

BUILDING SELF THROUGH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING:
A case study of four adult language learners' emerging identities

Master's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Oppiminen on vahvasti sidoksissa identiteettiin, sillä se voi saada aikaan muutoksen ihmisessä niin ajatuksen, toiminnan kuin tekojenkin tasolla. Vieraan kielen oppimista onkin verrattu uuden identiteetin omaksumiseen, sillä sen myötä oppijan käsitys itsestään muuttuu. Tarkempaa tietoa siitä, miten oppijat kokevat muuttuvansa ja millaisia identiteettejä heillä on kielen oppimisen myötä, löytyy kuitenkin hyvin vähän. Tämän lisäksi suurin osa kielen oppimisen ja identiteetin yhdistävistä tutkimuksista on tehty toisen kielen kontekstissa, jolloin kohderyhmänä ovat pääsääntöisesti olleet maahanmuuttajat, joiden vieraan kielen identiteetin muodostamiseen liittyy kuitenkin hyvin erilaisia prosesseja ja tavoitteita kuin luokkahuonekontekstissa opiskelevien.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia identiteettejä liittyy vieraan kielen oppimiseen aikuisiällä. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin teemahaastattelun avulla. Tutkimukseen osallistui neljä 30-50 – vuotiasta suomalaista vieraan kielen oppijaa Jyväskylän kansalaisopistosta, jotka kertoivat kielen oppimiskokemuksistaan menneisyydessä ja nykyhetkessä sekä kuvailivat tulevaisuuden suunnitelmiaan kielen parissa. Aineisto analysoitiin narratiivisesti, eli oppijoiden kokemuksista koottiin yksilölliset tarinat, jotka kuvasivat heidän identiteettejään.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulosten mukaan kielen opiskelu oli muuttanut oppijoita monella tavalla. Kielitaidon sekä kielen parissa syntyneiden kokemusten kautta jokaiselle oppijalle oli kehittynyt vieraan kielen identiteetti, joka koostui oppijoiden henkilökohtaisesta, työ-, oppija-, sekä kielellisestä identiteetistä. Identiteetit liittyivät vahvasti niihin yhteisöihin, joihin oppijat kokivat tai toivoivat kuuluvansa. Lisääntyneen kielitaitonsa sekä kulttuuritietoutensa myötä merkityksellisin yhteisöistä oli kohdekielisten ryhmä, mutta myös kansalaisopiston merkitys oppimisympäristönä näkyi kieliopinnoissa, sillä kenelläkään oppijoista ei ollut säännöllisiä kontakteja natiiveihin. Aikuisoppijoiden identiteettien muodostumista ennalta auttoi heidän positiivinen suhtautumisensa kielen opiskeluun, motivaatio sekä tulevaisuudensuunnitelmat. Vieras kieli nähtiin vahvasti sijoituksena omaan tulevaisuuteen, etenkin työelämän näkökulmasta katsottuna, mutta myös tärkeänä ja hyödyllisenä harrastuksena. Tutkimuksia vieraan kielen identiteeteistä tarvitaan kuitenkin lisää yksilöllisten muutosprosessien ymmärtämistä sekä opetuksen kehittämistä varten.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Identity, meaning the way a person sees oneself, is, in especially today's world, essential and, without a doubt, the guideline that people follow when they are lost and hesitant about where they belong to (Bauman 2011-1996:19). People are constantly identifying not only themselves but also others according to their features, such as, appearance, behavior, cultural backgrounds and, most of all, linguistic abilities. *Language* plays a double role, being both a *sign* of someone's identity and the way to *construct* identities (Weedon 1997:21). Whereas the mother tongue has its special role in a person's life as the language of expressing oneself confidently without restrictions, foreign languages set up various challenges for the language learner in terms of *who they are in that language*. It is thus no surprise that language learning has been equaled with learning a new identity (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000).

Identity construction through language learning became a topic of interest especially in the 1990s. During the past two decades the number of studies combining language learning and identities has increased rapidly as researchers have shifted towards understanding language learning as participation instead of acquisition (Block 2008:141 and Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos 2008:3). Basically the metaphor of acquisition refers to individual possession of language knowledge, whereas participation shifts the focus on becoming a member of a community. Hence, the active role of the language learner has been addressed even more since it is stated that everyone is a unique, social learner guiding one's own learning by participating in various communities of practice (Wenger 1998). It is generally acknowledged that through this social participation and interaction in different groups, people find their own place and thus, construct their identities.

Even though the research area of identities and language learners has extended over the years, immigrants, or in other words, second language learners, have constantly been under particular interest in identity studies (Taylor 2013:27). Therefore, there is a notable shortage of identity studies concentrating on the foreign language learners who, in comparison to second language learners, are not surrounded by native speakers and the same challenges in their everyday life. Basically, second language learners and foreign language learners face different types of processes concerning their identity building. Finally, it also has to be noted that the information of the emerged foreign

language identities that the studies have conducted so far is in many ways inadequate and thus, more precise information about the language learners' identities is needed.

The purpose of the present study is thus to examine the effect of foreign language learning on adult language learners to find out what type of identities emerge as a result of language learning. Adults were chosen as the target group not only because young learners have commonly dominated the field of language learning and teaching, but also since it was considered that adults are able to express issues relating to processes of change and identities better than young learners. Furthermore, adults' experience in work life and their aspirations to start learning a new language at adult age were thought to bring interesting perspectives to the studying of foreign language identities.

As a subject of research, identity is a complex phenomenon since it consists of subjective and highly personal experiences which, first of all, are challenging to express and secondly, even harder to interpret. Therefore, numerous studies interested in the identities of language learners use a variety of different theories in order to get closer to the learner (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:7). In the present study identities are viewed from the poststructuralist point of view which sees identities as multiple, complex, dynamic and socially constructed (Miyahara 2010:5, Paiva 2011:62, De Fina 2006:268, Weedon 2004:7). Moreover, it is stated that identities are closely attached to narratives which consist of language learners' subjective experiences (McAdams, Joelsson and Liebllich 2006:4). This is in line with the definition of foreign language identities presented by Benson et al (2012) and Korhonen (2014:68) who note that identities are closely related to "any aspect of a person's identity that is connected to their knowledge and use of a foreign language."

Because of the complexity and sensitivity of the topic, the data of the present study was collected qualitatively. Altogether four adult learners, aged 30 to 50 years, were interviewed thematically in order to receive information about their language learning experiences in past, present and future and thus, to be able to form their foreign language identities. The data was then analyzed using both content and narrative analysis. In the end, four unique stories, or in other words, narratives, were created based on what and how the learners spoke about the foreign language and how it had affected or changed their lives and themselves.

Hopefully the study offers meaningful information about the diversity of language learners and their identities, which can be utilized in understanding the identity formation of foreign language learners and more generally in educational contexts of language learning and teaching in the future. Furthermore, the study addresses the joy of life long learning and the meaning of languages in people's lives.

The organization of the present study is as follows. In chapter 2 the theoretical background for the present study is introduced including history of language learning and identity studies, definition of identity and the connection between learning and identity building. The final parts of chapter 2 present previous studies in more detail and construct the precise framework for the present study. In chapter 3 the research design is outlined including the aims of the study, thematic interview as the data collecting method, participants and methods of analysis. Findings of the study are presented in chapter 4 in the form of narratives, which are considered learners' identities. In chapter 5 the results are discussed in more depth and additionally, the study is evaluated and future implications in terms of possible research areas are presented. The final chapter concludes the present study by summarizing the results.

2. IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The purpose of this section is to form a theoretical background for the present study whose aim is to examine emerging identities in an adult foreign language learning context. Wenger (1998:215) states that learning always involves a process of becoming someone and thus, is an experience of identity. This notion works as a basis for the present study in understanding the connection between language learning and identity. It is therefore hypothesized that language learning, which in the present study refers to any foreign language learning that does not take place in the target language community¹, changes the person in various ways. The present section deals with the conception of identity starting from a discussion about the rise of identity-based studies and then continuing to the current tendency in the field of language learning to view identity from a social constructionist and poststructuralist perspective. Thus, identity is perceived as being a multiple, dynamic, contextually situated and socially constructed phenomenon which requires for language, and thus interaction in various communities, for its formation to take place. Furthermore, identities are considered ongoing narrative projects which consist of people's self-told stories of themselves reflecting to their past, present and future.

2.1. Learner-centeredness and interest in identities

The number of identity-based studies in the field of language learning has soared in the past two decades which can partially be explained by the shift of focus on learner centered research (Block 2008:141). A renewed conceptualization of language acquisition that paid more attention to social perspectives and extended the link between language and identity was requested in the 1990s by researchers such as Pavlenko (2002:277) and Firth and Wagner (2007). At the time, the Chomskian way of viewing language learning governed the field and focused on the individual cognition and neglected the role of social life and interaction. The lack of research in the social factors

¹ Many of the studies discussed in the present study examine identities in second language learning (SLL) or second language acquisition (SLA) contexts. Especially the studies conducted in the U.S. focus on second language (L2) learners which means the acquisition of an additional language after one's mother tongue in a context where the L2 is the official language (Taylor 2013:27). Thus, the research focuses mainly on immigrant contexts where the learner is surrounded by the official language. In the present study, the discussion and presentation of these studies is relevant since the number of identity and language learning studies conducted in foreign language contexts is minimal. (See section 2.5. for further information.)

of language learning was addressed followingly by Pennycook (1990:26) who noted that there was “the need to rethink language acquisition in its social, cultural, and political contexts, taking into account gender, race, and other relations of power as well as the notion of the subject as multiple and formed within different discourses”. Under request was thus a comprehensive idea of a unique learner who developed oneself through social interaction, was constantly transforming and influenced by one’s features. In their aim to shift towards a new understanding of language learning, Firth and Wagner (2007) relied on the theory of situated learning presented by Lave and Wenger (1991), which views learning as a social process. According to Firth and Wagner (2007), learning constitutes of participation in various communities which require for social practice and interaction and thus, involve the whole person.

However, moving towards a more social approach has not been straightforward and in reality, the process is still in action. Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos (2008:3) note that the role of the learner in second and foreign language contexts is gradually changing to a more active one as learning languages is no longer only seen as acquisition, but as participation where the learner seeks learning opportunities and becomes eventually a member of a target community. Thus, instead of focusing on language structure and explaining different outcomes in terms of language proficiency between learners, researchers are currently more interested e.g. in how the learners manage their language learning and what kind of changes it brings to their lives (Cotterall 2008:126, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000:156). In other words, the researchers are interested in understanding learners’ subjective experiences of language learning and thus, how the learners become different during their learning processes (Benson 2005:20). According to Benson (2005:20), this understanding of learner diversity is mainly “a matter of construction of diverse identities through second language learning- - “.

New studies incorporating language learning and identities have evolved as a result of learner-centeredness and, most importantly, understanding learner diversity which considers language learners as unique, active and social actors. The current – the poststructuralist view to identity - has been adopted by many researchers, such as, Norton (2000), Miyahara (2010), Pavlenko (2002), Block (2007) and Korhonen (2014). Moreover, identity research has increasingly been using the concept of narratives both in the definition of identities as well as in the analysis of the actual data. Basically, narratives are considered learners’ identities which consist of their subjective

experiences of themselves. The use of narratives enables the researcher to stay close to the learner and thus, to ease the observation of one's identity.

To have a better understanding of the conception of identity, it is crucial at first to have a closer look at the history of identity research and then move on to the current approaches which play a significant role in how identity is nowadays being understood in language learning contexts. Thus, in the following chapters identities are explained from the perspective of poststructuralism, starting from a brief outlook on the two main approaches to identities and then continuing with the contemporary understanding of the complex phenomenon.

2.2. Social constructionist and poststructuralist view on identities and language learning

According to Hall (2011-1996), there are two major approaches to the conceptualization of identity, namely *essentialism* and *non-essentialism*, which have directed the understanding of this complex phenomenon. Basically, essentialism can occur in two different forms; *social structuralism* in which the self is considered as a product of the surrounding social conditions, or *biological determinism* which believes that genes construct the individual (Block 2007:11) The approaches share one key characteristic. Both social structuralism and biological determinism consider that identity is developed and shaped by formations that precede them (Block 2007:12). In the essentialist way of thinking, human is rather a permanent product, either of one's biological or social surroundings, and has almost non-existent possibilities to affect the construction of the self. Basically, the essentialist identity is thought to be a fixed essence constructed inside the person and determined either by environment or psychology. Viewing this theory from the language learning aspect, essentialism most importantly lacks of attention to social factors and the possibility to change as a person.

The phase of essentialism was followed by non-essentialism which refused to neglect the role of social factors in language learning. One of its best known orientations, *social constructionism*, an approach to socio-cultural studies, started quickly to gain ground and it still functions as one of the key theories to identity work in the applied linguistics and contemporary language learning (Miyahara 2010:3). However, another approach was born soon after the previously mentioned request of a more social approach to

language learning and has thus frequently been used in modern identity studies, namely *poststructuralism*. Poststructuralism and social constructionism rely heavily on each other, the combining factor between the two approaches being their vision of reality, or social life, which is constituted in discursive interaction (Miyahara 2010:3). For social constructionists, “the world is what we make of it through language” (Andrew 2012:27), meaning that language is not an independently existing, separated part of people but actually used to shape and create the surrounding social world. Similarly, identity was gradually seen as discursively constructed in social relations and, most importantly, as changing and transforming phenomenon in opposite to the essentialist thinking of a permanent essence that a person beholds.

2.3. Identities: negotiated, multiple and complex

From early on, researchers have struggled to theorize identities and thus, there has been a request for a unified conception of identity in the field of second language acquisition (Norton 2000:5). As the starting point for the different, commonly vague and confusing perceptions is that ultimately, identity is viewed as a depiction of oneself. Bonny Norton (2000:5), a pioneer and ground breaking theorist in the field of language learning and identity, uses the term identity “to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future.” Drawing on Norton’s (2000) definition and the previously presented approaches of social constructionism and poststructuralism, in the present study identities are similarly presented as multiple, complex, dynamic and, most importantly, socially constructed.

As many people argue today, everyone has an identity and additionally, not only one but *multiple* (Hall 1999:22, Paiva 2011:66, Miyahara 2010:5). According to Gee (2001:99) and Weedon (2004:7), people have multiple identities connected not to their inner self but to their performances in society. What is implied here is that the formation of identities is linked to people’s engagement in various social activities with each other. This is in line with Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012:15) who drawing on Lemke’s (2000) thoughts note that “A human becomes a person only through social interaction within a community.” As pointed out previously, humans are social beings and their activities are mediated: to be able to interact with each other, people use various ways to communicate of which the most significant is *language*. Since the relationship between

language and humans is symbiotic, meaning that there is no language without people, it is easy to come to the conclusion that language functions as the focal point of social organization, which is the assumption on which the poststructuralist theory lies as well (Pavlenko 2002:282). In addition to its role in forming the world and relationships, language, most importantly, offers a site of identity construction and negotiation.

Weedon (1997:21), who is the leading theorist of the feminist practice and poststructuralism, argues that language is where a person's construction of subjectivity takes place. Thus, language is not the way to be an individual, but instead it is the medium to construct individuality and to be a certain type of person. Drawing on Bourdieu (1977), Norton similarly notes that whenever people speak, they negotiate and renegotiate themselves in relation to the social world and in the specific context and time given (2010:350). What Norton points out is that the way identities can be constructed via language is related to what people speak, to whom, how and where. Human communication is about sharing and receiving information, expressing feelings and emotions and most importantly, about revealing to people around what type of persons they are and where they belong to (De Fina 2006:263). This can only take place in interaction with other people. Similarly Joseph (2010:9) agrees that through language people have a sense of themselves and of their place in the world. In addition to the self-images that people create of themselves while talking, language is also used to identify others, to judge and to classify people (De Fina 2006:263).

Identities are socially, culturally, historically, and institutionally assigned, meaning that the environmental and structural conditions produce the discourses where identities are constructed (Weedon 2004:7, Gee 2001:100). Because of this, special emphasis should be paid on how structural conditions and social practices place individuals in various contexts and how the individuals react to them. This is made possible through identity categories (Norton & Toohey 2011:427). Identities are closely related to different traditionally *demographic categories* through which people can identify themselves according to their ethnicity, race, nationality, migration, gender, social class and language (Block 2007:27). According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005:592), "Identities encompass (a) macrolevel demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles." Similar to Block's view (2007:27), macrolevel demographic categories refer to grand scale identities, such as nationality or ethnicity, whereas local positions are

identities under a certain macrolevel category. The latter remark on identities refers to roles which people take in various acts of interaction with friends or in any community, for instance.

Similarly De Fina (2006:268) agrees that the emerging of identities may involve various agents and processes of communication. Accordingly, identities can be typed as *individual* or *collective*, *social*, *personal* or *situational* (De Fina 2006:268). The first type, individual identity, means negotiating of one's own identity in a conversation with a friend, for example, whereas collective identity refers to discursive constructions which involve the identity of the represented community, such as, a political party. Personal identities involve both membership in a community and moral or physical characteristics, such as courage or weakness, that help in distinguishing people from each other. Situational identities refer to similar types of roles in specific contexts that Buchholtz and Hall (2005:592) and Miyahara (2010:4) also suggest. For instance, a female teacher working in an elementary school can have various identities during a day, such as, a wife, a mother, a teacher and a colleague to her fellow teachers. Similarly, using different languages can place the individuals to different roles in their lives (Paiva 2011:66). Finally, social identities are categories that express belonging to a specific racial, gender or political group. However, it is important to acknowledge that the various identities cannot be completely separated from each other since they are constantly overlapping.

In addition to their multiplicity, by their nature identities are *complex* and *dynamic*. According to Paiva (2011:62), "identity is a complex system that displays a fractalized process of expansion as it is open to new experiences." Identity changes constantly since its process is dynamic; new environments, experiences, people or any other "process of expansion", has an effect on identity. Complexity also refers to the previously mentioned multiplicity of identities and the production of them that can take place in various communicational situations and requires for different types of agents (De Fina 2006:268). Indeed, the process of identity construction takes place at many levels at the same time which leads to a temporary and fluctuating end result (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:15). Similarly Barker and Galanski (2001:31) note that identities are unstable by their nature but they can, however, also be temporarily stabilized by social practice and regular behavior. The multilayered and constantly shifting nature of identity thus sets challenges in the understanding of the concept but also makes it easier

to understand why it cannot be called a fixed system. Therefore, the construction of identity is also often described as *a constant process* of different phases, or as Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012:15) phrase it, “a holistic life-long process”, which implies that identities are never finished.

In the following sections the vision of identities and how to interpret them are examined more closely. Taking into account the purpose of the present study, the connection between language learning and identity reconstruction is discussed first. Secondly, the role of the learner oneself in language learning and identity construction is dealt with. Thirdly, the focus is shifted towards situations where interaction and thus, the reconstruction of identities takes place, namely in communities of practice. Additionally, the notion of imagination and investment in forming identities is discussed. Lastly, identities are described as narratives, which are constructed of the person’s self-expressed experiences.

2.4. Learning as becoming: The reconstruction of identities

According to Wenger (1998:215), learning always involves a process of becoming since it changes who we are and what we do and therefore, it can be noted that learning is an experience of identity. In the process of learning people accumulate their skills and information; new knowledge shapes the old information. Since the new knowledge also reforms the way people think, it can be regarded as “a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy” (Wenger 1998:215). Thus, from this point of view it is no surprise that learning a new language has been referred to as learning a new identity (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). Identity formation as a result of language learning is commonly named reconstruction, a term which refers to the previously mentioned dynamicity of identities involving various changes. Thus, whereas language is inevitable for identities to emerge, the learning of a new language involves the processing of who one is in the new language.

Why does learning transform the learner and what is it that changes when people learn languages? According to Kaikkonen (2012), foreign language learning is a holistic, socially and culturally situated process which involves identity work. This is in line with Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012:5) who note that second language learning is considered a complex project that involves constant identity formation. Concerning the

relationship between the learner and one's languages, Kaikkonen (2012:22) states that starting from the childhood and the first acquired language, the child identifies oneself as a part of that specific community where one's mother tongue is spoken. The child learns the cultural codes, modes of behavior and the values that the group shares and eventually, though not necessarily, becomes an integrated, meaningful part of the group of people who share the same language. As foreign languages are learned, the role of mother tongue as familiar remains but people start wondering what role the foreign languages have in their lives and how they see themselves using the languages. Thus, they do identity work in relation to their language repertoire (Kaikkonen 2012:23). Also Ricoeur (1988, 1991b, 1992, cited in Korhonen 2014:68) notes that identity construction is an experiential project of making sense of oneself over time. According to Korhonen (2014:68), the identity process involves various questions such as 'Who am I as a foreign language learner and user?', 'Where do I belong?', 'Where do I come from?' and 'Where am I going?'. The experiences of change that people confront during their learning are always subjective, meaning that similar types of changes can be remarked very differently between two or more learners, depending on the meaning of the language or linguistic knowledge, for example.

Hence, language learning is more than mastering the use of the language. The learning does not only require for conscious cognitive work, it is also a process of going through attitudes and emotions that arise along the way (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:9). Moreover, the construction of identity also evolves learner's interpretation of the learning process and the context where the learning takes place. Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos (2008:3) agree that when the learner uses the foreign language, learning turns into subjective experiences that include the arising of emotions and identities and therefore, language learning gets very personal meanings.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) studied adult language learners who strove to become native speakers of their second language and found out that their process of identity construction consisted of two phases which were the initial phase of loss and the phase of recovery and reconstruction. Using learners' personal stories, referred to as narratives, (The notion of narrations is discussed in more detail in 2.4.3.) as their data, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000:162-163) separated four critical stages in the reconstruction of the self which were 1) appropriation of others' voices, 2) emergence of one's own new voice, 3) translation therapy: reconstruction of one's past and 4) continuous growth

'into' new positions and subjectivities. On the way of finding one's own new voice, the learner first appropriates the voice of others which takes place in close interaction. Through bonding, creating friendships and thus, participation in various communities, the learner finds who one is. In translation therapy the learner rewrites one's childhood experiences in the new language and thus, closes one chapter in one's life and begins another in a new language. Over time the learner positions oneself into a new cultural space and grows into a new subject. The building of the self is thus a constant process including various stages of development. However, even though the identity work evolves changes in one self, people still experience themselves being the same person (Wenger 1998).

Instead of describing the actual process of reformation of identities including different stages, the present study's aim is to find out what type of identities evolve from the learning of a foreign language. Thus, the reconstruction of the learners' identities is viewed from the perspective of emerging of new or reformed identities. Based on the previously addressed definition offered by Norton (2000:5), and following the example of Benson et al (2012) and Korhonen (2014:68), the present study examines the foreign language identities of learners which are defined as "any aspect of a person's identity that is connected to their knowledge and use of a foreign language" (Korhonen 2014:68). Therefore, in order to find traces of the emerged foreign language identities, it is necessary to study the learners' connection to the language including its meaning, purposes of use and general knowledge of the language and its culture. As the learners describe themselves as language learners and share their experiences, they at the same time construct their identities in the foreign language.

In conclusion, foreign language learning, as any other learning process, does not occur in a vacuum, but is always socially and culturally situated and involves identity work in relation to learners' languages (Kaikkonen 2012, Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:7). It is where and with whom people speak that gives meaning to the language being used or learned. Before addressing this significant meaning of the surrounding environment in identity formation, the learner's role in terms of autonomy and agency is first discussed in more depth.

2.4.1. Autonomy, agency and identity

Whereas the first language and subjectivities are given, new languages and identities are arrived by choice (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000:169). Thus, without neglecting the significant impact of the environment and surrounding people on language learning and identity construction, in charge of the learning process and its possible effect on the identity formation is the individual. As the interest in examining the complex relationship of language learning and the language learner's identity has increased, two concepts have recently been closely connected to the construction process of one's identity, namely autonomy and agency (Korhonen 2014:68, Huang 2011, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, Paiva 2011).

Autonomy refers to the learner's ability to take control of one's own learning (Benson 2001:47, cited in Huang 2011:229). According to Paiva (2011:63), autonomous learners utilize the available linguistic affordances surrounding them and act by participating in second language social practices. Moreover, autonomous learners are highly aware of how to learn and thus, they reflect and direct their own learning by using effective learning strategies, for example. Whereas autonomy is linked to the learner's capacity of being in charge of one's own learning, *agency* is referred to the actions and engagement of a learner in the social world and it can thus be viewed as a socially oriented autonomy (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, Huang 2011:230, Toohey and Norton 2003, cited in Korhonen 2014:69). Block (2008:143) agrees that agency is created of and by social structure, meaning that social environments provide the settings for individuals to act by constantly reshaping them. The action, according to Huang (2011:230), emerges from the learner's deliberation and choice. This is supported by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000:169-170) who note that agency in language learning is "crucial at the point where the individuals must not just start memorizing a dozen new words and expressions, but have to decide on whether to initiate a long, painful, inexhaustive and, for some, never-ending process of self-translation." Thus, agency is closely related to the creation of the self, or in other words, the construction of identity.

According to Korhonen (2014:65), the relationship between agency and foreign language learning and moreover, the connections to autonomy and identity have remained unclear to a certain extent. Basically, the complex relationship of the three concepts is understood in two different ways. Paiva (2011:63) states that autonomy is

the precondition for agentic behavior and that agency operates on a practical level, “representing a kind of actualization of autonomy.” The view of Benson on the other hand has been more generally accepted among researchers. Benson (2007:30) suggests that “agency can perhaps be viewed as a point of origin for the development of autonomy, while identity might be viewed as one of its more important outcomes.” Hence, autonomy and identity are both derived from the learner’s agency. Despite the inconsistencies in their connections to each other, which requires for further research on the topic, it can be stated that autonomy, agency and identity are closely linked to each other and thus, their relationship needs to be addressed when studying identities. However, as mentioned already, the environment, and thus the social world also play a crucial role in the identity construction which is discussed next.

2.4.2. Communities of practice, imagined communities and investments

As discussed already, finding a place of one’s own in the social world and thus, the feeling of belonging and engagement to a group is a key feature in the construction of identities. According to Wenger (1998:6), people belong to several *communities of practice*, which, similarly to identities, change over the course of their lives. The theoretical framework of communities of practice functions as the basis for the earlier mentioned social theory of learning developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), which considers learning as *social participation* and thus emphasizes the learner’s relationship to other people (Wenger 1998:4). Participation takes place in a community of practice, which is described as “a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor” (Eckert 2006:1). In its simplest form, a community of practice can be any group of people at home, work or in the spare time. The shared interests or positions of people construct the communities, which shape their members’ participation to the outer world (Eckert 2006:1). In addition to the fact that participation in communities of practice implies to being an active participant, it also affects the individual in every level and thus defines one’s actions, thoughts and self-image (Wenger 1998:4).

What the theory basically implies here is that the participation and engagement in communities of practice is a sign of identities (Wenger 1998:151). Block (2007:27) agrees that identity emergence craves for social encounters and membership with other people with whom the person shares at least partially the same beliefs, motives, values,

activities and practices. As the communities of practice negotiate their meaning, the members of the community simultaneously construct their identities (Wenger 1998:145,151). The concept of time, including past, present and future, is also closely connected to the identity negotiation in communities of practice. According to Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012:9), there is continuity and coherence through time in the identity work, meaning that “when we negotiate the present, we incorporate the past as a part of our identity while simultaneously orienting towards the future.” Similarly Norton (2000:5) in her definition of identity emphasized the understanding of the learner’s relationship to the world across time and space.

Even though the framework of communities of practice is mostly used in studies which emphasize the meaning of the target community on identity process, in the present study communities of practice are most of all considered a destination, the reason for learning languages. In this sense, in language classrooms where the emergence of the target community is minimal or non-existent and the learners are mostly newcomers to the language practices, the community in the classroom is rather a community of imagination (Norton 2010:355). Drawing on Wenger (1998:176) who notes that imagination “refers to a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves”, Norton (2010:355) argues that *imagined communities* are desired communities of learners which offer various identity options in the future. Thus, instead of being real life communities in which people know and meet each other face to face, imagined communities are the product of the language learners’ desires and hopes of belonging to a certain group of people in the present or future as their language proficiency grows (Murphey et al 2005:84). According to Canagarajah (2004:117, cited in Murray 2008:128), constructing imagined identities and communities in which the learners see themselves participating and communicating with others is one of the greatest sources of motivation for learning the language. Similarly Murphey et al (2005:84) agree that imagined communities can help in the building of second language identities.

To be part of an imagined community requires for an *investment* which refers to the relationship between language learners and the target language and moreover, to the learners’ desires to master the language (Norton 2010:356 and Norton 2000:10). The learning of a language is thus considered an investment which results in symbolic and material resources and increases the value of the learners’ cultural capital (Norton

2000:10). What the learners receive from the learning of a language is thus an access to resources, which the language proficiency offers. For many people, learning a language is a gatekeeper of something; a better job or status in the work market, a placement to study or a chance to see the world and participate in new communities. By investing in the language, the learners improve their possibilities to fulfill these desires and hopes.

In the present study the notions of communities of practice, imagined communities, investments and the concept of time are used in examining the emergence of the learners' foreign language identities. As the learners depict their reasons for learning a language, they simultaneously form an imagined identity in an imagined community. The hopes of becoming a certain person and thus, possibly belonging to a certain community require for time and energy to be invested (Murphey et al 2005:85). Next the meaning of the learners' self-expressed experiences in identity studies is addressed.

2.4.3. Narrative identities

The interest in using narratives as a means of investigating the construction of self has spread in various areas of research such as psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics and anthropology (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000:159). Especially in the field of language learning and teaching, there is a growing interest in the narrative research combining the formation of identities (see e.g. Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012 and Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos 2008). Regarding identities as narratives enables to combine two major areas of focus in identity studies, namely language and subjective experiences. As mentioned already, in poststructuralism language is considered the site of identity construction and narratives naturally consist of language which follows a certain plot line. Most importantly, narratives, similar to identities, are learners' self-expressed stories of their own, subjective experiences which give value to them. According to Benson (2005:20), "it is only through access to learners' stories of their experiences that we are able to see how they become different from each other as their learning progresses." Overall, narrations offer a unique way to investigate human activities, which could not be captured through the more traditional approaches (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000:159).

Narratives are about personal *experiences* that are expressed or communicated in language (McAdams, Joelsson and Lieblich 2006:4). Drawing on Bruner (1990),

Miyahara (2010:5) suggests that narratives can thus be defined as "a discourse or a way of using language to construct stories." As people talk about their lives, they are constantly producing stories of themselves in which they construct and reconstruct their identities (Johansson 2005:83, cited in Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:7). Turning the lived experiences to stories leads to a plot which organizes and merges the several events that people have encountered and gives direction to the person's life (Ricoeur 1991a.:21). Similarly Prusak and Sfard (2005:16-17) note that the narratives of individuals are reifying, endorsable and significant, meaning that the actions have a repetitive nature, the stories reflect the state of affairs in the world, and the storyteller's feelings about the identified individual are affected. Eventually the process of the life story with its developments and elaborations leads to the emergence of the individual self (Hydén 2010:33). Studies that incorporate narratives and identity have different, sometimes even controversial ideas of what can be called as narrative identity, which is good to bear in mind. In the framework of the present study, the outlining of the narrative identity occurs in a broad sense, similarly to McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich (2006:4) who note that approaches that emphasize more qualitative analysis and hermeneutic frames, such as case studies, autobiographies and discourse analysis are all accepted.

The connection between stories and identities can be explained through their mutual features (Prusak and Sfard 2005:13). Both stories and identities are dynamic and human-made, meaning that they change constantly and are not created by themselves but rather because of the effort and work of the individual. They also both have recipients and authors and they function autonomously. Last but not least, stories and identities are both collectively shaped, meaning that they inquire social relationships and emerge in ongoing conversations (Prusak and Sfard 2005:17 and McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich 2006:6). Indeed, understanding narratives as personal experiences also requires for the understanding that experiences are always formed in a certain social, cultural and historical context (Miyahara 2010:7). Thus, narratives are not produced only by an individual, but they are formed in a specific context surrounded by other social, cultural and historical factors. Moreover, in the research of identity through narrations the focus is aimed at the activity of identification rather than at the pure end product, the identity itself (Prusak and Sfard 2005:15). The events taking place somewhere during the journey shape and form the identity, or the story, and it is those events and how people react to them that help to understand who the individual really is.

The analysis of narrative identities can follow different threads, such as the consideration of the participants. According to Prusak and Sfard (2005:17), the identifying narratives include three participants that can be observed by the construction of the triple BAC, A being the identified person, B being the author and C stating for the recipient. Depending on who is telling the story and to whom, the narratives can be called as first-person, second-person or third-person stories. When examining the construction of one's own identity, the first person self-told stories are the richest source. According to Prusak and Sfard 2005:17, being present in one's own discussions affects the person's actions in the most significant way. Similarly Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012:8) note that especially first person narratives can be treated as places of transformation of the self.

According to Prusak and Sfard (2005), the reifying, endorsable and significant narratives of the individual can be divided into two categories that are *actual* and *designated identities*. Actual identities are constituted of stories that depict the present state of affairs, whereas designated identities consist of stories that picture the state of affairs which is hoped to happen in the future. In other words, actual identities picture what kind of a person the individual is at the moment and designated identities, similar to the notion of imagination, picture what the person wants to be like later on. Despite the name, designated identities are not always rational and well planned choices even though they often are constituted of the hoped future perspectives (Prusak and Sfard 2005:18). Overall, the temporal dimension, viewing the emergence of the identity in the past, present and future, is a significant part of identity building (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:5).

In conclusion, agreeing with the significance of stories in identity formation (Benson 2005:20), in the present study identities are considered narratives which consist of the learners' self-expressed stories of their personal experiences in past, present and future. Moreover, the concept of narration is also used in the analysis of the participants' interviews (For further information see section 3.4.).

2.5. Towards the present study

Researchers agree that language learning involves identity construction (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012, Norton 2000, Murphey et al 2005) and

thus, identity work as a result of language learning has been studied in increasing amounts. However, the field has been divided into two in terms of context of learning. As the majority of studies focus on second language learning in immigrant contexts, meaning that the learners learn the language in the target community (see e.g. Norton 2000 and Kinginger 2004), only a fraction of studies have been conducted in foreign language contexts where the learner is not situated in the target community and the language learned is thus not the main language of the country (see e.g. Block 2008 and Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2010).

In this section the meaning of the context in language learning is discussed and frameworks and findings of previous studies concerning language learning and identity construction are presented. Even though the amount of identity work taking place in the two contexts has been a subject of dispute, similar theoretical frameworks such as narratives, imagined communities and investments have been used in many of the studies. The section ends with a defined framework for the present study and addressing its meaning in combining adult foreign language learning and identity work.

2.5.1. Two contexts of identity studies

Before presenting the findings of earlier research in more detail, it is evident to address the issue of the two different contexts of language learning which have systematically been separated from each other in this field of study. Research on identity construction and language learning has consistently focused on second language acquisition which means that there are very few studies conducted from the foreign language perspective (Taylor 2013:27, Huang 2011:229). This naturally has an effect on the way in which it is sensible to interpret the meaning of the previous research in the present study. The learning and identity processes are very different depending on the context, second or foreign language, where the learning takes place, and thus they both include various challenges and opportunities for the learners (Block 2008:150). Moreover, the separation of the contexts has questioned the amount of identity work taking place in educational contexts which will be discussed in more depth in the next section (see 2.5.2.).

In the field of second language acquisition the focus of identity studies is commonly on immigrant language learners, meaning people who have moved to a different country

and started to learn the language of their new, temporary or permanent, home country (Taylor 2013:27). Most of the studies have been conducted in English speaking countries where immigration rates are relatively high, such as the United States, Canada and Australia. Even though negotiating a new identity in a new language may at first seem overwhelming for the immigrants, they have a clear advantage in improving their linguistic skills since they are surrounded by their new host communities that offer constant cultural and linguistic input (Taylor 2013:27). The language is also an evident part of their new lives since it helps their integration to the new home country. This type of context for identity construction is also described as *naturalistic* since the language learning and identity building takes place in the target community instead of an educational context (Block 2008:142).

In foreign language learning, however, the situation is very different since the language learned is not the main language of the country but instead an additive language, which is being taught at school or in another educational environment. This context is often termed as *non-naturalistic*. Identity construction in a foreign language context has at least to some point been pessimistically viewed. According to researchers such as Taylor (2013:27), foreign language learners' possibilities to improve language skills are thought to be limited mainly because of the lack of time and contact to target language communities and thus, real life practice. Moreover, because of the position of foreign language learners as outsiders of the community where the target language is used, it is sometimes assumed that not only do foreign language learners have little access to the language but that they also are instrumentally motivated towards school success rather than changes in social identity or lived experience, which indicates that identity reconstruction rarely occurs (Kinging 2004:221). However, these views are old-fashioned since foreign language learners commonly have numerous ways to contact target language speakers and their communities via new technology, for example. Additionally, the motivation towards language learning is always individual, and in the case of adult language learners, the motivation usually descends from somewhere else than school success.

Having acknowledged the notion of naturalistic and non-naturalistic contexts and the rather pessimistic estimation of identity work in the educational setting, it is time to move on to presenting findings of studies addressing the relationship between identity construction and language learning more closely. Because of the above mentioned lack

of research in the foreign language classroom, which is of interest in the present study, research concerning language learning and identity construction both in the second language acquisition and foreign language learning context are discussed to have a more extensive view than what the scarce foreign language studies could have offered. Even though the results cannot be generalized, the studies can be considered giving direction to the present study since according to Benson (2005:20), any language learning includes identity work.

2.5.2. Previous studies of identity and language learning

The most cited studies in the field of identity and language learning are the works of Bonny Norton, the pioneer who called for a comprehensive theory of identity a few decades ago. In her longitudinal study from the early 1990s Norton studied five immigrant women in Canada using a variety of data collecting methods including questionnaires, interviews, diary entries and essays which were treated as learners' personal stories (Norton 1995, 2000). The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between language learning and identity, focusing on language learning practices in three different social contexts, namely school, home and workplace. Relying on the framework of communities of practice by Lave and Wenger (1991), Norton stated that the participants' identities shifted depending on the context and the learners' abilities to participate in the communities. One of the immigrants called Eva transformed from an uneducated immigrant to a valued co-worker as she was able to participate in her work community and strengthen the bonds between her co-workers in English. According to Norton (2000:85-86), identity construction takes place when the learner has access to the communities of practice and is thus given resources and opportunities for participation. In her later study, Norton (2001) emphasized the role of imagined communities and investments in strengthening the learners' participation.

In his study Block (2008) examined the identity formation of an adult English foreign language learner called Silvia in Barcelona in the 1990s by using interviews, which were carried out in Silvia's mother tongue, Spanish. Considering her experiences as ongoing narrative projects of who she was in the lessons, Block found out that Silvia's identity was formed firstly of her positioning as a rather wealthy and educated person among her class mates and her attempts to have a textual identity in English which again was linked to her problematic relationship with her teacher (Block 2008:151-152).

However, Block (2008:142) concluded his study stating that the construction of an adult English foreign language learner's identity in an EFL classroom "tends to be very limited" because the identity work takes place in a non-naturalistic context which does not offer enough practice as a target language community would. Thus, the main problem is the lack of 'critical experiences' in the target language, which in Block's view are necessary in identity work.

Despite his pessimistic view, Block (2008) admits that identity work in the foreign language classroom is, however, not completely impossible, but requires for self-conscious reflective work about the learners' imagined communities in English. According to Block (2008), important is that the reflective work expands to the complete timeline starting from the past, moving on to present and continuing to the future, so that the information of the learner's phases during the language learning is as extensive as possible. Thus, Block suggests that identity construction should focus on examining language learners' personal experiences through learning histories and imagined communities.

In contrast to Block's (2008) view, Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund's (2012), Korhonen's (2014) and Huang's (2011) findings indicate that the construction of a foreign language identity in an educational context is possible. Korhonen (2014) studied the relationship of agency, autonomy and identity in foreign language learning in an adult upper secondary school context through written language narratives in the learner's mother tongue. The Finnish adult learner called Suvi had an increasing anxiety towards her English language learning. The results show that the learner's agency developed both in and beyond the classroom in interaction with other people and alongside the learner's foreign language identity. The previously discussed lack of the target community was replaced by the learner's subject position and membership in the foreign language classroom and identification with the imagined community of other foreign language users (Korhonen 2014:78). Similarly Huang (2011) found out in his study of Chinese trainee teachers of English that the relationship of agency, autonomy and identity is closely interrelated.

Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012) studied the emerging identities of 33 Finnish speaking university students of Swedish based on their written essays during different stages of their studies and similarly found out that identity work can take place in a non-

naturalistic, educational context. The essays of the students, referred to as narratives, were written in Swedish. According to the results, while answering to questions about studies of Swedish the learners inevitably also shared their visions of themselves as language learners and thus, they (re)constructed their identities as second language users (Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012:6). The narratives revealed that first semester students wrote quite vaguely about their dreams, whereas advanced students described their more detailed plans for the future (Huhtala & Lehti-Eklund 2012:15). The knowledge of the self and the future increased as the students proceeded in their studies. Additionally the advanced students had engaged and participated deeper in their communities of practice than the first year students (Huhtala & Lehti- Eklund 2012:15).

Murphey et al (2005) studied the identity construction of 84 Japanese and 58 Taiwanese learners of English similarly through their self-written language learning histories. The study agrees with Block (2008) about the importance of critical experiences in the target language and in the target language community, but also notes that the construction of identities can take place in the classroom. However, the success in language learning and in the formation of identities requires for constant interaction between the students and appropriate, meaningful language use (Murphey et al 2005:94). According to the results of the study, the writing of language learning histories is a social construction which sets the multiplicity and dynamicity of identities in a prior position making them firmer and stronger (Murphey et al 2005:98). Thus, writing their histories and dealing with such subjective material helped the learners to see who they were and also to invest more in their learning, which again was connected to their creation of an imagined community (Murphey et al 2005:94,97-98). In conclusion, it was noted that writing language learning histories can help in developing agency since the learners become more aware of the influence of their trajectories (Murphey et al 2005:99).

In line with the notion of Block (2008) and Murphey et al (2005) about the imagined communities, Murray (2011:87-90) studied how language educators can enhance the level of motivation of their language students by offering them learning experiences that increase their development and belonging to imagined target language communities and strengthen the visions of their second language selves. In his study, Murray examined the meaning of imagination in an English language learning context of Japanese first-year university students. He found out that with the help of imagination, the learners envisioned themselves as future English speakers and engaged in imagined target

language communities (Murray 2011:79). According to the results, as the understanding of how imagination works in the process of learning increases, the goals, meaning the development of the second language self and belonging to imagined communities, can be successfully achieved (Murray 2011:75). However, as Murray (2011:75) notes, the role of imagination in specific second or foreign language learning contexts has not been studied much yet.

The importance of learner autonomy, narrations and personal experiences in identity construction was also noted in the study conducted by Prusak and Sfard (2005) about identities and learning in general. In their aim to find out whether learning can be seen as closing the gap between actual and designated identities, the researchers studied native and immigrant Israeli mathematics students via multiple interviews and observations (Prusak and Sfard 2005:19). In the stories, treated as narratives, about themselves the students revealed their future visions that comprised of an image of themselves in a certain position in the society. For some of them, mathematics was a gatekeeper that needed to be encompassed to be able to have a life of their dreams. According to the students' stories, learning can be acknowledged as a tool for the learner to move from the present, actual identity to the designated identity of one's plans and dreams. According to Benson (2001:47, cited in Murray 2011:244), learning purposes and learners' identities are directly related to the learners' "capacity to take control over their learning" which is the force that drives learners to achieve their aims. Similarly as in the case of mathematics students, language learners may have various reasons for their language studies that stem from their identities and hopes to become a certain kind of person.

To draw together the findings of the presented studies, the majority used the narrative approach in examining the identity work. Thus, researchers such as Block (2008), Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012), Korhonen (2014) and Murphey et al (2005) used written or oral biographies, also referred to as narratives, as their means of collecting data and moreover, treated them as identities. Most of the studies suggested that identity work can take place in a foreign language classroom if the classroom offers experiences of belonging to an imagined community (Korhonen 2014, Block 2008, Murphey et al (2005). Studies conducted by Murphey et al (2005) and Norton (2001) also indicate that imagination increases the investments in language learning. Finally, it was also noted that identity construction, agency and autonomy develop hand in hand in the foreign

language classroom (Korhonen 2014), and that learning is a way to fulfill the hopes and desires of the learners and to become a certain type of person (Prusak and Sfard 2005).

2.5.3. The defined framework of the present study

Foreign language learning has been equaled with learning a new identity, which is the main interest of the present study. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to examine what types of identities emerge among adult learners when learning a foreign language. Since the emerging of identities is complex and challenging to study, the present study examines identities through a dialogue of different theories, the basis being the definition of a foreign language identity as “any aspect of a person’s identity that is connected to their knowledge and use of a foreign language” (Korhonen 2014:68).

Firstly, in the present study identities are treated multiple, dynamic and constructed through language (Weedon 2004, Paiva 2011, Norton 2000). Secondly, identities are considered narratives which consist of learners’ self-expressed stories of themselves in past, present and future (Benson 2005, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). Thus, the meaning of trajectories in the learners’ stories is also emphasized. Thirdly, it is argued that the participation in communities of practice and most importantly, imagined communities created by the learners’ hopes and desires in the learned language, are significant in the identity formation (Wenger 1998, Norton 2010). Lastly, it is presented that the agency and autonomy of the learner, namely the way the learner takes control of one’s own learning and the investments in terms of time and energy that the learner puts into learning the language, have an effect on the identity work (Norton 2000, Benson 2007, Benson 2001, cited in Huang 2011:229).

Having addressed the variety of studies conducted about identity and language learning in terms of context, the present study furthermore strives to fill in the gap in the foreign language research field and to offer evidence of the identity work of adult language learners of whom previous studies have presented controversial results (see Block 2008 and Korhonen 2014).

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

This section presents the methodology behind the present study including the aims and research questions and the qualitative method of interviews for collecting data. Additionally, precise descriptions of the gathered data and participants are presented and the methods of analysis are thoroughly explained and discussed.

3.1. The aims and research questions

The purpose of the present study is to shed light on how foreign language learning affects the adult language learner and what kind of identities emerge as a result of the language learning process. As learning is always highly connected to identity, meaning that learning something new causes a change in people themselves, the way learning a language affects the individual is particularly interesting although scarcely studied in the field of applied linguistics. In the present study four adult language learners' experiences and stories of their language learning are described in past, present and future. Furthermore, the learners' grounds for learning and their backgrounds, including work life and previous language studies, are also taken into consideration. The aim is not to gather detailed identity reconstruction information but to have an overview of the possible emerging identities from the perspective of the learner. The precise research questions are the following:

- 1) What kind changes are visible in adult language learners after starting to learn a foreign language?**
- 2) What kind of identities emerge from the adult language learners' narratives?**

3.2. A qualitative method of collecting data: Thematic interview

The method of collecting data should be chosen after a careful consideration of which approach could clarify the issues being studied the most (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:137). Examining identity is challenging because the process does not have a clear starting or ending point but is rather a constantly alternating phenomenon and, most importantly, a very personal experience. Therefore, it was important to choose a method which would posit the adult language learner and one's personal experiences in the first place. According to Hirsjärvi et al (2009:164), qualitative research is in favor of methods

where the participant's own perspectives and voice can be heard and thus, it was thought that data collection through qualitative methods could provide more valuable information for the present study than what quantitative methods could have offered. The choice of a qualitative approach was also justified with the present study's aim which was to gather realistic and truthful information about language learning and its effects on the learners. According to Hirsjärvi et al (2009:161), qualitative research strives to depict reality as it is, namely multifold. Reality consists of multiple phases that cannot be distinguished from each other since the actions are in constant dialogue. Thus, the purpose of the qualitative research is to provide as comprehensive picture of the studied theme as possible and collect data in natural, realistic conditions (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:160-161).

In qualitative research there are various options to collect data, of which interview is one of the most used. Interview's greatest advantage from the perspective of the present study is the role of the interviewee as a meaning creating and active participant, a subject, who is able to share one's opinions freely (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:35). Thus, in interviews the focus is on people's personal impressions of themselves. Patton (2002:4) agrees that interviews "yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge." After having mentioned the complexity of identity, interviews are used especially when the topics are hard to study or sensitive in their nature (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:35). There are also differentiating opinions considering this point, since it may sometimes be harder to share very personal and emotional experiences face-to-face with a stranger. Nevertheless, interviewing has many other advantages as well. Firstly, interviews are flexible; it is possible and even recommended to change the order of the questions or to make new or more accurate questions after hearing something interesting (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:36). Secondly, when interviewing, it is easier to motivate the participant to answer the questions than when using a questionnaire (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:36). The interviewer's examples or help in defining some of the questions, for instance, may assist the interviewee to say something that one would not have brought up without motivating. The use of interviews is also supported by previous studies about identities in the language learning context, such as, Norton (2000), Kinginger (2004) and Block (2008). In addition to oral interviews, written material, such as, essays and journals have commonly been used to gather data about identity. Because of the schedule of the present study, only interviews

were chosen, even though journals, for instance, could have given more depth and clarity to the understanding of the identity process.

Interviews can be divided into three main categories that are structured form interviews, thematic interviews and open ended interviews (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:208-209). The interview type used in the present study was thematic interview which combines characteristics from both of the form based and open ended interview. Thematic interviews consist of one or various beforehand selected and prepared themes, but the questions themselves are not accurately formed or put in a certain order, which helps in highlighting the interviewee's own voice (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:208, Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:48). However, to ensure that the interviews produce requisite information, it is crucial also to draft and go through some questions before the interview takes place (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:103). Taking this into account, a list of questions was carefully drafted beforehand as a frame for the interviews in the present study.

The interview questions consisted of three parts, excluding the first two questions which dealt with the interviewee's age and educational backgrounds. The first part focused on the learner's language studies and language experiences in the *past*. The questions dealt with their language repertoire, overall experiences of and attitudes towards learning foreign languages and estimation of language skills after secondary, upper-secondary or vocational school. The second, and the most meaningful part of the interview, consisted of questions about the learner's *present* language studies and experiences at the Adult Education Centre. The questions ranged from reasons for starting to learn a language to listing down positive and negative experiences that they had confronted during their learning process. Most importantly, the interviewees were asked to describe themselves as language learners and to consider whether they had noted any changes in themselves during their language learning process. The third and final part of the interview strove to discover how the learners would see themselves and their language studies in the *future*. The interviewees were first asked to think how the language would overall utilize them in the future and then to describe themselves in a few years' time as language users. The draft of the interview questions can be found in the Appendices (Appendix 1).

The greatest challenge in drafting the structure of the interview related to the difficulty of the studied topic. Because identity is a complex, changing, and most of all, a very personal experience, it was challenging to come up with questions that would capture

the essence of the learners' identities. It was also an intentional decision not to mention the word *identity* in the interview, unless the interviewee him/herself brought it up during the conversation. The purpose of using every-day language and avoiding academic expressions, including words such as *identity*, was to keep the conversation as relaxed as possible which again would produce natural, more truthful data of the learners' personal experiences. Avoiding academic language also helps in the actual understanding of the questions, and should thus be taken into account when forming interview questions (Kvale 1996:132, Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2014:105). Because of the complexity of the topic and the fact that everyone studied a different foreign language, the interviews were held in Finnish.

3.3. Participants and data

In qualitative studies the participants are always carefully chosen instead of random sampling (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:164). The participants in the present study were recruited from the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre which seemed to be the best alternative to search for adult language learners with different backgrounds. With the help of the Centre's language planner, various possible language courses to choose from were narrowed down to five and one voluntary participant from each of the course was sought for. The final list of the requirements for the participants was, however, rather short and included the age rate (which was between 30 and 50), Finnish nationality and current language studies at the Adult Education Center. The point of language studies or the learners' educational backgrounds, for example, did not play any role in selecting the interviewees. At the end, the group of participants consisted of three women and two men, who studied Spanish, German, English or Chinese once a week for one and a half hours. The languages were chosen so that there would possibly be variety in terms of purposes of learning and motivation, and it was also considered important to look at languages that are not regularly used in Finland, such as, Chinese and Spanish. However, it turned out during one of the interviews that one of the participants was not a native speaker of Finnish. Because of the clearly specified purpose of the study to examine particularly native Finns in their foreign language studies, there was no other option than to rule the mentioned participant out of the study. Thus, two female and two male participants were left.

The participants' age ranged from the early thirties to late forties which, as mentioned, was an intentional decision, and there were basically two major reasons for the choice. Firstly, even though the studies about adult language learners have increased, they are still in the minority position compared with the studies conducted about young language learners and foreign language learning. At the opposite end of the continuum are studies about notably older people, and thus, there clearly is a demand for adult learner research. Secondly, the choice of age related to the adults' position in the society. It was considered interesting to examine adult learners who learn a foreign language in their spare time even though their lives might already be filled with other responsibilities, such as work, family and hobbies. Additionally, because of the challenging topic, it was thought that adult language learners might be more capable of expressing themselves in terms of issues relating to identity than young learners. It is also noteworthy to mention that the adult language learners in the present study are all voluntary language learners, meaning that they have started their language studies because of their personal aspirations to master the language.

Below Table 1 consists of information about the interviewees' age, education, previous language learning at elementary or secondary school, upper-secondary school, vocational school or university, their current language studies at the Adult Education Centre and the state of their language studies in terms of semesters.

Table 1. Preliminary knowledge of the interviewees

Interviewee*	Age group	Education	Previous language studies*	Currently studied language and the state of studies*
Markku	41-45	Master's degree in Communications Engineering	English, Swedish, German	Spanish, 4 th semester
Hannu	30-35	Master's degree in Software Development	English, Swedish, Japanese	German, 2 nd semester (additionally two months of self-studying during the previous summer)
Kirsi	46-50	Vocational Qualification in Restaurant and Catering Services, Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care; practical nurse	English, Swedish, German	English, 2 nd semester
Julia	36-40	Master's degree in Education	Swedish, English, French, Spanish	Chinese, 2 nd semester (Julia had started the same course a few years ago but dropped out of classes before the semester ended.)

* Interviewee: The interviewees' names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

* Previous language studies: The languages are listed down in the order the participants had started to study them.

* Currently studied language and the state of studies: In Finland the academic year consists of two semesters; the autumn and spring semester which means that two semesters equal one academic year. However, depending on the Adult Education Center, the length of the semester varies. In these cases, one semester is approximately four months long.

The interviews were held in January and February 2015. Four of the interviews took place at the main building of the Adult Education Centre and one at a local school where some of the language classes are held. Before the interviews started, the participants gave a written consent to participating in the study and were able to ask any questions considering the study or the interview. The notice of consent can be found in the Appendices (Appendix 2). I also presented the structure of the interview briefly and encouraged the interviewees to tell their truthful opinions without hesitating whether

their answers were right or wrong. My role as the researcher and interviewer was to create a relaxed atmosphere where the interviewees would feel themselves comfortable and rather part of an ordinary conversation than a research interview. The way to ask and form questions also plays a significant role in interviews and requires for a skilled interviewer who, according to Patton (2002:27), is “able to read nonverbal messages, sensitive to how the interview setting can affect what is said, and carefully attuned to the nuances of the interviewer-interviewee interaction and relationship.” The interviews were recorded with Roland Edirol R-09 MP3 recorder and additionally some notes were made during the interviews. The duration of the interviews varied from 24 minutes to 60 minutes, the average rate being approximately 40 minutes.

After the interviews were held the recorded data was transcribed. Transcribing means that the recorded speech is written down word for word (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:222). The accuracy of transcribing the data depends on the research questions and methods of analysis (Dufva 2011:139). Because of the choice of the analysis method in the present study, which is presented in the following section, it was not necessary to make detailed transcriptions including the duration of pauses and other notes of the way the interviewee spoke, for example. Therefore, in the process of transcribing the focus was solely on the content of the interviews. However, if there were some significant characteristics in the interviews that were considered important in the interpretation of the data, such as the tone of the interviewee, they were marked clearly in the transcriptions. After transcribing the data, there was about 56 pages of material to be examined.

3.4. Methods of analysis

The method of analyzing the data was selected based on the desired focus on the learners’ self-expressed experiences and the use of narrative identities in the background theory. (The concept of narratives was introduced in detail in section 2.3.2.) According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000:18), personal experiences occur in narrative thinking which is why a *narrative approach* was chosen. Thus, the self-expressed experiences told by the participants were considered stories, which followed a certain plotline according to the themes found in the data.

Treating the data as narratives sets challenges to the way it is analyzed, even though there are various possibilities available (Kalaja 2011:121, Korhonen 2014:72). In the present study, the analysis focuses on *subject reality*, namely how the learners have experienced events and in this case, the learning of a certain language (Kalaja 2011:121). Since an increasing rate of narrative-based studies suggests alternative options to carrying out analyses about narratives, the present study similarly strives to question the use of content or thematic methods as the only possible way of analyzing.

According to Pavlenko (2007:166-167), the risk in using only content or thematic method in analyzing narratives lies in the lack of their theoretical frameworks and clear methodological procedures. At its worst, it might result in a mere list of categories and observations and additionally, also to the ignorance of the larger context of the narratives themselves. Therefore, the analysis of the narratives should consist of careful examination of *content*, *context* and *form*. Firstly, when examining the content of the narrative, instead of only addressing what was said, a special emphasis should be laid on what was omitted and why (Pavlenko 2007:174). Secondly, the autobiographical narratives are always highly connected to their cultural, institutional and social productions, meaning that they are a genre of their own which “reflect literary conventions, social norms, and structures of expectation of the place and time in which they are told.” (Pavlenko 2007:175). Thus, narratives, whether oral, written or visual, are always produced in a certain context and at a certain point of time, meaning that they are never the same. Thirdly, the form of the narrative, namely the way the participant expresses things linguistically, culturally or from a certain genre, has to be taken into account in the analysis as well.

According to Squire (2008:50), a common approach to conduct an analysis of narratives is the experience-centered narrative analysis. It first depicts the contents thematically and then develops and tests explaining theories taking into account the sequencing, progression, transformation and resolution of the themes. Although the method resembles thematic content analysis to a certain extent, it focuses specifically on the narrative aspects of the text (Squire 2008:50). This has also been referred to as a holistic analysis of narrative material (Lieblich et al 1998). According to Korhonen (2014:72), reading the narrative first as a whole and then identifying themes based on the content reflects the temporality of the narratives and offers cognitive evidence of the participants’ experiences of language learning. Additionally, a “middle-course”

approach to analyzing data which views the narratives as authentic responses to actions in real life but does not consider them mere reflections of the experiences or fiction, might be of help (Lieblich et al 1998:8).

Even though thematic interviews can produce both qualitative and quantitative data, they are commonly analyzed qualitatively, which was the case in the present study as well (Hirsjärvi et al 2009:208, Dufva 2011:139). Following the above-mentioned guidelines, the analysis of the data in the present study started with reading the transcriptions for multiple times and making notes. After going through what the interviewees had said, the answers were collected together individually under certain categories which, according to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2014:147), is an essential part of analyzing especially when comparing different parts of the interview with each other. This phase helped in having an overview of what the interviews had said, omitting parts that were irrelevant for the present study. The answers of the learners were kept separate since each interview was considered unique and one of a kind case story. From the subjective experiences of the learners, which were now divided into specific categories, three themes that were mutual to all the learners emerged. The themes can be considered the storylines of the four learners' narratives which reveal how the learners' experiences of past and present language learning, their visions of themselves as learners and their experienced changes because of language learning have affected themselves. The themes were next gathered into a table to help in comparing the learners' experiences with each other. In analyzing the data, the notions of content, context and form were taken into consideration. In addition to looking at what was said, it was also important to study what was not said and why. Moreover, the way the learner spoke and expressed oneself was taken into account as well. Significant was also to examine how the context, consisting of time and place, of the narrative affected the learners' answers. The next phase consisted of selecting and translating suitable citations from the learners' narratives to support the findings. It was considered important to keep the participants' tone as close to the original as possible although the citations were translated into another language.

As a result, four unique narratives, which strive to explain the emerging of the adult learners' foreign language identities, were formed. Following Lieblich et al (1998:8), the experiences of the adult learners were treated authentic to real life, but it was also

important to take into account that even though the narratives followed what the learners' had said, the researcher always does one's own interpretation of the material.

4. LEARNER NARRATIVES – STORIES OF IDENTITIES

The aim of the present study is to examine what kind of foreign language identities emerge as a result of voluntary adult language learning. The findings are presented in the form of case narratives which are created on the basis of four adult language learners' self-expressed experiences of their language learning. The use of narratives is purposeful since learners simultaneously through their stories define themselves and who they are, so in other words, they form their identity (Johansson 2005:83, cited in Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2010:7). Taking into account the emphasis of trajectories in the identity studies, it was considered meaningful to gather information about adults' language learning in the past, present and future (Norton 2000, Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund 2012). This also enabled the examining of possible changes in the adults' identities including their previous experiences of and future plans in language learning.

In the present study the emerging of foreign language identities is examined with the help of three themes which arose from the data, namely 1) Reasons for learning languages, 2) Me as a language learner and 3) Experience of change. Together the themes reveal information about the factors which have influenced the learners' identity formation. The first theme focuses on the reasons for learning the language and thus, helps in finding out the learners' hopes and desires of becoming a certain type of person. The second theme shows how learners speak about themselves as language learners and describe their personal experiences, attitudes, motivation and overall relationship to language learning. The third and final theme pinpoints any possible changes in the learners caused by the learned language which again implies of identity formation.

The found identities in the learners' narratives are pointed out in relation to the communities of practice in which they have been constructed since according to Wenger (1998) and Norton (2000), identities are always socially constructed. A brief explanation of the emerged identities in the learners' stories is necessary as well. The identities are divided into categories as De Fina suggests (2006:268). In the present study the acknowledged identities are *work identity*, *learner identity*, *linguistic identity* and *personal identity*. Whereas *work* and *learner identity* naturally describe the relationship between identity and work or learning, the *linguistic identity* refers to the learners' linguistic abilities to use the language, their cultural knowledge of and

participation in the target community and their feelings of internationality. *Personal identity* in the present study describes the relationship of the learned language to the individual's perception of oneself in situations when the learner feels that the language is a significant part of their everyday lives, for example. Moreover, it has to be emphasized here that each learner's narrative, which is considered a reflection of one's identity, consists of highly subjective experiences. Thus, the emerged identities are my interpretation of what the learners spoke about themselves as foreign language learners. What comes to the form of the narratives, italic style is used to highlight the major findings, namely the emerged identities and communities of practice, the reasons for learning and the changes in the learners. The headings of the narratives depict what type of changes the process of foreign language learning has brought about and thus, they imply of the learners' foreign language identities.

In conclusion, each narrative is unique and begins with a brief introduction of the learner including age, work, language repertoire, the point of current language studies and future insights (The summarized background information can also be found in Table 1.). The interviewees' names have been changed to protect their anonymity. The introduction is then followed by the learners' experiences of the three above-mentioned themes and at the end of the present section is a summary of the findings.

4.1. Markku's Narrative: Becoming a happy Spaniard

Markku, aged 41-45, was a telecommunications engineer and had been in work life for approximately 15 years already. His language studies at school started with English in the 3rd grade of elementary school and Swedish in the 7th grade of secondary school. Later in the upper-secondary school he began to learn German but dropped out of classes after two years of studying. Markku had obligatory English courses at the university but he did not attend any Swedish classes. At work he used English on a daily basis and additionally he attended English classes offered at his workplace once a week. At the time of the interview Markku studied his 4th semester of Spanish at the Adult Education Center and planned to continue his studies next year.

4.1.1. Reasons for learning Spanish

Firstly, Markku's Spanish learning was connected to his *work community* and thus, his *work identity*. Markku began Spanish classes approximately one and a half year ago after struggling with communication at his *workplace*. In his job Markku was required to use English on a daily basis, but on top of that his firm had Spanish clients and they also had had a Spanish supervisor a while ago. Soon Markku realized that communicating in English with his supervisor caused some misunderstandings since English was neither of their mother tongue (1). Additionally, in his work producing web services on the base of material that their clients send to them, it would be beneficial to know Spanish in order to correct texts (2). Therefore, it occurred to Markku that knowing Spanish might be a profitable *investment* in his future which could increase his abilities to sustain social relations and operate better at work. This is in line with Norton (2000, 2010) who stated that language learning is considered an investment which results in symbolic and material resources.

(1) --sitten mulla oli espanjalainen esimieskin vähän aikaa ja tuota noita kehityskeskusteluja ja mä niinku vähän tipahdin kärryiltä hänen kanssaan. Puhuttiin tietysti englantia mutta maan aksentti on niin vieras, että mä tipuin kärryiltä ja sitten mä aattelin että ihan villi idea, että mitäs jos mä osaisin espanjaa tarpeeks, että voitais pitää tää keskustelu espanjaks jos se ois helpompaa (naurahtaa).

--then I had a Spanish supervisor for a while and some of those career development discussions and I kinda lost it with him. Of course we spoke English but the Spanish accent was so strange that I didn't understand what he was saying and then this crazy idea came to my mind that if I knew Spanish enough, we could have this conversation in Spanish, if it was easier that way (laughs).

(2) -- me tehään tämmöstä tuota...webbipalveluita ja siellä on espanjankieliset tietysti ja joskus siellä joutuu...tulee niinku... joutuu ratkomaan jotain niinku tekstiä että nehän tietysti...käännöksiä että asiakkaalta tulee ne käännökset...käännöspyyntöt että me niinku myydään palvelua. Käännöspyyntöt meille ja me tehään ne niiden mukaan että tietysti sitten jos sä ite huomaat että hei onko tossa joku epäkohta tai onko toi väärin tai niin sellasiin se (espanjan osaaminen) vois sitten auttaa. -- työt vois muuttua tai niinku sen kielen (espanja) myötä, kielitaidon myötä.

--we produce these kinds of... web services and some of them are in Spanish and sometimes you have to...you have to...you have to solve some texts, they of course...the translations come from the customers.. the requests of translation, so that we like sell the service. The requests of translation come to us and we work according to them, so of course knowing Spanish might be of help in those situations when you notice that 'hey, there is a mistake' or 'that is wrong'. -- Spanish, or knowing Spanish, could change what I do at work.

Secondly, Spanish learning was related to Markku's *personal identity* both *in his spare time* and *in the future*. Even though Markku's reasons for learning Spanish focused mainly on his current workplace and communication with his clients or colleagues, he

also had other purposes for his Spanish studies. When asked about future prospects concerning his Spanish skills, Markku pointed out that he had considered *moving* to Spain. Whether the idea of living in Spain had come from his relative who studied in a Spanish speaking country for a longer period of time or from the possibilities to challenge himself in his work, Markku's plans were not certain yet. Based on his thoughts, moving to Spain was a rather newly born idea and learning Spanish was most of all his *hobby* which had brought new routines to his life. However, according to Markku, he could see his Finnish life transformed into a life in Spain. This implies of his hopes and desires and also the investment in Spanish that could offer him an access to *the Spanish community* in which Markku already *imagined* himself participating in (Wenger 1998, Norton 2010). Thus, at the time of the interview, Markku was already forming his *designated, future identity* through the Spanish language (Prusak and Sford 2005).

(3) *No tuotaa, no yks.. no kyllä se että osaa..mitä enemmän kieliä osais niin tokihan se laajentaa mahdollisuuksia kommunikoida ihmisten kanssa ja ja tuota voisinkin kuvitella.. vois ehkä olla mahdollista että muuttaisin Espanjaan esimerkiksi tai töitä vois tehdä siellä. -- Ja tietysti oma elämä voisi sinne (Espanjaan) päin mennä.*

Well, well one.. well if you can.. the more languages you can speak, the more opportunities it offers to communicate with people and and well I could imagine.. It could be possible that I'd move to Spain, for example, or I could work there. -- And of course, my own life could go to that direction (to Spain).

Regardless of whether Markku's future is in Finland or Spain, Markku clearly hoped to use Spanish elsewhere than at work only. Even though he admitted not to be a very enthusiastic traveller, he reckoned that he would enjoy himself more if he was able to talk with local people and to get to know them slightly better when *travelling*. Thus, other social reasons for learning Spanish arose during the interview.

(4) *--en oo hirvee matkailija mut mutta kyllä se mitä nyt oon ulkomailla ollu niin ois tietysti itsestä tosi mukava että osais sitä paikallista kieltä että sit pystyis puhumaan enemmän--- tykkäisin niinku enemmän.. että matkoja mitä teen, niin tykkäisin enemmän niinku olla ihmisten kanssa tekemisissä. Toisessa maassa se ei oikein suomella onnistu, että.. että se ois mielekkäämpää että jos osais sitä juuri sen maan..Että kyllä se ehkä se kommunikointi muuallaki niinku töissä on niinku tota yks yks kimmoke sinne (espanjan opiskeluun).*

--I am not a very enthusiastic traveller but.. but considering the time I've spent abroad, it would be really nice if I would be able to use the local language so that I could speak more- I would like to... like the trips that I make, I would like to hang out with people more. It's impossible to do that in Finnish in another country, so..so it would be nicer if I knew the country's own language. So communicating elsewhere than just at work is also another reason for it (learning Spanish).

4.1.2. Markku as a language learner

Markku's narrative suggested that during his life he had changed tremendously as a learner and simultaneously his *learner identity* had gone through various changes. Despite his current enthusiasm for Spanish, Markku was never very interested in learning languages which was shown in his attitude towards them at school. However, after being taught by a young, skilled English teacher who had fresh visions of teaching and learning in the upper secondary school, Markku's opinion concerning English changed quickly. Unfortunately the enthusiasm was not transferred to other languages, namely, Swedish and German which Markku did not continue after two years of studying in the upper secondary school. One of Markku's parents had university background and thus, the children were supported and prepped for the upcoming language exams, but still Markku was disinterested. However, the main reason for disliking languages was the lack of understanding their use later on in life, and at the time of the interview, Markku regretted for not learning languages properly at school since, according to him, it would have been easier then.

(5) No ehkä sille (kielen oppiminen) ei ollu oikei...tai ei niinku osannu oikei nähä että mitä tarkotusta. Nyt taas sitten kattoo ihan eri perspektiivistä, että... ja harmittelee miks ei (opiskellut kieliä silloin)... Niin, se ois ollu kuitenkin niin tavallaan helpoo.

Well maybe there wasn't any... or I couldn't see any purpose for it (language learning). Now I'm looking at it from a different perspective and...and I feel bad since I didn't (learn languages then)..Yeah, in a way it would've been like much easier.

Markku's attitude towards learning languages had changed drastically in adult age. After a phase of disliking languages, the enthusiasm for English, which, as mentioned, arose in the upper secondary school and continued during his university studies because of a native teacher, grew and made Markku understand the possibilities that languages could offer in his career. Thus, languages were no longer an extra burden but a possibility to develop himself. Because of a portfolio assignment that he had been preparing in the Adult Education Center in his Spanish course, Markku had already previously reflected himself and his abilities as a language learner which was of use in the interview. When describing himself generally as a language learner, Markku was able to point out both his negative and positive characteristics. Firstly, Markku described himself to be an enthusiastic and perfectionist learner who did not like making mistakes, and secondly, he brought up his use of time and effort in learning Spanish especially.

(6) --oon innost..aika innostuva, mutta sitten siihen mitähän...innostuva ja totaa...no onpas vaikea. No ehkä semmonen, vähän perfektionisti, tota haluaisin että kaikki menis tosi täydellisesti aina ja onnistuisin heti ekalla kerralla ja sit jos yleensä ku ei mee ni sit se vähän niinku harmittaa mut mutta ehkä sit vähän sellanen vois käyttää enemmän aikaa ehkä. Yritän vaan niinku saada ne valmiiks, että vähän niinku suorittaja-tyyppi siinä mielessä, että yritän vaan saada ne valmiiks ja sitten piste ja sit voi tehdä muuta--

--I am enth..quite enthusiastic, but then what else..enthusiastic and uhhh..well, this is difficult. Well, maybe a bit perfectionist, I'd like everything to go perfectly and I would like to have success immediately at the first try and then normally if it doesn't go that way I'm a bit bummed, but..but I'm a bit sort of a guy who could maybe use some more time (in learning languages). I just try to get everything finished, so I'm a sort of a performer in the way that I just try to get everything done and then that's it, and then I can do other stuff--

During his Spanish studies Markku had realized that learning languages required for hard work and constant practice, and since he described himself to be a performer, Markku understood that to improve his Spanish skills, he should put more effort into his learning. According to Markku, in his spare time he did not take time for learning Spanish which is why he considered himself a bad student. Additionally, during the interview Markku emphasized the lack of his Spanish skills that he estimated to be poorer than what they could have been at that point of his studies. Thus, features of Markku's *linguistic identity* started to occur as well.

(7) Markku: --huomaan, että teen läksyt, mutta en hirveän paljon käytä muuta aikaa (oppimiseen), että toivoisin olevani parempi opiskelija ja periaatteessa sillä mitenkä mitä nyt on niin pitäis pystyä paljon enemmän niinku (huohtaa ja naurahtaa) kommunikoidaan, kuin mitä koen, että voin kommunikoida. --Mutta että siinä on niinku...ehkä pitäis varata enemmän aikaa, niinku ottaa sitä aikaa silleen....

Haastattelija: Koetko sä, että se on mahdollista niinku ottaa sille (oppimiselle) vielä lisää aikaa, että...?

Markku: Kyllä, se on ihan itestä kiinni.

Markku: I have noticed that I do my homework, but otherwise I don't use much time in learning. I wish to become a better student and basically based on what I have learned I should be able to communicate much more (sighs and laughs) than what I think I can communicate now. -- but there's like.. maybe I should schedule more time, like take some more time...

Interviewer: Do you think that you could take some more time for it (learning)?

Markku: Yeah, it totally depends on myself.

Since Markku was highly aware of his limited Spanish skills, he had started making plans to become a better learner. At work he listened to a Spanish radio station and he had also considered starting to write a diary in Spanish to improve his writing skills. Additionally, he could speak Spanish with a relative, but had not yet found the time and place for it. Despite his slightly negative estimation of himself as a learner, it became clear that Markku was motivated to learn and had sought for different ways to keep up

his Spanish skills, even though the most of his plans had remained to be only ideas. Therefore, it can be stated that Markku's *autonomy* and *agency* in language learning were not at the same level which explains his problems with his linguistic skills and thus, the negative image of himself as a bad learner (Benson 2001:47, cited in Huang 2011:229, Huang 2011:230). Whereas Markku had realized that the only person who could do the hard work of learning the language was Markku himself, he had not yet become the active agent who engaged in the activities in the social world because of his deliberation and own choice (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, Huang 2011).

Overall Markku had enjoyed his Spanish learning at the Adult Education Center and described his learning experiences in the *learning community* to be mainly positive. He was glad of his decision to start Spanish classes which had brought routine to his life even though at times he considered it to be a burden after work. However, based on Markku's experiences, Spanish learning had given more than it had taken and will, most likely, be a part of his future plans as well. Markku's future visions of himself as a Spanish speaker were both realistic and dreamy; he was fairly determined to continue his studies at the Adult Education Centre and improve his Spanish skills to be able to increase his working opportunities, and at the same time he imagined himself living in Spain as well. The role of Spanish in his future life depends on his own actions. To accomplish his mission of sustaining his language skills, he hoped to find a way to use Spanish actively.

(8) - Niin tota, että on antanu ja paljon (espanja) ja oon tykänny, ja oon ilonen, että lähin siihen-- Mm. No tota siinä oikeestaan ne kaks vaihtoehtoo on, että joko se (espanja) unohtuu, että jää niinku tai sitten sitä alkaa aktiivisesti käyttää ja se sit johtaa, no se voi sit johtaa, ei välttämättä mihinkään, mutta ylipäättään, että joko sitä, että ja toivon, että tulisin (käyttämään), että nyt pitäis oikeest...että nyt pitäis oikeestaan löytää sellanen.. sellanen...asia tai tapa tai mikä ruokkis sitten sitä kielenkäyttöä.

-- Yeah, it (Spanish) has given me a lot and I've really liked it, and I'm happy that I went for it-- Mm. Well there are those two options actually, either I will forget it (Spanish) or then I'll start actively using it and then it leads to, well it doesn't necessarily lead to anything special, but overall, either I will use it, and that's what I hope that will happen, so now I should actual...now I should find a...a way which motivates my use of language.

4.1.3. Markku's experience of change

Markku found it slightly challenging to analyze whether he felt different in any way when using different languages, but was still able to separate his experiences of using English from using Spanish. From his current language repertoire Markku felt that

English was his best language because he had learned it the most and used it daily at work. However, since his *Spanish* learning at the Adult Education Center had been, in his own words, intensive, he estimated himself to be quite the same using English or Spanish. Whether he referred with this to his language skills, which is assumed here, or generally to himself as a person, remained slightly uncertain.

(9) *No kyllä tietysti se englantia on vahvempi, koska sitä on niinku pitemmän aikaa (opiskellut). -- Mutta nyt tietysti tää espanja, kun tää on ollu sellasta intensiivistä tai joka viikko niin se on tuonu sitä vähän, että ehkä ne on vähän, ne vois olla melkein jopa samalla viivallakin.*

Well, of course English is my best language since I 've learned it the most. -- But now of course this Spanish, since this has been so intensive, or I've had it a bit every week, it has brought it a bit, I mean it's slightly, well they could almost be on the same line.

Despite Markku's thoughts of feeling the same or being as good at English as at Spanish, he pointed out one major difference between his use of the two languages. Sometimes Markku pictured the situation where he was supposed to use English and practiced how he would express himself in English without speaking it out loud. This 'thinking without speaking' he had not yet experienced with Spanish because of the lack of his language skills. Thus, at least in Markku's case, how well the learner knew the language defined how one felt when using it.

(10) *No sitä oon eng..eiku esp..eiku englannin suhteen oon tehny, en oikein tiää, että mistä se on niinku tullu, ehkä siitä että oon niinku harjotellu jotain puhetilannetta, että se on sitten jääny, että oon saattanu ajatella englanniks tai niinku että niinku mieltii päässään lausetta...tai mitä mieltii niin mieltii tavallaan, että jos se täytyis sanoa niin noin niinku englanniks. Että espanjan suhteen ei oo oikein vielä semmosta syntyny mitään. -- Että siellä (espanjassa) ne lauserakenteet ei oo ehkä vielä ehtiny elämään--*

Well with Eng..I mean Span...I mean with English I've done, I don't really know where it has come from, perhaps it's because I've like practiced some situations where I've been supposed to say something (in English), so it has become a habit, I might have thought it in English, or like I keep thinking what I have to say in English in my head...or I kinda think what I will say if I have to say it in English. With Spanish nothing like that has happened yet. -- In Spanish I'm not able to form sentences the same way I can in English.

The vivid Spanish culture had also made an impact on Markku who was starting to gain a voice in Spanish and thus, was reconstructing who he was in Spanish (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). When asked whether he had noted any changes in himself after starting Spanish, Markku pointed out that he had become slightly more *vibrant* which he thought had something to do with the Spanish culture. On this, Markku placed himself into a *group of happier people*, referring to the open minded and positive nature of Spanish people, and considered himself at least partially to be a member of the *target*

language community which is evident in the construction of identities (Wenger 1998, Block 2008, Murphey et al 2005).

(11) --sitten on ehkä tullu vähän sellasta elävä..elo..eläväisyyttä tai sellasta niinku oon kokenu, että se on ja sit se, että se on jotenki niin erilaista se se espanjalainen kulttuuri verrattuna suomalaiseen tai no on niissä varmaan samanlaisuuksiakin mutta kuitenkin ite kokee, että joo sitä kautta, että...Joo ehkä siihen aikasempaankin kysymykseenkin, että, että tuota, että sitä kautta on niinku jossain, niinku näkee itensä jollain tavalla niinku toisessa ryhmässä, että on, että niinku semmosessa ehkä enemmän ilosten ihmisten ryhmässä tai (naurahtaa)---

--then I might have become more..vibr..vib..vibrant or like that's what I've experienced that it's like that, and then the fact that the, the Spanish culture is so different compared to the Finnish culture, or I bet there are some similarities too, but I think that, in that way.. Yeah, answering to your previous question as well that, well that, that way I'm like somewhere, like I see myself in some way in another group, like, like in a group of a bit happier people or (laughs)--

Even though during the interview Markku did not emphasize the change of his *attitude* towards learning languages or the increasing level of *interest* in them, the transformation compared to his school experiences when he disliked languages was notable and had to be taken into account. Whereas at school learning languages was obligatory, at the Adult Education Center learning is voluntary which already implies something about the learners' motivation. Additionally, the interest in the Spanish language and culture were shown in Markku's previously mentioned future plans which implied him moving to Spain. Evidently, Markku was *identifying* more strongly with the *Spanish community*, which motivated him in the language learning process (Canagarajah 2004:117, cited in Murray 2008:128).

(12) --tai että koulussa se (kielen oppiminen) oli sellanen pakko, että sun on tehtävä näin tai ite ainakin mielti sen niin, mut nyt sitten taas se on täysin vapaaehtosta, että mä voin lähteä täältä millon vaan pois, jos mä haluan, mutta en mä halua lähteä täältä.

At school it (learning languages) was compulsory that you have to do this, or at least that's how I took it, but now it's completely voluntary, so that I can leave anytime I want, if I want to, but I don't wanna leave.

4.2. Hannu's Narrative: Becoming an international employee

Hannu, aged 30-35, was a software developer who was currently in work life. His language repertoire consisted of English which he started in the 3rd grade of elementary school, Swedish which began in the 7th grade of secondary school and Japanese which he started later during his university studies. Additionally, at the university Hannu had obligatory English and Swedish courses. At the time the interview took place Hannu

studied his 1st semester of German preceded by two months of self studying the German basics during the previous summer, since Hannu wanted to attend the second course of German offered at the Adult Education Center last autumn. Hannu planned to continue his German studies at the Adult Education Centre.

4.2.1. Reasons for learning German

Similar to Markku's case, Hannu's language learning was connected to his *personal* and *work identity*. Hannu started to learn German because of a range of reasons from which the most important was to improve his position and become a more valuable person especially in the foreign *job market*. After searching for information about possible future jobs abroad, Hannu realized that the ability to use German would be a major asset in increasing his employment opportunities in Central Europe. Even though Hannu was not planning on leaving anytime soon, his growing interest in working abroad finally lead him to learn German at the Adult Education Center.

(13) --*ehkä semmonen noin viiskyt prosenttia oli sitä, kun tota sai tietää tai että etti tietoa noista oman alan työpaikoista esimerkiksi tuolla Keski-Euroopassa. -- Niin se tuntu, siellä jos sä osaisit saksaa niin se ois niinku varsin suuri kilpailuvaltti. Ja siellä oli aika, on niinku omalla osalla aika kiintoisat noin mahdollisuudet tarjolla, vaikka en mä nyt oikein varsinaisesti ookaan (menossa) sinne...en pysty nytkään sanomaan, että lähtisinkö mä nyttenkään sinne, mutta mutta orastavaa kiinnostusta on kuitenkin siihen suuntaan.*

-- perhaps about fifty percentage of the decision was made based on the information I found about the jobs in my own niche in Central Europe, for example. -- Yeah I felt like if I knew German, it would be such a great asset there. And there are quite, like in my own niche, there are quite interesting opportunities offered, even though I'm not really (going there)...I can't say yet whether I would go there now, but but my interest towards it is growing.

The decision to start learning German was finalized because of Hannu's other aim, namely, to have a *hobby* in his spare time. At the university, Hannu's hobby was Japanese which he considered a generally beneficial spare time activity, and it also enabled him to familiarize himself with a completely new language and culture. The general *interest* in learning languages and cultures was also one of the reasons for his German studies, since, as mentioned, Hannu had always been keen on languages at some level. Additionally, before his German studies Hannu had travelled to a German speaking country where he assumed that he would cope with English which, however, was not the case. Thus, Hannu acknowledged that knowing German might be of help when *travelling* as well. Learning German was thus a significant *investment* for Hannu both in his work life as well as in his personal life. Through this investment he strove to

gain access to the *German speaking job market* and to *German culture* which were thus his *imagined communities* of his hopes and desires (Norton 2000 and Murphey et al 2005).

(14) *No sanotaan, että pieni, ehkä pieni osa siitä on sitä, että se voi olla ihan niinku harrastus ja sen sellane, jonka olen huomannu kun olin silloin vaikka sitä japania opiskellu...Että siitä on niinku semmosta hyötyä tai se on ihan kiinnostavaa sinänsä itsessään jo perehtyä johonkin toiseen kieleen ja toiseen kulttuuriin tai jotain tällasta ja. Olikohan mä itseasiassa, mä olin tainnu käydä reissussakin, joo, mä olin olin käynny tuolla (saksaa puhuva maa) reissussa, missä ne puhuu saksaa ja mä menin sinne sellasella asenteella, että joo että kyllähän ne nyt varmaan englantia siellä osaa, mutta kyllä siellä aika moni ei sitten osannu englantia juurikaan.*

Well, let's say that a minor, perhaps a minor part of it is that it can just be a hobby and that sort of thing which can be of use for me, a thing which I noticed when learning Japanese, for example. Already getting to know another language and culture is interesting in itself and something like that and. Did I, I actually had already travelled, yeah, I had already travelled to a German speaking country and I went there assuming that they most certainly can speak English, but there were a lot of people who couldn't speak much English.

4.2.2. Hannu as a language learner

In contrary to Markku, Hannu's *learner identity* had stayed more or less the same throughout his life. Already at school Hannu was slightly interested in languages, even though his attitude towards English was more positive compared to his attitude towards Swedish. According to Hannu, English was, and continued to be, by far his best language and it was also the easiest to study, whereas Swedish did not feel especially hard either but it faced a great deal of resistance because of its unpopularity, and thus, was disliked by him. Hannu's Japanese studies at the university differed drastically from learning English or Swedish since it did not resemble any other language he knew and was thus the hardest one to learn. Starting to learn German at adult age had made Hannu ponder his previous chances to study languages at school which he did not utilize. Hannu regretted his decision not to study German earlier, but also admitted that the interest in the language was born only a few years ago, mainly because of the earlier mentioned employment opportunities abroad and travelling.

(15) *Esimerkiks oon hyvin paljon ajatellu, että harmittaa se, että mä en oo koskaan lukenu saksaa koulussa noin niinku aiemmin.*

For instance, I've thought a lot about, or I'm bummed that I never learned German at school, I mean like earlier.

As a language learner Hannu had followed the method of learning by doing which basically meant that instead of paying much attention into learning the rules of the

language, Hannu strove to learn the language by using it. In terms of *autonomy* (Benson 2001), Hannu had conscientiously attended German lessons and done his homework, but otherwise he had not put much effort into learning. Other features of Hannu's learner character were his confidence in his learning skills and also his rather carefree attitude towards learning which showed that Hannu did not stress his German studies. Based on Hannu's experiences it might be that the confidence in language learning was a result of experiencing his first foreign language learning, namely English, fairly easy and natural.

(16) *Yleisesti ottaen mä oon koittanu noita kieliä opiskella sillä lailla, että sillä lailla, että mä vaan käytän niitä. -- Käytän niitä siellä tunneilla ja niitä tehtäviä tehdessä ja kaikkea tämmöstä ja että mä en niinku mieli, mieli juurikaan niitä sääntöjä ja kielioppia ja kielioppisääntöjä ja kaikkea tällasta. En oikeastaan panostakaan niiden opiskeluun paljoa vaan mä ehkä niinkun luotan siihen, että mä opin niitä käyttämään sitä kieltä muutenkin, muutenkin. Samalla lailla kun suomea ja englantiakin, mitä ei niinkun..pystyy käyttämään ja kyllähän sitä ruotsiakin pystyy jonkun verran käyttämään, mutta siis ilman, että tarvii mitenkään olla, mitenkään tietoinen niistä kielisäännöistä tai tän tämmösistä. -- Että sillä lailla niinkun oikeastaan käyttämällä oppii.*

In general I've tried to learn those languages by..by..by just using them. -- I use them in class and when doing exercises and stuff like that and I don't think much about those rules and grammar rules and stuff like that. I don't put much effort into learning them but instead I just trust that I can learn to use the language in other ways. The same way I can use Finnish and Swedish too which you can't.. like I can.. and I can use Swedish a bit as well, but I mean without being aware of those grammar rules and that sort of things. -- Basically I think that you learn by doing.

Even though Hannu emphasized his carefree attitude towards language learning, at least at the beginning of his German studies Hannu was highly goal-oriented and motivated. As mentioned, Hannu attended the second course of German offered at the Adult Education Center last autumn after self-studying the basics of German during the previous summer. Having no previous knowledge of German, Hannu challenged himself to learn the language well enough to enable his attendance to the second course. It can be concluded that depending on the situation, Hannu could change his ways of learning and motivation to accomplish his goals which implies that his *learner identity* was flexible.

(17) *No mä oon kai lähteny vähän sillä asenteella, etten, mä en niinku hirveästi, hirveästi, tota poislukien, että mä nyt sit itse, itse opiskelin sen ykköskurssin, niin sen jälkeen mä oon ollu vähän sellasella asenteella, että mä vaan käyn siellä tunneilla ja teen sen mitä ohjeistetaan ja katon miten hyvin se tarttuu siitä matkaan. Mä en oo sillä lailla niinkun panostanu mitenkään suuremmin muuten, kun nyt kun tehnyt kaiken kurssin sisällön.*

Well, I guess my attitude towards learning German has been, like I don't, excluding the fact that I studied the first course on my own, after that my attitude towards German has been

like, I just go to class and do what I'm told to do and then I just check how well I learn that way. I haven't really paid much effort into this except doing the contents of the course.

Hannus's *agency* in language learning fluctuated since his actions and engagement in the social world as a learner had not yet stabilized (Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001, Huang 2011:230). Hannu's German studies did not play a major role in his spare time and the only place where he used German actively was the language course and thus, the *learning community*. On top of doing homework, Hannu occasionally read German newspapers or magazines and visited German web pages, but mostly because of his work. When travelling to German speaking countries, however, Hannu had striven to use as much German as possible, even though his vocabulary was not very vast yet and the actual use of the language had felt challenging. The lack of effort he had put into learning outside the classroom was explained by the voluntariness of learning at the Adult Education Center. Since Hannu was not a full-time student, he identified himself more in relation to his work and his focus was thus more on his job than on learning German (18). Even though German interested Hannu, he did not consider it to be especially important to him at this point of his life, but rather a hobby (19).

(18) *Ei oo mitään pakkoa itse ainakaan siellä oppia sitä (saksaa), niin se tuo siihen jo vähän semmosen niinku harrastusmaisen piirteen siihen koko touhuun. Ja tota totaa sitten tämmönen, että totaa se on vaan tommonen, että ei oo niinkun ei, ei täyspäiväisesti opiskele, ei edes puolpäiväestikään opiskele, niin se vaikuttaa siihen aika lailla. Sillä lailla se tota ehkä se tuo siihen vähän sitten haastetta, haastetta siinä määrin, että sulla ei oo siinä niinkään paljon fokus siinä opiskelussa kaikenkaikkiaan.*

I'm not forced to learn German there which already brings a sort of hobby-like characteristic to it. And well then..it's just..I don't, I'm not a full-time student, not even partially which has a major effect on it. In that way it brings a bit of challenge to it, in the way that overall my focus is not that much on learning.

(19) -- *Vapaaehtosestihan sitä jo tekee, niin se jo kertoo ainakin sen verran, että on ainakin jonkun verran kiinnostunut ja innostunut siitä, ei mitenkään, tai niinkun ihan harrastusmielessä niinkun aiemmin tuli sanottua. --Käytännössä vois olla hyvin tärkeää, mutta en nyt tiitä, ei se nyt tällä hetkellä..ei mitenkään tärkeää, en osaa sitä niinkään hyvin, mutta mahdollisesti (tulevaisuudessa) hyvin tärkeää.*

-- Well I'm doing it voluntarily which already says that I'm at least a bit interested and enthusiastic about it, but not like.. or like hobby-wise as I just mentioned earlier. -- In practice it could be really important, but now I don't know, not at the moment.. it's not that important, I can't use it (German) that well, but it possibly is really important (in the future).

According to Hannu, learning at the Adult Education Center had overall been a positive experience, and compared to the school context, Hannu felt that learning was more worthwhile and pressure-free. His learning had proceeded smoothly and he had not

confronted any setbacks since he had not set any clear goals for his learning either. Hannu had also become acquainted with his classmates, even though he did not rate the meaning of the *learner community* very high. Hannu's visions of himself as a German speaker were realistic and focused mostly on his future language studies at the Adult Education Centre which he planned to continue the following autumn. Additionally, Hannu noted that he could see himself living in a German-speaking country for a longer period of time to improve his German skills and thus, to maximize his employment opportunities in Central Europe. However, being a slightly carefree and observing person, Hannu had not done any permanent decisions yet.

4.2.3. Hannu's experience of change

When comparing whether Hannu felt any different when using different languages, he was able to point out the *importance of and his superiority in English* compared to Swedish, Japanese or German. Because of Hannu's long history of learning and using English, including writing his Master's thesis in English and having to use it daily at work, it had become the most familiar language to him. Being aware of his good English skills, Hannu felt mostly confident in situations where he needed English, even though he occasionally struggled with problems of communication (20). Hannu linked Swedish and German to each other mostly because of their linguistic similarities but he did not define his other thoughts of using *Swedish* in more detail. Since Hannu's *German* studies began rather recently, only about seven months ago, he had difficulties in estimating whether he felt different when using German. However, he admitted that if he ended up in a situation where he could use German, he would most likely use it, which implies of *courage* and *will* of using the language already (21).

(20) *Joo, no siitä tuli sanottua aiemminkin jo, juurikin toi itsevarmuus on ainakin semmonen, semmonen, että englannin kanssa se on paljon suurempi verrattuna saksaan. Tai ruotsiin tai japaniin. -- sitä on opiskellut, käyttänyt enempi ja sitä käyttää jatkuvasti ja yleisesti ottaen sitä osaa paljon paremmin ja oon kirjottanu gradun englanniks ja kaikkee tällasta. -- Siitä on paljon ainakin luottamusta siihen että sitä osaa vaikkakaan se ei aina välttämättä vaikuta siltä kun koittaa vaikka jonkun natiivin kanssa kommunikoida.*

Yeah, as I said earlier, it's exactly the confidence that..that is bigger in English than in German. Or in Swedish or Japanese. -- I've studied it, used it more and I still constantly use it and in general I can use it better compared to other languages and I've written my Master's thesis in English and stuff like that. -- At least I'm very confident of my skills of using it even though it doesn't always seem that when I try to communicate with a native speaker, for example.

(21) *Ehkä sitä saksaa on niin vähän käyttäny, että siitä ei osaa vielä oikein sanoa sitten. -- No jos tuntuu siltä, että kykenen, niin kyllä mä sitten mieluusti käytän (saksaa), toivoisin, että kykenis käyttämään sitä kun sitä tarvii.*

Perhaps I've used German so little that I really can't tell anything about it yet. -- Well, if I feel that I'm able to, then I most certainly use it (German) and I hope that I could use it when necessary.

The greatest change in Hannu after starting to learn German had been the increased *knowledge, awareness and understanding* of the German speaking area which implied of him *identifying* more strongly with the *target language community*. Since Hannu did not earlier have any connections to German or German speaking countries, his knowledge of the language and culture were basically non-existent and the German speaking area was just another part of Europe among others. However, during his studies Hannu had learned a great deal of the German culture and it had become meaningful to him. In addition to the increased awareness and understanding, most importantly Hannu's *interest* in the German language and culture had grown significantly compared to his starting point last summer. Based on Hannu's experiences, his drive to learn German, which at first was motivated by his hopes of working abroad and improving his employment opportunities, was now mostly motivated by his genuine interest in the German language and culture. The increased knowledge, awareness, understanding and interest can be related to Hannu's emerging *linguistic identity* although, according to him, his language skills had not developed much yet.

(22) *No tota totaa siitä vois tietty, siitä vois tietty vaikka minkälaista diagnoosia tehdä, mutta kyllä ainakin semmonen muutos on, että kokee vähän ymmärtävänsä tai kokee tiedostavansa enempi sen saksalaisen kulttuurialueen olemassaolon ja vaikutuksen ja niinkun niin niin tiedostaa sen olevan oma alueensa siellä ja sitten kun vaikka seuraa jotain uutisia niin sitä helposti sit saattaa ajatella, että mitähän ne nyt on siellä päin mieltä tästä ja mitähän siellä päin tapahtuu ja kaikki tämmönen, tämmönen ainakin on. Että tietoisuus on lisääntyny.*

Well, I could, I could make different diagnoses about it, but at least that sort of change has happened that I feel that I understand or I'm more aware of the existence of the German culture area and its influence, and I, I like know that it's its own area there and when I follow the news, for example, I easily think what the German people's thoughts are about this and what's going on there and everything like that. So basically, my awareness has increased.

The second significant change that Hannu remarked in himself was *internationality* which was obviously linked to the growth of the awareness and knowledge of the German culture. Being able to use and understand German had enabled him to follow the German media and experience how issues were represented there in comparison to Finland. It had also brought Hannu closer to the German people and made him feel to be

part of the *German community*. This is line with Joseph (2010:9) who noted that through language people have a sense of themselves and of their place in the world. The feeling of being more international was also connected with Hannu's note of his broadened view of perceiving things and thus, Hannu did not classify himself being only Finnish.

(23) *Ja ehkä se (saksa) on sitten vähän lisännyt semmoista omaa kansainvälisyyttä. Että niinkun pystyy seuraava, tai siis en nyt tiää pystynkö vielä kovin tehokkaasti seuraamaan niitä niiden juttuja, mutta..mutta sitä myötä, että tiedostaa niiden, tiedostaa sen alueen olemassaolon niin sitten on vähän niinkun laajempi tui oma näkemys noista Euroopan asioista varsinkin.*

And perhaps it (German) has increased my own internationality. Like I can, or I'm not sure if I can yet follow their things really efficiently, but..but.by being aware of their..being aware of the existence of the area has broadened my own perspective especially of those European things.

The internationality was also shown in Hannu's *travelling* plans. Nowadays German speaking countries were on the top of his travelling list, mostly because they felt much more familiar to him than other destinations. Again, the ability to use the language and the knowledge of the German culture had made Hannu interested in experiencing the German culture himself. In conclusion it can be stated that Hannu's growing *linguistic identity* was connected to the choices he made in his personal life and thus, his *personal identity*.

(24) *Hannu: --jos matkaillee niin kuulostaa ainakin paljon tutummalta kohteelta sitten kun on saksa puhuva maa. Ja ehkä se on sitte lisännyt intoo sitten siihen, että käy jossain siellä päin pyörimässä..ainakin.*

Haastattelija: Joo. Elikkä haluaisitko matkustella enemmän noissa saksankielisissä maissa?

Hannu: No voi olla, että se mitä nyt tulee reissattua niin se saattaa vähän niinku lisätä sitä intoa reissata sitten siellä päin, esimerkiks semmonen idea on ollu tosiaan, että kävis tuolla Münchenissä, Münchenissä joskus ja se on oikeestaan tullu suoraan sieltä saksan tunneilta sitten.

Hannu: --and if I go travelling at least the destination sounds much more familiar to me if it is a German speaking country. And then it might have increased my enthusiasm to go travelling somewhere there..at least.

Interviewer: Okey. So, would you like to travel more to those German speaking countries?

Hannu: Well, it might be that the trips I'm planning, it might like increase my enthusiasm to travel somewhere there. For instance, I have this idea that I'd go visit München, München one day and the idea actually came straight from my German lessons.

4.3. Kirsi's Narrative: From a reluctant learner to a motivated traveler

Kirsi, aged 46-50, was a practical nurse who had Vocational Qualifications in both Social and Health Care and Restaurant and Catering Business where she worked for

nearly a decade before starting her nursing studies. Kirsi's career as a practical nurse began approximately 15 years ago, and at the time of the interview she was in work life. Kirsi started learning English in the elementary school and Swedish in the secondary school. Additionally, she started learning German at some point in the secondary school, but she did not continue her studies later in the vocational school. Last autumn Kirsi started learning English at the Adult Education Center and was currently in her 2nd semester of studies. Most likely she will continue her English studies next autumn.

4.3.1. Reasons for learning English

For Kirsi, English learning was closely related to her *personal identity*. Last autumn Kirsi's long-term dream came true when she attended the English course for beginners at the Adult Education Center. After years of struggling and being insecure when using English, Kirsi finally applied for the course to improve her English skills which, according to her, were poor. In addition to generally enhancing her language skills, Kirsi pointed out two main reasons for her English studies, the first one being *travelling* and the second one having a *hobby*. Kirsi traveled approximately a couple of times a year and knew that being able to use English better would most definitely ease her journeys. Earlier Kirsi had to rely on her friends and family when spending a holiday abroad since she lacked of a voice in English and was thus too insecure to speak for herself. Having a hobby was also important since it gave time for herself after a hectic day at work. Therefore, it can be noted that Kirsi's reasons for learning English arose mainly from her desires to *invest* in herself (Norton 2000). The comment below represents how Kirsi described her reasons:

(25) *Sen takia, että mulla olis hiukan helpompi tuolla maailmalla matkustaa, mä kumminkin matkustan, no en nyt mitenkään erityisen paljon, mutta kerran, kaks vuodessa. Siihen helpotusta siihen matkustamiseen. Ehdottomasti omaksi ilokseni, niin jotenkin vastapainoksi mun työlle. Niinkun jotain ett..ihan joku niinku harrastuksenakin ihan joo ja sitten siitä on kumminkin hyötyä. Ne on niinku ne painavimmat niinku syyt.*

So that it would be slightly easier for me to travel in the world, I do travel, well not that much, but once, twice a year. Yeah, to help me when travelling. Absolutely for my own good, in a way as a counterbalance to my work. Like as a.. as a hobby which is also beneficial. Those are the main reasons.

However, as the interview proceeded, a third reason for her English learning was found, namely her *work* and hence, English was also connected to her *work identity*. Since the rate of foreign patients in Finnish Health Care is constantly increasing, Kirsi had already

ended up in situations where she had to use English. Thus, Kirsi understood that English skills would help her to operate better at work. To support the practical nurses' abilities to work in English, Kirsi's work place had printed out English vocabulary lists which were available for everyone.

(26) -- ja eihän sitä (englanti) täällä Suomessa paljon tarvita, mutta nyt mä oon hoitoalalla ja nyt on, nyt on kyllä itseasiassa myös niinkun englanninkielisiä potilaita ollu. -- Ja töissä tulostettu ihan niinku sanastoa pöydälle, että pärjätään.

-- and we don't need it (English) that much here in Finland, but now when I'm working in health care, and now we have, now we have actually had English speaking patients as well.
-- And at work we have printed out vocabulary lists and placed them on the table so that we'll cope (working in English).

4.3.2. Kirsi as a language learner

Similarly as in Markku's case, Kirsi's *learner identity* had gone through drastic changes over the years. For most of her life, learning languages had been a struggle for Kirsi whose first experiences of learning English in the elementary school were nevertheless positive. However, problems started to emerge in the secondary school when Kirsi was not fond of her English teacher and became interested in subjects, such as, handicrafts and sports where she could use her hands and athleticness. Learning languages, which required for theoretical studying, was disinteresting and gradually everything else except school felt important in life. Despite her rather negative estimation of her language skills, Kirsi had always been good at comprehending what she had heard, but her oral skills had caused the most of her problems. In retrospect, Kirsi regretted her careless attitude towards language learning which had always caused her problems, especially in work life. Kirsi described her school time experiences of and attitude towards language learning followingly:

(27) Mulle valitettavasti pakkopullaa. Mä en jotenkin koskaan kouluuikaan kiinnostunu, tai mua kiinnosti kaikki muu mut ei kielet ja siks mä oon nyt lähteny aikuisena opiskeleen ees jotain vähän. -- Ja kaikki muut asiat oli siinä elämässä tärkeempiä kun se koulunkäynti, kaikki mitä käsillä pystyin tekemään tai liikkumaan niin ne oli semmosia juttuja ja kaikki mitä ois pitäny lukea tai pöntätä niin ne ei, ei kiinnostanu. -- No just sellanen hällä väliä - asenne (kielten oppimista kohtaan). Ja sen nyt aikuisiällä sen niinku, tai jo pitempään se on mua harmittanu hirveesti.

Unfortunately it felt like I was forced to learn. At school I was never interested, or I was interested in everything else than languages and that's why I've started to learn at least a bit of something at adult age. -- And everything else in life mattered more than going to school, like everything I was able to do with my hands or with my body were those sorts of things and subjects in which I should've read books and crammed for didn't, didn't interest me. -- I had the sort of 'I don't care' - attitude (towards learning languages). And now, like at adult age, or for a long time already, it has bothered me terribly.

Turning a new page in her life and moving closer to the town center finally signed the deal to start learning English last autumn. Having one of Kirsi's dearest friends as her classmate also brought a great deal of joy to her learning. As a language learner Kirsi described herself to be motivated, active and interested which made her an *autonomous* and *agentic* language learner. Hence, she was in charge of her own learning and worked actively towards language proficiency both in and outside the classroom (Huang 2011, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). Compared to her language learning at school, Kirsi was more motivated to learn English which she considered mostly as a result from the voluntariness of learning. As a person Kirsi always committed herself to whatever she was currently doing, which happened with learning English as well. In addition to being active in class, Kirsi had also paid attention to other ways in her spare time that could help her in learning English, such as, watching TV without subtitles and sending text messages in English. Together with her friend Kirsi had even planned weekly English conversations over a cup of coffee. Because Kirsi already had a basis in English, which most of her classmates at the Adult Education Centre did not have, at times she had self-studied her English book in advance. In addition to her learner identity, the activeness and increased motivation are also closely related to Kirsi's growing *linguistic identity*.

(28) *Mä oon ainaki kiinnostunu ja tota mun tuo ystävä sanoo, että mä oon niinku aktiivinen tuolla, tuolla tunneilla. Motivoitunut, aktiivinen, ehkä ne on ne samat. -- Mut kyllä mä ihan selkeesti kiinnitän huomion kaikkiin englanninkielisiin, niinku no just tv-ohjelmat ja tietokone ja ja radio ja kaikki mistä sitä nyt tulee sitä englantia, kyllä mä siihen nyt kiinnitän enemmän huomiota, kun aikasemmin ja mietin mielessäni ymmärsinkö mä mitä sanottiin. -- Mutta sitä tulee ite enemmän kahlattua sitä kirjaa ehkä läpi ja tehtyä vähän etukäteenkin niitä tehtäviä--*

At least I'm interested and, well, my friend says that I'm like active there, in class, I mean. Motivated, active, perhaps I'm those same things. -- But I clearly do pay more attention to every English speaking,..well like TV programs and computer and radio and everything where there is English, than what I did before, and in my mind I think whether I've understood what has been said. -- But I do plough through the book by myself and I might do some exercises in advance as well. --

Despite using English more than before, Kirsi's anxiety and insecurity towards English had not completely vanished. The haunting negative experiences from her past and the lack of voice in English disturbed her learning at times and thus, in class Kirsi often became quiet and gave her classmates the opportunity to answer teacher's questions even though she knew the answer herself. This happened not only because of her insecurity, but also because in her English skills Kirsi was commonly ahead of her fellow students. Highlighting her own skills in front of the class did not make Kirsi feel

comfortable. The insecurity also rose from the fear of failing or answering wrong in class.

(29) *Niin jotakin sitä en tuonu esille, että mä ehkä jossain kohtaa tiään tai osaan vähän enemmän kuin he, mutta siinä mä jotenkin sit aina huomaan hiljeneväni vähän siinä luokassa, jos mä tiään jostain asiasta ni, enkä oo päällepäsmärinä ensimmäisenä vastaamassa aina kysymyksiin niin tai jos mä tiään niinkun nopeemmin kun ne, jotka ei niinkun ikinä oo luku millään tasolla niinkun englantia. -- Niin oonhan mä silloin varuillaan...varuillani enkä mä oon niinkään varma ittestäni ees ihmisenä-- epävarmuus ja sellanen pelko, että vastaankohan mä nyt ihan (oikein)---*

Yeah, I don't want to bring up the fact that at some point I know or I'm slightly better than they are, but at that moment in class when I know something they don't, I become quiet and I don't like run the show and always try to answer the questions if I, for instance, understand something quicker than my classmates from which some have never learned English at any level before. -- Yeah, I'm quite cautious then..cautious and I'm not sure about myself even as a person—the insecurity and the sort of fear which makes me think whether my answer is (right)--

Feedback from Kirsi's closest friends and family members had played a significant role in her process of learning English and her identity construction. The enjoyment she had gained from her learning had been well acknowledged by her colleagues, friends and family who supported and were curious of how Kirsi's learning preceded. At work Kirsi had openly shared her experiences and encouraged her colleagues to participate in the courses, and after class her siblings called her to find out how Kirsi's English lesson was today. Attention from both work and home had made Kirsi glad and proud of her achievements and, most importantly, it had proved that her decision to start learning English was definitely right at this point in her life.

(30) *No kyllä mä oon aina ylpeenä siitä aina niinku puhun työkavereille ja kaikille, että mä käyn tämmöstä, että mä oon Kansalaisopistossa opiskelee enkkua, että tällasta, sellanen ylpeydenaihe ehkä. -- No just eilen yks nainen, joka ei ollu aikasemmin kuullu, en ollu aikasemmin hänen kanssaan puhunu tästä, niin hän sano, että 'voi ei', että hänkin niin haluais (opiskella englantia) ja mä sitten häntä niinkun rohkasin, että hae nyt, että kun ne sitten syksyllä taas tulee ne..se Kansalaisopiston kirjanen, niin hae ihmeessä. -- Joo, ja kyllä mulle mun sisarukset soittaa yleensä tiistai-iltasin, että no miten meni enkun tunti (nauraa)---*

Well, I'm always talking really proudly to my co-workers and everyone else about me learning English at the Adult Education Center and like, it's perhaps like my proud boast. -- Well, just yesterday I was talking to a lady, who hadn't earlier heard, or I hadn't earlier talked to her about this, and she said that 'oh no' she would really like to learn English as well and then I like encouraged her to apply for a place in the course next autumn when the..the booklet of the offered courses at the Adult Education Centre is published. -- Yeah, and my siblings usually call me on Tuesday evening, asking how the English lesson was (laughs)--

Overall, learning English at the Adult Education Centre had been a positive experience to Kirsi. Because of her excellent *learning community*, namely her teacher, nice

classmates and the positive learning atmosphere in class, Kirsi had enjoyed her language studies and been a conscientious student who had never skipped a lesson. In her *imagined community* (Norton 2000 and Murphey et al 2005), Kirsi's future vision of herself was formed by her realistic hopes of learning more and becoming an encouraged and stronger English speaker. Thus, in a four or five years' time Kirsi hoped to continue her English studies either at the Adult Education Centre or on her own.

4.3.3. Kirsi's experience of change

Comparing whether Kirsi felt any different when using different languages, she brought up a significant point which actually has already been addressed in the previous chapter as well. In this comparison Kirsi estimated her feelings when using Finnish and English as the only one of the interviewees and it came clear that *Finnish*, being her mother tongue, made her feel confident and using *English* again made her feel insecure. The low level of her confidence had to do with Kirsi's fears of failing because of her self-estimated, poor language skills. This is in line with Kaikkonen (2012) who addressed the familiarity of the mother tongue and the unfamiliarity and strangeness of the foreign language. Hence, the processing of Kirsi's *linguistic identity* was still in progress because of her self-assessed poor linguistic skills.

(31) *Jos mä vertaan (englantia) suomen kieleen, niin tottakai tuntuu erilaiselta, kun se on se oma äidinkieli on kuitenkin se on tuttu juttu ja englanti sitten taas vieras asia, että se erohan siinä nyt ihan selkeesti tietenk on. -- No sittenhän mä tietysti, kun mä yritän sitä englannin kieltä käyttää ja puhua sitä mun kaverin kanssa tai missä tahansa muualla, niin oonhan mä silloin varuillaan...varuillani enkä mä oo niinkään varma ittestäni ees ihmisenä kun sitte, kun mä puhun suomee tietenk in.*

Well, if I compare it (English) to Finnish, of course it feels different since my own mother tongue is something I know very well and English again something I don't know well, that's the obvious difference between them. -- Well, I, of course, when I try to use English and talk in English with my friend or anywhere else, I am quite cautious then...cautious and I'm not sure about myself even as a person which of course is not the case when I use Finnish.

Despite being cautious when using English, Kirsi's *confidence* overall, and especially in using English orally, had increased dramatically since young adulthood and even last autumn. Whereas before Kirsi did not want to use any English when travelling, but instead let someone else do the job for her, after half a semester of learning, Kirsi was convinced that she had the courage to speak English when needed. Having booked a holiday trip, Kirsi described her motivation to use English very high.

(32) *Haastattelija: Miltä susta nyt tuntuu, että jos sä lähtisit matkalle, vaikka nyt tänä keväänä, ni uskaltaisitko puhua rohkeemmin englantia?*

Kirsi: Uskaltaisin (sanoo hyvin suoraan ja nopeasti)

Haastattelija: Joo.

Kirsi: Ja oon lähössäkin kyllä joo.

Haastattelija: Ai oot? No niin.

Kirsi: Kyllä oon, ja uskon kyllä, että uskallan puhua.

Interviewer: How would you feel like, if you went on a trip, let's say this spring, would you have more courage to speak English?

Kirsi: I would (says right away and quickly)

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kirsi: And I'm actually going to.

Interviewer: You are? Okey then.

Kirsi: Yes I am, and I truly think that I have the courage to speak.

The *target language community*, which was emphasized especially by Block (2008), was present in Kirsi's learning. The disappearing of her previously negative attitude towards learning languages and the new opportunities that her improved English skills had brought along had without a doubt changed Kirsi's *interest* in the English language and culture. At the Adult Education Centre the teacher had provided the students with intriguing information about England, English manners and especially London where Kirsi was determined to travel to. Thus, it can be concluded that Kirsi had started to *identify* with the *target language community* because of her increased knowledge of and interest in the English language and culture.

(33) *No mä yhtenä päivänä itse asiassa mietin kovasti semmosta, että mä haluaisin päästä Lontooseen. -- Tuolla puhutaan tunneilla..opettaja puhuu paljon Lontoosta ja niinku siitä kulttuurista ja paljon Lontoon kaupungista ja kaikkee mitä siellä nyt käydään läpi, se hirveen paljon kertoo siitä kaikkea kivaa siitä Englannista ja Lontoosta nimenomaan, niin mä oon miettiny, että mä haluaisin tehdä sinne semmosen kaupunkiloman. Joku kaunis päivä.*

Well, one day I actually thought about the fact that I'd like to go to London. -- In class.. the teacher talks a lot about London and the English culture and a lot about the city of London and like everything we go through in the class, she talks a lot about everything nice there is in England and especially London, so I've thought that one day I'd like to do a trip there.

During her English studies Kirsi was negotiating both her *learner* and *personal identity* in relation to her past experiences. After half a semester of studying at the Adult Education Centre, Kirsi had already become more *aware* of herself as a language learner and she had understood how great a difference she had experienced in her English skills after only six months of studying. Whereas at school she felt to be bad at languages, at adult age Kirsi realized that her language skills could never have been absolutely terrible, since she had always passed her English courses at school, even though her grades were not commendable. The *self-criticism*, which obviously was

present in her adolescent, had decreased and to her surprise, Kirsi was able to recall things that she learned at school, which made her feel overwhelmed and glad. Being at first a highly insecure learner who never thought could enjoy learning languages and actually learn them, Kirsi's transformation to a positive and motivated English speaker was tremendous. After years of regretting her careless attitude towards languages, being able to fulfill her dream of learning English had most definitely paid off.

(34) *Koska se (kielitaito) on ihan oikeasti näinkin lyhyessä ajassa niiku..että kyllä mä varmaan siellä kouluaikaan niin siellä tunnilla niin on mulla, on mulla jotain varmaan kumminkin sinne päähän jääny, koska kuitenkin on tullu..Niin, että nyt ne on niinkun ne on vaan vahvistunu ja sanoja muistan tosi paljon ja on nyt niinkun tässä puolessa vuodessa on tapahtunu ihan tosi iso muutos.*

Cause they (language skills) really have in such a short time like..that I must have learned something at school, in those lessons I've been able to learn something since now they have..Yeah, now they have just got stronger and I recall lots of words and just in like six months there has been a major transformation.

4.4. Julia's Narrative: From an eager language learner to a Chinese business woman

Julia, aged 36-40, was an educationalist who at the time of the interview stayed at home to take care of her child. Julia's language history differed from the majority of Finns, and of the other participants in the present study, since she learned Swedish in the elementary school as her first foreign language. Later her language repertoire expanded as she started learning English and French in the secondary school. Additionally, Julia learned fluent Spanish while she was an exchange student in a Spanish speaking country in the upper-secondary school. Currently Julia studied her 2nd semester of Chinese at the Adult Education Center and hoped to continue her studies in the future.

4.4.1. Reasons for learning Chinese

Firstly, Julia's Chinese learning related strongly to her *personal identity*. Even though Julia's decision to start learning Chinese consisted of multiple reasons, it was mainly the general *interest* in learning languages and the *exoticism* of Chinese that lead her into the Adult Education Centre. Julia had always enjoyed learning languages, but Chinese was considerably different than any other language she had learned, which again intrigued her. For a longer period of time already, Julia had found it especially fascinating to be able to use Chinese in *searching for information* online - an ambition

of hers which she hoped to become true one day. Overall, learning Chinese has become more common and even *fashionable* to study, which Julia admitted to have an influence on her language choice as well, although it was not her ultimate ground for learning the language.

(35) *No totaniin tietysti se vähän tuntuu nyt, että se on vähän sellanen muotikieli. -- Ja tietysti se, että ylipäätään tykkää kielistä ja kielten oppiminen on hauskaa-- no sitten tietysti semmonen (kiinan) eksoottisuus-- jos tällei aattelee niiku just vois hakea vaikka jotain tietookin kiinaks, jos nyt joskus osaa niin hyvin niin totaa kiinan kielellä niin sitten.*

Well, of course right now it feels that it's slightly a fashionable language to study. -- And of course the fact that I overall like languages and learning them is fun -- well of course the kind of exoticism (of Chinese)-- if I like think about I could like search for some information in Chinese as well, if I'm ever able to use it well enough then I could do it in Chinese.

For Julia, learning Chinese was also an *investment* in her personal and work life (Norton 2000). Having a few *connections* with Chinese people had brought the exotic language closer to Julia's life and thus, notably increased Julia's interest in Chinese and its culture. In her circle of friends and family, Julia had Chinese acquaintances with whom Julia hoped to *communicate* with, but most of all, whose culture she wished to understand better.

(36) *--ja sitten on joku on..niinku kiinalaisia tuttuja. Että tota oikeestaan tutun tuttuja, että ei hirveen tuttuja nyt sillei niinkun kavereita mutta että...esimerkiks miehen kaverin vaimo on kiinalainen. Ja totaa, ei oo tosin kyllä puhuttu kiinaa, mutta englannilla me puhuttiin, mutta..Ja sitten on yhen toisen sukulaisen ka..vaimo tai naisystävä on kans kiinalainen.*

-- and then I have a few..like Chinese acquaintances. Or actually they're friends of our friends, not that close to us, but like friends, but..my husband's friend's wife is Chinese, for example. And uhm, we haven't, however, discussed in Chinese but we've used English instead, but..And then another relative's frie..wife or girlfriend is also Chinese.

Julia had also realized the potential of Chinese especially in business life and had been pondering how she could use her Chinese skills in *work* life in the future (37). Because of her husband who worked as an investor, she had also become interested in investing in the Asian markets and overall in learning as much about China and its economy as possible. Additionally, having enjoyed her experiences of interpreting while her student exchange in a Spanish speaking country, she had also considered her possibilities to work as a Chinese interpreter whose demand is most likely increasing in the future. Hence, Julia's *work identity* was closely connected to her aspirations in language learning. However, Chinese had mostly been her *hobby* which had enabled Julia to

fulfill herself as a person and to take her mind off from the busyness of her everyday life (38).

(37) --mun mies on sijoittaja ja totaa sijoittaa niinku ulkomaille ja just siinä hän sanoo, että tulee niinku käytettyä eri kieliä. Mmm..mä oon itekin vähän miettiny sitä mahdollisuutta-- Että en osaa siitä sanoa, mutta että semmonen potentiaali kuitenkin on, että siinä varmaan kiinan kielessä. Mmm..Asia sijoituskohteena kenties. En tiedä olisko just Kiina, mutta kaikella tapaa mua tietysti kiinnostais saada Kiinasta tietoa. Ihan Kiinan taloudesta ja siinä mielessä. --Mm..kiinalaisia tulkkeja, tai kiinan kielen tulkkeja varmaan tarvitaan...

-- my husband is an investor and he like invests abroad and he says that in his work he like uses different languages. Umm..I've thought about that possibility myself as well. -- I'm not able to say much about it yet, but it has the sort of potential, the Chinese language, I mean. Umm.. Asia as a target of investment perhaps. I don't know if it would be China, but I'm interested in getting information about it in any possible way. Like about the Chinese economy and that stuff. -- Umm..Chinese interpreters, or interpreters of Chinese are most probably needed...

(38) *Harrastus, harrastus kun harrastus. Harrastuksen tavoitteena on just varmaan se, että että totaniin pääsee irti jostain muusta asiasta ja saa toteuttaa itseään ja niin edespäin.*

A hobby, like any other hobby. The point of having a hobby is probably that you can set your mind on something else and you get to fulfill yourself as a person and so on.

4.4.2. Julia as a language learner

Out of all the participants, Julia's *learner identity* stood out the most. Julia's positive outlook on languages was born in her early childhood already since her mother was a Swedish teacher who kindly provided Julia with various materials and pieces of advice of how to learn languages. Having numerous language records and books available at home, Julia got accustomed to hearing and using Swedish and thus, an interest in languages was arisen. Gradually Julia became an enthusiastic language learner who over the years in addition to the obligatory English and Swedish broadened her language repertoire with French in the secondary school and Spanish during her student exchange experience. Learning languages had always been rather effortless for Julia who quite obviously had a gift for languages.

(39) --mun mielestä kielet on aina ollu kivoja. Että ei ne hirveen työläitä oo ollu, mut toisaalta öö itseasiassa mä niinku sain mun omalta äitiltä semmosen neuvon, että lue aina ne sanat, että lue ne niinku aina yhen tota kappaleen jälkeen heti ne sanat, että ei niitä jaksu sitten niinku yhtäkkiä lukea niinku ihan hirvittävää määrää ja varmaan se on ollu niinku ihan hyvä neuvo, että lukee aina sen, mitä on käyty läpi. -- Tykkäsin kielistä ja se varmaan, niinku johtu siitäkin kun oma äiti oli kielenopettaja, niin meillä oli kaikenlaisia tota niin tollasia levyjä esimerkiksi kotona, missä oli esimerkiksi ruotsia ja jotain Peppi Pitkätossua ja kaikkee mitä mä kuuntelin sillon pienenä ja muutakin materiaalia oli sitten, niin sitä tuli kaivettua sillon hyllystä ja katottua, että mitäs tää on--

-- I've always liked languages. They haven't required for much work from me, but then on one hand umm I actually got this piece of advice from my mom that you should always

revise the vocabulary, like after going through a text, always revise the vocabulary, cause you don't have the energy to go through them all at once and I think it has probably been a good piece of advice, like to revise after class what you've learned. -- I liked languages and probably it was mostly because my mom was a language teacher, so at home we had different kinds of like records, for example, which were in Swedish and some were about Pippi Longstocking and there were lots of things I listened to or other material that I had when I was little and I just used to grab them from our bookshelf and see what they were all about--

Julia had a fairly clear vision of a good language learner and according to her, participating in the lessons was not enough to master a language and thus, required for investments in terms of time and effort. A few years ago Julia started the same course of Chinese she began last autumn, but dropped out of classes because at that point of her life she did not have the possibility to commit to the studies the way she would have liked to. After having a second chance to learn Chinese, Julia had been an *autonomous, active* and motivated learner who sought for material from libraries, for example, to sustain and develop her Chinese skills (Benson 2001:47, cited in Huang 2011:229, Paiva 2011:63). Thus, her *learner identity* was constructed both in and outside the classroom. However, as in any other learning process, Julia remarked her learning to take place in phases, meaning that there were points of time when she had the energy and drive to commit to the studies and then there were times when she did not study as much in her spare time.

(40) *No mä oon sitte sentyyppinen, että mä oon kuunnellu jotain materiaalia, että mun mielestä se ei ollenkaan riitä, että jos joku käy vaan tunnilla, nii ni tota sitä ääntämistä ei kyllä oikein opi, että mut jos sitten vaikka lainaa kirjastosta jotain materiaalia ja kuuntelee, niin mun mielestä se auttaa siinä niin, että..*

I'm the kind of learner who listens to other material than just the course ones as well, like I think that it's not enough if you just go to class, you don't learn the pronunciation that way, but if you like borrow some material from the library, for example, and listen to it, I think it helps there so that...

Starting Chinese again from the scratch gave Julia the opportunity to revise her previous skills and overall she found her Chinese studies both interesting and challenging. Julia had never considered learning Chinese to be easy and there were times when she regretted for not choosing an easier language to learn even though it was exactly the demanding nature of Chinese that kept the learning interesting and fun. In comparing the different areas of the language, Julia noted Chinese grammar to be rather simple, but pronunciation and learning vocabulary had instead caused various problems. Based on her previous language knowledge, Julia had understood Chinese to be significantly

different since it did not resemble any of the languages she had learned before. Julia described her learning experiences followingly:

(41) *Vaikeeta. Mun on tosi vaikee niiku joitain sanoja muistaa. Jos vertaa niiku muihin kieliin, en tiää mikä siinä on, onko sitä, että on vanhempi vai onko sitä, että ne sanat on todella niin, että niissä ei oo mitään yhteyttä niinku eurooppalaisiin kieliin..ei tuu mitään assosiaatioita, että tän oon oppinu jostain muusta kielestä. Toisaalta kielioppi on helppoo. Joskus tuntuu, että laitetaan vaan sanoja peräkkäin..ei tarvii, tarvii lukee sillai kielioppia. Ääntäminen, niin se on aika hauskaa mun mielestä, se on vaikeeta..se on erilaista ja mä tykkään kyllä.*

It's difficult. I've got like big difficulties in remembering some words. Compared to other languages, I don't know what it is there, is it because I'm older now or because the words are so, like there is no connection to any European language. I can't associate anything, like this I've learned from this language. On the other hand, the grammar is easy. Sometimes I feel that we are just putting words after words..you don't have to, like study grammar. Pronunciation, that's what I think is quite fun, it's difficult and I do like it.

Because of her solid background in learning languages, Julia's linguistic knowledge and thus, her *linguistic identity*, was shown frequently in the interview, such as, when Julia depicted herself to be an auditive learner which means a person who learns by listening. Even though Chinese pronunciation, as mentioned, had been challenging and difficult, listening to languages and trying to pronounce them had always been something Julia had enjoyed. When writing her Master's Thesis in English, for example, Julia used to listen to BBC news online to get into the right mood. In the discussion of auditivity, Julia also noted the connection between musicality and language learning and recalled having heard that learning languages is easier if one has musical backgrounds. Similarly to one of her Chinese teachers, Julia had played an instrument and was convinced that being musical helped in the mastering of the language. Overall, Julia was skilled at guiding her learning which is a sign of her *autonomy* (Paiva 2011:63).

(42) *No se varmaan tulee sieltä lapsuudesta, kun mä kuuntelin niitä, niitä tota ruotsin levyjä (naurahtaa). Mikä on varmaan aika harvinaista kuitenkin, että mä tykkäsin kuunnella niitä ja tykkään niinku vieläkin. Ja mä oon kuunnellu niiku just vaikka jotain gradua kun tein, niin saatoin lukee..tai kuunnella BBC:n uutiset ensin ja sit pääs vähän niikun tunnelmaan ja sit rupesin kirjottaa ja tykkään niinkun kuunnella hirveesti. Varmaan se on, en tiää tuleeks se sitten siitä musiikin harrastas..musiikin harrastamisesta, että tykkää kuunnella ulkomaisia kieliä. Espanjassahan se oli niinkun kielikylpyä koko ajan, että se oli aivan ihanaa. Ja vieläkin haluais niinkun kielikylpyyn, että voisimpa päästä johonkin tilaisuuteen, missä puhuttais koko ajan jotain (kieltä)..--Ehkä mä oon sellanen auditiivinen tyyppi sitten että..*

Well it probably comes from my childhood when I used to listen to those Swedish records (laughs). Which is pretty rare, I assume, that I liked listening to them and I like still do. And I've listened, like when I was doing my Master's Thesis, I might have read..or listened to BBC news first and then I like got into the mood and I started writing and I really like listening to things. It's probably because, I'm not sure if it comes from having music as my hob...having music as my hobby that I still like listening to foreign languages. In Spain it was like language showering all the time, and it was just wonderful. And I'd still really like

to experience language showers again, I wish I would end up in a situation where I could speak (a language) all the time. -- Perhaps I'm the sort of an auditive learner then...

Based especially on her knowledge of and abilities to use languages, Julia was a confident and broad-minded language learner. Julia was not afraid of the challenges created by the language learning process, but instead was curious and motivated to learn more and see what kind of opportunities the languages could provide. In her job, Julia described her to use languages quite frequently and there had been situations where she had had to stretch her knowledge even to languages she had only scarce knowledge of. Julia recalled having to use German once although her previous experiences with the language were limited to her self-studying the language for a month.

(43) --*esimerkiks saksa, että vaikka mä en oo sitä koulussa lukenu niin mä huomasin niinku ilokseni, että m..mä oon joskus sitä huvikseni lukenu jonkun kuukauden jostain (Internetissä) niin mä pystyn niinkun lukemaan saksankielisiä uutisia-- mitä oon joskus töissä ollu, niin öö kyllä yllättävän paljon on tullu sellasia tilanteita eteen, että on tarvinnu käyttää niinku kieltä, jopa saksaa, jota ei hirveen hyvin osaa—*

--German, for instance, which I didn't learn at school, I was happy to notice that I..at some point I have studied it for a month somewhere (online) just for my own fun, and I'm like able to read German news-- during the time that I was at work, there were umm surprisingly many situations where I had to use languages, even German which I can't use that well--

Languages were a natural and significant part of Julia's everyday life and her *personal identity*. According to her, she could not have imagined living without the possibility to use languages since they had always brought her feelings of success and given her opportunities to see the world from different perspectives. In her spare time Julia surfed on foreign web pages and especially read foreign newspapers online, a habit which she shared with her husband. Interestingly, Julia's family did not subscribe to any Finnish newspapers or magazines but instead the only magazine they did subscribe to was the American Time. This, according to Julia, did not feel special in any way but rather natural since they were so accustomed to using English on a daily basis. Therefore, it can be concluded that learning languages was more of a lifestyle than an occasional hobby for Julia.

(44) --*kieli, se on mulle niinkun melkein yksinomaan kuitenkin aina positiivinen asia, että se tietysti tuo sen tunteen, että osaa jotain ja ja se avaa mahdollisuuksia ja uusia tilaisuuksia, vaikka nyt ois vaan siellä luokassakin, missä juttelee joittenkin kanssa ja on opettajan kanssa tekemisissä ja mm..se on positiivinen asia. Että mun mielestä ois tosi kurjaa, mä en osais kuvitellakaan jos en, että mun elämä ois sellasta että ei sais käyttää kieliä, että on se siis sillain luonteva osa kuitenkin jokapäiväistä elämää. Ihan niiku lehestä asti, että meille tulee Time, mutta meille ei tuu mitään suomalaista lehteä että..--mutta se on ihan luonnollista vaan että me luetaan Timea--*

-- language, for me it's like almost exclusively a positive thing which obviously brings along the feeling that you can do something and and it gives you opportunities and new chances to do stuff even though it would mean being in a classroom and talking to your classmates and your teacher and umm...it's a positive thing. I think it would be really sad if, I can't even imagine a situation where in my life I couldn't use languages, so it's a natural part of my everyday life. Like starting from the newspaper since we subscribe to Time but we do not subscribe to any Finnish newspapers so...--but it's just so natural that we read Time--

Although learning Chinese had been challenging and, according to Julia, it was not realistic to learn the language in a year or two, she had maintained her positive spirit towards learning and described her experiences at the Adult Education Center mostly positive. Because of her great *learning community*, namely her excellent teacher, classmates and the friendly atmosphere in the class, learning had been fun and motivating. In the future Julia hoped to continue her Chinese studies either at the Adult Education Centre or even at the university where she could possibly receive a diploma from her Chinese studies. Julia's vision of herself as a Chinese speaker consisted of her realistic hopes and dreams. In *her imagined community* of her hopes and desires (Norton 2010 and Murphey et al 2005), Julia dreamed of her future *Chinese* and *work identity* which consisted of reading and speaking Chinese and working as an interpreter, whereas her voice of realism noted Chinese to be her spare time hobby which she enjoyed. However, Julia knew that if she *invested* enough in learning Chinese, she could fulfill her dreams.

4.4.3. Julia's experience of change

Comparing whether Julia felt any different when using different languages revealed interesting facts of her language use. Most importantly Julia emphasized that her language skills had always varied based on the context where and when the learning of the languages or the actual use of them had taken place in. Even though Swedish was her first foreign language at school, Julia felt that English most definitely was her best language since she had used it the most. As noted by Paiva (2011:66), different languages placed Julia into different roles in her life. In *English* Julia described her to be an expert with which she referred to reading of scientific articles, whereas in *Swedish* Julia read mostly newspapers and thus, was a casual user of the language.

(45) *No englantia, se tuntuu, että sillon on asiantuntija. Että se on lukenu asiantuntijatekstejä, että voi lukea kaikkia tieteellisiä artikkeleita ja kaikkee sellasta -- Ja ruotsi. Hmm. Mun mies yllättäen sano, että hän käyttää ruotsia joskus, että hän on kattonu*

joitakin talous- ja pörssisivuja ruotsin kielellä. Itseasiassa mäkin innostuin sitten, mä katoin Svenska..luin Svenska Dagbladetista jotain.

Well English, it feels that when I use it, I'm an expert. That the expert has read those expertise texts and is able to read all the scientific articles available and stuff like that. -- And Swedish. Umm. My husband surprisingly said that he uses Swedish sometimes when he checks some economy and market web pages in Swedish. Actually I got excited about it as well and I watched..I read something from the Svenska Dagbladet (a Swedish newspaper).

Julia considered *French* to be her poorest language since she had not used it much compared to her other languages. Occasionally she read French literature or newspapers online. *Spanish* again reminded Julia of the time she spent abroad as an exchange student and she especially recalled her memories of the local Spanish culture. During her exchange Julia learned fluent Spanish and integrated into the Spanish culture so well that she felt to be more than just a Finn. Thus, in her life Julia had gained several *voices* in her foreign languages which were related to her identity construction (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000).

(46) -- kun mä olin (espanjaa puhuvassa maassa) niin oppi sen kaikki fraasit ja kirosanat ja (nauraa) semmoset käytännön puhekielen -- jos käyttää espanjaa, niin tulee ehkä mieleen (espanjan kieltä puhuva maa) ja se kulttuuri ja kaikkia muita asioita, että minkä tyyppisiä siellä oltiin, niikun yleensä kun puhuttiin, että oltiin vähän erilaisia kuin suomalaiset tai ainakin siinä tilanteessa, missä mä siellä olin, että se koko kulttuuri tulee ehkä mieleen siinä.

--when I was in this Spanish speaking country I learned all the phrases and curse words and (laughs) the practical everyday language -- if I use Spanish I remember the country where I was and its culture and all the other things there, like what kind of people we were there, like we usually talked about the fact that we were a bit different than Finns or at least in that situation where I was there, but like when I think about Spanish, the whole culture comes to my mind.

The processing of who Julia was in Chinese was still in progress. When using *Chinese* Julia felt insecure and not capable of using the language well enough which was present in the other learners' stories as well. However, as a balance to her negative thoughts, using Chinese also made her feel *excited* and it had increased her expectations of and hopes to master the language one day well enough to be able to understand Chinese texts. Julia comments on her thoughts when using Chinese the following way:

(47) Että no on vähän sellanen tunne, että ei osaa vielä kovin hyvin. Että on semmonen, mutta että, mmm.. kuitenkin mielenkiinto (kieleen)-- tietysti semmonen niinku kiinasta tulee semmonen niinku kiva odotus, että voi vitsi, jos joskus osais sitä niin hyvin, että pääsis sitten ymmärtämään jotain.

Well, I kinda have the feeling that I'm not able to use the language well enough. That I have the kind of like, umm..like interest (in the language)-- of course when I think about

Chinese I get these nice expectations that it would be so nice if one day I'd be able to use the language well enough to really understand something.

Learning Chinese had transformed Julia in the sense that it had made her more *interested* in the Chinese language and culture especially, which again made her *identify* stronger with the *target language community*. Only after starting her studies at the Adult Education Centre Julia had become an enthusiastic reader of Chinese history. Her excitement towards the topic had also been acknowledged by her family and friends who at special occasions remembered her with books about China. In addition to understanding the culture better, Julia was excited of the fact that she had been able to read some Chinese signs found in the books which implies of her growing *linguistic identity*.

(48) *Julia: Itseasiassa mä luin kyllä jotain Kiinan historiaan liittyvää. Ihan huvikseni ja muutenkin luen, on tullut niinku luettua Kiinasta asioita ja jotain elämäkertoja ja sellasia..*

Haastattelija: Onko se sit tullu tän kiinan opiskelun myötä se innostus tällaseen?

Julia: Niin on kyllä joo. Että mä sain..tai no anoppi osti joululahjaks siitä oli just ilmestynyt tää Kiinan keisarinna se ses tota semmonen historiallinen kirja.

Julia: I actually read something that had to do with the Chinese history. Just for fun and otherwise I read, I've read things about China and some memoirs and books like that.

Interviewer: So has this interest in reading these books come after starting to learn Chinese?

Julia: Yeah it has. I got..well, my mother-in-law bought me this newly published historical book about the Chinese empress as a Christmas present.

Already previously it was addressed that Julia had considered being someone else when using another language, namely Spanish. As the only one of the interviewees, Julia discussed her *identity perception* when using different languages mentioning the term identity herself. According to her, the sense of easiness and naturalness which arises in herself when using languages takes place because she considers herself to be more *international* than an average Finn. This is most likely a result from her earlier experiences as an *autonomous* and *agentic* language learner and her strong linguistic abilities. The growing feeling of being international was also evident in Hannu's story. Having learned numerous languages and spent a longer period of time in another country, had clearly changed Julia's perspective of seeing things. As mentioned already, languages constituted a significant part of Julia's life and she noted that she would feel *incomplete* without having the ability to use them. Thus, as mentioned before already, languages were a major part of Julia's *personal identity*.

(49) -- *tottakai sitä on tässä sillain niinku suomalainen mutta voi..voihan se olla, että se identiteetti on jotenkin..jotenkin sitten sellainen, että..tietty kansainvälisyys niinku*

kiinnostaa ja on että että totaa no ehkä se jos tuntuu niinkun luontevalta vaihtaa jotain kieltä jotenki niin siinä ehkä tulee semmonen olo, niinku että ikään kuin ei olis vaan suomalainen vaan, että ihan yhtä hyvin voi niinku vaihtaa vähän näkökulmaa ja kieltä.

-- of course I'm like Finnish but it can be..it can be that the identity is somehow..is in some way a certain kind that..certain internationality interests me and is like, well perhaps if I feel natural when switching to another language then it just makes me feel that I wasn't just a Finn, but similarly I could change my perspective of seeing things and the language I use.

4.5. Summary of the narratives

Although the narratives of Markku, Hannu, Kirsi and Julia were all complex and unique, *various similar identities* emerged in relation to their language learning processes. As de Fina (2006:268) suggests, identities can be typed in various ways, such as, *individual, collective, social, personal* or *situational*. In the present study each of the learners shared at least three of the following identities which were *work identity, personal identity, learner identity* and *linguistic identity*. Depending on the context, all of these can be categorized under the identity types that de Fina (2006) uses. It is, however, suggested here that together the emerged work, personal, learner and linguistic identities form the learners' *foreign language identities*. The found identities are firstly summarized briefly here in relation to the *communities of practice* in which they have been constructed and then discussed in more depth in the following section.

Firstly, the learners' identities were closely related to their reasons for learning the language. Each of the learners had more than one reason for their language studies and all of them shared at least partially two of the mentioned motives, namely work and having a hobby. For Markku and Hannu learning the language was more connected to their professional aspirations and thus, their *work identity*, whereas Kirsi and Julia expressed the language to be more of a hobby which was connected to the spare time and their *personal identity* even though being able to use the language could possibly be of benefit in their work life as well. The work identities were constructed both in and outside of the *learning community* and also in the learners' present (Markku) or imagined *work community* (Hannu). Among all the learners, the reasons for learning the language were highly connected to their *future visions of themselves*, or as Prusak and Sfard (2005) call them *designated identities*, as speakers of Spanish, German, English or Chinese. Thus, language learning was an *investment* in their work or personal life (Norton 2000). The learners' envisioning was alternately realistic or unrealistic, mainly consisting of truthful aims, such as becoming a stronger language speaker (Kirsi) and

working abroad (Hannu), but some of the learners' hopes were considered dreams, such as, working as an interpreter (Julia) or moving to Spain (Markku).

Secondly, the learners' experiences of the foreign language were closely related to their *learner identities* which were split into two distinguishing learner types, namely a relaxed and a dedicated learner. These learner types relate to the learners' *agency* and *autonomy* (Benson 2001:47, cited in Huang 2011:229, Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001, Huang 2011:230). Both the learner types participated conscientiously in the course and the *learning community*, but they differed in the amount of time and effort they put into the learning of the language especially in the spare time. The most relaxed learner was Hannu, whereas the most dedicated learner was Julia. Overall, in terms of *autonomy* and *agency* (Huang 2011, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000), Julia was clearly in her own league. Markku and Kirsi could have been categorized in either of the types since they shared characteristics of both relaxed and dedicated learner, but eventually, Markku was more carefree than Kirsi who self-studied more actively in her spare time. Thus, for Hannu and Markku the learned language was mainly used in the classroom and in the *learning community*, whereas Kirsi and Julia strove to use the language more actively *outside the classroom* as well. In terms of communities of practice it can be concluded that the women were constructing their language identities more extensively than the men. However, despite the fact that Markku and Julia had the greatest opportunities to speak with native speakers to receive critical experiences which Block (2008) emphasized, no-one of the four learners used the foreign language with native speakers on a regular basis.

Thirdly, in line with the notion of Wenger (1998:215), who noted that learning can be considered a significant part of identity formation since it reforms the way people think, the current language learning had brought various *changes* to the learners' lives both in general and individual levels. However, the learners were not always able to identify the changes. Most of the issues commented below related to the learners' *linguistic identities* which were connected to the *learning community* but most importantly, to the *target language community*. First of all, everyone's linguistic skills had grown since the beginning of language studies. Moreover, everyone noted that their *interest* in the studied language and culture had increased during the learning which was shown in their spare time activities, such as reading books about Chinese history (Julia) and travelling abroad (Markku, Hannu and Kirsi). In addition to the increased interest, also

the *knowledge, awareness* and *understanding* of the language and culture had grown, especially in Hannu's and Julia's case. Both of the learners similarly noted of their increased *internationality* which was connected to their expanded knowledge of the language and culture. In Julia's case the internationality was also highly connected to her *personal identity* since she emphasized the significant meaning of languages in her everyday life.

Markku and Kirsi had gone through the greatest change in terms of *attitude* and *motivation*. Although all the learners were at the time of the interview rather enthusiastic and motivated about their language learning, Markku and Kirsi's thoughts of languages had changed the most radically to a positive direction because of their current language learning. Hannu and Julia's interest in languages had continued and strengthened since the school. Overall the learners' descriptions of themselves were mainly *positive* and included notes of their already mentioned *high motivation, enthusiasm* and *activeness*, except for Hannu who was keen on German but did not consider it that important at this point of his life. Markku, Hannu and Kirsi also addressed the regrets of their careless attitude and their choice of not studying languages at school. This is where Julia stood out from the other learners because of her differing language backgrounds and extensive linguistic knowledge.

Although the language learning had changed the learners, they considered themselves the same person as before. Markku was the only one who mentioned that a change had occurred in his character since he had become more *vibrant*. During her English studies, Kirsi had become more aware of her abilities as a language learner and she had gained *confidence* in using the language. Similarly Hannu had gained *courage* to use German when travelling. Through their interest in the language and culture, all the learners considered to belong to the *community of target language speakers* in some way, even though Hannu and Markku expressed their membership slightly more clearly. Markku even noted about belonging to a group of 'happier people' referring to the Spanish people. Additionally, *fluctuating feelings* were attached to different languages, and in most cases, the context and feelings were interconnected. All the learners had feelings of *inadequacy* regarding their abilities to use their currently studied language, mostly because they considered that they had not learned the language enough yet. Thus, how well the learner knew the language, defined how one felt when using it. This applies to the difference that Kaikkonen (2012) addressed between the mother tongue and the

foreign language. However, Markku was the only one who estimated his English and Spanish skills to be at the same level, despite his comment of being able to think in English but not in Spanish. It has to be taken into account that Markku had begun his Spanish studies already one year before the others.

5. DISCUSSION

In the present study, the emergence of the adult learners' identities was observed based on their self-expressed experiences of language learning, including their backgrounds, reasons for learning and the actual use of the language. This resulted both in similar and differentiating identity emergencies, which, most importantly, were all unique. Next the results of the present study are discussed in relation to the previous studies of identities and language learning. Finally, the present study is evaluated and implications for the future are presented.

5.1. Emerging identities

The findings of the present study show similarities with the results of the previous studies about identity construction in the context of language learning, but also differ from what has been found out earlier. In contrary to Block's (2008) findings, the results of the present study show that various identities emerged as a result of adult foreign language learning and thus, the present study suggests that adult language learners can construct their foreign language identities in an educational context. This is also supported by the studies of Korhonen (2014), Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012), Huang (2011) and Murphey et al (2005) who despite their differentiating participants in terms of age also agreed that identities can be formed in the classroom. Referring to the critical experiences within the target community, of whose meaning Block (2008) highlighted as being crucial in the identity construction, it can thus be concluded that the Adult Education Centre offered the type of learning opportunities for the learners which strengthened their identity formation. This is in line with the study conducted by Murphey et al (2005) which showed that learners can construct their identities inside the classroom if there is interaction and success in using language meaningfully. However, it is noteworthy to note that the learners' motivation and enthusiasm towards their language learning, which they all shared, had a significant impact on their growing foreign language identities as well. Especially in Julia and Kirsi's cases, the learners actively sought for various ways and opportunities to improve their linguistic skills both in and outside the classroom, whereas Markku was more of a planner than an actor. Hannu was interested in language learning, but his learning activities were mostly restricted to the classroom.

As mentioned already, instead of one identity, the learners' stories of themselves revealed that there were multiple identities connected to their language learning processes at various levels of their learning. This is in line with Hall (1999:22), Paiva (2011:66) and Miyahara (2010:5) who similarly emphasized the multiplicity of identities in people's lives. The most distinguishable of the emerged identities and common for every learner were *work identity*, *personal identity*, *learner identity* and *linguistic identity*. Together the various identities were treated as the learners' *foreign language identities*. Although according to De Fina (2006), it is not always meaningful or even necessary to separate the various identities from each other, the different identities were named and discussed on their own to have a better understanding of their origin and meaning in the learners' learning processes. It is, however, evident that the identities were constantly overlapping and thus, cannot be completely separated from each other because of their interdependency. In the end, the complex nature of identities was present in the stories as well (Paiva 2011:66).

Although similar identities emerged in each of the learner's narrative, it has to be taken into account that everyone of them had their own, unique plotline and thus, their own unique identity which cannot be generalized. Moreover, the emerged identities were emphasized differently in each learner's story. Whereas work identity was the most present in Hannu and Markku's narrative, Kirsi and Julia's experiences of language learning focused more on their personal identities. This implies that for Kirsi and Julia, the language learning meant more than the opportunity to proceed in their careers. Julia's learner identity was the strongest mostly because of her autonomy and agency, whereas Hannu's was the least effective. Markku and Kirsi's learner identities shifted, Kirsi having the strongest one from the two. However, the linguistic identity was quite the same among all the learners since each addressed their still poor language skills and then emphasized their increased cultural knowledge and awareness. Thus, this resulted in various, complex foreign language identities which can be equaled with the learners' multifold narratives of themselves. The variety of the emerged identities most importantly highlights the individuality of the learners meaning that there are never two identical learners.

In terms of age and sex, only slight variation among the learners was detected. Regarding their autonomy and agency, the women were more actively using the language outside the classroom and searching for opportunities to use the language than

the men. It can be assumed that they were more motivated to find their voice in the foreign language, which affected their identity construction positively. This is in line with the results of Korhonen (2014) who addressed the tight relationship of identity, autonomy and agency. The youngest of the learners, Hannu, differed from the others due to his relaxed learner identity which was explained by his focus on work life. The oldest learner Kirsi, on the other hand, stood out because of her reasons for learning the language. Whereas especially Hannu and Markku, but also Julia, emphasized the meaning of their language skills in the future work market, Kirsi learned English mainly as her hobby which most of all helped her when travelling.

5.2. The meaning of communities

As noted by Gee (2001:99) and Weedon (2004:7), in the present study the learners' emerged identities were similarly connected to their performances in society and thus, the learners constructed their identities socially in various communities of practice (Wenger 1998). Similar to the study conducted by Norton (2000), the learners' identities shifted depending on the context and the learners' abilities to participate in the various communities. The different emerging identities were mainly present in their own communities, but naturally they were also overlapping with each other. Whereas the personal identities were constructed in the spare time activities or within the communities of friends, family and acquaintances, both the learner and linguistic identities were mainly formed in the learning community which took place either inside or outside the classroom. Occasionally, the linguistic and learner identities were also constructed in the target community. The work identities on the other hand were constructed in the learners' work communities.

It can, however, be stated that the learners' identities were mainly constructed in the learning community at the Adult Education Centre since no-one of the learners was regularly participating in the target language community in their personal lives. Interestingly, the learners did not emphasize the meaning of the target language community in their language learning although each admitted that finding ways to interact with native speakers would help in becoming a better language user. In general, the learners valued and commented on the meaning of the communities differently in their narratives. Kirsi who was the most insecure regarding her English skills, had gained a great deal of confidence from her family, friends and work colleagues who

supported her learning constantly. Moreover, Kirsi, Julia and Markku estimated the meaning of the language learning community higher than Hannu who did not consider that it played a major role in his language learning process. The difference can be explained by Hannu's attitude towards learning which was rather relaxed and careless. However, because of the learners' increased linguistics skills, knowledge and awareness of and interest in the foreign language and culture, they were all creating a strong bond with the target language community. Especially Markku, who was the most advanced learner, addressed his belonging to the group of happy Spaniards which is in line with the results of Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012:15) which similarly showed that the advanced students had engaged and participated deeper in their communities of practice than the first year students.

Besides the present communities of practice, the learners had formed imagined communities of their hopes and desires during and already at the beginning of their learning processes, which were connected to what they wanted to achieve or be like in the future. According to Prusak and Sfard (2005), these can be called designated identities. Thus, in accordance with the notion of Canagarajah (2004:117 as cited in Murray 2008:128), the learners' language learning was motivated by the construction of their identities they desired and the communities they wanted to participate in. This is in line with Murphey et al (2005:84) who similarly noted that imagined communities can help in the building of second language identities. Through the language, the learners invested in their future and aimed at gaining an access to the communities that they wanted to participate in. These were alternatively their future work communities or target language communities in which the learners wanted to communicate as their linguistic abilities had strengthened.

However, as noted in the theory section, identities are always socially, culturally, historically and institutionally assigned (Weedon 2004:7, Gee 2001:100). Thus, from the viewpoint of the learning context, it has to be taken into account that both the Adult Education Centre, the learners' position in the society as well as their age affected positively on the results. Despite their differing backgrounds, personalities and learning strategies, Markku, Hannu, Kirsi and Julia were all voluntary adult learners of a foreign language who in terms of spare time and financial resources had the opportunity to participate in the language course. The voluntariness was shown in their high motivation and enthusiasm for language learning which affected positively in the stories

the learners told about themselves. Everyone had enjoyed learning at the Adult Education Centre and mainly had only positive experiences to be shared, which, moreover, implies of their success in language studies. All the learners commented that the learning community, including the teacher and classmates, was also a positive factor in their learning process although it did not play as significant role in Hannu's language learning process, for example. In conclusion, the learners had rather clear visions of themselves in the future which they had come to put into action at the Adult Education Centre.

5.3. Language learning as a journey of changes

In the light of the narratives, the learners' experiences of language learning can be viewed as multiphase journeys with their ups and downs, involving various changes and thus, transformed identities. The learners' noted changes were closely connected to the trajectories, or in other words to the time spans, which according to Norton (2000) and Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012), are a meaningful part of the learners' identity construction. Although the language learning had brought various changes to the learners' lives and even transformed the learners to some extent, the learners had stayed the same persons as before which is in line with the notion of Wenger (1998). Thus, the learners did not develop a completely new identity for themselves in accordance with their new linguistic and cultural skills, but instead, the language had changed how they felt and where they belonged to. This was most evident in cases where the learners pointed out that languages had placed them into different roles, such as an expert in using English, which suggests strongly that there are different identities attached to different languages. In a way, the increased language skills and knowledge made the learners feel that they had become better versions of themselves, without losing the idea of who they truly were.

For Markku, Hannu, Kirsi and Julia, language learning at the Adult Education Centre was not only about acquiring linguistic skills, but to explore something new and to challenge oneself. This is in line with Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012) who noted that language learning is not only about mastering the language, but also dealing with the various emotions and attitudes that are connected to the language learning process. Language learning had brought new things to their lives, including increased abilities to use the language and various, mostly positive feelings. Concerning the learners'

abilities, the learners' linguistic skills, knowledge, awareness of and interest in the foreign language and culture occurred most strongly. The strongest emerged feelings, which were related to the learners' foreign language identities, were confidence, internationality and enthusiasm. However, negative feelings such as insecurity and inadequacy regarding the abilities to use the language occurred in the learners' stories as well. Especially the positive emotions attached to the learners' one or multiple foreign languages prove that the languages were a meaningful part of their lives outside the classroom as well. Thus, it can be concluded that the journey of language learning had shaped the learners to their present state.

In conclusion, Markku, Hannu, Kirsi and Julia had all their own, unique foreign language identities which were influenced by their subjective experiences of language learning in their past, present and future. The narratives of the four language learners revealed traces of emerging foreign language identities which consisted of their future visions of themselves, their abilities as learners, the changes caused by the language learning and the different roles and feelings attached to different languages. Most importantly, the findings of the present study show that language learning had brought various positive changes to the learners' lives, which implies of the significance of language learning in creating positive experiences and feelings of success. Moreover, the fact that the learners had started their language learning at adult age and been successful in their studies addresses the meaning of life long learning. Thus, the adult learners' experiences prove that it is never too late to start studying languages.

5.4. Evaluation and future implications of the study

The present study examined the emerging identities of four adult language learners who studied a foreign language at the Adult Education Centre. The participants consisted of four adult language learners, two men and two women, who were 30 to 50 years old. Whereas Hannu, Kirsi and Julia had started their language studies the previous autumn, Markku had begun his studies one year earlier. Retrospectively, it would have been reasonable to select learners which were already further in their studies, since it was evident that the learners' foreign language identities were only developing at that point of their studies. However, I was positively surprised when noticing that even though the learners had not studied the language for a longer period of time, various aspects of identity emergence were already evident.

There are two other points to be addressed in terms of the participants in the present study. Firstly, even though the criteria for finding participants were rather loose, interviewees are always to a certain degree carefully selected to the specific study. Therefore, the backgrounds of the learners, for instance, have to be taken into consideration when evaluating the validity of the study. All the participants in the present study had a stable lifestyle and were in terms of finance and time capable to participate in the language courses. Additionally, their mostly supportive families, friends and colleagues could have had an effect on the positive outcomes of the present study. Secondly, and, most importantly, since the participants present only a minor fraction of the entire target group of adult language learners, the results of the study cannot be generalized, as typical of qualitative studies in general.

The data was gathered using thematic interviews which was considered the best alternative when examining a highly personal topic. As a result, the interviews provided interesting and usable data but not without struggles. The greatest difficulty related to the formation of questions since the topic was extremely complex to study. As discussed previously, the use of the word *identity* was avoided since it could have affected negatively the way the interviewees answered. Examining identities without mentioning the word itself was challenging since it forced to find alternative ways to discuss the learners' visions of themselves and thus, the conversations with the learners encompassed various areas regarding their language learning and experiences and feelings attached to it. Moreover, the learners clearly struggled during the interviews to express especially issues concerning their experienced changes in themselves after starting to learn a language, which was considered one of the most significant points in examining their identities. On the other hand, the difficulty of the topic and questions can also be regarded as an asset of the study since they forced the learners to think carefully what they wanted to say and how. To detect and prevent the difficulties relating to the interview, it would have been recommendable to test the interview questions beforehand which, according to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2014:72-73), adds the reliability of the study. However, because of the tight schedule of the present study, the pre-interview was not possible.

Although interviews were definitely the right choice for gathering data, it could have been possible to use other methods as well which would have helped in detecting and most importantly, understanding the learners' identities better. Since identities are

considered processes, using diary entries or essays at different points of their language courses would most probably have given more valuable information about the learners' journey towards their foreign language identities. However, taking into consideration the extensiveness and the schedule of the present study, only interviews were considered necessary.

Overall, the interviews produced data which was far from straightforward to draw conclusions from since naturally, the experiences were all subjective and everyone had their own understanding of the ways languages had affected their lives. Because of the complex nature of identities, namely the multiplicity and dynamicity of them, it was extremely hard to find the thread of identities in the learners' narratives. Having extensive material of the participants' language learning dating from their childhood to the future, it was evident that clear plot lines had to be created to form an overview of the learners' identities. Since using narratives is a constantly growing approach in the field of language learning, there were not many studies to which I could have referred to when facing problems and thus, the construction of the stories required for a great deal of time, effort and decisions to be made. Moreover, the interpretation of the material is always done through the lens of the researcher. As mentioned before, treating the data as narratives indicates that the participants are story tellers and the researcher is the listener who then interprets and rewrites the material heard. Thus, the way the interviewee has spoken does not always come across similarly in the actual study even though it obviously is the aim in the analysis. Thus, the narratives are, most importantly, my own interpretation of the learners' emerged identities, which from the viewpoint of the learners could have been presented in a different way.

The lack of former research influenced the conducting of the present study in two contradictory ways which should also be taken into account when evaluating the study. Firstly, the shortage of the produced material and referable studies caused difficulties in finding a fitting framework for the study. After careful consideration, the theoretical background was finally constructed relying on the poststructuralist perspective on identities and language learning, including the notions of communities of practice and narrative identities. Thus, it was important that a dialogue of different theories was used. On the other hand, the mainly uncovered field of foreign language learning and identities offered to investigate the learners rather freely since there was no clearly defined direction which to follow. The rising trend of narrative research was thus

perhaps easier to choose as the basis for the present study. Finding a balance in the research area which has partially been untouched, but which at the same time offers multiple alternatives in terms of theory and analysis, was challenging and forced to work with a strong feeling of insecurity. However, taking into consideration the purpose of the study, which was to fill in the gap in the research field and to provide valuable information about the uniqueness of language learners, it can be stated that the present study managed to produce information of the emerging foreign language identities of adult language learners, which have previously been scarcely studied.

The results of the present study emphasize the individuality of learners and hopefully raise the awareness and knowledge of identities in the teaching of foreign languages. Following the notion of Murphey et al (2005:83), the studying of identities as a factor of difference will give valuable information to teachers concerning their students' individual needs. According to the findings of the study conducted by Murphey et al (2005:83), being aware of the differences in the constructed identities in the classroom is important since "they position students in different socio-emotional positions, provoking different investments in learning". One of the issues that arose from the learners' past experiences of learning languages in the present study, for instance, was the lack of understanding the meaning of learning languages. Thus, for three of the four learners, languages were mainly an obligation which had to be accomplished. Only as the learners became older, they realized the benefits of languages in the work life, for example. In their present language learning, however, the learners had invested in their language learning and already envisioned themselves being a part of a community of imagination, such as a job abroad. Supporting and helping the learners to understand the benefits and joys of learning languages hopefully results in strengthening their foreign language identities and high motivation which in Julia's case, for example, were interconnected.

The present study produced only a fraction of valuable information about the connection between foreign language learning and emerging identities and thus, more research is needed to depict the complex formation of foreign language learners' identities. In addition to detailed information about the emerging foreign language identities, more information is also needed from the role of communities of practice and imagined communities in identity building. Furthermore, it is suggested that adult language

learning should be emphasized more because young language learners have overshadowed them at least in the number of studies conducted in the field.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine how foreign language learning affects adult learners and thus, what type of identities emerge as a result of language learning. The previous studies on identity formation and language learning have consistently focused on the field of second language learners, meaning immigrants, which means that there has been a notable shortage of studies conducted from the foreign language learning perspective. Thus, the present study aimed at gathering meaningful and valuable information about the foreign language learners.

The study was conducted through thematic interviews with four adult language learners who studied at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre. Adults were chosen as the target group because of two main reasons. Firstly, in the field of language learning, young learners have mainly dominated the studies leaving adult language learners in their shadow. Secondly, studying adults' language learning was considered especially interesting because all the learners were or had been in work life for several years, or even decades, already and each of them had various backgrounds and multiple grounds for their language learning, which was thought to bring interesting perspectives to the studying of their identities. Additionally, it was considered that adults are able to express issues relating to identities better than young people. The data was analyzed qualitatively using both narrative and content analysis. Eventually, four unique stories of adult language learners were created which followed a common plotline of three themes that arose from the data, namely reasons for learning the language, me as a language learner and experience of change. It was stated that the narratives reflect the learners' emerged foreign language identities.

The results of the present study suggest that language learning at adult age can result in the emergence of various identities. The narratives of the learners about their experiences of language learning revealed that the learners' foreign language identities consisted mainly of four separate identities, namely their work identity, personal identity, learner identity and linguistic identity. The identities were closely connected to the communities of practice in which the identities were constructed in interaction with other people (Wenger 1998). In the light of the results of the present study, the lack of the target community did not prevent the emerging of foreign language identities which was suggested by the study of Block (2008). Thus in line with Korhonen (2014),

Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund (2012), Huang (2011) and Murphey et al (2005), the results indicate that adult language learners can develop their foreign language identities in an educational context. The most influential of the communities was the learning community in which the learners actively used the language and where they received feelings of success. However, of great help in the identity construction process were the learners' imagined communities, which were constructed of the learners' hopes and desires in terms of language proficiency (Norton 2000). Thus, the imagined community of a future work place, for example, motivated and helped the learners to invest in their language learning which they knew would be of benefit in the future.

The narratives of the learners helped to discover that during their learning processes, the adult language learners had already unconsciously considered who they were in the foreign language and where they wanted to be in a few years time. Moreover, language learning had involved various positive changes which most of the learners were able to recognize in themselves and their lives. The changes that the learners had gone through during their language studies did not only consist of the learners' enhanced linguistic skills, but the foreign language learning had also affected the adult learners in many other positive ways, including their already mentioned increased working opportunities, cultural knowledge and boosts of confidence and enthusiasm. Thus, for the majority of the learners, the world had opened up in a different way after starting to learn the foreign language. However, although the results of the present study suggest that language learning changes the learners in various ways and thus, results in reconstruction or emerging of new identities, the learners' ultimate perception of themselves stayed the same. Thus, the increased language skills and knowledge made the learners feel that they had become better versions of themselves, without losing the idea of who they truly were. Alongside their professional aspirations, each of the learners considered their foreign language as meaningful and, for most of them, an important hobby which had become an integral part of their lives. The present study thus emphasizes the significant meaning of language learning as bringing content and joy to people's lives both in the personal as well as societal level.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

HAASTATTELURUNKO

IKÄ

KOULUTUSTAUSTA

AIEMPI KIELITAITO / TAUSTA KIELITAIIDOSTA

- Mitä kieliä olet opiskellut aiemmin ja kuinka kauan? (koulu/opiskeluaikoinasi)
- Millaista kielten opiskelu oli? (esim. mielekästä, inhottavaa, aikaavievää, helppoa, innostavaa jne.)
- Jos on opiskellut useampaa kieltä; Osaatko eritellä oliko kielten oppimisessa jonkinlaisia eroja? Mukavampaa/vaativampaa/rankempaa...
- Millainen oli asenteesi kieltenopiskelua kohtaan yleisesti? Mahdollisesti erot eri kielten välillä.
- Miten kuvailisit millainen kielitaitosi oli koulun/opiskelujen jälkeen? (Ehkä ensin yleisesti, sitten tarkennettuna eri kielet)

KIELEN OPPIMISESTA JA SEN KOKEMUKSISTA KANSALAI SOPISTOSSA

- Mitä kieltä opiskelet tällä hetkellä kansalaisopistossa?
- Milloin olet aloittanut kys. kielen opiskelun?
- Miksi aloitit opiskelemaan kyseistä kieltä? (mahd. syitä: työ, vapaa-aika, mielenkiinto, sos. suhteiden ylläpitäminen jne.)
- Millaista kielen oppiminen on ollut?
- Mitä positiivisia ja negatiivisia kokemuksia sinulla on ollut? (onnistumisen tai epäonnistumisen kokemukset, vaikeudet/vastoin käymiset ja niistä selviäminen)
- Oletko jo päässyt käyttämään kieltä miten paljon luokkahuoneen ulkopuolella? Missä tilanteissa? Miten tärkeänä koet sen, että voit käyttää kieltä luokan ulkopuolella?
- Onko opiskelu kansalaisopistossa ollut erilaista kuin aiemmat kieliopintosi?
- Miten kuvailisit itseäsi kielenoppijana? (Ensin yleisesti kielenoppijana. Jos tuntuu, että on eroja eri kielissä, voit kertoa.)
- Havaitsetko itsessäsi eroja, kun käytät eri kieliä? (englanti, ruotsi, mahd. muut kielet sekä nyt opiskelemasi kieli)
- Millaisia tarkoituksia varten opiskelet nyt kyseistä kieltä? (esim. sosiaalisia tarkoituksia vst aivotyöskentely)
- Onko kielitaito tuonut sinulle uusia tuttavuuksia tai kontakteja? Jos kyllä, minkälaisia? Jos ei, toivotko, että niin tulisi vielä käymään? (Ihmissuhteiden luominen/ylläpitäminen)
- Ajatteletko kuuluvasi ns. (uusiin) kohdekielen yhteisöihin tai ryhmiin opiskeltuasi kys. kieltä?
- Miten kielen opiskelu näkyy vapaa-ajallasi?
- Koetko, että olet jollain tavalla muuttunut aloitettuasi opiskelemaan kys. kieltä? Millä tavoin? (esim. itseilmaisuu, rohkeus, avoimuus, sulkeutuneisuus, kulttuuritietous)
- Millä tavoin koet, että kys. kieli hyödyttää sinua tulevaisuudessa?
- Miten näet itsesi kys. kielen käyttäjänä tulevaisuudessa?

APPENDIX 2

SUOSTUMUS TUTKIMUKSEEN

Olen opintojen loppuvaiheessa oleva englannin kielen pääaineopiskelija ja tuleva kieltenopettaja Jyväskylän yliopistosta. Pro gradu - tutkimukseni tarkoitus on selvittää millaisina aikuisopiskelijat näkevät itsensä kielenoppijoina. Tämä käsittää siis erilaisia tuntemuksia, ajatuksia ja kokemuksia kielen oppimisesta. Tutkimuksen avulla saamme arvokasta tietoa aikuisoppijoiden kielenoppimisesta ja näin myös esimerkiksi tietoa opetuksen kehittämistä varten. Tutkimukseni ohjaajana toimii professori Hannele Dufva.

Tutkimus toteutetaan haastatteluiden avulla, jotka nauhoitetaan. Aineiston raportointi tapahtuu täysin anonymisti, eli tutkimukseen osallistuvista henkilöistä ei jää tutkimuksen raportointiin tietoja, joista heidät voitaisiin tunnistaa. Tutkimuksessa haastateltaviin viitataan joko keksityllä peitenimellä tai tunnistekoodilla. Kerättyä aineistoa käsitellään pro gradu - tutkimuksessa sekä mahdollisesti siihen liittyvissä seminaareissa sekä tieteellisissä tapaamisissa. Aineistoa, kuten äänitteitä, säilytetään muistitikulla lukitussa paikassa tutkijan työhuoneessa. Äänitteet hävitetään tutkimuksen valmistuttua.

Valmis tutkimus julkaistaan mahdollisesti Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjaston opinnäytetyösivuilla.

Allekirjoittamalla tämän suostumuksen, otat osaa tutkimukseen. Osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista ja suostumuksen voi peruuttaa niin halutessaan tutkimuksen missä vaiheessa tahansa.

() Olen lukenut edellä mainitut tiedot ja haluan osallistua tutkimukseen.

Paikka ja aika

Allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

Lämmin kiitos osallistumisesta!

Yhteystiedot:

Opiskelija Reetta Romo

Puh. xxx

Sähköpostiosoite: xxx