

**LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES OF FINNISH STUDENTS:**  
What has English got to do with it?

Bachelor's thesis  
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Tiivistelmä ó Abstract <p>Monikielisyys on osa arkeamme. Täten se voi vaikuttaa myös monien identiteetteihin. Koska myös kielellinen identiteetti muuttuu jatkuvasti, on mahdollista, että opitut kielet voivat vaikuttaa sen rakentumiseen. Monikielisyiden vaikutuksia suomalaisten kieli-identiteetteihin ei olla kuitenkaan mittavasti tutkittu, ja monet aiemmista tutkimuksista keskittyvät vain CLIL-oppijoihin. Tässä tutkielmassa halusin tutkia sekä suomella että vieraalla kielellä opiskelevia lukiolaisia, ja samalla myös löytää mahdollisia yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroavaisuuksia näiden ryhmien välillä.</p> <p>Tutkielmaani varten haastattelin yhteensä kahdeksaa lukiolaista tarkoitukseni kuulla, kuinka he puhuvat kielellisestä identiteetistään ja millaisia repertuaareja he käyttävät. Pidín kaksi ryhmähaastattelua, joista toisessa oli IB-lukiolaisia ja toisessa opiskelijoita suomenkielisestä lukiosta. Kysymykset koskivat haastateltavia kielenkäyttäjinä, heidän opiskelemiaan kieliä sekä heidän ajatuksiaan omasta mahdollisesta monikielisyystään. Analysoin aineistoni diskursiivisella otteella, minkä jälkeen pystyin nimeämään sen pohjalta kolme eri repertuaaria: tärkeys vs. merkityksettömyys, kielenoppija vs. kielenkäyttäjä sekä yksikielinen vs. monikielinen. Sain selville, että englannilla oli suuri merkitys lukiolaisten kielelliselle identiteetille. Se oli opiskelluista kielistä ainoa, joka koettiin suomen lisäksi tärkeäksi ja jonka osaamista kuvattiin positiivisesti. Monikielisydestä puhuttaessa englanti oli myös ainoa kieli, jonka taitaminen vaikutti opiskelijoiden käsityksiin itsestään, eikä englantia enää nähty vieraana kielenä. Kaikki opiskelijat eivät kuitenkaan jakaneet näitä mielipiteitä, sillä haastateltaviin kuului myös opiskelijoita, jotka kokivat olevansa yksikielisiä. Osa heistä myös koki englannin vaikeana, eivätkä he nähneet tulevaisuudessa käyttävänsä sitä ainakaan merkittävässä määrin.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is now more a norm rather than an exception that people speak several languages. Therefore, multilingualism is an important part of many of our lives and the possibility of it affecting our identities should not be ignored. At the moment, research of multilingual identities is still in progress. According to Edwards (2009: 248), when people speak a specific language they belong to a certain speech community. Speaking two or more languages could thus mean that their identities might vary as well. Edwards (2009: 248) draws attention to the fact that the construction of multilingual identities has not been studied enough to make justified assumptions of the matter but there are some interesting speculations that have been raised. For example, multilinguals have been thought to have split personalities (Edwards 2009: 249).

As multilingualism is now present in every aspect of our society, it can also be seen in schools and their curricula. The research of linguistic identity of Finnish students has often focused on content and language integrated learning (CLIL) students' views of themselves as language users (e.g. McCambridge 2007, Kovanen 2011). As multilingualism is assumed to be present in every student's life, whether they attend CLIL courses or not, I wanted to incorporate both types of students in my study to learn about the possible similarities and differences in their linguistic identities. By doing so, I was also hoping to get a broader view of the linguistic identities of Finnish upper secondary school students today.

Identities are constructed in language use and due to this, I was in the present study looking at the issue of linguistic identity from a discursive point of view. The post-modern view on identity describes it as something subjective and constantly changing (Joseph 2004: 3-9). Therefore, the aim of this study was to find out how Finnish students themselves talked about their identities and what they said about themselves as language users when interviewed in the 21st century Finland. To be able to answer this, I interviewed two groups: one group consisting of Finnish upper secondary school students and the other of IB school students. I then identified three different interpretative repertoires in the two interviews.

In chapter 2, I will attempt to form a short review of linguistic identity and then talk about the two different ways of learning English: as a regular school subject and as a medium of

instruction in studying other subjects. I will also talk about four previous studies of Finnish students' linguistic identities. In chapter 3, I will explain my methodological choices and describe data collection and data analysis. In chapter 4, I will be reporting my findings and after that, in chapter 5, I will discuss them in more detail. Finally, in chapter 6, I will discuss the implications and suggest how the topic could be studied further.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

In this chapter I will form a review of linguistic identity. After that I will talk about the aims of foreign language teaching in Finland and then those in CLIL. I will also summarise four previous studies conducted in Finland.

### **2.1 Language and identity**

#### **2.1.1 Identity in general**

Throughout the history of research on identity, there has been a debate about whether identities are stable or fluid. The post-modern view on identity is that they are constantly constructed and can thus change, according to Joseph (2004: 9). Vignoles et al. (2011:10) add that seeming stability does not necessarily mean that identity is not going through different processes. Bucholtz and Hall (2003: 370-371) argue that the concept of identity can be explained in terms of sameness and difference. Sameness allows people to feel that they are a part of a group, whereas differences create a distance between them and those who they consider are unlike them. Sometimes inventing sameness can include the downplaying of differences. In contrast, creating differences between group members and people outside the group is also a part of constructing identities.

Joseph (2004: 3) argues that one's identity is always an individual experience. This type of individual experience does not, however, rule out the fact that one's identity can also mean that one considers oneself to be a part of a smaller or a bigger group, as Vignoles et al. (2011: 2) point out. Interestingly, when people are trying to determine who someone else is, it often tells more about their own identities, according to Joseph (2004: 3). It takes a conscious effort

to identify with a certain group or to exclude others from it. Sometimes, however, identity processes take place without people becoming aware of these, as Vignoles et al. (2011: 5) point out.

Individual characteristics, roles in relation to others and the feeling of membership in different groups are all parts of one's identity, according to Vignoles et al. (2011: 4). An individual's identity consists of a number of different aspects. Joseph (2004: 8) argues that it is undeniable that each individual has a number of identities as people have different roles that change according to other people and contexts. It is not, however, the context that effortlessly changes people, as Vignoles et al. (2011: 11) point out. As stated above, people tend to look for contexts that fit their own conceptions of who they are. Vignoles et al. (2011:6) draw attention to the fact that these type of different identities or different aspects of one's identity can sometimes be in conflict with each other.

### **2.1.2 Linguistic identity**

According to De Fina (2011: 267), people convey their identities through several symbols but the most important set of symbols regarding identity construction is language. Edwards (2009: 250) uses a metaphor to talk about the complicated emotional links to languages that a multilingual person might have:

If we put aside the technicalities of bilingualism, and we (rightly) dismiss claims that having more than one language can be a problem in an on itself, we may turn to matters of attachment and identity. What is the significance of bilingual or multilingual capabilities that link individuals to more than one ethnocultural community? What does it mean, and how does it feel, to have foot in more than one camp?

Edwards's metaphor clearly distinguishes the statuses of the different languages one might know. This seems to be linked to how people choose to use certain languages in different situations. Edwards (2009: 251) also points out that bilingualism does not always mean it affects one's identity. When people use a language purely instrumentally, it is in that case not enough to interfere with their conceptions of themselves. The psychological connection with a language must be deeper to have such effects.

De Fina (2011: 263) draws attention to the fact that the way people use language to convey who they are and also to identify others, show how language and discourse are linked to the identity construction processes. Jensen et al. (2011: 285) argue that globalisation affects the

identity formation of adolescents and young adults as it is now more a norm that they grow up learning about more than one culture. Although they base their arguments on cultural identity, it has to be noted that the cultural and linguistic aspects of identity are very closely linked as there is no culture without a language. Therefore, it could be assumed that learning different languages together with the cultures can also affect the identity formation process.

Joseph (2004: 3) points out that people form conceptions of others by the way they speak. Therefore, accents are an important factor when forming such conceptions. However, the accents of non-native speakers of English do not always mirror their social status as accents are often influenced by many other factors, as Beinhoff (2013: 6) points out. For example, English learners may adopt accents from their teachers or different media, and it cannot thus be counted as a representation of their origin or social class. It would, however, be interesting to find out the reasons why one identifies with a certain accent. Some reasons people adapt an accent are to reject an identity they are thought to have or to indicate a sense of belonging (De Fina 2011: 268).

## **2.2 Foreign language education in Finland: aims**

The Finnish national core curriculum for general upper secondary education (Finnish National Board of Education 2015: 28) encourages teachers to support each student's linguistic identity. According to the curriculum (2015: 107), one aim of foreign language teaching is to encourage students to broaden their multilingual competence. Other aims include guiding students to appreciate the knowledge of different languages and understanding the possibilities that language skills can offer. Foreign language teaching includes making use of all aspects of students' language skills and therefore one aim is to create a link between the language use in schools and in students' free time.

Finnish foreign language education recognises the status of English as a lingua franca of the multicultural world. According to the curriculum (2015: 109), one goal of English language teaching for students in grades 10 to 12 in Finland is for the students to progress as a user of English in different communities of the multicultural world. The second aim is to understand the meaning of English and its role as a medium of international communication. The third aim is to evaluate one's own skills regarding further studies and also to plan one's language studies for future employment and globalisation. The linguistic aim for the students is to reach

the skill level B2.1, which means they are skilled enough to be able to communicate with native English speakers regularly.

### **2.3 Content and language integrated learning (CLIL): aims**

CLIL means teaching non-language subjects using a foreign language (Dalton-Puffer 2008:1). In addition, according to Nikula (2007: 208-209), CLIL is not a specific model for teaching but it covers a variety of different ways of using a foreign language as a medium of instruction. Due to the diversity in CLIL teaching, it is difficult to form generalisations of it, as Nikula mentions. She also adds that teaching content subjects in a foreign language is still a rather new phenomenon in Finnish schools and has not therefore been studied much. However, most of the CLIL classes in Finland have one thing in common: English is most often the main language of instruction. Nikula draws attention to the fact that in CLIL education in Europe, and in Finland, teachers and students are usually non-native speakers of the main language of instruction.

According to Dalton-Puffer (2008: 4), the research results concerning the efficiency of CLIL are positive. More specifically, CLIL students have as much content knowledge as their peer students who have had their mother tongue as the main language in school. Although students with language aptitude learn languages very efficiently even when using more traditional teaching methods, average students' language skills improve significantly in CLIL classes, according to Dalton-Puffer (2008: 5). She points out that studying content subjects in a foreign language has positive effects on students' receptive skills, vocabulary, morphology and creativity, for example. In addition, the technical and semi-technical vocabularies of CLIL learners are larger than their peers who study in their L1 (Dalton-Puffer 2008: 6). In other words, CLIL learners should acquire more knowledge of the main teaching language and be as good as their peers in content subjects.

### **2.4 Previous studies in Finland**

In the earliest study, McCambridge (2007: 2) studied graduates from the English School in Helsinki. Her aim was to find out how education in English had affected the graduates' identities. She collected her data using a semi-structured interview, which she then analysed

from a discursive point of view (McCambridge 2007: 36-39). McCambridge (2007: 94) pointed out that English was an important element in the participants' identities. However, her study interestingly showed that some of the participants wanted to avoid sounding like a native speaker of English as they did not identify with any native communities. They still described themselves as more multiculturally oriented compared to other Finns, according to McCambridge (2007: 94-95).

In her study, Häyriinen (2008: 12) studied CLIL and EFL students and compared how they saw themselves as English users. She collected her data by interviewing four students individually. Two of the students had attended EFL classes, whereas the other two had CLIL experience. Häyriinen (2008: 26) argued that CLIL students felt more comfortable when using English and their descriptions of their relationships with the language were more positive. She also pointed out that EFL students were not only less comfortable but even insecure and hesitant when it came to using English. EFL students were also found to be less active English users and Häyriinen argued that their identities were not affected by the language, which is in sharp contrast with the CLIL students' views of their identities.

In her study, Kovanen (2010: 2) studied six CLIL students in a Finnish IB-school in order to find out about their views on English. She wanted to find out how and where the students used English and what the language meant to them. At the time of the study, the students had been in the school for one year. Kovanen collected her data using a semi-structured group interview and analysed it using content analysis (Kovanen 2010: 34). She found out that for CLIL students, English had become an 'everyday language' (Kovanen 2010: 57-58). The students also hoped to be able to keep English as a part of their lives in the future as well. They were aware of the possibilities that fluency in English offered to them. Kovanen (2010: 64), however, argued that rather than already being bilingual, the students were on their way of becoming bilingual.

Close to the identity research is Kalaja's (2016) longitudinal study on university students' attitudes and beliefs about English and Finnish. She also studied whether those beliefs had changed over time and therefore, the pools of data were collected twice between 2005 and 2010 (Kalaja 2016: 112-113). The students answered a questionnaire that included sentence completion tasks. Kalaja (2016: 113-114) used discourse analysis to analyse the data and found out that the participants resorted to four different interpretative repertoires: affection

repertoire, aesthetics repertoire, vitality repertoire and challenge repertoire. Kalajaø (2016: 118-123) findings showed that the way the students thought about their linguistic identity had changed during the years and that they no longer saw themselves as language learners but as multilingual language users. However, they also seemed to assume that they could never master a second or foreign language as well as their mother tongue which they had used since childhood.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter I will introduce the aim of the study together with the research question. I will also explain the methodological choices of the study, which means introducing the participants as well as data collection and data analysis methods.

#### **3.1 Aims of the Study**

Many of the studies concerning Finnish studentsø linguistic identity concentrate only on CLIL learners. This study focuses on both CLIL students and students who attend traditional English classes. My data consists of two groups of four students in grade 12. My attempt is to find out how the students identify themselves as language users and how they construct their linguistic identities in discourse. Although a study concerning CLIL and Finnish upper secondary school studentsø linguistic identity was carried out by Häyrinen (2008), I have reasons to believe that the situation, particularly considering the students in Finnish upper secondary school, has changed. I am basing my assumption on the major social and technological changes that have taken place during the past decade. Another aspect that makes my study different is the analysis method. Whereas some of the earlier studies on Finnish studentsø linguistic identity have used content analysis as the main method of analysis, this study focuses on discourse. The reason for using discourse analysis is explained in more detail in section 3.4.

The research question of the study is: How do the students talk about their linguistic identities?

More specifically, my attempt is to find out what kind of interpretative repertoires (see section 3.4 for details) the students resort to while being interviewed in groups. In addition, I am also

interested in finding out whether there are differences in the answers due to the students' educational backgrounds.

To answer my research question, I analysed the transcribed interviews and then identified the different repertoires the participants used while talking about their linguistic identities. In the next sections I will talk more about the participants who took part in this study as well as collecting and analysing my data.

### **3.2 Participants**

I decided to study upper secondary school students as I believed they were mature enough to talk about matters related to my study. I chose to study graduating students as they already had two years of upper secondary school behind them but were still involved in the school world. Therefore, they were able to draw back to their experiences from the past two years but also had fresh memories from their last school year in mind. I studied two groups of four: one consisting of EFL students and the other of CLIL students. I reckoned that groups of four would be large enough to give me reliable information but also small enough for everyone to take part in the discussion. All of the participants in my study were female. From now on, I am referring to the students in the Finnish upper secondary school as regular or Reg. Students and to the IB school students as IB Students. Both of the IB Students and Reg. Students were named randomly from A to D.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

I collected my data by interviewing the two groups. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2012: 73), an important benefit, regarding this type of study in particular, is the flexibility that interviews offer. During an interview, it is possible to repeat or modify questions and clarify what one says. They also mention that it is possible to pick the participants for an interview and thus choose individuals that are interested in and have something to say about the matter. Even though I did not personally choose the students who took part in my study, I assumed that the ones who wanted to participate were interested in language and identity, at least to some extent. I was hoping to be able to generate a flow of conversation between myself and the interviewees but also among the interviewees alone.

I decided to conduct semi-structured group interviews (for details, see Appendix 2). In a semi-structured interview there are themes for which the interviewer has prepared more specific questions, according to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2012: 75). The reason I used semi-structured interviews instead of open interviews was the possibility to plan what kind of themes should be covered in the discussions. The questions I had planned for the interviews concerned the languages that the participants used or had studied, the participants themselves and their future as language users, and finally, multilingualism. The interviews took place in a Finnish city between December 2016 and January 2017.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

As I have implied above, my study is qualitative, and as Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2012: 85) point out, the purpose here is not to make statistical generalisations. According to Dufva (2011: 134), the purpose of the type of interview I have used is to find out about the participants' subjective experiences and therefore the analysis of such data is qualitative. I studied how the participants talked about their linguistic identity and what kind of language they used in the discussion. This seems to fit how discourse studies see the formation of identity as according to Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 64), discourse studies see identity as multiple and changing. They also point out that central to discourse studies concerning identities is the fact that identities are constructed in language use.

Discourse analysis can concentrate on what kind of linguistic choices people make when describing themselves. This is related to how people constantly make linguistic decisions while talking. Although the connection between language and identity has been recognised in the past, the study of identity has only recently been accepted in discourse analysis, as De Fina (2011: 263), points out. Although my analysis method was discursive, I only used rough transcriptions as my attempt was to look for the participants' ways of talking about themselves and different languages and I thought a rough convention such as the one used was enough for me to analyse the data. The specific transcription convention I used as a guide was introduced by Alanen (2006: 222, as quoted by Dufva 2011: 145).

The units of analysis in this study were different interpretative repertoires that came up during the two interviews. As defined by Potter and Wetherell (1987: 149), *ö*a repertoire is constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions.ö The

repertoires were identified by reading through the transcribed interviews and looking for frequently occurring themes. While doing so, I paid particular attention to vocabulary choices and opposite opinions. I then categorised extracts from the transcripts by theme and looked for similarities and differences. Three distinct repertoires emerged: importance vs. insignificance repertoire, language learner vs. language user repertoire and monolingual vs. multilingual repertoire.

## 4 FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will report the findings of my study. The findings are categorised into three sections based on the different repertoires that emerged from the data: importance vs. insignificance repertoire, language learner vs. language user repertoire and monolingual vs. multilingual repertoire. The examples here are in Finnish as translating them would interfere with the original meanings. The roughly translated English versions can be found in Appendix 3.

### 4.1 Importance vs. insignificance repertoire

The students felt it was important that they were able to communicate with a language other than Finnish and that English was the best language for that. Reg-Student A<sup>1</sup> described English as something handy when talking about communication without a shared mother tongue (example 1):

#### Example 1

joo ja se ihan riippuu silleen niinku ku mulla on just sukulaisia esimerkiksi virossa kun he ei sinällään osaa puhua suomee.ne kyl ymmärtää ja mä ymmärrän sillee viroo mut mä en osaa sitä puhua niin sit se englanti on sillee tosi kätevä.ja tällee ja sit ihan tällee satunnaisesti jossain kävelee joku tuttu jostain saksasta vastaan niin niinku hän ei osaa suomee ja mä en saksaa niin siinä on se englanti aina

Some talked about personal attachment to a language. They took different positions in terms of how they felt towards Finnish and English. IB-Student B simply stated that English was

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<sup>1</sup> I am referring to the participants as IB-Students A-D and Reg-Students A-D as I have promised anonymity.

more important to her. Many agreed with what IB-Student A said about appreciating both languages in different ways (see example 2):

Example 2

vähä niinku eri tavalla arvostaa kumpaaki et mä esim ite arvostan suomee sillee ku se on semmonen uniikki kieli ja hirveen moni ihminen ei puhu sitä mut sitte englanti on siinä just kiva että sitte taas monet ymmärtää sua

Some students in the Finnish upper secondary group mentioned that they preferred Finnish as a language more although English offered more opportunities, which is also how Reg-Student B felt about the two languages (example 3):

Example 3

no mulle on tärkeätä se että mä pystyn niinku kommunikoimaan myös muidenkin ihmisten kanssa ku suomalaisten mutta mä ite niinku tykkään enemmän suomen kielestä

As the involvement of different languages in one's future can be seen as an expression of how important one thinks a language is, I have chosen to include this aspect in my analysis. In other words, a language can offer the participants certain options for their future. Many mentioned English when asked if they thought other languages than Finnish were going to be playing a role in their future lives. They said they would like to study in English, as also pointed out by Reg-Student A (see example 4):

Example 4

mä veikkaan just että englanti et mua esim kiinnostaa opiskella niinku englanniksi ja tällee mut vähä vaikee sanoo et oisko siellä muita ku en mä oikein muita osaa ((naurua))

Many shared IB-Student D's views as she mentioned she would also like to combine different languages in her future job (example 5):

Example 5

mm mä en tiedä vielä missä niinku sillain mut kyl mä aattelin et jotenki työn kanssa yhistäis mahdollisimman monta eri kieltä,jatkan vielä eri kieliä opiskelua

Many said they would like to keep studying the languages they had started at school to become more fluent in them. However, Reg-Student D thought that there were not going to be other languages than Finnish in significant roles in her future life when being asked about it

(example 6):

Example 6

mä en ehkä en ajattele et on ainakaan mitenkään silleen merkittävässä osassa muita ku suomi

The other languages the students had studied in school included Spanish, German, Swedish, and Russian. None of these were, however, regarded as particularly important and were often used only when necessary or when visiting a foreign country, like Reg-Student A mentioned in example 7:

Example 7

no ei oikeestaan että ruotsia käytän ite sitte tunnilla jos on pakko mut en mä sitä niinku osaa ja espanjaa käytin ehkä kerran ku oltiin espanjassa

Overall, the possibilities that English offers as a lingua franca were often stressed by the participants. Many felt they needed English in their daily lives, some admitted using it even more than Finnish. However, in some answers by the Finnish upper secondary school group, particularly when talking about the future, only Finnish was seen as important. This already shows that there was variation in the students' linguistic identities.

#### 4.2 Language learner vs. language user repertoire

Being good at a language was often described as being a natural user of that language and the students described themselves as English users with words such as natural (*luonteva*, *luonnollinen*) or fluent (*sujuva*). This is also what IB-Student D claimed (example 8):

Example 8

just niinku semmonen sujuva ehkä itelläki...luonnollinen

Reg-Student B mentioned that speaking English was usually natural for her but if she had not used the language for a long time it could affect her fluency (example 9):

Example 9

mulla tulee kans yleensä aika luonnostaan varsinki just viime aikoina oon käyttäny tosi paljo niin sit se silleen kehitty mut jos ei oo tosi pitkään aikaan käyttäny niin sit voi olla hetki et joutuu miettimään jotain

Some students from the IB school group as well as from the Finnish school group felt that

they spoke English even more naturally than Finnish. Some of them even said that English is sometimes easier to use, as Reg-Student A mentions in example 10:

Example 10

siis mää oikeesti huomaan sen tosi usein et mä mietin jotain mulla on vaikka joku tunne ja sit mä oon sillee et miten mä kuvailen tän nii se tulee sillee paljo luontevammin niinku englanniks ku suomeks...siis just sillee että itsensä ilmaseminen on mulle paljo helpompaa englanniksi

Some participants from both of the groups also talked about how they could occasionally forget how something is said in Finnish as only the English word would come to mind. Reg-Student B was one of them (example 11):

Example 11

no joskus on niinku sillee et tulee joku sana mieleen englanniksi ja sit sitä ei osaa tavallaan suomentaa

In contrast, during the interview of the group of Finnish upper secondary school students, quite negative expressions appeared when talking about English. Reg-Student C mentioned she might become frustrated (*alkaa turhautuu*) while speaking English, which could then discourage her from even trying, as she mentions in example 12:

Example 12

mm no mulla on just sillee jos ei tiä jotain nii alkaa turhautuu ja sit ei niinku jaksa puhua tai ees yrittää

Reg-Student D mentioned being poor at English (*olla huono englannissa*) and being afraid (*jänistää*) of speaking the language (see example 13):

Example 13

se vähä riippuu ehkä just tommonen onnistumisen fiilis jos sitte osaa sanoo sen asian mutta sit ku mäki oon aika huono englannissa niin sitte ehkä vähä aina jänistää sitä puhumista

However, she had experienced positive feelings in situations where she had tried to speak English and managed (see example 14). She also talked about speaking English as something that has to be gone through in her mind before starting and therefore not as something that happens automatically (example 14):

## Example 14

mm mun pitää ainaki välillä tosi paljo miettiä ja sillee ei se kovin automaattisesti tuu

Negative feelings of oneself as a language user were expressed more while talking about the use of other languages taught. This was evident in both groups. For example, all of the students in both of the groups had studied Swedish before but many said they had poor Swedish skills. None of them felt comfortable speaking Swedish, which is also what IB - Student C mentioned in example 15:

## Example 15

...jos on joku.tuota joka puhuu äidinkielenään ruotsia nii sen puheesta ei ymmärrä mitään ja sit tota ku ite pitäs alkaa lausumaan siinä nii se on.vähä sillee niinku epämurkava tilanne

This was also how the students felt about many of the other languages they had studied. Something that came up when talking about the additional languages was the fact that the students had not used some of them in years, which could certainly affect how confident they felt when using the languages, as could be seen from IB-Student A's answer (example 16):

## Example 16

A: mä en muista siit ((saksasta)) hirveesti ku ei oo käyttäny sitä kahteen vuoteen

As one can notice, in some of the examples the students described their English skills quite negatively and using it might sometimes even have been frustrating. It should be noted that this was only evident in the Finnish upper secondary school group and, as mentioned above, there were students who felt natural and confident when speaking English in that group as well. One could also find similarities between the answers of Reg-Student A and Reg-Student B and the IB students' answers.

### 4.3 Monolingual vs. multilingual repertoire

Every IB student interviewed felt they could call themselves bilingual. IB-Student B said that using English is effortless, when talking about why she defines herself as a bilingual (example 17):

## Example 17

käytön vaivattomuus tekee siitä sen että tuntuu ihan niinku siltä että ois aina puhunu sitä ((englantia))

IB-Student D mentioned sometimes forgetting certain words when using English but it did not make her question her bilingualism (example 18):

## Example 18

niin mullakin ja vaikka sit välillä tuntuuki et sanasto vähän uupuu mut sitte kuitenkin se ymmärrys on sen verran hyvä että kyl mä koen olevani kaksikielinen

In addition, Reg-Student A in the Finnish upper secondary school group, although more hesitantly, also defined herself as a bilingual (example 19):

## Example 19

no siis.vähä ehkä vaikee alkaa sillee niinku määrittelemään.no en mä kyllä tiä kyllä mä ehkä määrittelin itseni kaksikieliseksi... kyl mä sillee joo

Interestingly, she had also noticed her personality changing when switching from Finnish to English (example 20):

## Example 20

mä huomaan ainaki itessäni et yleensä mä oon jotenki paljo ilosempi tai sillee paljo positiivisempi jos mä puhun niinku englantia tai ylipäätänsä jotain muuta kieltä ku suomee tai no ei ruotsii kuitenkaa ((nauraa)) mutta niinku sillee

In contrast to the IB group, there was more variation in the other group regarding how the students described themselves regarding multilingualism. All of them besides Reg-Student A defined themselves as monolinguals although all of them had studied different languages for several years. Also Reg-Student B, despite having described her English quite fluent and natural, classified herself as a monolingual (example 21):

## Example 21

silti.mää määrittelin itteni kuitenkin yksikieliseksi

It should be noted that none of the participants from either of the groups described themselves as multilinguals. In addition, some of the participants even regarded themselves as monolinguals. However, all of them had for years studied and, at least to some extent used, other languages as well.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In the present study, I wanted to find out how Finnish students talked about their linguistic identities. Three different interpretative repertoires emerged from the interviews: importance vs. insignificance repertoire, language learner vs. language user repertoire and monolingual vs. multilingual repertoire. In this chapter, I will discuss my findings further.

The students approached the importance vs. insignificance repertoire from two different points of view. Firstly, the students talked about the possibilities a language could offer to them. Secondly, the issue of importance was approached from a more personal level as well. The importance vs. insignificance repertoire revealed which languages were important to the participants and which languages might have been a part of their linguistic identities. As English was the only language besides Finnish that came across as important in the two discussions, it could be said that none of the other languages played a role in the participants' identities.

The language learner vs. language user repertoire could be seen in the way the students talked about the relationships between themselves and different languages. The students mentioned being poor or good at a language or whether certain languages seemed hard or easy to them. This was linked with how confident or unconfident they felt when using different languages. Reg-Student A and Reg-Student B together with every student in the IB group described their English as natural or fluent. This leads one to believe they did not see English as a foreign language but a natural part of them and their lives.

If we now go back to what Häyrynen (2008: 26) said about EFL learners, we can notice certain similarities in some of the answers but there were students who felt very comfortable with English and considered themselves natural users of the language as well. Looking at examples 8 to 11, it could now be said that students can feel confident about speaking English and be fluent in it although they have not taken CLIL courses. It could be suggested that

Finnish students' linguistic identities are now more affected by English than they were nine years ago. In addition, English was the only language the participants had studied that they felt particularly confident using. None of the other languages or the students' skills regarding different languages were described as positively as English was. This was the case although all of them had studied other languages besides English for years as well. This certainly makes English stand out from the other languages that students learn in Finnish schools today.

The monolingual vs. multilingual repertoire positioned the participants according to how they perceived themselves regarding multilingualism. The discussion around this topic varied quite a lot between and within the two groups. All of the IB school students defined themselves as bilinguals and Reg-Student A from the Finnish group also felt she could call herself bilingual. The rest of the students in the Finnish group all felt monolingual. What is interesting is that Reg-Student B who was fluent in English had even mentioned sometimes forgetting Finnish equivalents for words but still thought of herself as a monolingual. If we now draw back to what the Finnish core curriculum (2015: 107) says about multilingualism, it can be noticed that perhaps more could be done to develop Finnish students' conceptions of themselves as multilinguals. When thinking about what Edwards (2009: 251) pointed out about the different ways of using languages, it could here be assumed that the students who had studied several languages but still saw themselves as monolinguals, only used English and all the other languages they had studied as linguistic instruments or simply saw them as school subjects.

The participants who described themselves bilinguals all referred to their knowledge of English rather than any other language. As mentioned earlier, English was also the only language the students regarded as important besides Finnish. Compared to the other languages they had learned, English was the only one that was natural for the students and the only one they thought they were particularly good at. All of these points enhance the role of English in Finnish students' lives and thus their linguistic identities as well. This is in accordance with what McCambridge (2007: 94) found out about the importance of English in her participants' linguistic identities but the present study shows that English can also affect the linguistic identity of those who have not taken CLIL courses. Kovanen's (2010: 64) argument about Finnish students not being bilingual but on their way towards it seems now to be an understatement as many of the students themselves thought that they were fluent, natural and competent users of English and most of all, bilingual. Since many of them felt they were bilingual, their linguistic identity was not based on their mother tongue only, it had rather evolved from the mixture of using the two languages.

Drawing back to what Kalaja (2016: 118-123) found out about university students' attitudes towards English, it has to be noted that the results here are somewhat different. Although Kalaja's participants defined themselves as multilinguals, they mentioned they could never be as good at English as they were at their mother tongue. They thought mastering a language would require it to be learned already in childhood or by living in a foreign country. In the present study, however, there are many students who thought they had mastered English as well as they had Finnish. They had sometimes noticed minor problems when using the language (as in example 18) but it did not make them question their bilingualism. They saw it as a normal part of language use rather than a sign of not having good enough skills. In addition, not every participant was officially going to be bilingual, which suggests that bilingualism is not necessarily a fact but an experience.

As Reg-Student A had said that English was a natural language for her and described herself bilingual, it was interesting to find out how she also acknowledged her personality dividing between the languages. She said she felt happier and more positive when she spoke English compared to using Finnish. Although both of the languages were natural for her, she experienced them differently. If we now consider what Edwards (2009: 250) said about having one's foot in two camps, we can see that individuals can acknowledge the impact that languages could have on their personality, and even, identity. People can acknowledge that they in fact are standing in different camps and act differently in each of them. As Reg-Student A said she has noticed it happening, it could be said that the change in personality has happened unconsciously and was not something that was done on purpose. This reminds also of how Joseph (2004:8) argued that each individual has multiple identities that change according to different roles and contexts. It would be fascinating to study whether this kind of an alteration in one's personality stays the same, evolves or disappears in time and whether it is, at least to some degree, a part of every bi- and multilingual. In addition, one could study whether this kind of phenomenon is either caused by the speaker's inner views or the linguistic features of a language or whether it is something cultural.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to find out how Finnish grade 12 students talked about their

linguistic identities. I was also interested in finding out whether there were differences in the linguistic identities of IB school students and those who study most school subjects in their mother tongue, Finnish. To be able to answer these questions, I interviewed two different groups. By identifying interpretative repertoires in the data, those interviewed could be divided to those who thought of themselves as bilinguals due to their English skills and those who felt monolingual. The monolingual group had two types of students in it: those who had studied several languages but felt they were not very good at them and a student who had studied several languages and felt she was fluent in a language other than Finnish but could still not call herself bilingual.

Before the study, I was interested in finding out whether the situation particularly regarding Finnish upper secondary school students had changed since the last study on their linguistic identity had been conducted (for details, see section 2.4). Now I can answer that yes, it has. As Häyrynen (2008) argued almost a decade ago that CLIL students were clearly better in English and the only ones to think of themselves as bilingual, it can now be said that the situation has changed. Although there was only one student who had not taken CLIL courses and could call herself bilingual, particularly the situation regarding language skills has taken a larger turn as also very confident, fluent and regular user of English took part in the recent study. It has to be admitted, though, that the results from 2008 were still evident but my point is that the situation is changing, and English is in fact affecting the identities of many Finnish students. It would not seem too far-fetched to assume that this is not only happening in Finland but in other parts of the world, too.

However, as mentioned earlier, identities are constantly constructed and the data I got from the interviews was merely a fraction of how they perceived their identities in that place and time. All I could do was analyse what they said in a particular interview, surrounded by certain people in a certain place at a certain time. My aim was to be able to describe their linguistic identities by what the participants themselves had said. In other words, it is the nature of identity that determines how one might study it. As I did not choose the participants myself, it turned out that all of them were female. To further study the topic, one should also include male participants to make the study more comprehensive.

As it seems that English can have a strong impact on Finnish students' linguistic identities, studying the topic further would give us valuable information of how Finnish people see themselves as language users. One could choose to study younger people but questions should

then be altered to be more comprehensible to them. Similarly, one might interview people already involved in working life and perhaps find out how different working environments affect people's linguistic identities. One might also collect data by individual interviews to reach a deeper understanding of the participant's identity. This type of a study could also be conducted on a larger scale to provide information from a larger number of participants. However, the discursive nature of identity construction should not be left out in such a case. All things considered, the issue of language and identity in the world today is an intriguing subject and could be studied with both children and adults. As research on identity has only recently been admitted to the field of discourse, there are still multiple types of discursive studies to be conducted on language and identity.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Interview questions in Finnish

1. Mitä kieliä opiskelet?

Kieli kerrallaan:

2. Milloin aloitit kielen opiskelun?

3. Opiskeletko koulussa mielestäsi enemmän itse kieltä vai asioita kyseisellä kielellä? Käytätkö kieltä koulupäivän aikana muulloin kuin opetustilanteissa?

4. Käytätkö kieltä vapaa-ajalla? Mihin ja miksi

5. Koetko, että kieli sopii johonkin suomen kieltä paremmin? Esimerkkejä? Entä milloin suomen kieli on parempi vaihtoehto?

6. Voitko käyttää kieltä vaivattomasti (miettimättä samalla mm. kielioppia tai sanoja)?

7. Millainen tämän kielen käyttäjä koet olevasi?

8. Millaisia tunteita tällä kielellä puhuminen sinussa herättää?

9. Kun puhut tätä kieltä, tavoitteletko jotain tiettyä aksenttia? Miksi?

10. Koetko, että kyseinen kieli on sinulle tärkeä? Miksi?

Yleisesti:

11. Näetkö oman tulevaisuutesi sisältävän suomen lisäksi muita kieliä? Osaatko sanoa tarkemmin mitä ja miksi?

12. Ajattelematta sanan virallista merkitystä, tuntuuko sinusta itsestäsi, että olet kaksi- tai monikielinen? Miksi/miksi et?

### Appendix 2: Interview questions in English

1. What languages do you study?

One language at a time:

2. When did you start studying the language?

3. Do you think that in school you study more the language itself or things in that particular language? Do you use the language during your school day in any other than learning situations?
4. Do you use the language on your free-time? For what and why?
5. Do you consider the language better than Finnish in some situations? Examples? When is Finnish a better option?
6. Can you use the language without trouble (without simultaneously thinking about e.g. grammar or vocabulary)?
7. How would you describe yourself as a user of this language?
8. How do you feel when speaking this language?
9. When you are speaking the language, do you go for a specific accent? Why?
10. Do you consider this language important to you? Why?

General questions:

11. Do you think there are other languages but Finnish in your future? Can you tell which languages and why?
12. Without considering the official meaning of the word, do you feel that you are bi- or multilingual? Why/why not?

### **Appendix 3: Roughly translated data examples**

- (1) yeah and it kinda depends like 'cause I have relatives for example in estonia and they cannot speak finnish.they do understand and I understand estonian but I can't speak it so then english is like very handy.and like this and then just like when an acquaintance from like germany is randomly walking somewhere towards me and like they can't speak finnish and I can't speak german so there is always english
- (2) I kinda appreciate both in different ways like for example I appreciate finnish 'cause it is this unique language and not so many people speak it but then english is nice like that that many understand you
- (3) well it is important for me that I can like communicate with others but finnish people also but myself I like the finnish language more
- (4) I guess that english that I'm for example interested to study in like english and like this but it's a little hard to say if there are others 'cause I really don't know any others ((laughing))
- (5) mm don't know yet like where but I thought of somehow combining as much languages as possible with work.I still continue to study different languages

- (6) I maybe don't think that there is at least not in like a significant role others than finnish
- (7) well not really I use swedish then in classes if i have to but i like don't know how to and spanish I used maybe once when we were in spain
- (8) like that sort of fluent with me too...natural
- (9) it usually comes quite naturally with me especially when lately I have used it really much so it sort of develops but if I haven't used it in a really long time then there can be a moment that I have to think about something
- (10) ) I really notice it really often that I'm thinking about something I have for example a feeling and then I'm like how do I describe this and it comes so much more naturally with english ... well just like expressing oneself is for me a lot more easier in english
- (11) well sometimes it's like that that a word comes to mind in english and then you can't kind of translate it to finnish
- (12) mm well I have it like that if I don't know something then I start becoming frustrated and then I can't be bothered to speak or even try
- (13) it depends maybe that kind of a feeling of success if I do know how to say that but then -cause my english is quite poor so then I maybe always chicken out of speaking
- (14) mm I at least have to think a lot sometimes and like it's not very automatic
- (15) ) ... if there's someone who has swedish as their mother tongue then I don't understand anything from their speech and then well when I should start pronouncing there it is. a bit like an uncomfortable situation
- (16) I don't remember much of it ((german)) -cause I haven't used it in two years
- (17) how effortless it is to use it makes it feel like you have always spoken it ((English))
- (18) yeah with me too and although occasionally it feels like vocabulary is missing but then the understanding is still that good that I do think I'm bilingual
- (19) well yeah.it's maybe a bit hard to start defining.well I don't know yeah maybe I would define myself as a bilingual ...yeah I do kind of
- (20) I notice at least in myself that usually I'm somehow a lot more happier or like a lot more positive if I'm like speaking english or generally some other language than finnish or well not swedish anyway (laughing) but like that
- (21) still.I would define myself monolingual anyway