, the prestige of which is mainly expressed in English.

It is a fact that bilingualism is the norm and monolingualism is an exception pertaining to certain western countries (Andreou and Galantomos 2009, Grosjean 2010) and even in those countries there are people who speak some other language than the one used in official contexts. This applies to Finland: Finnish and Swedish are the national languages but languages such as Sami and Romanian also have some official status reinforced by law. However, growing in mainly monolingual contexts is possible if Finnish or even Swedish is the first language. As monolingual standard is not sufficient for examining bilinguals, this provides an interesting point of departure for the present study. Bearing Pavlenko and Blackledge (2003) and Grosjean (2008) in mind, several variables need to be considered when studying bilinguals. In Finland it is possible to find informants who have grown in mainly monolingual contexts but who have acquired a strong second language later on. This allows ignoring plenty of other variables associated with growing up with bilingualism. In addition, when English is a foreign language at school rather than a second language used at home or in other important environments, it can be assumed that English does not have a great influence on one's development. The present study will investigate what kind of influence there is after entering bilingual life after monolingual childhood.

4. The present study

The present study examines the transition from monolingualism to bilingualism and whether there is something indispensable in the first language, something that cannot be replaced by a second language. It seeks to discover how the complementarity principle is realized in lives of persons who have stayed in their second language country three years after a mainly monolingual childhood. The present study aims to shed some light on whether early experience and bond with only one language affects the relations between new languages and domains of life that appear in later life and the languages in question are Finnish and English. Finally it maps the participants' linguistic identities in order to discover what kind of relationship has been formed between the L1 and the L2 and whether the L2 has become more important.

4.1 Research Questions

The goal of the present study is to examine linguistic identity and the relationship between mother tongue and a second language from a bilingual perspective.

First, the present study is concerned with what is the relationship between the L1 and the L2 for late bilinguals. Therefore the first research question is:

1. What is the role of the L2 when compared to the role of the L1?

Second, the ultimate aim of the study is to explore the importance and the role of the second language, therefore the third research questions is:

2. To what extent could the L2 take the same role as the L1 for bilinguals with monolingual childhoods?

4.2 Participants and Method

The participants in the present study were Mikael and Petri, aged 29 and 32 at the time of the interviews. They came from monolingual Finnish families and had gone through normal Finnish education, where English is a prominent foreign rather than a second language. Thus they had not been immersed a great deal in the English language in their youth, which is an essential

qualification for the aims of the present study. Mikael lived in Finland at the time of the interviews and he has lived three years in Australia, where he studied in a college and also worked for Australian companies. At the time of the interviews Petri had lived three years in the US, where he had worked for an international company. Based on these facts, the participants qualified as late bilinguals and therefore appropriate for the present study.

The present study is based on two interviews, which were analysed in qualitative terms. Qualitative method allowed to gain a deeper insight into the topic. Explicit questions were needed for gaining informative and insightful answers that could be analysed meaningfully. First of all, I wanted to know the linguistic backgrounds of the participants: When did they start studying English, how much effort they put in it and especially how had they started using it on a daily basis. Secondly, I asked them to identify their linguistic identity as it was at the time of the interview and also give a brief self-evaluation of their language proficiencies. In order to understand the participants' conceptions of linguistic identity, it was also important to know how they themselves defined a bilingual person. Thirdly, I wanted to discover how the participants considered the relationship between the first and the second language in their lives: there was an attempt to explicate these ideas with help of notions such as the complementarity principle, inner speech and emotional links to both English and Finnish.

The Data was gathered by interviews in single sessions without breaks. One interview took place in Finland and the other was conducted via an Internet call with webcam connection as the other informant lived in the US at the time of the interview. Both interviews were recorded and all the parts that were important for the analysis were also transcribed. In particular, parts that indicated prominence of English language were taken into focus.

The present study is a case study. Therefore the data was analysed according to Hammersley and Gomm's (2009) definition of case study: the study is concerned with understanding the case and the phenomena surrounding it, without greater interest in theoretical inference of generalization or need to control variables. The datas from the two interviews were compared in order to acquire a wider understanding of the topic, but as such the current study is not a comparative case study (Campbell 2010).

5. Results and discussion

In this section the results of the interviews, which provide insightful accounts into linguistic identities of two individuals, are presented. The following sections include results from the interviews and the order of discussion is roughly the same as in the interview: First the backgrounds of the participants are described, the second section is concerned with the participants' own definition of some linguistic phenomena and the third section presents the participants' level of identification with either Finnish or English in detail. Finally, bilingualism and the relationship between the L1 and the L2 are discussed on a more general level.

Mikael and Petri were of approximately the same age, they had been born in Finland to purely Finnish-speaking families and they had gone through normal Finnish schooling without tuition in English. In addition, they both had stayed in an English-speaking country for three years: both participants reported that they had not used the English language in any significant measures before the age of 16. It is important to consider linguistic backgrounds, because one aim of the present study was indeed to discover to what extent one could learn and identify with a second language after growing up in very monolingual conditions. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether there had been earlier influence.

(1) In school I'd say my effort was very average ... apart from like reading, like reading and that was mainly in games and then on television listening but then again there's subtitles so I didn't really use it. (Mikael)

(2) When thinking my time from grades one to nine, I didn't use English at all in my freetime. (Petri)

In this respect the present study examines a specific area of bilingualism, while the study of bilingualism more typically associated with growing up in a bilingual family. There were some differences in Mikael's and Petri's linguistic backgrounds: Mikael made friends with English-speaking people in his high-school time while Petri only sometimes spoke with such people and focused on studying hard: "I just hated being the last (in listening comprehension) in my class". It is very difficult to classify these differences very accurately, but the broad lines are reliably similar.

5.1 Definition of bilingualism

The backgrounds of the participants provide an interesting viewpoint to the study of bilingualism, as the influence of the first language can be assumed to be very strong in the life of the participants.

However, the results suggest that one can become a bilingual even as an adult. With regards to bilingualism, it is interesting to note the participants' own definitions of bilingualism. Both the participants had rather strict definitions for what a bilingual is. For Mikael, bilingualism essentially entails good language skills. Petri shared the idea of the role of proficiency, emphasizing fluency in the languages. In addition, he deemed cultural knowledge important.

(3) I'd say bilingual is someone who who has like * significant parts of their life where they have to use mm in like in some significant parts they use language and in other parts they have to use another language ... so I do I would Expect a bilingual person to have quite high level of skill. (Mikael)

(4) I think a bilingual person is able to pretty fluently to use two languages so it's not enough that you know some language ... it's also strongly connected to culture mm you need to know the culture. (Petri)

As one aim of the present study was to examine the importance of bilingualism for an individual, it was important to know whether the participants considered themselves bilinguals. Both answered that they are nearly bilingual and they might become fully bilingual at some point of their life.

(5) yeah * I'd say yeah * at least close closely bilingual ... but I bind some of my identity into the languages so that I think sort of helps as well. (Mikael)

(6) it's kind of like coming to that point * it's right not I have been three years * so I would say that probably after four five years it's like fully. (Petri)

It is difficult to say what affects these definitions: Mikael considers himself very nearly bilingual so there is still something that prevents him from being completely bilingual. It might be the fact he considers his wife bilingual, because she has grown up in a bilingual family. Petri's answer is clear as he does not yet feel fully bilingual because his stay in the US has not been long enough in his view. However, consulting Grosjean (2008), Petri and Mikael can be considered fully bilingual: the use of two or more languages in everyday life defines bilinguals. Had the participants been aware of this, their answers could have been more lenient. In the case of Petri and Mikael, they were somewhat cautious to identify with English language as they did not even consider themselves fully bilingual. However, further questions revealed that despite these answers, Mikael showed a strong identification with English, while Petri's identification was significantly weaker. This is discussed below.

5.2 Linguistic identities of the participants

In contrast to his definition of bilingualism, Mikael seemed to identify with English quite strongly:

(7) You know when I write my CV or like something ... depending on the

situation I might even choose like native level or the same as natives have because it's so close to that. (Mikael)

Moreover, he thought that English could take the same role in his personal life as Finnish, which is more or less a straight answer to the second research question whether a second language could take the same role as the first language for a late bilingual:

(8) Yeah I think so and I think it has done it already. (Mikael)

In Petri's case the things were not so straightforward. For him the first language was clearly Finnish and his response to the question whether the second language could assume the same role as the L1 was clearly negative. This answer was affected by the fact that his wife and family were Finnish and he used Finnish to communicate with them almost all the time. These two are large areas of life, which require plenty of communication, which in turn is done through languages.

The interviews revealed that one's identification with a certain language is strongly connected to the amount of use and to the areas of life where it is used. Mikael and Petri both had stayed in an English-speaking country for three years, but their linguistic identities were very different. This is explained by the differences in other areas of life, which shows that the study of bilingualism is greatly affected by many different variables, which make bilingualism different for everybody. When asked about the use of English in different contexts, Mikael answered that he mostly uses English even after living a year in his native country Finland. These areas include reading, writing the most personal things such as a journal and a blog, marriage, friendships, extended family, work and even religion and thinking, both abstract and concrete. In contrast, Petri, who was still living in the US at the time of the interviews reported that the language for areas like marriage and thinking is Finnish, while work was the only area he names that he associated with English. It is interesting to note that for both participants, the language of religion could be either English or Finnish, even though in many religions the original language is considered holy, which is echoed in Mills (2003). These results suggest that it is possible for late bilinguals to identify very strongly with a second language. However, the extent of identification depends on the amount of use. In Petri's case, the first language remains strong, because he regularly uses Finnish.

(9) At this point I'd say that maybe Finnish is anyway the main language for all the other areas. (Petri)

Despite differences in use and the level of identification, both Mikael and Petri had some areas for which the second language had become stronger than the first language: Petri named work and Mikael named religion and abstract thinking though it should be noted that Mikael has more areas where he used both languages equally.

(10 In work I always write in English so I guess that I have been doing that for so

long time that actually I think it is easier to write in English. (Petri)

(11) English I do more than Finnish like I find the concepts easier to communicate. (Mikael)

Petri said that when reading and acquiring new knowledge, the language choice does not have much significance. Similarly, Mikael read mostly in English because there is more material published in English. In addition, he had studied three years in Australia and finds English to be an easier language for communication the concepts he had learned through English. Therefore it can be said that Mikael and Petri can learn non-linguistic things through both their L1 and L2. This further confirms the view that both Mikael and Petri have proficiency in the second language that is equal to the first language, but the amount of use is a decisive factor for the choice of identification.

The term 'mother tongue' did not involve any significant connotations for either participant. For Mikael it was the language spoken at home and for Petri it was the same as the first language. This was very different to Mills (2003:175), whose participants connected it to nurturing and mothering. When asked about the importance of maintaining the first language, both participants responded very clearly that it is important.

(12) If I stayed here for a very long time let's say ten or twenty years * I would like to keep Finnish at a good level. (Petri)

(13) I think it's very important ... I really look after even in Australia I did look after Finnish though I never thought I'm gonna lose it. (Mikael)

To Mikael, knowing languages has intrinsic value: he referred to some of his Finnish acquaintances in Australia, whose children had never learned Finnish, which he considers sad. Furthermore the participants were asked a question about what they would miss if their first languages went and the responses were well aligned with those to the previous question. Mikael reports the difficulties he had when he started school in Australia, where he was not able to use Finnish at all: there were feelings of not being able to express intended messages perfectly and exhaustion after school days, which involve a great deal of use of English.

(14) some days you feel like you just can't speak so well like you know you have those days when your accent is bad you can't really produce the language for some reason * which hardly ever happens in your native language. (Mikael)

In addition, Petri mentioned emotional connections to one's first language and thought that one would not necessarily ever learn the subtlest layers of a second language.

Both Mikael and Petri feel at home in English-speaking countries and they can easily communicate with native speakers. Both emphasize the fact that in their countries of stay, Australia and the US, all people are foreigners in some way. Petri stated that there are people from so many parts of the

world who use their own accents of English that it is difficult to say what their native language is and where they come from. However, Petri said that he still needs to think about his language use when speaking with natives, while Mikael does not show signs of such:

(15) We don't even think what languages we use or speak, whatever comes out of the mouth. (Mikael)

The participants also showed some differences in feelings of anxiety when speaking English. For Mikael, his most anxious memory about language use was from his high-school times but at the time of the interviews he did not feel much anxiety with English. Moreover, he had difficulty identifying whether it is language or something else, such as a public speaking situation, which caused anxiety. Petri had quite a bit of anxiety at the beginning of his stay in the US and even after three years he did not feel at ease when speaking English the same way he did when speaking Finnish.

Finally, Mikael and Petri were asked how it felt to give an interview in English to an interviewer, who was also a native speaker of Finnish. Both said that the language choice did not really matter, even though it might have been more natural to conduct the interviews in Finnish.

The main findings from the interviews are that one can use an L2 and identify more with it but still feel that acquiring a level of proficiency similar to L1 takes a very long time if it is ever possible. In addition, the simple fact that one of the participants did identify strongly with the second language while the other did not, shows that a strong identification with a second language depends also on other variables besides stay in an English-speaking country. The analysis of the data shows that it is rather the amount of use of a certain language that determines the level of identification. The greatest difference between Mikael and Petri was the language of family life, which likely takes plenty of time in daily communication.

The identification with the first language was not much different for Mikael and Petri: this shows that even when having less contacts with the first language, the connection with it does not decline. Furthermore, it can be argued that Mikael and Petri have developed proficiencies similar to the first language, when considering learning new things and areas of life that might appear in the future. For example, the communication in Petri's family would probably become more complex if his children entered school in the US. It would be interesting to observe such changes, which would give an interesting point of view for the future of the study of bilingualism.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the lives and linguistic identities of two participants, who had had mainly monolingual childhoods, but whose lives had later turned bilingual. The interviews revealed that linguistic identification with a second language can become very strong. However, the different stories of the participants showed that this is not necessarily the case. Despite having an apparently strong proficiency in English, one of the participants still had plenty of opportunities to use his first language Finnish most of the time, which was the main factor for weaker identification with English. The findings demonstrate the width of bilingualism: the participants come from very similar conditions, but differences in some areas of life have led to very different linguistic identities. When drawing conclusions about the present study, it should be noted that the first language remained strong for both participants and both participants considered proficiency in the first language important.

Bilingualism was a successful model for researching the topic of the present study. The main findings were aligned with the complementarity principle (Grosjean 2008: 22), which primarily considers bilingualism as a richness, not as a source of potential personal crises. The present study showed that one can indeed become bilingual as an adult and one can reach a comfortable level with a second language after staying in the target language country. It would have been useful to examine the change in proficiency and identification with English from the beginning of stay to the time of the interviews and discover how long it took to reach that comfortable level.

The present study was satisfactory, thanks to the participants who showed great interest in the interviews and gave extensive answers to all interview questions. However, the present study was not necessarily all-encompassing. If differences can be found between two individuals, there are probably plenty of different stories to be studied. In other words, the sample was fairly small and it would have been beneficial to find different stories, which could contribute to understanding identification with L2 under strong L1 influence. In addition, interviews are unique and interactive situations, which often advance differently. The second interview raised some useful questions, but it was not possible to get comparative answers from both participants anymore. Should the study be repeated with different participants, the interview would benefit from additional questions concerning one's linguistic identity. However, using the same form would probably reveal useful information about different individuals, who have had a monolingual childhood and have stayed in an English speaking country for a few years.

In the light of the present study, a monolingual childhood does not significantly affect or hinder becoming bilingual at an adult age. The first research question was concerned with the relationship between the first and second language for bilinguals. The role of the second language is determined by the amount of use and the number of areas of life that are covered in the second language. The present study showed that it is possible for monolingual Finns to acquire very high levels of proficiency in English, which helps covering new areas of life, which are accessible only through English. In regards to the final research question, English as the second language may even take the same role as Finnish as the first language, even though connection with the first language after having a monolingual childhood remains strong and will probably fade only in complete absence of it. The present study was concerned with the process of transferring from monolingualism to bilingualism. Thus, a natural continuation of the present study would be the process of forgetting the first language and moving completely to the other end of the continuum, monolingualism in the second language. The present study revealed a new dimension of bilingualism, which is a very large field of study. Therefore, there is still opportunities for further investigations.

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Appendix: the interview questions

- Which language do you prefer for conducting this interview?
- What is your age
- Where were you born?
- What kind of schools did you go to?
- What was the role of English in your first and second level schooling?
- How much effort did you put into learning English?
- How much did you use English in your free-time?
- Did you feel affinity with the English language in your school ages?
- Was English ever difficult to you?
- Do you remember when it started feel more natural?

Linguistic identity:

- Do you use English on daily basis?
- Have you stayed in English-speaking countries? Where? How long?
- How would you compare you language skills with native-speakers?
- How about other speakers of English as a second language?
- Do you think you have a clear accent or dialect in English?
- What is the language you use most nowadays?
- In which language do you read?
- In which language do you prefer writing?
- What are the most important areas of life that you associate with English?
- How about Finnish?
- Are there some things that you couldn't express in Finnish?
- How about in English?

Language-related questions:

- How would you define bilingual?
- Do you consider yourself one?
- What term do you prefers when describing your languages? Why?
- What does the term 'mother tongue' mean to you?
- To what extent do you think it is important to maintain your proficiency in Finnish?
- If your first language went, what would you feel missing? In other words, what is the

importance of your first language to you?

- Do you feel you are still acquiring English language?
- Do you feel at home in English speaking countries?
- Do you feel comfortable in connection with English native speakers?
- Has use of English ever caused anxiety to you?
- Have people mistaken you as a native speaker of English?
- Do you see dreams in which English is used?
- Which language do you use for abstract thinking?
- Are you religious?
- What is the language you associate with your religion?
- Does language choice make a difference?
- With which language do you associate childhood? Do you feel it could be expressed in the other?

- What is the language you use when feeling strong emotions?
- Are there emotions you associate and handle with English ?
- What is the language you use for thinking?
- Have you noticed changes in this during your life ?
- Do you feel that the English language could take the same role in your personal life as Finnish?