

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**"AS MANY MEN, SO MANY MINDS" -  
A STUDY ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOREIGN  
LANGUAGES IN FINLAND**

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by

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”AS MANY MEN, SO MANY MINDS” - A STUDY ON ATTITUDES  
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Kieliasenteita on aiemmin tutkittu sekä perinteisen, että diskursiivisen näkemyksen mukaisesti. Tutkielman taustalla on kuitenkin kolmas näkemys kieliasenteista. Tämän metalingvistisen käsityksen mukaan kieliasenteet määritellään ns. mytologeemeiksi, joita voidaan tutkia sekä kvantitatiivisin, että kvalitatiivisin menetelmin.

Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia ovat suomalaisten vieraita kieliä koskevat mytologeemit. Kieliasenteita tutkittiin kyselylomakkeen avulla, joka koostui kahdesta eri tehtävästä. Tehtävissä vastaajia pyydettiin täydentämään 1) sopivin kieli lauseisiin, joissa kieliä määrittävät adjektiivit olivat valmiina, sekä 2) kahdeksasta kielestä kaksi lausetta: a) Mielestäni \_\_\_ kieli kuulostaa... ja b) \_\_\_ kieli sopii hyvin... Vastaajilta kysyttiin myös opiskeltuja kieliä, kielten kurssinumeroita sekä sukupuolta. Vastaajat olivat lukiolaisia ja iältään 16-18 -vuotiaita. Yhteensä heitä oli 70, joista miehiä oli 33 ja naisia 37.

Vastaukset ensimmäiseen tehtävään (1) analysoitiin adjektiivi kerrallaan, mihin sisältyi kaikkien vastausten määrällinen ja prosentuaalinen raportointi. Vastaukset toiseen tehtävään (2) jaoteltiin ensin ryhmiin samankaltaisuuden perusteella, jonka jälkeen suoritettiin määrällinen raportointi. Lisäksi vastauksia pyrittiin myös kuvailemaan, sekä selittämään niiden syitä. Molempien tehtävien kohdalla otettiin huomioon myös mahdolliset erot miesten ja naisten välillä. Englantia ja ruotsia koskevien vastausten avulla tutkittiin myös eroja hyvin ja heikosti menestyvien vastaajien välillä.

Ensimmäisessä tehtävässä vastaajat nimesivät englannin tarkimmaksi, helpoimmaksi ja rikkaimmaksi, venäjän rumimmaksi ja vaikeimmaksi, saksan vakavimmaksi ja säännönmukaisimmaksi, ranskan kauneimmaksi, ruotsin köyhimmäksi ja viron hauskimmaksi kieleksi. Toisessa tehtävässä vastaajat kertoivat englannin kielen olevan enimmäkseen mukavaa ja helppoa, venäjän ja ranskan vaikeaa, saksan maskuliinista, viron suomea muistuttavaa, suomen ja espanjan kivaa ja ruotsin rumaa. Lisäksi toisessa tehtävässä englannin, saksan ja ranskan katsottiin enimmäkseen soveltuvan tv-sarjoihin ja elokuvaan, kun taas venäjä, viro, suomi, ruotsi sekä espanja sopivat vastaajien mukaan parhaiten käytettäviksi kyseisissä maissa. Erot hyviä ja heikompi arvosanoja saaneiden vastaajien välillä olivat melko pieniä vertailtaessa englannin ja ruotsin kielestä annettuja vastauksia. Kuitenkin heikompi arvosanoja saaneet vastaajat kokivat ruotsin vaikeaksi, mikä ei käynyt ilmi englantia koskevissa vastauksissa.

Asiasanat: descriptive research. language attitudes. metalinguistic activity. mythologemes.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, many Finns, among other nationalities, took notice of the world championships in football which were held a few months ago in South-Korea and Japan. Even though the Finnish team could not fight its way to the actual world championships, many Finns chose, anyhow, their favourite team from the selection of other nationalities. A local newspaper, for example, inquired a couple of people about their personal favourites receiving answers, such as, "I hope the Spanish team will win. They are so sympathetic." or "I don't know. The most important thing is that the Swedes won't do well. They are so annoying!". Similarly, some of the interviewees preferred the French team, while others were devoted fans of Italy, and so on. Obviously, the Finns turned out to be no different from the rest of the world in the sense that they, too, in addition to having their own favourite teams, also seemed to have opinions about other nationalities in general. Consequently, one might ask if the interviewees' choices for the favourite teams had, in fact, something to do with their attitudes towards different nationalities, and not so much with their skills in football!

Even if no study has yet been carried out on the influence of people's attitudes towards different countries or nationalities in their choices for favourite football teams, extensive research with the focus on *language attitudes* has, however, been carried out. As language attitudes have been studied from the 1960s to the present day, also the ideas and concepts concerning the nature of language attitudes as well as the methods used in research have, quite understandably, been many and somewhat varying. For a considerable period of time, language attitudes were defined only according to the mentalist view which, above all, emphasizes the "static" nature of language attitudes. Later, towards the 1990s, the traditional paradigm in research on language attitudes had to give room to another prominent paradigm in which language attitudes were defined as discursive constructions. As a result, the

general nature of language attitudes was now considered somewhat unstable, and the social aspects in the formation of language attitudes were strongly emphasized.

But, despite the existence of different possibilities of studying language attitudes, the same practices can also help us to identify another phenomenon closely related to language attitudes. In fact, language attitudes and attitudes towards different nationalities seem, more or less, to refer to the same thing in people's mind. In other words, languages are, in general, considered symbols for different nationalities. Therefore, the study of language attitudes can also be combined with research on people's attitudes towards different nationalities. This can be best noticed when scrutinizing the results of studies carried out on language attitudes: the subjects often associate their definitions on a specific language with the people who speak it. Accordingly, the characterizations given by the subjects of a certain language usually apply also to the nation where it is spoken, and to the people who speak it as their mother tongue - and vice versa. Consequently, attitudes towards different languages suddenly becomes a much larger concept which not only gives information on people's personal views, but also makes it easier to notice how the views shared by a group of people have an effect on society in general. The most well-known example of this is probably the heated discussion on the role and importance of learning Swedish in upper secondary schools in Finland. Again, opinions have been expressed both for and against but, most importantly, public discussion also raises the question on the nature of these views, as well as the thoughts and reasons which lie behind them.

Largely, the nature of language attitudes and the reasons Finns have for holding such attitudes is also the focus of the present study. To be more specific, the present study aims at finding out not only the attitudes held by Finns towards Swedish, but also the attitudes expressed towards other European languages. In addition, an attempt is also made to describe and explain these attitudes to reach a wider understanding of the reasons on which Finns base their views. However, as far as the methodology and definitions are concerned, the present study cannot be directly associated with either

traditional or discursive research. Yet, there are some elements from both approaches adapted to the present study. For example, a questionnaire, which is often perceived as an essential part of traditional research, is also used in studying the language attitudes of Finns in the present study. But, in contrast to traditional research, an attempt is made to reach a more descriptive and explanatory perspective when analysing the language attitudes which, in turn, is usually considered one of the trademarks of discursive research. Even though the present study cannot, as mentioned, be directly combined with either traditional or discursive research, some information is still provided on them in the present study. For example, the general characteristics of the two lines of research, as well as examples of studies based on them will be discussed and summarized in the following chapters. This is because the combination of aspects deriving from both traditional and discursive research is here regarded as a strength, which creates the basis for studying language attitudes of Finns in the present study.

In summary, chapter 2 reviews the ideas and practices of traditional research on language attitudes. Also, criticism towards the definitions and methods within the positivist paradigm is expressed. Chapter 3 concentrates on defining the features of discursive research within the "newer" constructionist paradigm. However, some of the definitions and methods of discursive research have also been criticized. Next, chapter 4 discusses the ideas and practices behind the present study, as well as summarizes a similar study carried out earlier in Russia. Chapter 5 introduces the objectives and methodology of the present study. Then, chapter 6 reports and discusses the findings. Finally, in chapter 7, the present study is evaluated and suggestions are made for further research.



## 2 MAINSTREAM RESEARCH

In this chapter, the various definitions of an attitude are introduced first in a more historical perspective, after which the ideas and practices characterizing mainstream research on language attitudes will be discussed in more detail. Also, some examples on studies carried out within the positivist paradigm are provided. Finally, the ideas and methodology of mainstream research on language attitudes will be criticized.

### 2.1 Definitions of an attitude

In Ancient Egypt the inhabitants believed, according to Kashkin (2001), that the reason why people in other countries spoke differently had to do with the "fact" that their tongues had grown in the opposite direction in their mouths. The conclusion was made by the Egyptians because foreign languages came across to them as unclear and incorrect. Some centuries later, the people in the flourishing Roman empire might have suspected that the ancient Egyptians had a somewhat negative *attitude* towards foreign nations and languages. Although, instead of an attitude, they might, according to Baker (1992), have used a word similar to the Latin word *actus*, which originally meant 'aptitude for action'. As Baker (1992) further points out, this term which meant a tendency to a certain kind of action in Latin, adopted even later the literary form *attitude* in English. However, the original meaning of the English word *attitude*, which was derived from Latin, changed slightly in the course of time. More precisely, *attitude* in English developed later into meaning 'a posture' or 'pose' in painting or drama, as in *adopt an attitude of innocence*. Nonetheless, the meaning of an attitude was yet about to change. The "newer" meaning of an attitude emphasizes, according to Jahoda and Warren (1966), increasingly a psychological rather than a physical orientation. In fact, the more modern and also very influential meaning of an attitude was efficiently summarized by

Allport (1935, quoted in Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980:17 and Baker, 1992:11): "A mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." Unfortunately, the story is not as clear-cut as it sounds, quite the contrary. Since the earlier days of humankind, attitudes have definitely grown only to become a very complex and sensitive issue both in science and everyday-life.

Nowadays, according to Eiser (1986) and many other researchers in the field of social psychology and sociolinguistics, an attitude is at the same time the most natural phenomenon as well as the most complicated one. Certainly this is, at least partly, due to the fact that no universal understanding has been reached over the definition of attitude (Ryan and Giles, 1982, Billig, 1987, Potter and Wetherell, 1987 and Ajzen, 1988). In spite of this, as Eiser (1986) points out, an attitude is a concept which is introduced in many theories in the forementioned fields of research, as well as in theoretical and experimental literature in general. However, an attitude is not only a term familiar to professionals in a few limited subject areas, on the contrary, everyone has some idea of what attitudes are all about. An attitude, as Gardner and Lambert (1972) observe, is a term frequently used in everyday conversation in various different contexts, which means that nearly everyone should be able to define it at some level. Usually, according to Eiser (1986), "to say that we have a certain attitude towards something or someone is a shorthand way of saying that we have feelings or thoughts of like or dislike, approval or disapproval, attraction or repulsion, trust or distrust and so on". Alternatively, as Ajzen (1988:4) depicts it, "an attitude is a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event". It is, therefore, not surprising that attitudes, to a certain extent, are seen by Gardner and Lambert (1972) to have an affect on the things we say or do, and also to control our reactions and behaviour in respect to what others say or do. As a consequence, attitudes can be, as Cook (1969:179) proposes, defined as motivelike constructions which also can, as mentioned, be very important in terms of determining human behaviour. However, it is, as Baker (1992) points

out, useful to bear in mind that attitudes do not necessarily predict occasional behaviour because it always partly depends on contextual and situational circumstances. With this in mind, the idea of drawing any strong and precise connections between attitudes and behaviour is nowadays considered almost impossible, even though behaviour, to a certain extent, can reflect attitudes. Or, one can go as far as to say, as Fishbein (1967:477) argues, that there seems to be "little, if any, consistent evidence supporting the hypothesis that knowledge of an individual's attitude toward some object will allow one to predict the way he will behave with respect to the object". Consequently, Ajzen (1988) and Baker (1992) argue that attitudes are, in fact, hypothetical constructs, which cannot be directly observed in people, which is to say that a person's thoughts and feelings, and the processes behind them are inaccessible to others.

Even though there is some uncertainty on the relationship between attitude and behaviour among the researchers, traditional research is still very much prevalent as far as language attitudes are concerned. Particularly, mainstream research is based on a certain view on the nature of language attitudes referred to as the mentalist view. Next, the details of the mentalist view, as well as mainstream research in general will be discussed more specifically.

## **2.2 Language attitudes and the mentalist view**

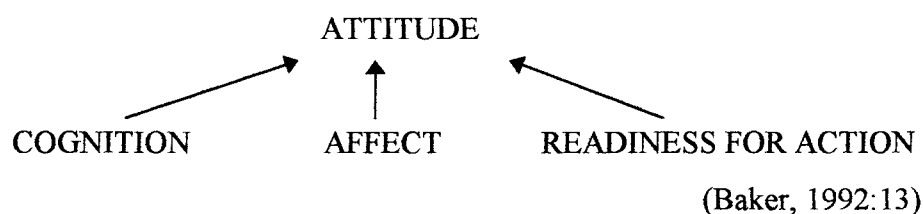
Compared with other types of attitudes people can have towards various subjects, in research of language attitudes the focus is on a very specific kind of attitudes. Language attitudes as a concept, according to Ryan and Giles (1982) and Kalaja (1999), includes, first of all, attitudes which people have towards persons who speak different languages from them. In addition, also attitudes which people have towards persons, who speak the same language as they themselves but have different social or regional dialects, are considered language attitudes. The study of language attitudes is a fairly new line of research, which Ryan and Giles (1982) and Kalaja (1999) consider to have started around the 1960s when Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum introduced the matched-guise technique in indirect attitude measuring. In this

way, many other researchers around the world became interested in the topic as well and, therefore, language attitudes became a currently well-known area of research (Ryan and Giles, 1982 and Kalaja, 1999).

The research that has been carried on language attitudes from the 1960s to the present day has, as Kalaja (1999) mentions, mostly been carried out in accordance with a mentalist view of attitudes. Largely, this view consists of certain views and definitions about how attitudes are "located" in the human mind. To be more specific, language attitudes are seen as separate entities in the mind, which have been formed when a specific kind of a stimulus has been present. In other words, attitudes are, as Kalaja (1999) describes, actually considered a mental condition which can again be activated when a certain stimulus, in other words, speech or writing, is present.

More precisely, attitudes can be divided into three main components: *cognition*, *affect* and *readiness for action* (Oskamp, 1977, Judd and Johnson, 1984, Ajzen, 1988 and Baker, 1992, see fig.1).

Figure 1. A three-component model of attitude



The cognitive component includes thoughts and beliefs which means, for example, that a person possessing a favourable attitude towards Swedish might believe in the importance of Finland having a minority language. The affective component, on the other hand, consists of feelings towards the attitude object, in this case Swedish, which means that a person can, for instance, absolutely love the language and have a passion for Swedish films. However, as Baker (1992) points out, feelings and beliefs may not always go hand in hand, but one can express a positive attitude towards a language or its variant and have, at the same time, covert negative feelings about it. The third,

conative component, that is to say, readiness for action, deals with an intention of acting on the basis of an attitude one has. For example, if a person has a favourable attitude towards Swedish, s/he might consider sending his/her children to a bilingual school. Among researchers, there is, however, some variety in views concerning the theoretical construct of attitude. Instead of the three-component model (see fig.1), an attitude can, according to Shaw and Wright (1967), also be viewed as "a set of affective reactions toward the attitude object". Closely related with these affective reactions are also propositions about the object (cognition) as well as the action tendencies (readiness for action), which, however, are not considered a part of the attitude itself.

In the three-component model of attitude, the three aspects, namely cognition, affect and readiness for action, form together a single construct referred to as an attitude. To study these abstract constructs from the mentalist point of view, taking into consideration the model according to which attitudes are "built", specific methods have been developed in accordance with the positivist paradigm. This is, however, discussed in more detail in the following section.

### **2.3 Measuring of language attitudes within a positivist paradigm**

Within traditional research of language attitudes, two main types of research methods can be named, that is, *direct* and *indirect* (Ryan, Hewstone and Giles, 1984, Ajzen, 1988 and Kalaja, 1999). Both of them were originally designed to measure language attitudes from the point of view of an individual or a group of speakers of some specific language. Furthermore Kalaja (1999) claims that the research has primarily concentrated on describing subjects' attitudes towards foreign languages in general or the social or regional dialects of a language, which could be either their mother tongue or a foreign language. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the direct and indirect research methods became very well known especially in the 1950s and 1960s, when some of the most influential techniques of attitude measurement, for instance, the matched-guise technique, were designed. Even today, these

techniques enjoy strong recognition among researchers worldwide and are, in fact, the most popular ways of studying attitudes.

### 2.3.1 Direct methods

As Ajzen (1988) and Kalaja (1999) note, direct methods in attitude measuring consist of questionnaires and interviews. The main idea in these techniques is to ask subjects directly about their language attitudes. Attitudes, according to Kalaja (1999), can be measured towards any language or its varieties, for example, subjects can be asked about their attitudes towards British English and American English. Moreover, research can be carried out, for instance, about people's attitudes towards Finnish and Swedish, or regional and social dialects of British English. Interviews and questionnaires can, as Oskamp (1977) mentions, contain either *open-end* or *closed-end* questions. Open-end questions are often answered after the subject has listened to a speech sample featuring the language or dialect towards which attitudes are being studied. The question might be something similar to *In which contexts is it acceptable to use this language/dialect?* or *Describe the people who speak this language/dialect?*. The main idea in open-end questions is that subjects can use their own words when answering the questions instead of using ready-made scales or definitions invented by those who carry out the study. However, closed-end questions are often used in questionnaires which, in turn, might consist of different statement concerning the language and its users, for example, *It is important to study Swedish in Finland*. Then, the subject has to choose from the ready-made answers the one which indicates his/her attitude towards the matter. According to Shaw and Wright (1967) and Baker (1992), a scale designed by Likert is used quite often in connection with this type of questions. The responses can simply be either Agree/Disagree or the measuring may be done more accurately with a five-point scale:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Even though not as popular as the Likert scale, the semantic differential technique is also worth mentioning, when measuring attitudes directly. As Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Ajzen (1988) observe, the semantic differential technique, originally designed by Osgood, consists of pairs of bipolar adjectives, such as *good - bad*, *positive - negative*, *pleasant - unpleasant*. Typically, the word pairs are placed in the opposite ends of seven-point scales, and subjects are then asked to evaluate the attitude object in question by putting a mark somewhere along the scale, depending on their attitude towards the matter. Thus, their attitudes toward Swedish can, for instance, be evaluated with the following scale:

Swedish	
good	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ bad
difficult	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ easy
awful	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ nice
unfriendly	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ friendly

The responses are scored from -3 on the first three points on the negative end of the scale to +3 on the positive end. In that way, it is possible to sum up the responses on every scale and count the average, which is then considered to describe the subject's attitude toward Swedish (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). On the whole, as Jahoda and Warren (1966) point out, attitudes scales such as the Likert scale and the semantic differential technique can, for example, differ in the method of construction and basis for interpreting scores. But, in general, any set of items are considered to work as well as any other.

The most popular methods of measuring attitudes directly, namely open-end and close-end questions with the evaluative scales from Likert and Osgood, have now been summarized. In the next section, it is time to take a closer look at how these methods work in practice, or more specifically, how the methods worked in Taiwan. Notably, this study on language attitudes in Taiwan is neither unique nor the only one carried out with the help of direct

methods, but it is merely provided as an (fairly recent) example of how direct methods can be made use of in the study of language attitudes.

### **2.3.1.1 Language attitudes in Taiwan**

An example of a study on language attitudes based on direct methods is that of language attitudes in Taiwan. More precisely, the study carried out by Young, Huang, Ochoa and Kuhlman (1992) consisted of analysing differences in language attitudes of four different Taiwanese ethnolinguistic groups, that is, Hakka, Southern Min, Mandarin-speaking Mainlanders and non-Mandarin-speaking Mainlanders. The purpose was to investigate the attitudes held by these ethnolinguistic groups towards Mandarin (the national language of China) and mother dialects (e.g. Hakka and Southern Min, spoken by many people across the country in Taiwan). Nowadays, despite the wide use of Mandarin in many domains including family and workplace in Taiwan, further attempts are still made to promote the use of the language. Consequently, this makes the situation very interesting, especially from the point of view of the people who speak different mother dialects, such as, Hakka and Southern Min.

In the study by Young et al. (1992), a total of 703 subjects was included, all of them 18 years or older. The percentages of the subjects representing different ethnolinguistic groups were classified as follows: Southern Min 50.2%, Hakka 26.1%, Mandarin-speaking Mainlanders 4.5% and non-Mandarin-speaking Mainlanders 4.6%. The language attitudes were then measured by the extent of agreement or disagreement with a questionnaire consisting of 13 items and a five-point Likert scale. It turned out that the majority of the subjects in all groups were in favour of maintaining the mother dialects. However, Mandarin was generally seen as being useful, for example, in order to get a good job. Mandarin as well as mother dialects were important to the subjects at a personal level, depending, of course, on a subject's own mother tongue. Therefore, different views were expressed concerning a shift toward Mandarin in Taiwan: the Mainlanders were usually more favourable towards Mandarin than the Hakkas and Southern Mins. In all, Mandarin seemed to generally unify people in terms of official use, even though varying



stages of attachment could be noticed towards the language in different ethnolinguistic groups.

In addition to various direct methods which are used in attitude measuring, including questionnaires and Likert scales used in the study above, there are also certain techniques referred to as indirect. More precisely, one of the most well-known and important indirect method is the matched-guise technique. Consequently, this even nowadays very popular technique is the focus of the next section.

### **2.3.2 Indirect methods**

Nowadays, the overwhelming majority of indirect attitude measuring is, as Ryan and Giles (1982) and Hyrkstedt and Kalaja (1998) point out, carried out with the help of the well-known matched-guise technique, either in its original form or somehow modified. Ryan and Giles (1982) as well as Hyrkstedt and Kalaja (1998) note that the aim of the matched-guise technique, in general, is to investigate subjects' reactions to recordings which feature different languages or dialects spoken by persons of different ages and genders. Therefore, it is important that the speakers are bilingual or otherwise competent in those languages or social or regional dialects they are asked to speak in the recordings. In addition, every speaker, according to Kalaja (1999), gives at least two different speech examples as to ensure that the subjects evaluate the languages or dialects and not any other features which the speakers' speech styles might include (for example: a high/low pitch, intonation, etc.). In other words, for the matched-guise technique to be successful, it should minimize all the other factors, beside the language or dialect, which might affect the subjects' judgment and reactions. On the actual test situation, the subjects are then asked to listen to the speech samples on the tape one by one. Between the speech samples, the subjects should, as Kalaja (1999) points out, answer the questions concerning the speech sample heard. The evaluation in the matched-guise technique can be done, for example, by using the semantic differential technique or the Likert scale (see section 2.3.1).

The basic assumption in the matched-guise technique is, according to Kalaja (1999), that people not only classify other people according to their accent or dialect, but also often go as far as try to define the speaker's personality and intelligence depending on how they speak. In other words, as Palmer (1973) says, language seems to reveal quite a lot about a person, even though the listener has not necessarily received any linguistic training, which is the fact that also the matched-guise technique makes use of. Consequently, as Gardner and Lambert (1972) claim, when an ordinary person hears a foreign language or dialect spoken, it evokes specific attitudinal reactions in him/her, which usually have been associated with a certain group of people who speak that language or dialect. These reactions may have appeared when encountering a member of the foreign group, or they might be learned in a person's own social environment without any contact with the group in question.

As mentioned earlier, the matched-guise technique is by far one of the most popular methods of studying language attitudes. Consequently, several studies making use of this technique have been carried out. However, similar to the previous section, only one of them focusing on China is introduced next to illustrate the use of the matched-guise technique in research on language attitudes.

### **2.3.2.1 Language attitudes in China**

The study by Kalmar, Hong and Yong (1987) on language attitudes in a Southern-Chinese city, Guangzhou, is an example of a study based on the matched-guise technique. The aim of the study was to investigate respondents' attitudes towards "good" Putonghua (based on the northern dialects of Mandarin, the national language of China) and Putonghua heavily influenced by Cantonese. In the experiment, two speakers, a male and a female, were chosen to give speech samples on the tape. More precisely, both speakers were, in fact, public speakers who did not know the purpose of the study. Therefore, two brief stretches of speech characterized as "good" and "Cantonized" Putonghua were isolated from a somewhat larger amount of

speech by both speakers. The four stretches were then presented to judges consisting of Cantonese and non-Cantonese students. A total of 24 judges was included in the study: 13 young men and 11 young women. Eight of the total number of judges spoke Cantonese as their native tongue and 16 were speakers of other dialects. The judges were asked to answer in Chinese to a set of questions, 20 in number, concerning the person speaking in each speech-sample. The questions covered several issues, such as, the speaker's age, height, occupation and intelligence, to mention just a few.

To sum up the results, all judges agreed that the person who did not speak "Cantonized" Putonghua, spoke somehow "better" Chinese. In addition, the "good" Putonghua speakers were considered more likely to have white-collar jobs and also to find new ones, if necessary. In contrast, the Cantonese-accented speakers were mostly thought to be manual workers and, therefore, less educated. However, there were also some differences in the judges' answers. On a personal level, the Cantonese judges considered the Cantonese-accented speakers to be more sympathetic: for example, they preferred to ask Cantonese-accented persons for help, and to turn to them in their personal problems. Respectively, the non-Cantonese judges preferred the "good" Putonghua speakers in similar situations. In general, the greater contrast in the answers can be noticed between the Cantonese and non-Cantonese judges than, for instance, between males and females.

On the whole, the matched-guise technique has become one of the standard ways of measuring attitudes toward languages, as well as regional and social dialects. Even though the matched-guise technique, together with several other direct methods, is very popular, it does have its problems. However, this is quite a complex issue and discussed, therefore, in more detail in the next section.

## **2.4 Criticism**

As mentioned earlier, mainstream research on language attitudes relies heavily on a positivist paradigm, and more importantly, on the mentalist view of language attitudes. Consequently, both the methods used in measuring

language attitudes within the traditional paradigm, as well as the mentalist view itself have lately been severely criticized. More precisely, as Oskamp (1977) and Ajzen (1988) argue, there is some uncertainty concerning the structural details of the mentalist view on language attitudes (see fig. 1). That is, researchers do not seem to agree whether the three components of an attitude, namely cognitive, affective and behavioural, form together a one larger entity, or whether they are, in fact, more independent and separate parts of an attitude. However, some researchers have lately gone even further having come to reject the whole mentalist concept of language attitudes. An important reason for this is the fact that traditional research on language attitudes is considered to have neglected the influence of context in the formation of language attitudes (Palmerino, Langer and McGillis, 1984). In other words, severe doubts have been expressed of the mentalist idea of attitudes being a stable, internal "state of mind", which can be activated when a certain stimulus is present (Kalaja, 1999). Potter and Wetherell (1987), for instance, claim on the basis of their studies that attitudes are actually quite flexible and variable in their nature. Consequently, they reject the idea of attitudes being stable, enduring and multidimensional units existing only in the human mind, which in turn has been one of the driving forces in traditional research on language attitudes so far.

In addition to the mentalist view on language attitudes, the traditional methods in measuring attitudes have also been criticized. More specifically, the ultimate goal in them has mostly been reporting on language attitudes, not so much explaining them (Kalaja, 1999). For example, as Billig (1989) points out, the traditional methods, such as formal questionnaires, do not take into account how attitudes are expressed in everyday conversations, quite the contrary, the existence and nature of attitudes are more or less taken for granted. In addition, conditions in which research has been carried out has often been very similar to a laboratory. This means that researchers have been able to control several variables in the test situation which, in turn, might have affected the subjects' attitudes (Kalaja, 1999). This is especially true concerning the matched-guise technique in which, as Cargile et al. (1994)

remark, subjects' evaluation can be influenced by factors, such as: the content of the message which is being read to them, vocal styles of the persons reading the message, or certain social dialects which the speakers possess, to mention just a few. Furthermore, the scales used in evaluation of attitudes have also been criticized. According to Oskamp (1977), quite a few problems can be pointed out in these scales of evaluation. Firstly, subjects may be unmotivated or careless and, therefore, the answers will also be somewhat variable and inconsistent. Secondly, it seems that subjects often want to give socially desirable answers, which means that there is an unconscious temptation to "fake good" even though one's own attitude would be completely different. For example, if a Finnish subject is being asked to state his/her view of increasing the number of schools functioning in a minority language in Finland (e.g. Swedish), s/he might say to be in favour of it even though s/he might not actually feel so positively about it on a closer examination. In other words, the subject perceives it socially more acceptable to be tolerant and approving towards a minority language and its speakers which, in turn, can make the subject to "improve" his/her attitude about the matter. This observation has also been made by Potter and Wetherell (1987), who argue that subjects, especially in a test situation, can be very sensitive towards different socially acceptable answers. Thirdly, it has been noticed that some subjects tend to give a large number of extremity answers, that is to say +3 and/or -3 on Likert-scales. However, the influence of these extreme responses to the validity of the questionnaire, even though recognised, has not been much studied (Oskamp, 1977). In general, the evaluation scales and the whole questionnaires have been criticized because of their lack of options (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 and Kalaja, 1999). In other words, questions and answering possibilities consist only of researchers' own concepts and word choices which, in turn, creates limitations to the subject who cannot express him/herself properly. Therefore, the subject cannot explain his/her choices or express any views other than those presented in the question.

As a consequence of the somewhat recent criticism towards mainstream research and the methods used in measuring language attitudes, a new

approach has been developed for the purpose of studying attitudes. The nature of this alternative approach, as well as the methodological details will now be discussed more specifically in the next chapter.

### **3 DISCURSIVE RESEARCH**

In recent years, discursive research within the constructionist paradigm has become a somewhat important competing concept to traditional research on language attitudes. Discursive research is considered by Kalaja (1999) to have gained more attention starting from the end of 1980s, when Potter and Wetherell began publishing material on social psychology and discourse analysis. According to Kalaja (1999), discursive research relies heavily on social constructionism in defining the origin and occurrence of language attitudes which, in turn, are no longer seen as stable mental entities inside a person's mind. Therefore, new ways of studying language attitudes have also been developed because the traditional methods based on the mentalist view on language attitudes, for example, the matched-guise technique, are considered ineffective in terms of fully explaining and measuring a person's attitudes towards a language.

#### **3.1 Attitudes redefined - attitudes as discursive constructions**

In general, the rise of discursive research on language attitudes derives from the shift of paradigms starting from 1980s, when the traditional, positivist paradigm was first challenged by the discursive view on language attitudes (Harré and Gillett, 1994 and Hyrkstedt and Kalaja, 1998). This process towards discursive research, also known as the second cognitive revolution, can, according to Harré and Gillett (1994:27), be characterized by three main principles. Firstly, many psychological phenomena (such as, language attitudes) are now considered features of public or private discourse: the public discourse refers to behaviour and the private discourse to thought. Secondly, thinking is seen as the "product" of interpersonal discursive processes, which constitute a very important part of the human environment. And thirdly, the production of these psychological phenomena (e.g. language attitudes) in discourse depends on the persons' skills and positions in the

community, as well as "the story lines that unfold" (Harré and Gillett, 1994:27). In summary, discursive research within the constructionist paradigm generally emphasizes the idea of language as a means of social interaction, whereby every person has always an effect on others (Schiffrin, 1994:414-418). Consequently, it is through various discourses where the social interaction takes place and different values, beliefs, as well as attitudes, are conveyed as well as constructed (Gee, 1992:107-113 and Potter, 1996b:128-129).

In addition to the other fields of research, these three, quite general principles of the new cognitive psychology can also function as a basis for defining language attitudes from a discursive perspective. To be more precise, the discursive view, unlike the mentalist view, emphasizes the unstable and social aspects of language attitudes (Billig, 1987:175-177 and Edwards and Potter, 1992:27-29). In fact, the whole human mind is, according to Harré and Gillett (1994), seen more as a social construction, which is shaped by the way we think and experience the world. Therefore, an attitude, for example, is not within the discursive view merely considered a stable, mental entity which independently causes people to act in a certain way; but it is rather seen to exist as a property of discourse when we make our decisions and judgements in different social situations. In other words, attitudes, or evaluative processes (as they are sometimes called within discursive research), are to be found in our social life as features of natural interaction (Potter, 1996a). That is to say, as Potter (1996a) and Kalaja (1999) point out, language attitudes should, according to the discursive view, be seen as flexible, linguistic activity functioning in different interactive situations in people's every-day life. However, there are various interactive situations that people have to face during a normal day, and often these situations are quite different from one another. This, in turn, can have an effect on a person's attitude. Or as Shotter (1993:17) remarks, 'reality' within which people lead their everyday lives is not the same for everyone. On the contrary, different realities exist for different people depending on the time and the place. Because of this, the actual formation and nature of language attitudes obviously depends on the



interactive situations, or discourses, we currently find ourselves in. Attitudes can, therefore, vary from one situation to another depending, for example, on the time and the place of interaction, not to mention the person(s) we are discussing with. As a consequence, as Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue, a person can, in fact, express different attitudes depending on the purposes and the context of discourse. Accordingly, "if a certain attitude is expressed on one occasion it should not necessarily lead us to expect that the same attitude will be expressed on another" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:45). After all, as Harré and Gillett (1994) point out, people are constantly facing different evaluative and interpersonal influences which, in general, have an affect on their reactions in specific situations, as well as their attitudes. Consequently, attitudes are, according to the discursive view on language attitudes, thought to be something more than just stable and invariable entities in the human mind, to which people respond either negatively or positively (Burman and Parker, 1993 and Kalaja, 1999).

Since the discursive view calls in question the whole traditional concept of language attitudes, new methods of analysing them must also be invented. However, these methods have to take into account the social and interactional nature of language attitudes which, in turn, requires rejecting the traditional research methods. Consequently, a more precise introduction of a method developed and suited for the demands of the discursive view is provided in the next section.

### **3.2. From traditional methods to discourse analysis**

As mentioned earlier, a few alternative methods of studying language attitudes have recently been developed within the discursive view. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Kalaja (1999), this has been necessary because the methods in the traditional approach aim at studying a subject's *real* attitudes towards languages, not taking into account features, such as, flexibility and instability, which attitudes within discursive research are considered to possess. In addition, as Coupland and Giles (1991) point out, discursive research also attends more to the processes of constructing language attitudes

studies concerning scientists' use of language. Broadly speaking, an interpretative repertoire is a system for describing and evaluating various actions and events. As far as language in general is concerned, a repertoire consists of certain types of stylistic and grammatical constructions, which are used by subjects in an interview or a written task. More precisely, as Potter and Wetherell (1987) describe, a repertoire is usually organized around metaphors and figures of speech, or sometimes even specific words which occur in the subjects' speech or writing. Later, in the actual analysis of the data, the identification of repertoires, according to Potter and Wetherell (1987), usually includes two phases. Firstly, a pattern has to be found in the responses. That is to say, the aim is to look for differences as well as similarities either in the content or form of the responses. And secondly, the researcher should now be able to form hypotheses about the functions and effects of the language used in the responses, on which the interpretative repertoires can then be based. In other words, the identification of different repertoires, as Hyrkstedt and Kalaja (1998) describe, consists of looking for variability and/or consistency, for instance, in the vocabulary, metaphors and figures of speech used by the subjects. The aim is then to try to find certain patterns in the responses in order to establish their functions and, in that way, render a possibility for the identification of different interpretative repertoires.

Compared with, for example, the matched-guise technique, discourse analysis and interpretative repertoires in general have not yet become widely popular in research of language attitudes. However, some studies have been made on language attitudes from a discursive perspective. One of them is a study concerning attitudes towards English in Finland which, in fact, is introduced next.

### **3.3 A discourse-analytic study on language attitudes in Finland**

Inspired by Gilbert and Mulkay, interpretative repertoires have also been used in research on language attitudes. Hyrkstedt (1997), for example, made use of them in her study on attitudes towards English in Finland. The material in this discourse-analytic study consisted of college students' written responses to a

letter-to-the-Editor. More specifically, the subjects were asked to write a response to a fictional letter-to-the-Editor called 'Is English our second mother tongue?', which contained three negative arguments concerning the use and status of English in Finland. The actual analysis of the study was then organized around the identification of different interpretative repertoires in the subjects' written responses. A total of seven different interpretative repertoires were identified. Four of them, namely the separatist, national-romanticist, fatalist and realist repertoires, were considered to describe a positive attitude; whereas the remaining three, that is to say the empiricist, nationalist and rationalist repertoires, were seen as an indication of a negative attitude. On the whole, more instances where the subjects had expressed a positive attitude (47) were identified compared with the instances where a negative attitude was prevalent (38). Usually, every subject used several different repertoires, both positive and negative, in the letter which made the language attitudes seem very variable and reflexive in their nature. However, as Hyrkstedt (1997) claims, the aim of the study, as of discourse analysis in general, was to provide the reader with only one interpretation of a fairly large amount of very complex data.

In general, not many studies on language attitudes has yet been carried out with using discourse analysis as a method. So far, the traditional methods in research on attitudes have not been replaced by this alternative approach. However, as Potter (1996a) points out, it is still too early to say whether discursive research will prove to be a true alternative to other types of research, or will it only end up supplementing them. Anyhow, discursive research has already faced a certain amount of criticism, which seems to support the fact that it does also have its problems. These are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **3.4 Criticism**

Not much research on language attitudes has yet been carried out in which discourse analysis would have been used as a method. Nonetheless, it has come under some criticism in recent years. Coupland and Giles (1991:191-

198), for example, argue that discursive research on language attitudes (as well as the traditional one for that matter) concentrates too much on the individual. Therefore, aspects such as interindividual variability in discourse have not been taken sufficiently into account. Secondly, there seems to be, among discourse analysts, a tendency to make a very clear difference between cognition and discourse. However, according to Coupland and Giles (1991:191-198), analysing language in context is not possible without the integration of both cognition and discourse. Accordingly, it would be useful to try to combine them in research whenever it is possible, because cognition as well as discourse has their advantages, especially concerning different insights and point-of-views.

In addition to the previous points, also some methodological aspects of discourse analysis have been criticised. For example, Parker and Burman (1993) point out quite a few problems concerning the methodology of discourse-analytic research in general. To begin with, discourse analysis is claimed to be very time-consuming and intense. This is especially so, if there are recorded interviews or discussions to be transcribed and studied. Apart from the process of transcribing the data, also defining the different repertoires takes time because there are not always very clear-cut differences, for instance, in vocabulary, metaphors or figures of speech which would make the identification easy. Moreover, because of the subjective and, to some extent, quite context-bound nature of the data, it is also perceived difficult within discourse analysis to make broad generalizations on the different "rhetorical devices" which have been spotted in the data. This leads to the conclusion that a researcher's analysis and results on a specific subject cannot necessarily be applied under any other circumstances. A further problem with the results presented by the researcher is that it is often only one possible interpretation of the data. In other words, it is not at all certain that the person who wrote or spoke the text did actually mean the same as the researcher has interpreted it to mean. However, only the researcher's view of the texts is introduced (Parker and Burman, 1993).

compared with the practices of traditional research. Therefore, an alternative method, referred to as discourse analysis, has been suggested to replace the traditional methods of studying language attitudes, such as, the matched-guise technique. According to Potter (1996a) and Kalaja (1999), the idea of discourse analysis is to provide such study-material on language attitudes in which subjects are allowed to formulate their answers themselves without having to settle for ready-made answers provided by Likert scales or the semantic differential technique. The data can, therefore, consist of small essays or even interviews, as long as the interviewer bears in mind that the subject is, in fact, supposed to use his/her own words when answering. Moreover, as Kalaja (1999) adds, the interviews can be seen more as discussions or exchange of ideas, rather than barely seeking the "right" answers to a set of questions.

In addition, according to Potter and Wetherell (1987), the goals of discourse analysis differ from those of traditional research on language attitudes. The researchers making use of discourse analysis are interested in the differences in the organization of texts, and the consequences of using some organizations instead of others. This is, as Potter (1996a) argues, because discourse analysts claim that when people say or write things they are, in fact, performing actions; and the nature of these actions can only be revealed through an explicit study of discourse. Therefore, as Potter and Wetherell (1987) state, the aim is to observe what kinds of forms the evaluative discourse takes in the subjects' written or spoken answers. However, an individual's discourse (or answers) is not, unlike in traditional research, expected to be consistent and coherent. Instead, the focus is on discourse itself (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

### **3.2.1 Interpreting discourse with repertoires**

Since the focus is on discourse when analysing language attitudes within the discursive view, specific measures have been developed to interpret it. For this purpose, researchers have made use of a concept called *an interpretative repertoire*, which was first introduced by Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) in their

In the previous chapters, two quite different paradigms within research on language attitudes have been introduced: the prevailing positivist paradigm with its matched-guise technique and scales of measurement, and the social-constructionist paradigm characterized by different discursive views and practices. In addition, a third view on language attitudes with an emphasis on metalinguistic activity and myths has also been developed. Consequently, these terms as well as the view behind them will be explored more specifically in the next chapter.

## 4 COMBINING THE TWO APPROACHES

In addition to the traditional and discursive view, also a third quite prominent view on language attitudes has been developed. Within this view, which in a way combines some aspects from both views presented previously, language attitudes are seen to be based on *metalinguistic activity*. According to Kashkin (2001), metalinguistic activity in human beings is controlled by different *myths*, which are mostly unconscious. Myths, or beliefs, are in turn responsible for triggering, for example, attitudes as well as certain patterns of behaviour. More specifically, a smaller unit of myth (belief) is called *a mythologeme* which, in reality, is some specific belief concerning languages and their uses. For instance, people often possess different kinds of language-related mythologemes, such as, the monosemy mythologeme and monolingual beliefs. Consequently, even language attitudes can be studied through specific mythologemes, which reveal themselves in a subject's speech or writing.

### 4.1 Language attitudes and metalinguistic activity

According to Kashkin (2001), every language has a metalinguistic mechanism. This is strongly controlled by different myths (or beliefs) and used by everyone who speaks the language. In other words, "...metalanguage activity is governed by stereotyped patterns, which form a mythological picture of the life of language and life in language" (Kashkin, 2001:1). Thus, a metalinguistic mechanism of language can be seen as mythological activity which, in turn, is based on different mythologemes. In reality, mythologemes are specific beliefs that an individual has about languages and their uses. For example, a monolingual view is a mythologeme according to which a person views his/her own native language as the ultimately best and unique means of expression, and other languages as useless or otherwise incorrect. This mythologeme can be expressed in subjects' speech or writing with statements, such as:

‘Why do these strange Englishmen have so many verbal forms; do they really use every one of them?’ (Kashkin, 2001:17)

Another example of a mythologeme is the so-called ‘single-meaning bias’, or a monosemy mythologeme. Accordingly, people often believe that their own language is more specific in terms of meanings than any other language. In other words, words in foreign languages are perceived to have several different meanings, but words in one’s native language have each only one, strictly defined meaning. This mythologeme can be noticed in statements, such as:

‘In *my* language words have definite meanings, while in the *foreign* language that I am studying the meaning of words is either multiple or can hardly be grasped at all.’ (Kashkin, 2001:28, emphasis original)

This kind of metalinguistic activity, or use of different mythologemes, can be especially observed in the language use of ‘naïve’ individuals, that is, persons who are not professional linguists (e.g. students, teachers and writers, to mention but a few), when they are faced with a situation of language contrast. However, after having divided people in two groups, namely in ‘naïve’ individuals and professional linguists, also a phenomenon referred to as a ‘frontier paradox’ is worth mentioning. This means that a person can be a professional linguist, but s/he is still at the same time a naïve user of language which, in turn, makes the borderline between the subject and object in linguistic activity very unclear. Therefore, language cannot actually be a separate object of research, because the use of language always depends on those who use it. However, metalinguistic study of language relies on dividing people into ‘naïve’ individuals and professional linguists. Consequently, research on mythologemes has mainly concentrated on the everyday language use of naïve users of language rather than that of professionals (Kashkin, 2001).

Having discussed metalinguistic activity in general as well as defined the nature of myths and mythologemes, it is time to take a closer look at the methods of studying them. In contrast to traditional and discursive research,



no single method is used in studying mythologemes; it is rather a combination of everything. Anyhow, this combination of methods is more specifically introduced in the next section.

#### **4.2 Studying language through mythologemes**

According to Kashkin (2001), studying language through mythologemes can be done in various different ways. More precisely, direct methods as well as discourse analysis can be used in research. However, different research methods are used for different purposes. For example, questionnaires, or quantitative methods in general, are an efficient way of collecting information on general ideas. More specifically, questionnaires consisting of, for example, Likert-type scales can provide information on issues, such as, to what extent certain mythological patterns influence subjects' behaviour. However, the actual mythologemes cannot be detected easily by using purely quantitative methods, since myths, as attitudes within the discursive view, are considered variable and somewhat context-dependant. In addition, myths are also strongly characterized by their narrative form, which means that they can be best observed in natural discourse. Therefore, discourse analysis based on interviews or essays is thought to be very useful in the closer examination of mythologemes. More precisely, mythologemes can be identified in data by specific discursive markers, such as *I think...* and *but...*, to mention just a few, as well as by subjects' own, explicit mini-theories on languages and their uses (Kashkin, 2001).

As pointed out previously, mythologemes such as the monosemy mythologeme and monolingual beliefs can, in general, be studied with various different methods deriving from both traditional and discursive research. Consequently, the same methods are also used in studying mythologemes that reflect beliefs about and attitudes towards foreign languages. These mythologemes produced by cross-linguistic boundaries include, for example, beliefs and ideas concerning the most beautiful language and a language which is the most difficult to learn. However, these mythologemes as well as a few

others are discussed in the next section which concentrates on a study on foreign language mythologemes held by Russians.

#### 4.3 A study on foreign language mythologemes in Russia

A study carried out by Kashkin (2001) focused on investigating different mythologemes on foreign languages in Russia. The subjects of the study consisted of 98 "naïve" language users, that is to say, non-linguists, of different ages, and the data of the study included the subjects' answers to two questionnaires. More precisely, questionnaire 1 inquired the subjects' opinions on *The most... language*. For example, the subjects were asked to fill in sentences, such as, *The most beautiful language is...*, *The most difficult language is...* and *The most serious language is...*, to mention but a few. In other words, the subjects were allowed to write down any language which, in their opinion, fitted best to the description (or the adjective) in the sentence. In addition to the questions on *The most... language*, the subjects were also asked to indicate what language they wanted to learn (*I would like to learn...*). The findings on questionnaire 1 in the study by Kashkin (2001) are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Russian attitudes towards foreign languages: questionnaire 1 (Kashkin, 2001:33)

Question	1st choice	%	2nd choice	%	3rd choice	%
<b>The most beautiful language</b>	French	50.0	Russian	31.3	English	12.0
<b>The most ugly language</b>	German	37.5	English	18.8	-	-
<b>The most precise language</b>	Russian	75.0	Latin	19.0	-	-
<b>The most difficult language</b>	Chinese	50.0	Japanese	20.0	Russian	12.0
<b>The easiest language</b>	Russian	43.8	don't know	31.0	English	18.0
<b>The richest language</b>	Russian	93.8	-	-	-	-

<b>The poorest language</b>	don't know	50.0	Chukchee	31.5	-	-
<b>The funniest language</b>	Chinese	37.5	Japanese	25.0	Ukranian	12.0
<b>The most serious language</b>	English	31.3	German	25.0	Russian	19.0
<b>The most correct language</b>	Russian/ I don't know	25.0/ 25.0	English	19.5	Greek	8.0
<b>I would like to learn</b>	English	50.0	French	11.8	-	-

The results of the study (2001) concerning questionnaire 1 were quite unanimous. In general, Russian was considered *the easiest, richest*, as well as *most precise language*. However, Latin was another language which was also quite a popular choice for *the most precise language*. Further, the subjects considered French *the most beautiful language*, whereas Russian came now in the second place. Chinese was thought to be *the most difficult and funniest language*, and English was the language half of the subjects wanted to learn. In addition, English was also viewed as *the most serious language* and, after it, came German. Further, German was also considered *the ugliest language* and now English was, in turn, the most popular second choice. Finally, for the question on *the poorest language*, the most popular answer was 'don't know'.

In comparison with questionnaire 1, the nature of questionnaire 2 was somewhat different. In questionnaire 2, the subjects were asked to reveal their opinions on seven languages, that is, English, Russian, German, French, Finnish, Ukrainian and Italian. To be more specific, the subjects were asked to answer two questions concerning each language, namely a) *This language is* and b) *This language is suited for*. In other words, the aim was to ask the subjects to define the nature of these languages, as well as to inquire what kinds of places and situations they are suited for. The results on questionnaire 2 in the study by Kashkin (2001) are now summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Russian attitudes towards foreign languages: questionnaire 2 (Kashkin, 2001:33-34)

Question	This language is...	This language is suited for...
<b>English</b>	international, difficult, correct, popular	business communication with foreigners; everyone and everything; speaking about computers and industry
<b>Russian</b>	native, beautiful, rich, precise, simple, very good, normal	everything; for communicating with friends; poetry and science
<b>German</b>	rough, harsh, tough, barbaric, difficult	war; military action; menace; speaking about sports
<b>French</b>	-	declaring love; making compliments; writing love poems; speaking beautifully
<b>Finnish</b>	soft, melodic, light, funny, slow	-
<b>Ukrainian</b>	funny, stupid, close, not beautiful, good and funny	making people laugh; listening to it with interest
<b>Italian</b>	-	declaring love; making a scandal; naming dishes; singing

On the whole, Russian was considered beautiful and rich in expression, and suited for nearly everything. In other words, Russian was thought to suit well for the everyday life of Russians including all kinds of ordinary situations people have to face during the day. In addition, English was another language which was seen to be suitable for every situation and, what is more, it was also considered international and popular. Further, French was considered best suited for declaring love and making compliments, and Italian for declaring love, as well, and making scandals. However, the answers to question a) (*This language is...*) were not mentioned as far as French and Italian were concerned. This was a complete opposite to Finnish which, according to question a), was viewed as soft, melodic and light, but none of the answers to question b) (*This language is suited for...*) concerning Finnish were given. In contrast, Ukrainian and German received the most negative evaluations. Especially German was found rough and barbaric, and best suited for warfare and military actions. However, Ukrainian was mostly considered stupid and funny, and best suited for making people laugh.

#### 4.4 Advantages of combining the two approaches

Compared with mainstream and discursive research, some advantages in the metalinguistic view on language attitudes can be pointed out. Especially, these advantages include several methodological details which often prevail in both mainstream and discursive research. However, the metalinguistic view on language attitudes does not attempt to reject totally neither traditional nor discursive methods in the study on language attitudes. On the contrary, the aim is, within the metalinguistic view, to try to combine the best methodological features of both the approaches.

Consequently, when attempting to combine these approaches, some of the problems concerning the methodology in mainstream research is tried to avoid by using partly such methods which are typically perceived as discursive. For example, Kashkin does not, in his study (2001), use any scales of evaluation, such as, the Likert scale or semantic differentials which are nowadays seen to be rather ineffective in terms of explaining "real" language attitudes (see section 2.4). Therefore, the subjects were asked to formulate their own answers, so that they would have been able to present a more reliable picture on their language attitudes based on their everyday experiences. Further, since the subjects did not have to settle with ready-made answers in Kashkin's (2001) study, the analysis of the results is also carried out in a more creative way in which the language attitudes of the subjects are not only reported, but an attempt is made to describe them. Notably, the idea of describing and explaining language attitudes is something that, in general, motivates discursive research on language attitudes, too. However, Kashkin's (2001) study differs from discursive research in the sense that it is not based on any authentic written data, such as, essays or interviews, which is considered very demanding in terms of time and effort. In contrast, the study partly resembles mainstream research because it actually makes use of formal questionnaires, and even statistics in analysing some of the findings (e.g. assignment 1. *The most... language*).

To be more precise, the combination of aspects mentioned previously from both mainstream and discursive research makes also the present study, more or less, something referred to as descriptive. However, descriptive research can very well be distinguished from both traditional and discursive research. According to Selinger and Shohamy (1989:116-117), an important feature of descriptive research is that a set of research questions, posed in advance, are used as a basis for studying a certain phenomenon. Unlike in discursive research, or qualitative research in general, in which the research questions emerge from the data itself as the research process goes on, in descriptive research there is often a specific set of questions, decided in advance, focusing only on certain aspects of the data. Furthermore, as Selinger and Shohamy (1989:116-117) point out, the descriptive nature of a study does not necessarily have to exclude any of the quantitative aspects. In other words, the use of, for instance, different questionnaires does not automatically make a descriptive study quantitative, or mainstream, for that matter. More specifically, the quantitative elements can, in a descriptive study, be taken into use after the data have been viewed in general terms, and possibly even categorized. In other words, the data in a descriptive study can, very well, be first analysed qualitatively and then quantitatively, for example, in terms of frequencies. Particularly, a good example of this, introduced more thoroughly in the previous section, is the study by Kashkin (2001), which combines the metalinguistic view on language attitudes with the methods and practices of descriptive research.

In all, the idea of studying language attitudes within the metalinguistic view is that even though questionnaires and statistics are, in fact, an essential part of the methodology, the more discursive perspective, especially when analysing the results, is considered very important. This “combination of strengths” based on both traditional and discursive research, also referred to as descriptive research, has built a foundation also for the methodology of the present study. Consequently, the next chapter concentrates on describing this methodology, as well as other essential details of the present study more specifically.

## 5 THE PRESENT STUDY - OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In short, the following chapter concentrates on defining the objectives and methodology of the present study. To be more specific, the research questions are clarified first, after which more is told about the collection of the data which includes information on the subjects, the questionnaire and the actual procedure of the data collection. Finally, the chapter ends with a description of the coding and analysis of the data in the present study.

### 5.1 Research questions

In general, the emphasis in the present study is on studying language attitudes held by Finnish students in the upper secondary school. Firstly, attention is paid to the Finnish subjects' views on *the most...languages*. In other words, the present study aims at investigating which languages Finns regard as the *ugliest, easiest, richest, poorest* and *funniest*, as well as *the most beautiful, precise, difficult, serious* and *correct*. Secondly, the purpose of the present study is to find out what the Finnish subjects think and how they feel about different European languages or, in particular, how some specific languages sound to them, and where and how they should be used. Accordingly, the subjects are asked to express their views on a total of eight European languages, which are *English, Russian, German, Estonian, French, Finnish, Swedish* and *Spanish*. Thirdly, the differences in the language attitudes of the Finnish male and female subjects, as well as the subjects with high and lower educational success will be studied. That is, the subjects answers will be divided between male and female, after which the differences and/or similarities in the language attitudes of the two groups will be scrutinized. The purpose is to find out whether the male and female subjects view languages differently or, more precisely, whether the answers by the males and females

are characterized by some specific features. Similarly, the subjects will also be divided between those with high and lower grades in English and Swedish, after which the language attitudes of the two groups towards English and Swedish will be studied. The aim is here also to find out whether the subjects with lower academic achievements in English and Swedish actually view the same languages differently compared to the subjects with high academic achievements on the two languages.

## **5.2 Collection of data**

In this section, the details and procedures involving the collection of the data for the present study will be explained and clarified. More specifically, the identification of the subjects, as well as the nature and details of the questionnaire will be discussed. Furthermore, the procedure in the actual data collection will also be dealt with.

### **5.2.1 Subjects**

The subjects of the present study were students in the upper secondary school in Valkeala. They were either first or second year students, which means that the age of the subjects varied between 16 and 18 years. In all, a total of 72 students, of which 33 were male and 37 female, filled in the questionnaire. However, two of the 72 students were excluded from the study on the basis of filling in questionnaires in which the answers were not clear. To be more specific, the answers in the two questionnaires were not appropriate as far as the questions were concerned and, therefore, the answers could not be classified in any of the categories used in the present study. Further, nearly all subjects participating in the present study had studied several years at least English and Swedish (30 subjects, 9 females/21 males) and, what is more, quite a few were learning either German or French as a third language in addition to English and Swedish (34 subjects, 22 females/12 males). However, there were also subjects who claimed to have studied a total of four languages, namely English, Swedish, German and French/Russian (6 subjects, 6 females/no males).



### 5.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire of the present study, consisting of two separate assignments, was originally designed by V.B. Kashkin (2001). Previously, he carried out a study on attitudes towards foreign languages in Russia in which the questionnaire was used. An almost identical questionnaire, with some minor differences compared with the one designed by Kashkin (2001), was used in the present study to measure language attitudes in Finland. However, assignment 1 in the questionnaire of the present study is completely identical with the one used in the study by Kashkin (2001) (see Appendix 1):

#### Assignment 1. The most... language.

**Instructions: Fill in the gaps below with a language which, in your opinion, suits the description.**

\_\_\_\_\_ is the most beautiful language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the ugliest language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the most precise language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the most difficult language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the easiest language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the richest language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the poorest language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the funniest language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the most serious language.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the most correct language.

I would like to learn \_\_\_\_\_.

In general, the purpose of assignment 1 was that the subjects would have filled in the sentences with a language of their choice (e.g. English, Swedish or Spanish, etc.). However, it is important enough to mention that the

instructions to the assignment and the fill-in sentences which followed were, in fact, in Finnish in the actual questionnaire of the present study which, in turn, allowed also the subjects to use their mother tongue when answering. Similarly, Kashkin (2001), when carrying out his own study, had originally designed the questionnaire in Russian because of which the subjects were also expected to answer the questions in Russian. However, the English translation of assignment 1 presented above is (apart from the instructions to the assignment) adapted from Kashkin's (2001) article, where he, among other things, introduces the questionnaire and summarizes the results of the study. Furthermore, the Finnish version of the questionnaire used in the present study was also translated on the basis of the forementioned article which was, in fact, published in English.

In contrast, the nature of assignment 2 in the present study was somewhat different from the first. More precisely, the subjects were now asked to describe what certain languages (that is, English, Russian, German, Estonian, French, Finnish, Swedish and Spanish) are like, and how and when they should be used (see Appendix 1):

**Assignment 2. This language is...**

**Instructions: Finish sentences a) and b) on different languages (1-8).**

**In sentence a), describe what the language in question is like.**

**In sentence b), state where and how the language in question should be used.**

**1a) The English language is** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**1b) The English language is suited for** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**2a) The Russian language is** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2b) The Russian language is suited for \_\_\_\_\_

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(etc. German, Estonian, French, Finnish, Swedish and Spanish).

As mentioned earlier, assignment 2 inquired the subjects about two things. Firstly, the subjects were asked to describe the eight languages by filling in the sentence *This language is...* on each language included in the present study. Secondly, the subjects were encouraged to reveal their opinion on the suitability of the same languages by filling in the sentence *This language is suited for...*, again on each language. However, in the present study, there were a few differences in assignment 2 compared with the original questionnaire. To be more specific, the choice of languages was somewhat different in the present study than it was in the study carried out by Kashkin (2001), in which the subjects were asked to answer questions on English, Russian, German, French, Finnish, Ukrainian and Italian. In other words, Ukrainian and Italian were erased from the questionnaire of the present study, and they were replaced with Swedish, Spanish and Estonian. This was done because the languages in question were thought to be more meaningful to the Finns than Ukrainian and Italian (for example, Sweden and Estonian are the neighbouring countries of Finland unlike Ukraine; and Spain is probably quite well-known to Finns as a popular holiday destination). Moreover, assignment 2 was, like assignment 1, also formulated in Finnish in the actual questionnaire in the present study, and the English translations introduced above are again adapted from the article by Kashkin (2001).

In addition to filling in the two "main" assignments in the questionnaire, the subjects were also inquired about two things (see Appendix 1). Firstly, the subjects were asked to indicate whether they were male or female. Secondly, the subjects were asked to write down their latest course grades on those languages they were currently studying in the upper secondary school. As mentioned earlier, all the subjects included in the present study had studied at

least two languages, namely, English and Swedish and, therefore, every subject should have been able to write down a minimum of two grades on two different foreign languages. However, there were several persons taking part in the present study who had studied more than two languages. The additional languages were, in this case, either German and/or French/Russian. In other words, quite a few of the subjects had studied English, Swedish and German or French, or if they had studied a total of four languages, those languages were English, Swedish, German and French/Russian.

### 5.2.3 Procedure

The data for the present study was collected at the upper secondary school in Valkeala. A total of three classes (72 students) took part in the study, and each of them filled in the questionnaire on separate occasions. However, before the subjects were asked to write down their answers, a short introductory presentation was given in Finnish for every class on the questionnaire, which consisted of repeating and clarifying the instructions for the two assignments. Next, the subjects were given approximately 30 minutes to answer the questions after which they were asked to hand over the questionnaire; however, nearly everyone managed to finish it before the due time. Nonetheless, since the emphasis was not placed on speed, those who did not finish the task in 30 minutes were given additional time to complete their answers.

Even though the subjects basically filled in the same questionnaires, some minor differences can, anyhow, be pointed out. These differences in the questionnaires which, as mentioned, consisted of two separate assignments, involved the order of the questions in assignment 2. To be more precise, in half of the questionnaires the two questions in assignment 2 (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) were placed in a reversed order than in the other half of the questionnaires. That is to say, half of the subjects, when starting to work on assignment 2, answered first the questions posed on the English language, which the other half answered last (that is, *The English language is.../The English language is suited for...*). Consequently, when one

half of the subjects, in assignment 2, answered the two questions (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) on English, Russian, German, Estonian, French, Finnish, Swedish and Spanish (in this order), the other half answered the same questions in a reversed order starting from Spanish. This was done because assignment 2 was perceived as more time-consuming than assignment 1 and, therefore, the subjects' concentration to the task might suffer gradually to the end. However, with this precaution an attempt was made to ensure that every question received a sufficient amount of attention which, in turn, makes also the results of the present study more reliable.

### 5.3 Coding and analysis

The coding of the data, concerning the answers to both the assignments, began with separating the answer sheets between the males and females. This was done to make the comparison of attitudes easier between the male and female subjects (since it would have been very time-consuming to classify first the whole amount of data, and after that do the same all over again with the male and female responses). In assignment 1 (*The most... language*), the coding was then merely carried out by counting which language, from the most popular to the least, was considered the most beautiful/serious/precise, and so on. Then, as the frequency of a particular answer (or language) had been established, also the percentage of the same answer, in relation to the other answers given by the subjects, was counted. For example, as summarized in Table 3, the answers to the question concerning *the most beautiful language* in assignment 1 turned out as follows (see also section 6.1.1):

Table 3. The most beautiful language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>English</b>	3	9.1	5	13.9	8	11.6
<b>Finnish</b>	11	33.3	8	22.2	19	27.5
<b>French</b>	10	30.3	16	44.4	26	37.7
<b>German</b>	1	3.0	2	5.6	3	4.3
<b>Italian</b>	5	15.2	2	5.6	7	10.1
<b>Latin</b>	2	6.1	-	-	2	2.9
<b>Portuguese</b>	-	-	1	2.8	1	1.4
<b>Spanish</b>	1	3.0	3	8.3	4	5.8
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	36	100.0	69	100.0

To be more precise, the frequencies of the answers given by the male subjects were summarized first in the table. Further, the same was done with the answers given by the females, after which the frequencies of the answers by the males were added to the corresponding number by the female subjects. In this way, the total frequencies of different answers given by all the subjects were summarized, after which the percentages of the answers by all the subjects as well as the males and females separately, were also counted. In general, these procedures concerning the coding and analysis of the data were used when reporting the findings on all the questions (11) in assignment 1.

However, the coding and analysis of the answers to assignment 2 (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) was somewhat more complicated. This was because the questions in assignment 2, unlike in the first one, were often answered by the subjects with more than just one word; and sometimes even with whole sentences. Therefore, it was also more difficult to point out any clear boundaries between different types of answers. Nonetheless, the grouping of different answers was very essential and, as for the first question (*This language is...*), this was done by dividing the answers consisting of different adjectives into groups according to their similarity in meaning. For instance, as summarized in Table 15, most subjects viewed English as nice and interesting, as well as clear and easy to understand (see also section 6.3.1):

Table 15. The English language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
nice/interesting/funny	12	10	22
easy/clear/simple	10	12	22
normal/familiar/ordinary	4	14	18
formal/official/serious	3	5	8
beautiful	-	7	7
sophisticated/fine/royal	2	5	7
regular/logical/precise	4	-	4
Br. Eng. formal/Am. Eng. relaxed	-	2	2
like Finnish	-	2	2
unclassified answers	5	8	13

More specifically, the frequencies of the answers given by the male subjects were first summarized in the table above. Again, the frequencies of the answers by the females were presented in the middle, after which the total frequencies of the answers given by all of the subjects were counted. However, unlike in assignment 1, only the frequencies of the different answers were summarized when reporting the findings on assignment 2. Unfortunately, this is because, in this case, it was not possible to use any further statistical methods.

Similarly, the answers to the second question (*This language is suited for...*) in assignment 2, which in this case did not consist of adjectives but nouns, were also divided into groups according to their meaning. For instance, most of the subjects viewed English as suitable for television and films, and everyone and everywhere (Table 16, see also section 6.3.1):

Table 16. The English language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
television/films	9	15	24
everyone/everywhere	5	18	23
the language of the world	10	10	20
international communication/events	11	7	18
music	2	6	8
travelling	-	3	3
English-speaking countries	2	-	2
work/school	-	2	2
unclassified answers	4	6	10

Like in the previous tables, also in Table 16 the frequencies of the answers given by the male subjects were summarized first, the corresponding figures by the females being in the middle. Furthermore, next to the answers given by the female subjects, a total of the frequencies was counted. Similar to the first question (*This language is...*) in assignment 2, only the frequencies of the answers were shown. Again, it was not possible to make use of any further statistical method because of the somewhat limited and difficult nature of the data.

Since the purpose of the present study was also to find out possible differences in attitudes among the subjects with high and lower academic achievements, a similar coding and analysis of the data was carried out among the subjects with high and lower grades on languages. More precisely, the coding included classifying the answers given to assignment 2 (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) by the subjects with high and lower grades in English and Swedish. In this context, a high grade was either nine (very good) or ten (excellent), and a lower grade was considered to be something between four (poor) and eight (good). In other words, if a subject had a



somewhat low grade in English (that is, 8-4), his/her answers to both the questions on the English language in assignment 2 were studied together with other subjects with similar academic achievements. For example, Table 32 summarizes the views on the English language (*The English language is...*) among the subjects with different academic achievements (see also section 6.5.1):

Table 32. Subjects with high/lower academic achievements: The English language is...

<b>The English language is...</b>	<b>Subjects with high grades (10-9)</b>	<b>Subjects with lower grades (8-4)</b>
<b>clear/easy/simple</b>	12	10
<b>ordinary/normal/familiar</b>	10	8
<b>nice/interesting/funny</b>	8	14
<b>beautiful</b>	6	1
<b>sophisticated/fine/royal</b>	5	2
<b>formal/official/serious</b>	3	5
<b>rich</b>	2	-
<b>regular/logical/precise</b>	1	3
<b>Br. Eng. formal/Am. Eng. relaxed</b>	-	2
<b>like Finnish</b>	-	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	3	8

In general, the frequencies of the answers were indicated in a similar manner as in the previous tables on assignment 2. However, instead of summarizing the answers given by the males and females, the answers were divided between subjects with high and lower grades in English. Correspondingly, the same was then done with the subjects' answers to the second question on English (*The English language is suited for...*), as well as to the questions on the Swedish language. But, dividing the answers further to those given by the males and females was not thought to be meaningful because the number of subjects would have remained rather small in each group (e.g. females with high grades, females with lower grades etc). In addition, the number of subjects

also created limitations when choosing the languages towards which attitudes were measured in this particular section. That is, attitudes towards English and Swedish among the subjects with different academic achievements were, as far as the present study was concerned, worth scrutinizing because every subject had studied at least those two languages. Thus, every subject should, in theory, have had a grade on both English and Swedish making, therefore, the number of subjects in both groups (high/lower grade) the highest possible.

## 6 FINDINGS

This chapter concentrates on reporting and analysing the findings of the present study. First, the subjects' answers to assignment 1 will be reported and discussed, after which the same is done with the subjects' answers to assignment 2. In the end of the sections, there will be a summary of the findings on both the assignments. Also, the attitudes towards English and Swedish held by the subjects with high and lower grades on the two languages are reported and discussed. Lastly, the chapter ends with a discussion on the validity of the present study.

### 6.1 Attitudes towards foreign languages: assignment 1

In general, the purpose of the present study was to investigate Finnish students' attitudes towards foreign languages with a questionnaire consisting of two different assignments. More precisely, assignment 1 inquired the subjects' opinions on the most beautiful/difficult/serious etc. language (see Appendix 1). Consequently, the focus of assignment 1 was on investigating the languages which the subjects had named as the most beautiful/difficult/serious etc. when answering the questionnaire. In the following sections, the students' answers to the question on *The most... language* will be analysed one adjective at a time with the help of tables indicating the frequencies of the answers, in general, and the frequencies of the answers of two subgroups, that is, the males and females. More specifically, the answers (or languages) given by all the subjects as well as the two subgroups will be introduced by first indicating the frequencies of the answers, which are then followed by the respective percentages. In addition to the table on the findings, the most important ones are also reported and summarized in the end of each section.

### 6.1.1 The most beautiful language

As mentioned earlier, assignment 1 consisted of a series of questions on the topic of *The most... language*, in which the subjects were first asked about *the most beautiful language*. Now, the findings concerning the first question are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The most beautiful language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>English</b>	3	9.1	5	13.9	8	11.6
<b>Finnish</b>	11	33.3	8	22.2	19	27.5
<b>French</b>	10	30.3	16	44.4	26	37.7
<b>German</b>	1	3.0	2	5.6	3	4.3
<b>Italian</b>	5	15.2	2	5.6	7	10.1
<b>Latin</b>	2	6.1	-	-	2	2.9
<b>Portuguese</b>	-	-	1	2.8	1	1.4
<b>Spanish</b>	1	3.0	3	8.3	4	5.8
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	36	100.0	69	100.0

On the whole, French was considered *the most beautiful language* by most of the subjects (37.7 %). Finnish (27.5 %) was another popular choice for *the most beautiful language* when all the subjects were taken into account. Moreover, English (11.6 %) and, after it, Italian (10.1 %) were the third choices for *the most beautiful language*.

However, there were some differences between the male and female subjects. To be more precise, French (44.4 %) was the language that the most of the female subjects seemed to be in favour of, whereas Finnish (33.3 %), in general, was thought to be *the most beautiful language* by the male subjects. Anyhow, Finnish (22.2 %) was the most popular second choice among the females and, correspondingly, French (30.3 %) among the males. In addition, English (13.9 %) was also quite a popular choice among the female subjects,

whereas Italian was viewed as clearly more beautiful by the males (15.2 %) than females (5.6 %).

### 6.1.2 The ugliest language

The second question in assignment 1 inquired the subjects' opinion on *the ugliest language*. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The ugliest language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Danish</b>	1	3.1	1	2.9	2	3.0
<b>Dutch</b>	-	-	1	2.9	1	1.5
<b>Estonian</b>	1	3.1	6	17.6	7	10.6
<b>French</b>	1	3.1	-	-	1	1.5
<b>German</b>	5	15.6	7	20.6	12	18.2
<b>Norwegian</b>	-	-	2	5.9	2	3.0
<b>Russian</b>	15	46.9	16	47.1	31	47.0
<b>Spanish</b>	1	3.1	-	-	1	1.5
<b>Swedish</b>	8	25.0	3	8.8	11	16.7
<b>Turkey</b>	-	-	1	2.9	1	1.5
<b>Total</b>	32	100.0	34	100.0	66	100.0

In general, Russian was clearly thought to be *the ugliest language* by nearly half of the subjects (47.0 %). After the Russian language, German (18.2 %) and Swedish (16.7 %) were the most popular second choices as *the ugliest language* among the subjects. In addition, Estonian (10.6 %) is also worth mentioning since it was viewed as *the ugliest* by some of the subjects taking, therefore, the fourth place as *the ugliest language* among the subjects.

On the whole, *the ugliest languages* were viewed quite unanimously by the males and females. For example, Russian was thought to be *the ugliest language* by both the male (46.9 %) and female (47.1 %) subjects. However, there were some minor differences in the second and third choices in both the

groups of subjects: Swedish (25.0 %) and, after it, German (15.6 %) were the two languages regarded as *the ugliest* by the males, whereas German (20.6 %) was considered somewhat uglier than Swedish (17.6 %) by the female subjects.

### 6.1.3 The most precise language

Furthermore, the subjects of the present study were asked about *the most precise language*. The findings are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. The most precise language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>English</b>	14	42.4	9	25.0	23	33.3
<b>Finnish</b>	2	6.1	3	8.3	5	7.2
<b>French</b>	1	3.0	1	2.8	2	2.9
<b>German</b>	10	30.3	9	25.0	19	27.5
<b>Italian</b>	2	6.1	1	2.8	3	4.3
<b>Swedish</b>	4	12.1	13	36.1	17	24.6
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	36	100.0	69	100.0

In all, only six languages were named as the choices for *the most precise language*. English (33.3 %) turned out to be the most popular of them when all the subjects were taken into account. Further, German (27.5 %) and Swedish (24.6 %) were the languages also considered *the most precise* by a considerable number of subjects.

Also the differences between the males and females were exceptionally clear concerning the question on *the most precise language*. Swedish was, in fact, thought to be *the most precise language* by the female subjects (36.1 %), after which came English (25.0 %) and German (25.0 %). In contrast, English was viewed as *the most precise language* by nearly half of the male subjects (42.4 %). Correspondingly, German (30.3 %) was also the most popular second choice among the males, whereas Swedish (12.1 %), although the most

popular third choice, was not considered nearly as precise by the male than female subjects.

#### 6.1.4 The most difficult language

The subjects of the present study were also asked to consider the question on *the most difficult language*. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. The most difficult language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Chinese</b>	9	27.3	6	16.2	15	21.4
<b>English</b>	1	3.0	2	5.4	3	4.3
<b>Finnish</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>French</b>	8	24.2	5	13.5	13	18.6
<b>German</b>	4	12.1	8	21.6	12	17.1
<b>Japanese</b>	1	3.0	3	8.1	4	5.7
<b>Russian</b>	7	21.2	10	27.0	17	24.3
<b>Spanish</b>	1	3.0	-	-	1	1.4
<b>Swedish</b>	2	6.1	2	5.6	4	5.7
<b>Turkey</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	37	100.0	70	100.0

In general, there was no single language which would have risen above the others in the subjects' responses to the question on *the most difficult language*. Anyhow, Russian was viewed as *the most difficult language* by nearly a quarter of the subjects (24.3 %), after which came Chinese (21.4 %). Moreover, French (18.6 %) and German (17.1 %) were almost as popular choices for *the most difficult language*, when all the subjects were taken into account.

Between the males and females, there were some differences in the opinions on *the most difficult language*. More precisely, Russian was viewed as *the most difficult* one by nearly one third of the female subjects (27 %).

Further, German (21.6 %) came in the second place, after which Chinese (16.2 %) was the most popular choice among the females. In contrast, Chinese was considered *the most difficult language* by the male subjects (27.3 %). Unlike among the female subjects, French (24.2 %) took the second place and Russian (21.2 %) came only third among the males, when the subjects were inquired about *the most difficult language*.

### 6.1.5 The easiest language

The fifth question in assignment 1 inquired the subjects' views on *the easiest language*. The findings are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. The easiest language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>English</b>	13	39.4	18	48.6	31	44.3
<b>Finnish</b>	15	45.5	7	18.9	22	31.4
<b>Swedish</b>	5	15.2	13	35.1	18	25.7
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	37	100.0	70	100.0

The variety of languages the subjects used, when answering the question on *the easiest language*, was extremely narrow. In fact, the subjects were very unanimous settling for only three languages, namely Finnish, English and Swedish. Of these languages, English was thought to be *the easiest* by almost half of the subjects (44.3 %). Further, Finnish (31.4 %) was the most popular second choice when all the subjects were taken into account. Finally, Swedish (25.7 %) was the third and last language regarded as *the easiest* by the subjects of the present study.

Again, there were also differences in the answers of the male and female subjects. Even though the languages the males and females considered *the easiest* were the same, the order in which they were placed was, however, completely different. To be more precise, English (48.6 %) was viewed as *the*



*easiest language* by the female subjects, after which came first Swedish (35.1 %), and then Finnish (18.9 %). In comparison, Finnish was the language considered *the easiest* by the male subjects (45.5 %). Further, English (39.4 %) and, lastly, Swedish (15.2 %) were the other two languages thought to be *the easiest* also by the males.

#### 6.1.6 The richest language

Furthermore, the subjects of the present study were asked to reveal their opinion on *the richest language*. The results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. The richest language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Chinese</b>	1	3.0	-	-	1	1.4
<b>Dutch</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>English</b>	13	39.4	11	29.7	24	34.3
<b>Finnish</b>	6	18.2	6	16.2	12	17.1
<b>French</b>	6	18.2	11	29.7	17	24.3
<b>German</b>	3	9.1	3	8.1	6	8.6
<b>Italian</b>	1	3.0	1	2.7	2	2.9
<b>Japanese</b>	1	3.0	-	-	1	1.4
<b>Latin</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>Russian</b>	2	6.1	-	-	2	2.9
<b>Spanish</b>	-	-	3	8.1	3	4.3
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	37	100.0	70	100.0

The repertoire of languages was quite large in the subjects' answers to the question on *the richest language* which, in turn, is to say that the subjects did not answer very unanimously. However, English was, in general, thought to be *the richest language* by over one third of the subjects (34.3 %). In the second place came French (24.3 %) and, after it, Finnish (17.1 %) when the answers from all the subjects were taken into account.

The male and female subjects chose again mostly the same languages as candidates for *the richest language*; and now, more or less, in the same order. More specifically, French (29.7 %) and English (29.7 %) were equally favoured by the female subjects, Finnish (16.2 %) taking the second place. Correspondingly, English (39.4 %) was also considered *the richest language* by the males, while Finnish (18.2 %) and French (18.2 %), in turn, were also viewed as *the richest languages* by quite many of the male subjects of the present study.

### 6.1.7 The poorest language

The seventh question in assignment 1 dealt with the subjects' views on *the poorest language*. The findings are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. The poorest language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Chinese</b>	1	3.2	-	-	1	1.6
<b>English</b>	-	-	1	3.0	1	1.6
<b>Estonian</b>	10	32.3	9	27.3	19	29.7
<b>Finnish</b>	1	3.2	1	3.0	2	3.1
<b>French</b>	1	3.2	2	6.1	3	4.7
<b>German</b>	1	3.2	2	6.1	3	4.7
<b>Nigerian</b>	2	6.5	-	-	2	3.1
<b>Norwegian</b>	-	-	1	3.0	1	1.6
<b>Russian</b>	5	16.1	3	9.1	8	12.5
<b>Swedish</b>	10	32.3	14	42.4	24	37.5
<b>Total</b>	31	100.0	33	100.0	64	100.0

In all, there were again several candidates for *the poorest language*. However, three of them clearly stood out: Swedish, for instance, was considered *the poorest language* by many of the subjects (37.5 %). Further, Estonian (29.7

%) was the most popular second choice, after which Russian (12.5 %) was viewed as *the poorest language* when all the subjects were taken into account.

Between the male and female subjects, the languages viewed as *the poorest* were mostly the same. More specifically, Swedish was thought to be *the poorest language* by nearly half of the female subjects (42.4 %). Further, Estonian was another language regarded as *the poorest* by a considerable number of female subjects (27.3 %). Similarly, Swedish (32.3 %) together with Estonian (32.3 %) were also viewed as *the poorest languages* by most of the male subjects. In contrast, Russian (16.1 %) was also quite a popular choice as *the poorest language* among the male subjects of the present study.

### 6.1.8 The funniest language

Furthermore, the subjects were inquired about *the funniest language*. The findings are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. The funniest language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Chinese</b>	1	3.0	2	5.4	3	4.3
<b>Danish</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>English</b>	3	9.1	5	13.5	8	11.4
<b>Estonian</b>	10	30.3	9	24.3	19	27.1
<b>Finnish</b>	6	18.2	2	5.4	8	11.4
<b>French</b>	1	3.0	2	5.4	3	4.3
<b>German</b>	3	9.1	2	5.4	5	7.1
<b>Italian</b>	2	6.1	3	8.1	5	7.1
<b>Japanese</b>	2	6.1	2	5.4	4	5.7
<b>Norwegian</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>Portuguese</b>	-	-	1	2.7	1	1.4
<b>Russian</b>	1	3.0	1	2.7	2	2.9
<b>Spanish</b>	2	6.1	4	10.8	6	8.6
<b>Swedish</b>	2	6.1	4	10.8	6	8.6
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	37	100.0	70	100.0

In all, the variety of languages in the subjects' answers to the question on *the funniest language* is undoubtedly greatest so far, if compared with the answers to the previous questions. Consequently, this also means that the differences in the frequencies between the various answers (or languages) were not necessarily very great. At any rate, there was a total of 14 languages considered *the funniest* by the subjects. To be more precise, Estonian (27.1 %) was thought to be *the funniest* of them, after which came Finnish (11.4 %) and English (11.4 %) equally supported by the subjects. Next, Spanish (8.6 %) and Swedish (8.6 %) were also thought to be *the funniest languages* by some of the subjects of the present study.

*The funniest languages* were viewed somewhat differently by the male and female subjects. Estonian (24.3 %), for example, was considered *the funniest language* by the females, English (13.5 %) being the most popular second choice. Further, Spanish (10.8 %) and Swedish (10.8 %) were also mentioned quite often in the answers of the female subjects. In contrast, the male subjects, in general, favoured only two languages as being *the funniest*. More specifically, Estonian (30.3 %) was also thought to be *the funniest language* by the male subjects, whereas Finnish (18.2 %) was the most popular second choice. Contrary to the female subjects, English, Spanish and Swedish, were not as popular choices as *the funniest language* among the males.

#### **6.1.9 The most serious language**

The subjects were also asked to consider *the most serious language*. The results are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11. The most serious language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Danish</b>	1	3.1	1	2.9	2	3.0
<b>English</b>	5	15.6	4	11.8	9	13.6
<b>Estonian</b>	1	3.1	1	2.9	2	3.0
<b>Finnish</b>	-	-	2	5.9	2	3.0
<b>French</b>	1	3.1	-	-	1	1.5
<b>German</b>	13	40.6	16	47.1	29	43.9
<b>Japanese</b>	1	3.1	-	-	1	1.5
<b>Latin</b>	-	-	2	5.9	2	3.0
<b>Norwegian</b>	-	-	2	5.9	2	3.0
<b>Russian</b>	5	15.6	3	8.8	8	12.1
<b>Spanish</b>	1	3.1	-	-	1	1.5
<b>Swedish</b>	4	12.5	4	11.8	8	12.1
<b>Total</b>	32	100.0	34	100.0	66	100.0

On the whole, the subjects responded quite unanimously to the question on *the most serious language*. To be more precise, German was regarded as *the most serious language* by almost half of all the subjects (43.9 %). Further, the English language (13.6 %) was also thought to be *the most serious*, but by considerably fewer subjects. Russian (12.1 %) and Swedish (12.1 %) came third and were viewed as *the most serious language* by an equal number of subjects.

The answers given by the males and females to the question on *the most serious language* were very similar. More specifically, German was considered *the most serious language* by the majority of the female subjects (47.1 %), while English (11.8 %) and Swedish (11.8 %) shared the second place. Correspondingly, German was viewed as *the most serious language* by most of the male subjects (40.6 %), after which came English (15.6 %) and Russian (15.6 %) equally supported by the males. Lastly, Swedish (12.5 %) was, like

among the females, also thought to be *the most serious language* by some of the male subjects of the present study.

#### 6.1.10 The most correct language

Finally, the subjects were asked about *the most correct language*. The findings are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. The most correct language

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>English</b>	10	30.3	7	19.4	17	24.6
<b>Finnish</b>	3	9.1	3	8.3	6	8.7
<b>French</b>	1	3.0	1	2.8	2	2.9
<b>German</b>	8	24.2	13	36.1	21	30.4
<b>Greek</b>	-	-	1	2.8	1	1.4
<b>Italian</b>	1	3.0	-	-	1	1.4
<b>Latin</b>	-	-	1	2.8	1	1.4
<b>Spanish</b>	1	3.0	-	-	1	1.4
<b>Swedish</b>	9	27.3	11	30.6	20	29.0
<b>Total</b>	33	100.0	36	100.0	69	100.0

In general, the subjects seemed to be mostly in agreement on the question concerning *the most correct language*. In fact, there were three languages that most of the subjects viewed as *the most correct*. More specifically, German was considered *the most correct language* by nearly one third of the subjects (30.4 %), after which Swedish (29.0 %) occupied the second place. Further, English (24.6 %) was the third language regarded as *the most correct*, when all the subjects were taken into account.

There were also some differences in the answers of the male and female subjects, even though the languages viewed as *the most correct* proved to be the same in both subgroups. To be more precise, German (36.1 %) was considered *the most correct language* by the female subjects, Swedish (30.6 %) being the most popular second choice. Furthermore, English was also

regarded as *the most correct language* by some of the females (19.4 %). In contrast, English was viewed as *the most correct language* by most of the male subjects (30.3 %). However, Swedish (27.3 %) was also the most popular second choice among the males, whereas German (24.2 %), unlike among the female subjects, came only third.

#### 6.1.11 I would like to learn

In addition, the subjects were inquired about the languages they wanted to learn. The findings are summarized in Table 13.

Table 13. I would like to learn

	Male		Female		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Chinese	1	3.2	-	-	1	1.5
Dutch	-	-	1	2.9	1	1.5
English	3	9.7	1	2.9	4	6.1
Estonian	2	6.5	-	-	2	3.0
Finnish	-	-	1	2.9	1	1.5
French	5	16.1	7	20.0	12	18.2
German	4	12.9	3	8.6	7	10.6
Italian	4	12.9	17	48.6	21	31.8
Japanese	2	6.5	-	-	2	3.0
Latin	3	9.7	1	2.9	4	6.1
Norwegian	-	-	2	5.7	2	3.0
Portuguese	-	-	2	5.7	2	3.0
Russian	5	16.1	3	8.6	8	12.1
Spanish	7	22.6	18	51.4	25	37.9
Swedish	2	6.5	1	2.9	3	4.5
Turkey	1	3.2	1	2.9	2	3.0
many languages	-	-	1	2.9	1	1.5
<b>Total</b>	31	100.0	35	100.0	66	100.0

Despite the large number of languages mentioned, a few favourites can, anyhow, be pointed out among the subjects. More precisely, Spanish was the language that most of the subjects wanted to learn (37.9 %), after which came Italian (31.8 %) being nearly as popular when the answers from all the subjects were considered. Further, French (18.2 %), Russian (12.1 %) and German (10.6 %) were the languages the subjects of the present study were also quite interested in learning.

The female subjects of the present study were somewhat more unanimous than the males in their answers to the question on what languages they wanted to learn. For example, the Spanish language was the first choice of over half of the female subjects (51.4 %). Further, Italian (48.6 %) and French (20.0 %) were also obvious favourites among the females. In comparison, the male subjects of the present study expressed somewhat more varying views on the languages they wanted to learn. More specifically, Spanish was also the first choice among the male subjects (22.6 %), after which came French (16.1 %) and Russian (16.1 %). Next, Italian (12.9 %) and German (12.9 %) were the languages considered worth learning also by an equal number of male subjects.

#### 6.1.12 Summarizing assignment 1

The previous sections have concentrated on reporting the findings concerning assignment 1 in the questionnaire. However, difficulties can sometimes occur in the interpretation of the results because the variation in the subjects' answers was often quite extensive. Therefore, the most important findings on all 11 questions in assignment 1 are now summarized in Table 14.

Table 14. Summary of the findings on assignment 1

Question	1st choice	%	2nd choice	%	3rd choice	%
<b>The most beautiful language</b>	French	37.7	Finnish	27.5	English	11.6
<b>The ugliest language</b>	Russian	47.0	German	18.2	Swedish	16.7



<b>The most precise language</b>	English	33.3	German	27.5	Swedish	24.6
<b>The most difficult language</b>	Russian	24.3	Chinese	21.4	French	18.6
<b>The easiest language</b>	English	44.3	Finnish	31.4	Swedish	25.7
<b>The richest language</b>	English	34.3	French	24.3	Finnish	17.1
<b>The poorest language</b>	Swedish	37.5	Estonian	29.7	Russian	12.5
<b>The funniest language</b>	Estonian	27.1	Finnish English	11.4 11.4	Spanish Swedish	8.6 8.6
<b>The most serious language</b>	German	43.9	English	13.6	Russian Swedish	12.1 12.1
<b>The most correct language</b>	German	30.4	Swedish	29.0	English	24.6
<b>I would like to learn</b>	Spanish	37.9	Italian	31.8	French	18.2

Overall, French (37.7 %) turned out to be *the most beautiful language*, after which came Finnish (27.5 %) and English (11.6 %). Moreover, Russian (47.0 %), followed by German (18.2 %) and Swedish (16.7 %), was clearly considered *the ugliest language* by the subjects. Further, English (33.3 %) was viewed as *the most precise language* by the subjects, German (27.5 %) and Swedish (24.6 %) taking the second and third places. Again, Russian (24.3 %) was regarded as *the most difficult language* with, however, rather a small difference in percentage with Chinese (21.4 %) and French (18.6 %), which were nearly as popular choices among the subjects. Moreover, English (44.3 %) followed by Finnish (31.4 %) and Swedish (25.7 %) were unanimously thought to be *the easiest languages* by all the subjects. Similarly, English (34.3 %) was also considered *the richest language*, while French (24.3 %) and Finnish (17.1 %) were the most popular second and third choices. In contrast, Swedish (37.5 %) was viewed as *the poorest language*, after which came Estonian (29.7 %) and Russian (12.5 %). Furthermore, Estonian (27.1 %), followed by Finnish (11.4 %) and English (11.4 %), was considered *the funniest language* by the subjects, while Spanish (8.6 %) and Swedish (8.6 %)

shared the third place. German (43.9 %), in turn, was clearly thought to be *the most serious language*, and English (13.6 %), Russian (12.1 %) and Swedish (12.1 %) were the next choices among the subjects. Again, German (30.4 %) was also viewed as *the most correct language*, Swedish (29.0 %) and English (24.6 %) taking the second and third places. Finally, Spanish (37.9 %), followed by Italian (31.8 %) and French (18.2 %), was the language most of the subjects, according to this questionnaire, wanted to learn.

## 6.2 Discussion

As mentioned earlier, a study on language attitudes, similar to the present study, was carried out in Russia by Kashkin (2001) (see section 4.3). To be more specific, Kashkin (2001) originally designed a unique questionnaire for the purposes of his study, which aimed at measuring attitudes towards certain European languages in Russia. As pointed out previously, the questionnaire of the present study which, in turn, concentrates on investigating the language attitudes in Finland is adapted from Kashkin's (2001) study. Next, the results of the present study are compared with those by Kashkin (2001) to spot any differences or similarities in the language attitudes of Finns and Russians (see section 4.3). In addition, an attempt is also made to find out the possible reasons behind the differences or similarities in the language attitudes of the two groups of subjects.

In general, the answers to the first question were very similar among the Finnish and Russian subjects: French was viewed as *the most beautiful language* by both the nationalities. This is perhaps not so surprising because the French language is generally considered very beautiful and attractive also by many other nationalities around the world. Correspondingly, the mother tongues of both groups, that is to say, Finnish in the present study and Russian in Kashkin's (2001) study, occupied the second place. Similarly, this is also quite understandable since quite many of us tend to view our mother tongue as more or less beautiful. Finally, English was the most popular third choice in both groups of subjects which, in turn, can have something to do with the fact

that English has lately become quite a widespread language. Consequently, people are often being exposed to it even if they are not living in an English-speaking country; and this might also make people, despite the country they live in, view English more favourably.

The second question which inquired the subjects' opinions on *the ugliest language* was not viewed so unanimously. More specifically, Russian was thought to be *the ugliest language* by the Finnish subjects, whereas German was the first choice among the Russians. As far as both groups of subjects are concerned, these views are possibly due to the historical events related to the second World War. However, the German language was also a popular choice as *the ugliest language* among the Finnish subjects, while English occupied the same place in Kashkin's (2001) study. In all, the Finnish subjects' negative feelings towards the German language might be explained with the previously mentioned reasons, but the Russian subjects' opinion on the English language is quite surprising; and not the least because it was earlier viewed as one of *the most beautiful languages* by the Russians themselves. Further, Swedish was the third choice as *the ugliest language* among the subjects of the present study which, again, is probably because of the rather hostile history between Finland and Sweden.

The question on *the most precise language* was again answered quite differently by the Finnish and Russian subjects. English was considered *the most precise language* by the Finns, whereas Russian was chosen first by the subjects in the study by Kashkin (2001). Further, German was the most popular second choice among the Finnish subjects, Latin taking the corresponding place in the answers of the Russians. Finally, the Swedish language was again the third choice among the subjects of the present study, but this time as *the most precise language*. On the whole, it is possible that the Finnish subjects' choices for *the most precise language* have something to do with the languages we have to study at school; namely English and Swedish are, in fact, compulsory and, in addition, many students choose to take courses also in German. Therefore, the knowledge of the grammatical rules of those

languages may be more substantial than some languages less familiar to the Finnish students. This, in turn, might also create an illusion of English, German and Swedish being somehow more precise than, say, Chinese. However, what is worth noticing is that the Russians viewed (quite logically!) their mother tongue as one of *the most precise languages*, while the Finnish subjects hardly mentioned the Finnish language at all.

The answers to the fourth question which dealt with the subjects' opinions on *the most difficult language* were somewhat similar among the Finns and Russians. More specifically, Russian was considered *the most difficult language* by the Finnish subjects, whereas Chinese was the first choice among the Russians. However, Chinese was also viewed as *the most difficult language* by many of the Finnish subjects, while Japanese was considered equally difficult by the Russians. In all, both groups of subjects seemed to regard a language as difficult, if it contained an (presumably) unfamiliar system of writing. However, French was, after Chinese, thought to be *the most difficult language* by the Finnish subjects, Russian being the third choice among the Russians themselves. Clearly, the Russian subjects have considered the question also from a foreigner's point of view, whereas the Finns avoided naming the Finnish language as *the most difficult*, even though it could easily be perceived as such.

The views on *the easiest language* were again quite different between the Finnish and Russian subjects. More precisely, English was regarded as *the easiest language* by the Finns, while Russian was viewed as *the easiest* one by most of the Russian subjects. However, Finnish came in the second place among the Finnish subjects, whereas *I don't know* was now the most popular answer in the study by Kashkin (2001). It is somewhat surprising that the Finnish subjects did not, unlike the Russians, view their mother tongue as *the easiest language*, but it came only in the second place after English. This might again be due to the Finnish subjects' heavy exposure to English especially in the Finnish mass media. On the other hand, the Finns might, in their answers to the question on *the easiest language*, have stuck to the languages the most familiar to them. This would explain why Swedish was, in

addition to English and Finnish, also considered *the easiest language* by some of the Finns. Furthermore, the English language was also mentioned quite often as *the easiest language* in the answers of the Russian subjects. Consequently, the reason for that might again lie in the international and widespread nature of English.

Surprisingly, the question on *the richest language* was viewed very differently by the Finns and Russians: English took the first place in the answers of the Finnish subjects, whereas Russian was, in fact, almost unanimously regarded as *the richest language* by the Russian subjects. In contrast, French occupied the second and Finnish only third place as *the richest language* among the Finnish subjects, while Russian was the only language mentioned under this category in Kashkin's (2001) study. On the whole, it is quite surprising that the Finnish subjects seemed again somewhat reluctant to include the Finnish language in their answers, while the Russians agreed very strongly on the question on *the richest language*. Perhaps, the Finns considered, for example, French somehow more passionate and intense and, therefore, also richer than Finnish. It was also quite unexpected that English was such a popular choice as *the richest language* among the Finnish subjects. Again, it is rather difficult to come up with any particular reason for this, except the general popularity of the language.

Moreover, the seventh question which inquired the subjects' opinions on *the poorest language* was answered almost as differently as the previous one by the Finns and Russians. To be more precise, Swedish, followed by Estonian and Russian, was viewed as *the poorest language* by the Finnish subjects. In contrast, *I don't know* was the most popular answer among the Russians, after which Chukchee was considered *the poorest language* by the Russian subjects. In the answers of the Finnish subjects, the influence of history might again be noticed; that is, Swedish and Russian were again seen in rather a negative light, being, therefore, very popular choices as *the poorest language*. However, as far as Russian was concerned, there could exist also financial reasons for viewing the Russian language as *the poorest*. Unfortunately, the Finnish subjects might see the language somehow connected with the current

state of the whole country which, at least in Finland, is generally considered very unstable. Consequently, this could also partly explain the Estonian language being mentioned in the answers of the Finnish subjects.

To the question on *the funniest language*, the Finnish and Russian subjects answered again somewhat differently. More precisely, Estonian was the first choice as *the funniest language* among the Finnish subjects. Further, Finnish and English shared the second place, after which came Spanish and Swedish. Possibly, the Estonian language was thought to be *the funniest* by the Finnish subjects because it has quite many features in common with the Finnish language. For example, it is a well known fact that many words in Finnish exist also in the Estonian language, with the exception that they have totally different meanings. This, in turn, might have a somewhat humorous effect on Finns, when they see a typically Finnish word used in a very different context in Estonian. However, this is not how the numerous other choices as *the funniest language*, such as, Finnish, English, Spanish or Swedish, could be explained. In comparison with the Finns, the Russian subjects came up with only three languages when answering the question on *the funniest language*. More specifically, Chinese was the first choice of most of the Russian subjects, Japanese and Ukrainian being the most popular second and third choices in the study by Kashkin (2001). Probably, the Chinese language was considered *the funniest* by the Russians because of its unique system of writing and peculiar pronunciation. Similarly, this could also be the reason for Japanese being the most popular second choice. However, it is worth noticing that the Finnish subjects did not mention neither of these languages in their answers, even though one might assume that the languages would sound as funny to them as they did to the Russian subjects.

Conversely, the Finnish and Russian subjects seemed to agree quite strongly on the question concerning *the most serious language*. In fact, German, followed by English, was viewed as *the most serious language* by most of the Finnish subjects. In contrast, English was the first choice among the Russian subjects, while German, in turn, was now the most popular second

choice. In all, the popularity of the English language in the subjects' answers might be due to the fact that English is often used not only in the soap-operas, but also in various other, more official contexts, such as, news, documentaries and science. Consequently, the Finnish and Russian subjects possibly created a certain image of the English language based on formal (and global) contexts in which it is often used. In contrast, the subjects' views on German as *the most serious language* probably derive from the military related history of Germany; after all, Germany was a very powerful military force especially during the second World War. In addition, the German people seem to be commonly considered somewhat official and serious which, in turn, might affect also the subjects' opinions on the German language. Again, similar reasons, such as, the reputation as a powerful military force and the views on the nature of the Slavic people, might have also influenced the subjects' third choices as *the most serious language*. Russian was, in the third place, regarded as *the most serious language* both by the Finnish as well as Russian subjects, with the exception that Swedish also shared the same position in the results of the present study. However, it is again interesting that the Finnish subjects did not view Finnish as a candidate for *the most serious language*, whereas the Russians did not hesitate to include their mother tongue in their answers.

The question on *the most correct language* was again viewed somewhat differently by the Finnish and Russian subjects. To be more specific, German was thought to be *the most correct language* by the Finnish subjects, whereas Russian or *I don't know* were the most popular answers among the Russians. At least, the view of the Finnish subjects on German as *the most correct language* might be due to what is often considered the general nature of the German language. This includes, for example, several grammatical rules which the subjects might perceive as somewhat inflexible and precise. In this way, the whole German language could be viewed as being somehow more correct than the other languages by the Finnish subjects. The same could apply also to the Swedish language which was the second choice as *the most correct language* among the Finnish subjects, while English occupied the same place

in Kashkin's (2001) study. However, English was, after Swedish, also viewed as *the most correct language* by the Finnish subjects, whereas Greek was the most popular third choice among the Russians. In general, the subjects in both groups probably answered to the question on *the most correct language* with languages already familiar to them. In other words, it is undoubtedly easier to consider a language *the most correct* if you actually *know* the language. This could also be the reason why the answers of the Finnish subjects consisted of languages, such as, German, Swedish and English and, correspondingly, the Russian subjects answered with languages like Russian, English and Greek. However, it is, again, worth mentioning that the Finnish subjects, unlike the Russians, did not at all regard their mother tongue as *the most correct language*.

Finally, the subjects were inquired about the languages they wanted to learn. Firstly, Spanish was the favourite among the Finnish subjects, whereas English was the language the Russians mostly wanted to learn. The enthusiasm of the Russian subjects to learn English is probably due to the fact that it, as well as foreign languages in general, is not taught in Russia nearly to the extent it is studied here in Finland. Therefore, the Russian subjects might consider it important to learn first English which, as mentioned, has lately become quite the 'lingua franca'. In contrast, the Finnish subjects' opinion of Spanish as the language they mostly wanted to learn could derive from not only the fact that it is spoken quite widely in countries around the world, but also the somewhat limited opportunities of studying it. In other words, the Finnish subjects might view the Spanish language more "tempting" and exotic because it is not so commonly taught in the upper secondary school than, say, German or French. Similarly, reasons, such as, limited learning possibilities, might also lie behind the Finnish subjects' most popular second choice, Italian, as the language they wanted to learn. In contrast, French, which was the corresponding language in the study by Kashkin (2001) and also mentioned as the third choice by the Finns, probably was a popular answer not only because French, too, is widely spoken in different parts of the world, but also because it was considered very beautiful by both Finnish and Russian subjects.



In all, the findings on assignment 1 have now been reported and summarized. Similarly, the next section concentrates on discussing the findings on assignment 2 in the questionnaire of the present study.

### **6.3 Attitudes towards foreign languages: assignment 2**

Assignment 2 in the questionnaire of the present study consisted of a set of questions on eight European languages, which the subjects were asked to answer. More precisely, the idea was that the subjects would finish two sentences, namely, *This language is...* and *This language is suited for...*, on a total of eight languages (see Appendix 1). However, the questions were, as explained earlier, in Finnish in the actual questionnaire of the present study (see section 5.2.2). In the following sections, the frequencies of the responses to these two questions on each language will be first shown in table form, after which the most important findings are reported and summarized. In comparison with the analysis carried out in assignment 1, the percentages of the answers are not shown here, only the frequencies. However, attention is, like in the analysis of assignment 1, paid to the possible differences in the answers of the male and female subjects. Similarly, the frequencies of the answers concerning all the subjects of the present study are also summarized.

#### **6.3.1 The English language**

In response to the first question in assignment 2 (*The English language is...*), the descriptions of the English language were quite unanimous. The findings are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15. The English language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>nice /interesting /funny</b>	12	10	22
<b>clear /easy /simple</b>	10	12	22
<b>ordinary /normal /familiar</b>	4	14	18
<b>formal /official /serious</b>	3	5	8
<b>beautiful</b>	-	7	7
<b>sophisticated /fine /royal</b>	2	5	7
<b>regular /logical /precise</b>	4	-	4
<b>Br. Eng. formal/ Am. Eng. relaxed</b>	-	2	2
<b>like Finnish</b>	-	2	2
<b>rich</b>	-	2	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	5	6	11

In general, English was viewed as nice and interesting (22) as well as clear and simple (22) by the subjects of the present study. Moreover, English was also thought to be ordinary, normal and somehow familiar (18), when the answers from all the subjects were taken into account.

For the most, the views on the English language were quite similar between the males and females. To be more specific, the English language was mostly considered a normal and familiar language by the females (14), whereas English being nice and interesting (12) as well as clear and easy to understand (10) was more emphasized by the male subjects. Furthermore, English was also described as clear and simple (12), and after that, nice and interesting (10) by the females. However, English was thought to be beautiful (7) only by the female subjects, whereas logical and regular (4) were the words which only the males used in describing the language.

The second question in assignment 2 (*This language is suited for...*) inquired the suitability of the English language from the subjects. The results are summarized in Table 16.

Table 16. The English language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
television /films	9	15	24
everywhere /everyone	5	18	23
the language of the world	10	10	20
international communication /events	11	7	18
music	2	6	8
travelling	-	3	3
English-speaking countries	2	-	2
work /school	-	2	2
unclassified answers	4	6	10

In general, English was considered the most suitable for television and films (24) by the subjects. Secondly, it was also thought to be a language for everything and everyone (23) and the whole world (20), a 'lingua franca', so to speak. In addition, English was also seen to be suitable for different international events and communication (18) by the subjects of the present study.

Again, there were some differences in the answers between the male and female subjects: English was viewed as the most suitable language for everything and everyone by the females (18), whereas English was emphasized as being used especially in international events and communication by the male subjects (11). Moreover, the suitability of English in television and films was also considered somewhat more important by the females (15) than males (9). Nonetheless, the idea of English being a 'lingua franca' was shared by both the male (10) and female (10) subjects of the present study.

### 6.3.2 The Russian language

Furthermore, the subjects were encouraged to come up with a description of the Russian language. The findings are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17. The Russian language is...

	<b>Male Frequency</b>	<b>Female Frequency</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>
<b>unclear/difficult/ incomprehensible</b>	18	23	41
<b>awful/ugly/stupid</b>	9	13	22
<b>weird/strange</b>	3	4	7
<b>funny/nice/interesting</b>	3	4	7
<b>scary/strong/brutal</b>	3	3	6
<b>dishonest/scheming</b>	-	5	5
<b>quick</b>	-	2	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	5	6	11

On the whole, the Russian language was thought to be mainly difficult and incomprehensible (41). Moreover, it was described as awful, ugly and stupid (22) by a considerable number of subjects. In addition, Russian was also viewed as strange (7) as well as nice and interesting (7) by some of the subjects taking part in the present study.

The descriptions of the Russian language were not substantially different between the males and females. More precisely, Russian was mainly regarded as unclear and difficult by both the male (18) and female (23) subjects. Further, awful, ugly and stupid were also the words used in describing the Russian language, again, by both the male (9) and female (13) subjects. However, Russian was also viewed as dishonest and scheming by some of the female subjects (5); a view which was not at all shared by the males (-).

Since two questions were posed previously on the English language, the subjects were, similarly, also inquired about the suitability of the Russian language. The results are shown in Table 18.

Table 18. The Russian language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>Russia/Russians (only)</b>	14	20	34
<b>nothing/nobody</b>	5	2	7
<b>business/work</b>	-	5	5
<b>television/films</b>	-	4	4
<b>poor people</b>	3	-	3
<b>criminals</b>	2	-	2
<b>trade</b>	2	-	2
<b>travelling</b>	-	2	2
<b>co-operation with the Baltic countries</b>	-	2	2
<b>fighting</b>	-	2	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	6	5	11

In general, the subjects were quite unanimous about the suitability of the Russian language. First of all, Russian was clearly considered the most suitable for Russia and Russians (34). In addition, some of the subjects wanted to emphasize here the fact that the language, according to them, should not be used in anywhere else or by anyone else except Russians themselves. Further, nothing and nobody was also a popular answer among the subjects (7), after which business and work (5) were also viewed as suitable contexts for the Russian language.

The males and females were again quite unanimous in their answers to the question on the suitability of the Russian language. More specifically, Russian was considered the most suitable for Russia and Russians by both the male (14) and female (20) subjects. However, business and work was also a popular suggestion for the suitability of Russian among the female subjects (5), whereas nothing and nobody was an equally popular answer among the males (5).

### 6.3.3 The German language

Furthermore, the subjects were inquired about their views on the German language. The findings are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19. The German language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>strong/aggressive/masculine</b>	11	6	17
<b>funny/nice/interesting</b>	6	10	16
<b>difficult/incomprehensible</b>	5	7	12
<b>clear/grammatical/precise</b>	3	8	11
<b>ugly/stupid</b>	-	11	11
<b>original/different</b>	3	2	5
<b>important/arrogant</b>	5	-	5
<b>beautiful</b>	-	3	3
<b>stiff/clumsy</b>	-	2	2
<b>rich</b>	-	2	2
<b>glad/hilarious</b>	-	2	2
<b>quick</b>	2	-	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	4	12	16

Mostly, German was viewed as strong, aggressive and masculine by the subjects (17). Further, nice and interesting (16) as well as difficult and incomprehensible (12) were the adjectives often used in the subjects' descriptions. Moreover, the German language was considered ugly and stupid by some of the subjects (11), grammatical and precise being also the adjectives mentioned equally often (11), when the answers from all the subjects were taken into account.

In comparison with some of the previously discussed languages, German was viewed quite differently by the males and females. To be more precise, the German language was first considered ugly and stupid (11) by the female subjects, after which funny, nice and interesting (10) were the most frequently used adjectives. Further, clear, grammatical and precise (8) were also

associated quite often with the German language in the responses of the female subjects. In contrast, the German language was mostly regarded as strong and masculine (11) by the male subjects, whereas funny, nice and interesting (6) were also mentioned quite often in the answers of the males. However, German was, unlike by the females, not at all considered ugly and stupid by the male subjects (-), but the males were, in turn, the only ones who described it as important and arrogant (5).

The subjects were also asked to consider the suitability of the German language. The findings are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20. The German language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
television/detective series/ films on war	3	12	15
Central-Europe	8	7	15
Germany/Germans	5	4	9
official/serious contexts	3	6	9
travelling	1	3	4
bosses/leaders	3	1	4
politics	2	2	4
language of the world	2	2	4
anything/anyone	2	2	4
students/workers in Europe	-	3	3
sports	-	2	2
trade/technology	-	2	2
giving instructions	2	-	2
unclassified answers	4	6	10

In general, quite a few suggestions for the suitability of the German language were conveyed by the subjects. However, German was viewed as the most suitable for Central-Europe (15) as well as detective series and films on war (15). Further, the German language was considered suited for Germany and

Germans (9), whereas also formal and serious contexts were regarded as suitable for German by some of the subjects (9).

The ideas on the suitability of the German language were somewhat different between the males and females. More specifically, German was mostly viewed as suitable for detective series and films on war by the female subjects (12), whereas Central-Europe (8) and Germany and Germans (5) were the most popular answers among the male subjects. However, Central-Europe was also considered quite a suitable place for German by the female subjects (7), while detective series and films were not, unlike by the females, seen very suitable for the language by the male subjects (3).

#### 6.3.4 The Estonian language

Furthermore, the subjects were asked to describe the Estonian language. The findings are shown in Table 21.

Table 21. The Estonian language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
like imitated/ugly/ "pirate" Finnish	14	19	33
nice/funny	12	20	32
awful/stupid	3	5	8
unclear/incomprehensible	3	3	6
weird/strange	1	4	5
easy/clear	-	2	2
"You think you understand something but you don't"	-	2	2
stiff/clumsy	2	-	2
mixture of Finnish and a foreign language	2	-	2
unclassified answers	3	2	5

On the whole, the subjects were quite unanimous in their descriptions of the Estonian language. Mostly, Estonian was viewed as a language somehow



related to Finnish by the subjects (33). However, Estonian was also considered somewhat inadequate: it was regarded as almost a joke or a "pirate" version of the Finnish language. In contrast, Estonian was also viewed as nice and funny by many of the subjects (32).

The descriptions of the Estonian language by the males and females were quite similar. More specifically, Estonian was mostly considered nice and funny by the female subjects (20), after which the language was also regarded as being closely related to Finnish (19). As mentioned, the male subjects gave somewhat similar descriptions. However, Estonian was, for the most, viewed as an imitation of Finnish by the males (14), after which it was, like by the females, also considered nice and funny (12).

Further, the subjects were asked to consider the suitability of the Estonian language. The results are summarized in Table 22.

Table 22. The Estonian language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>Estonia/Estonians</b>	14	15	29
<b>jokes/amusing tv- programmes</b>	2	6	8
<b>streets/market places</b>	-	4	4
<b>travelling</b>	2	2	4
<b>co-operation between Finland and Estonia</b>	-	2	2
<b>trade</b>	2	-	2
<b>Estonia/Russia</b>	2	-	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	5	7	12

Unlike in the previous section which concentrated on the German language, the subjects did not seem to come up with any specific situations or places suitable for the Estonian language. For the most, Estonian was considered suitable for Estonia and Estonians (29). Furthermore, Estonian was viewed as

suited for jokes and amusing tv-programmes, but by a considerably fewer subjects (8).

There were virtually no differences in the answers between the males and females concerning the question on the suitability of the Estonian language. To be more precise, Estonian was mostly considered suited for Estonia and Estonians by both the male (14) and female (15) subjects. However, there were hardly any further suggestions made on the suitability of the Estonian language by the males, whereas Estonian, to some extent, was regarded as suitable for jokes and amusing tv-programmes (6) as well as streets and market places (4) by the female subjects.

### 6.3.5 The French language

Furthermore, the subjects were inquired about their views on the French language. The findings are shown in Table 23.

Table 23. The French language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>difficult/unclear /incomprehensible</b>	7	15	22
<b>romantic/soft/tender /passionate</b>	7	9	16
<b>beautiful/lovely</b>	-	15	15
<b>fine/sophisticated</b>	5	5	10
<b>nice/funny/interesting</b>	3	6	9
<b>stupid/annoying/ugly</b>	5	3	8
<b>strange/original</b>	4	2	6
<b>artistic/creative</b>	1	3	4
<b>rich</b>	2	1	3
<b>lots of consonants</b>	3	-	3
<b>flowing/fluent</b>	2	-	2
<b>arrogant</b>	-	2	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	3	5	8

In general, French was thought to be rather difficult and unclear (22) by the subjects, after which it was viewed as romantic, soft and passionate (16). Further, the French language was also considered beautiful and lovely (15) as well as fine and sophisticated (10) when all the subjects were taken into account.

Between the males and females, there were some differences in the descriptions of the French language. More specifically, French was mostly viewed as difficult and incomprehensible (15) and beautiful and lovely (15) by the female subjects. Moreover, French was also considered romantic, soft and passionate by the females (9). In contrast, French was viewed as not only difficult and unclear (7), but also romantic, soft and tender (7) by the male subjects. Further, the French language was characterized as stupid and ugly (5) by the males. However, French was, unlike by the females (15), not at all thought to be beautiful and lovely by the male subjects of the present study (-).

Again, the subjects were also inquired about the suitability of the French language. The findings are summarized in Table 24.

Table 24. The French language is suited for...

	<b>Male Frequency</b>	<b>Female Frequency</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>
<b>romantic/sophisticated tv-series/films</b>	6	11	17
<b>France/the French</b>	5	10	15
<b>music/poetry/literature</b>	4	9	13
<b>romantic moments/places</b>	4	5	9
<b>wine/food</b>	5	2	7
<b>fine/sophisticated/rich people</b>	3	4	7
<b>EU-meetings/international contracts</b>	2	2	4
<b>artists/bohemian people</b>	-	3	3
<b>travelling</b>	-	2	2
<b>work outside Finland</b>	-	2	2
<b>nothing</b>	2	-	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	5	8	13

On the whole, the subjects of the present study came up with a variety of suggestions for the suitability of the French language. However, the subjects managed to agree quite strongly on a few of them. For the most, French was considered suitable for romantic and sophisticated tv-series and films (17), after which France and the French (15) was the most popular answer among the subjects. Further, music, poetry and literature (13) were also viewed as suitable uses for the French language, when the answers from all the subjects of the present study were taken into account.

In the subjects' answers to the question on the suitability of French, there were some differences between the males and females. To be more precise, the French language was mostly considered suitable for romantic and sophisticated tv-series and films (11), as well as France and the French (10) by the female subjects. Further, music, poetry and literature (9) were also regarded as suitable uses for the French language by the females. In comparison, romantic and sophisticated tv-series and films were, like by the females, also viewed as the most suitable contexts for French by the male subjects (6). Moreover, France and the French (5), as well as wine and food (5) were considered suited for French by the males. However, music, poetry and literature was not, unlike among the females, nearly as popular an answer among the male subjects (4).

### **6.3.6 The Finnish language**

Moreover, the subjects were inquired about their views on the Finnish language. The findings are summarized in Table 25.

Table 25. The Finnish language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
nice/funny/lovely/interesting/ beautiful/the best	15	10	25
clear/easy	10	8	18
normal/familiar/neutral	8	9	17
stupid/ugly/awful	-	10	10
my language	2	4	6
difficult (for others than Finns)	-	6	6
strange/original	1	3	4
like (children's) babbling	1	2	3
comical	-	2	2
gloomy/dark	2	-	2
clumsy	2	-	2
unclassified answers	3	8	11

For the most, the subjects were quite unanimous in their descriptions of the Finnish language. Especially, the variety of words describing a very positive and affectionate attitude towards Finnish was exceptionally wide. More specifically, Finnish was viewed as nice, lovely, beautiful and the best, to mention a few, by many of the subjects (25), after which clear and easy (18) were the most popular descriptions. Further, neutral and familiar (17) were also the adjectives used quite often in the subjects' answers. However, words describing a more negative attitude towards Finnish, such as stupid, ugly and awful, were also preferred by some of the subjects (10).

Partly, the differences in the answers between the males and females were quite substantial. For example, Finnish was viewed as nice, funny and beautiful (10), as well as stupid and ugly (10) by an equal number of female subjects. Further, normal and familiar (9), followed by clear and easy (8), were the most popular answers among the females. In contrast, the Finnish language was regarded as nice, funny and beautiful by the most of the male subjects (15), after which clear and easy (10) were the most used adjectives. Furthermore,

Finnish was also described as normal and familiar by quite many of the male subjects (8). However, what is surprising is that stupid, ugly or awful were, unlike among the females (10), not at all used in the descriptions of Finnish among the male subjects (-).

As usual, the subjects were also inquired about the suitability of the Finnish language. The results are summarized in Table 26.

Table 26. The Finnish language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>Finland/Finns</b>	13	25	38
<b>everywhere</b>	6	4	10
<b>everyday-life</b>	3	7	10
<b>Finnish commercials/tv-programmes/radio/films</b>	3	3	6
<b>music/poetry</b>	1	5	6
<b>not abroad</b>	2	3	5
<b>those who are interested</b>	2	-	2
<b>Scandinavia</b>	-	2	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	9	4	13

In general, the subjects agreed quite strongly on the suitability of the Finnish language and, therefore, the results are perhaps not very surprising: Finland and Finns was clearly the most popular answer among the subjects (38). Furthermore, Finnish was mostly considered suitable for everywhere (10) and everyday-life (10) by the subjects. In addition, the Finnish language was also pointed out as suited for the Finnish mass media (6), as well as for music and poetry (6) by some of the subjects of the present study.

The views on the suitability of the Finnish language were quite similar among the males and females. To be more precise, Finnish was undoubtedly considered the most suitable for Finland and Finns by both the male (13) and female (25) subjects. Moreover, Finnish was thought to be suited for everyday-life (7) by the female subjects, whereas everywhere (6) was almost

an equally popular answer among the males. However, the suitability of the Finnish language for music and poetry was emphasized much more by the females (5) than the male subjects of the present study (1).

### 6.3.7 The Swedish language

Furthermore, the subjects were encouraged to give a description of the Swedish language. The results are shown in Table 27.

Table 27. The Swedish language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
stupid/awful/annoying/ugly	9	12	21
funny/nice	2	15	17
unclear/difficult/obscure	8	5	13
arrogant/sophisticated	4	5	9
simple/easy/clear	3	5	8
fluent/melodic	2	5	7
familiar/ordinary	-	5	5
feminine/homosexual	4	-	4
strange/original	3	1	4
precise	2	-	2
dark/gloomy	2	-	2
unclassified answers	3	5	8

The descriptions given on the Swedish language were somewhat controversial. Mostly, Swedish was viewed as stupid, annoying and ugly by the subjects (21). However, it was also considered funny and nice (17) by an almost equal number of subjects. Further, the Swedish language was regarded as somewhat difficult, unclear and obscure by some of the subjects of the present study (13).

There were a few quite substantial differences in the attitudes of the males and females. More specifically, Swedish was mostly viewed as funny and nice by the female subjects (15). However, Swedish was also considered stupid and

ugly by quite a few females (12). In contrast, Swedish was mostly considered stupid, annoying and ugly by the male subjects (9), after which it was also viewed as difficult, unclear and obscure (8). Surprisingly enough, the Swedish language was not, to the extent of the females (15), regarded as nice and funny by the male subjects (2), whereas unclear, difficult and obscure was not as popular an answer among the female subjects (5) than among the males (8).

Again, the subjects were also asked about the suitability of the Swedish language. The findings are summarized in Table 28.

Table 28. The Swedish language is suited for...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
Sweden/Swedes	15	13	28
Scandinavia	2	7	9
nothing	6	1	7
travelling	2	4	6
Finland/Finns	2	3	5
anywhere	-	4	4
television/films	1	3	4
jokes/amusing situations	-	2	2
fine/sophisticated people	2	-	2
work	-	2	2
unclassified answers	9	13	22

In general, the subjects were quite unanimous in their answers to the question on the suitability of the Swedish language. More precisely, the Swedish language was clearly considered the most suitable for Sweden and Swedes by the subjects (28). Moreover, Swedish was also regarded suited for Scandinavia, when all the subjects were taken into account (9).

Between the males and females, there were not any substantial differences in the views on the suitability of Swedish. For example, the Swedish language was clearly thought to be the most suited for Sweden and Swedes by both the male (15) and female (13) subjects. Further, Scandinavia was also regarded as



somewhat suitable for Swedish by the females (7), whereas 'nothing' was nearly as popular an answer among the males (6).

### 6.3.8 The Spanish language

Finally, the subjects were asked to describe the Spanish language. The results are summarized in Table 29.

Table 29. The Spanish language is...

	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency
<b>nice/funny/interesting/lovely</b>	6	25	31
<b>passionate/intensive/fiery /temperamental/sexy</b>	8	9	17
<b>difficult/unclear /incomprehensible</b>	3	9	12
<b>quick</b>	7	4	11
<b>exotic/mysterious</b>	2	5	7
<b>strange/original</b>	2	2	4
<b>fine/sophisticated</b>	2	2	4
<b>fluent/melodic</b>	3	-	3
<b>easy/clear</b>	-	3	3
<b>"cool"/relaxed</b>	2	1	3
<b>stupid</b>	2	-	2
<b>strong/powerful</b>	-	2	2
<b>happy/lively</b>	-	2	2
<b>precise</b>	-	2	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	-	6	6

On the whole, the subjects came up with somewhat diverse descriptions of the Spanish language. However, a few of them can clearly be considered more popular than others. To be more specific, Spanish was mostly thought to be nice, lovely and interesting (31) by the subjects. Further, Spanish was viewed as passionate, intensive and temperamental also by a considerable number of subjects (17). In addition, difficult and incomprehensible (12) as well as quick

(11) were the adjectives also thought to describe Spanish quite well by some of the subjects of the present study.

The views of the males and females on the Spanish language were again somewhat different: Spanish was mostly considered nice, lovely and interesting by the female subjects (25), whereas the passionate and temperamental nature of the language was emphasized by many of the males (8). Furthermore, the Spanish language was also viewed as passionate and temperamental (9) as well as difficult and incomprehensible (9) by the females. In comparison, quick (7) followed by nice, funny and interesting (6) were the most used descriptions among the male subjects. However, Spanish was not considered nearly as nice and funny by the males (6) than females (25) which, in fact, also applies on the views on the difficulty of the language (males: 3, females: 9).

Furthermore, the subjects were asked to consider the suitability of the Spanish language. The findings are summarized in Table 30.

Table 30. The Spanish language is suited for...

	<b>Male Frequency</b>	<b>Female Frequency</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>
<b>Spain/Spaniards</b>	6	8	14
<b>travelling</b>	5	8	13
<b>shouting/arguing /emotional scenarios</b>	3	5	8
<b>television/plays/films</b>	3	5	8
<b>Southern-Europe</b>	1	4	5
<b>football</b>	3	-	3
<b>international use</b>	2	1	3
<b>exotic countries/people</b>	-	3	3
<b>music</b>	2	-	2
<b>restaurants</b>	-	2	2
<b>everyday-life</b>	1	1	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	9	6	15

In general, the Spanish language was considered the most suited for Spain and Spaniards by the subjects (14). Furthermore, travelling was also viewed as a suitable context for the language by many of the subjects (13). In addition, the Spanish language was thought to be suited for shouting and other kinds of emotional scenarios (8) as well as television, plays and films (8) by the subjects of the present study.

The views on the suitability of the Spanish language were very similar among the males and females. More specifically, Spain and Spaniards followed by travelling were the most popular answers among both the male (6, 5) and female (8, 8) subjects. Further, Spanish was thought to be suited for arguing and emotional scenarios, and television, plays and films, again, by both the males (3, 3) and females (5, 5). Additionally, the suitability of the Spanish language for football was also emphasized by some of the male subjects (3).

### 6.3.9 Summarizing assignment 2

In the previous sections, the findings on assignment 2 have been discussed in great detail. However, as in the end of section 6.1, the most important results will also now be summarized. More precisely, Table 30 shows first the language on which the two questions (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) were posed, after which the most popular answers to both the questions given by the subjects are summarized.

Table 31. Summary of the findings on assignment 2

Question	This language is...	This language is suited for...
<b>English</b>	nice/interesting/funny 22	television/films 24
	clear/easy/simple 22	everywhere/everyone 23
	ordinary/normal/familiar 18	the language of the world 20
		international communication /events 18
<b>Russian</b>	unclear/difficult	Russia/Russians 34
	/incomprehensible 41	
	awful/ugly/stupid 22	
<b>German</b>	strong/aggressive/masculine 17	television/detective series
	funny/nice/interesting 16	/films on war 15
	difficult/incomprehensible 12	Central-Europe 15

<b>Estonian</b>	like imitated/ugly/"pirate" Finnish nice/funny	33 32	Estonia/Estonians	29
<b>French</b>	difficult/unclear /incomprehensible romantic/passionate/soft /tender beautiful/lovely	22 16 15	romantic/sophisticated tv-series/films France/the French music/poetry/literature	17 15 13
<b>Finnish</b>	nice/funny/interesting/lovely /beautiful/the best clear/easy normal/familiar/neutral	25 18 17	Finland/Finns	38
<b>Swedish</b>	stupid/awful/annoying /ugly funny/nice unclear/difficult/obscure	21 17 13	Sweden/Swedes	28
<b>Spanish</b>	nice/funny/interesting /lovely passionate/intensive/fiery /temperamental/sexy	31 17	Spain/Spaniards travelling	14 13

In general, English was viewed as nice, easy and ordinary by the subjects. It was also considered suited for television and films, as well as for different international events. In addition, the English language was also viewed as very suitable for everyone and everywhere. In contrast, Russian was mostly thought to be difficult, ugly and stupid and suitable only for Russia and Russians. Similarly, German was also viewed as difficult but, in addition, also nice, strong and masculine. Further, German was considered suitable for detective series and films on war, as well as for Central-Europe. In comparison, Estonian was thought to resemble Finnish, while also being viewed as nice and funny, and suited for Estonia and Estonians. However, French was mostly regarded as difficult, romantic, soft and beautiful by the subjects. Further, it was considered suitable for romantic tv-series and films, France and the French and, finally, music, poetry and literature. Similarly, Finnish was viewed as beautiful, lovely and nice, but also easy and familiar by the subjects of the present study, according to whom Finnish was regarded the most suitable for Finland and Finns. Again, Swedish, too, was considered nice by the subjects but also difficult, obscure and stupid and the most suited for Sweden and Swedes. Lastly, the Spanish language was viewed as nice and interesting as

well as passionate, temperamental and sexy. It was regarded as suitable for Spain and Spaniards and travelling by the subjects of the present study.

#### 6.4 Discussion

As in assignment 1, also one of the purposes of including assignment 2 in the questionnaire of the present study was not only to investigate the language attitudes of Finns, but also to compare the attitudes of Finns with those of Russians. Similarly, the findings on assignment 2 are now compared with the results on the study by Kashkin (2001) (see section 4.3). However, as mentioned earlier, the languages on which the two questions (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) were posed in assignment 2 were fewer and somewhat different in the present study than in the study by Kashkin (2001). To be more specific, eight languages were included in the questionnaire of the present study, whereas in the study by Kashkin (2001), the total number of languages was only seven. In fact, English, Russian, German, French and Finnish were the languages used in both studies, while Spanish, Swedish and Estonian, even though used in the present study, were not included in the study by Kashkin (2001). Therefore, the idea is now to compare the answers given by the Finnish and Russian subjects to the questions on those five languages, on which both groups of subjects had the possibility to express their views.

The subjects' views on the English language were, in a way, quite similar. More specifically, the Finns considered English interesting and ordinary, while international, popular and difficult were the most popular answers among the Russians. However, English was thought to be somewhat easy by the Finnish subjects which was not the case among the Russians, who also considered English suited for business communication with foreigners as well as for everything and everyone. Similarly, the international nature of English was also emphasized by the Finnish subjects together with its suitability for everything and everyone. Furthermore, tv-series and films were also viewed as suitable uses for English by the Finns, whereas the Russian subjects disagreed with the Finnish subjects in this respect.

On the whole, the most striking differences between the Finnish and Russian subjects probably lie in their views on the difficulty of the English language. The fact that the Russians viewed English as difficult is possibly due to the quite late stage they presumably start studying it at school. In contrast, Finns usually take their first courses in English at the age of 8 or 9, which most likely makes the subjects consider it relatively easy. In addition, an important factor which might also affect the Finnish subjects' views on English is the Finnish mass media, and especially television. It goes without saying that the foreign tv-programmes are not usually dubbed in Finland which, in turn, provides everyone (at least, occasionally) the possibility to hear English as it is used in real-life. Consequently, this might also make the subjects participating in the present study view English as somewhat easy. In addition, the almost unlimited supply of tv-programmes in English has probably an impact also on the Finnish subjects' opinion on the suitability of the English language. Accordingly, English is considered very suitable for films and television by the Finns; a view which was not shared at all by the Russians who possibly have a different tradition on exposure of foreign languages on their national television. However, what the Finns and Russians agreed on was the idea of English being a very international language which is suitable for everywhere and everyone. Obviously, this is a view possessed by many people in today's world - with or without dubbed tv-programmes.

In contrast, the subjects' views on the Russian language were completely different. More specifically, Russian was mostly considered difficult, awful and ugly by the Finnish subjects, whereas beautiful, rich, normal and simple were the most used definitions among the Russians. Furthermore, Russian was, according to the Finnish subjects, considered suitable only for Russia and Russians. However, the Russian language was mostly regarded as suitable for everything by the Russian subjects, the emphasis being also on the social functions as well as the scientific and technological use of the language.

In all, the differences in the subjects' answers to the questions on the Russian language were to be expected. It is not at all surprising that the Russians themselves viewed Russian not only beautiful and rich, but also

normal and simple. After all, Russian is, most likely, their mother tongue; a fact, which probably explains the various positive and affectionate evaluations given on the language. In contrast, the Finnish subjects developed a totally different approach to the Russian language. In fact, Russian was evaluated very negatively by the Finns who regarded it mostly as ugly and awful. This possibly goes back to the second World War in which Finland, as everyone knows, fought against Russia with quite dramatic consequences. Therefore, the Finnish subjects, even though relatively young, might still consider Russia and the Russian language somehow as a threat, if not to Finland as a country, then to their Finnish identities. However, the Finnish subjects' views on the difficulty of the Russian language is possibly not due to any war, but to the differences in the spelling systems of the two languages which, in turn, might make Russian seem quite incomprehensible. Furthermore, it is interesting that the Russian subjects also emphasized the fact that their mother tongue covers many aspects of society, including science and technology, whereas the Finns could not or refused to think of any further functions for Russian than the concept of it being used in Russia.

The views on the German language were again quite similar among the Finnish and Russian subjects. More precisely, German was viewed as not only strong, masculine and difficult, but also nice and interesting by the Finns, whereas it was thought to be somewhat rough, tough, barbaric and difficult by the Russian subjects. Further, the German language was regarded as suitable for films on war, detective series and Central-Europe by the majority of the Finnish subjects. In contrast, the German language was considered suited for war, menace and speaking about sports by the Russians.

Even though the definitions on German were somewhat similar among the Finnish and Russian subjects, there could, however, be noticed more subtle differences on the connotations of the answers. For example, the Russian subjects described German as rough, tough and even barbaric, of which the latter word sounds especially negative. In contrast, the Finnish subjects, even though having also emphasized the "toughness" of the language, evaluated German with perhaps more positive adjectives, such as, strong and masculine.

In addition, the German language was, in fact, regarded as nice and interesting by the Finns; a view which was not shared by the Russian subjects. Consequently, the reason for the Russian subjects' views on German might, again, lie in the second World War. More specifically, the war-infested years between Russia and Germany in the 1940s might partly explain the Russian subjects' brutal view on the German language. In fact, the Russian subjects' answers to the question on the suitability of German also suggest this; namely, German was considered the most suited for war and menace by the Russians. However, the Finnish subjects settled on mentioning only films on war in their answers as well as (German) detective series which are typically shown on Finnish television. In addition, the Finns seemed to regard German as a somewhat international language which is often preferred especially in Central-Europe. However, this aspect of the German language was not at all mentioned by the Russian subjects.

Surprisingly enough, as far as the French language was concerned, the Russian subjects did not seem to come up with any specific descriptions for it. In comparison, French was described quite vividly by the Finnish subjects: namely, French was viewed mostly as difficult, romantic, soft and beautiful by the subjects of the present study. Further, romantic and sophisticated tv-series and films as well as France and the French were thought to be the most suitable uses for the French language by the Finnish subjects. In addition, the suitability of French for music, poetry and literature was also emphasized by the Finns. However, also the Russians, even though not giving any descriptions of French, considered the French language suitable for quite many things. To be more precise, declaring love, making compliments and speaking beautifully were the most popular choices among the Russian subjects.

In general, the Finnish subjects' quite traditional descriptions on French probably derive from the unusual and exotic sounds as well as the peculiar intonation the language is often seen to possess. In addition to the Finns, this is possibly the most common reason for regarding the French language as romantic and beautiful also among other nationalities. In contrast, the Russian subjects did not at first seem to share this opinion or, at least, they did not,



according to Kashkin (2001), give any descriptions on the language. However, the Russian subjects views on the suitability of the French language might suggest that they, in fact, had quite the same idea on French in mind as the Finns did. More specifically, French was, for instance, considered suited for declaring love and speaking beautifully by the Russian subjects which, in turn, could mean that they, too, viewed French as romantic and beautiful at least to some extent. Similarly, the Finnish subjects also viewed French as suitable for different romantic and sophisticated contexts, with the exception that those contexts were usually seen to exist on television. Consequently, television programmes, and especially the fact that they are not dubbed in Finnish, are obviously quite an influential source of information for Finns in processing language attitudes which, as demonstrated earlier, applies also to other languages than the one discussed here.

Finally, the subjects were asked to describe the Finnish language. To be more precise, Finnish was considered lovely, beautiful, easy and normal by the Finnish subjects. In comparison, it was viewed as soft, melodic, light, slow and funny by the Russian subjects; funny being also included in the descriptions given by the Finnish subjects on the Finnish language. Further, the Finnish language was regarded as suitable mostly for Finland and the Finnish people by the subjects of the present study, whereas the Russian subjects did not name any specific uses for the Finnish language.

Similar to the Russian subjects' answers to the question on the Russian language, also the Finns gave quite positive and affectionate descriptions on their mother tongue. For example, adjectives, such as, lovely, beautiful and normal, which were mostly used in describing Finnish, were not often mentioned in the answers of the Finnish subjects to the questions on the other languages in the present study. This, in turn, might suggest that the Finns, quite naturally, have somewhat stronger feelings towards Finnish than any other language. However, the Russian subjects, unlike the Finns when answering the questions on Russian, expressed a surprisingly positive attitude towards the Finnish language. More specifically, the Russians mostly viewed Finnish as soft, light and funny which, in turn, could hardly be interpreted as a

sign of any negative or hostile feelings towards Finnish. A reason for this might be that the Russians have not, neither today nor in the past, considered Finland or the Finnish language as a threat to their independence or national identities. Consequently, this probably influences their opinions on the Finnish language in a way that any strong feelings are, most likely, not associated with Finnish by the "average" Russians participating in Kashkin's (2001) study. Partly, the reason for the Finnish language not having been seen as a threat by the Russians derives also from the fact that Finnish is spoken in a fairly small area. Therefore, the Russian subjects had probably difficulties in answering the question on the suitability of Finnish. However, it would have been interesting to know whether the answers had been different if most of the Russian subjects in the study by Kashkin (2001) had been from towns and villages next to the Finnish border. It is possible, that the answers on the suitability of Finnish would have, in this case, been more diverse because the subjects might have had more knowledge of Finland and the Finnish language on which to base their views.

In all, there were several differences and similarities in the views of the Finns and Russians of which some were perhaps more expected than others. However, there were, in addition to the details, also a few, more general characteristics that can be noticed, at least, in the answers of the Finnish subjects. One of them is certainly the fact that there seems to be a tendency to associate a language with its speakers. In other words, the subjects are likely to make the descriptions given on a certain language apply also to the people who speak it as their mother tongue. This can be well noticed in the subjects' answers on the suitability of the languages included in the questionnaire: usually, a language is, among other things, considered suited for the country where it is spoken and for the people who speak it. The only exception to the "rule" is the English language which is viewed by the subjects as suitable for everything and everyone, international communication and the language of the world, to mention few. However, English is not the only language which is widely spoken around the world but, for example, Spanish and French are also quite popular outside Europe. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that the

subjects did not, in fact, define any other language as global or 'lingua franca'. Although, this might be due to the subjects' own experiences which probably consist of English being used in communication with foreigners, as well as on television, not to mention the fact that English is widely taught in Finnish schools as the first foreign language. Possibly, the subjects' answers would have been different if English had been replaced by some other language in the curriculum. Moreover, diminishing the exposure of English on the national television might also contribute to the same effect. As it has become evident, television and films seem to have rather a great influence on the subjects' views on different languages. At least, various films and tv-series were considered suitable contexts for many languages by the subjects of the present study. However, the Swedish language was one of the rare languages which was regarded as suitable neither for television nor films. But, similar to most languages in the present study, Swedish was also thought to be the most suited for Sweden and Swedes. On the one hand, this is very surprising because Swedish is, together with Finnish, an official language in Finland which, in turn, means that many people actually speak it as their mother tongue. Consequently, it would not have been unreasonable to expect that the subjects of the present study might have taken this into account in their answers on the suitability of the Swedish language. On the other hand, the subjects were all living in such areas in Finland, in which people were not used to speaking or hearing Swedish in their everyday life. Therefore, it is possible that most of the subjects simply did not come to think of it as an option to include Finland and Finns in their answers, as far as the question on the suitability of the Swedish language was concerned. Possibly, the answers would have been different if the subjects of the present study had lived somewhere in the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland. Not to mention the possibility that the subjects would have had Swedish as their mother tongue as well. But then again, that would have made the results of the present study different altogether.

On the whole, the findings on assignment 2 have now been reported and summarized. The next chapter concentrates on reporting the subjects' attitudes only towards English and Swedish. However, the subjects are no

longer divided into groups according to their gender, but according to their latest grades in aforementioned languages. Thus, the views of both subjects with high and lower grades on the two languages will be scrutinized.

### **6.5 Foreign language attitudes among subjects with different academic achievements**

In addition to studying the language attitudes of Finns and comparing them with those of Russians, the purpose of the present study was also to examine the differences in the language attitudes among subjects with different academic achievements. More specifically, the idea is now to concentrate on scrutinizing the attitudes towards English and Swedish held by the subjects with high and lower grades on those two languages. First, the subjects' attitudes towards the English language were studied and, for this purpose, the subjects were divided into two groups on the grounds of their latest school grades in English. This is to say that one group of subjects consisted of students with high grades (10-9, excellent-very good), the other group including subjects with somewhat lower grades (8-4, good-poor) in English. In the following sections, the subjects' answers to the two questions (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*) on the English language in assignment 2 are first summarized in table form, after which the answers are reported and analysed more thoroughly. Furthermore, since the summary involves the subjects' answers to assignment 2, the results are again illustrated only with the frequencies of the answers. Correspondingly, the same procedure in summarizing the findings is also used when reporting the attitudes held towards the Swedish language by the subjects with high and lower academic achievements.

#### **6.5.1 Attitudes towards English: subjects with high and lower grades in English compared**

The descriptions of the English language were somewhat varying among the subjects with different academic achievements. As usual, the results are summarized in Table 32.

Table 32. Subjects with high/lower academic achievements: The English language is...

The English language is...	Subjects with high grades (10-9)	Subjects with lower grades (8-4)
clear/easy/simple	12	10
ordinary/normal/familiar	10	8
nice/interesting/funny	8	14
beautiful	6	1
sophisticated/fine/royal	5	2
formal/official/serious	3	5
rich	2	-
regular/logical/precise	1	3
Br. Eng. formal/ Am. Eng. relaxed	-	2
like Finnish	-	2
unclassified answers	3	8

Mostly, the English language was thought to be clear and simple by the subjects with higher grades in English (12). Furthermore, it was also viewed as ordinary and familiar (10) as well as nice, funny and interesting (8) by the subjects more successful in their studies of English. In contrast, English was, for the most, considered nice and interesting (14) by the subjects with lower grades in English, after which it was thought to be clear and simple (10). Moreover, English was also viewed as normal and familiar (8) by the subjects less successful in their studies.

The subjects' answers to the second question (*The English language is suited for...*) had also been re-examined to find out the possible differences between the subjects with different academic achievements. The findings are summarized in Table 33.

Table 33. Subjects with high/lower academic achievements: The English language is suited for...

The English language is suited for...	Subjects with high grades (10-9)	Subjects with lower grades (8-4)
everywhere/everyone	11	12
television/films	9	15
international communication/events	8	10
the language of the world	6	14
music	4	4
work/school	2	-
travelling	2	1
English-speaking countries	1	1
unclassified answers	3	7

The English language was mostly considered suited for everywhere and everyone by the subjects with high grades in English (11). Further, the suitability of the English language for television and films (9), as well as international communication and events (8) was also emphasized by the subjects more successful in their studies. In comparison, English was thought to be the most suited for television and films by the subjects with lower grades in English (15). Moreover, it was viewed as suitable for the language of the world (14) as well as for everyone and everywhere (12) by the subjects with lower academic achievements. However, like among the subjects with high grades, international communication and events (10) were also regarded as suitable uses for English by the subjects with more modest academic achievements.

#### **6.5.2 Attitudes towards Swedish: subjects with high and lower grades in Swedish compared**

Again, the subjects' answers to assignment 2 were under inspection, but this time the aim was to compare the attitudes of the subjects with high and lower grades in Swedish. The results are now summarized in Table 34.

Table 34. Subjects with high/lower academic achievements: The Swedish language is...

The Swedish language is...	Subjects with high grades (10-9)	Subjects with lower grades (8-4)
stupid/awful/annoying/ugly	7	14
arrogant/sophisticated	6	3
funny/nice	5	12
simple/easy/clear	4	4
fluent/melodic	4	3
familiar/ordinary	4	1
strange/original	3	1
unclear/difficult/obscure	2	11
feminine/homosexual	1	3
precise	1	1
dark/gloomy	1	1
unclassified answers	4	4

The Swedish language was mostly viewed as stupid, awful and ugly (7) as well as arrogant and sophisticated (6) by the subjects with high grades in Swedish. However, Swedish was also thought to be funny and nice (5) by some of the subjects with high academic achievements. Similarly, the Swedish language was mostly considered stupid, annoying and ugly (14) also by the subjects with lower grades in Swedish. Furthermore, Swedish was also regarded as funny and nice (12), after which unclear, difficult and obscure (11) were the most popular characterizations of the Swedish language among the subjects with lower academic achievements.

As in the previous section, the answers given to the second question by the subjects with different grades were also scrutinized. To be more precise, the findings based on the differences in the subjects' grades in Swedish are summarized in Table 35.

Table 35. Subjects with high/lower academic achievements: The Swedish language is suited for...

<b>The Swedish language is suited for...</b>	<b>Subjects with high grades (10-9)</b>	<b>Subjects with lower grades (8-4)</b>
<b>Sweden/Swedes</b>	9	19
<b>Scandinavia</b>	4	5
<b>anywhere</b>	4	-
<b>travelling</b>	2	4
<b>Finland/Finns</b>	2	3
<b>jokes/amusing situations</b>	2	-
<b>nothing</b>	1	6
<b>work</b>	1	1
<b>television/films</b>	1	3
<b>fine/sophisticated people</b>	-	2
<b>unclassified answers</b>	9	13

Mostly, the subjects seemed to agree on the suitability of the Swedish language: it was viewed as the most suited for Sweden and Swedes by both the subjects with high (9) and lower (19) grades in Swedish. However, Swedish was, unlike among the subjects with lower grades, also considered suitable for anywhere by the subjects with higher academic achievements (4). In contrast, the Swedish language was thought to be suited for nothing by some of the subjects with lower grades in Swedish (6). Further, Swedish was also viewed as suitable for the whole Scandinavia, again, by both the subjects with high (4) and lower (5) grades; a 'lingua franca' of the Nordic countries, so to speak.

## 6.6 Discussion

In response to the questions on the English language, it is quite surprising that both groups of subjects gave very similar answers. First of all, English was considered easy, ordinary and nice, and suited for everywhere, television and films, international communication, as well as for the language of the world by all the subjects. However, it is interesting that even the subjects with lower



grades in English did not, in fact, view English as difficult. In contrast, all the subjects seemed to share the opinion of English being quite an easy language. Further, the subjects with high grades in English were more likely to define English as beautiful. This was not the case among the subjects with lower grades. It might be possible that the use of the word 'beautiful' had to do with the subjects' gender. That is, the female subjects might have been more eager to use the adjective compared with the males which, in turn, would imply that there were quite many females in the group consisting of subjects with high grades in English. However, this remains only as speculation because attention was not paid to the subjects' gender when dividing the subjects between those with high and lower grades in English.

In contrast, the answers to the questions on the Swedish language were considerably more varied. Nonetheless, both the groups viewed Swedish as stupid and ugly but, on the other hand, also as nice and funny. Clearly, the subjects had a so-called "love/hate -relationship" with the Swedish language, which can be influenced by the fact that Swedish is very strongly present not only in Sweden, but also in Finland. Consequently, the Swedish language seemed to arouse quite extreme emotions also in the subjects of the present study. For the same reasons, Swedish was probably viewed as arrogant and sophisticated, but mostly by the subjects with high grades in Swedish. However, the subjects with lower grades were the ones who viewed Swedish as unclear and difficult. Possibly, the subjects felt more comfortable criticizing the Swedish language compared with English, which might have had a stronger status and acceptance among the subjects as a "useful" language. Therefore, as far as English was concerned, the subjects might have been more apt to blame themselves rather than the language if they had not managed to learn it. Similarly, the subjects with lower grades in Swedish were the ones who viewed the Swedish language as suitable for nothing which, again, was not found to happen in a similar situation when the English language was concerned. Nonetheless, the subjects were mostly in agreement on the suitability of Swedish: both the groups viewed Swedish as very suited for Sweden and Swedes. However, it is, as mentioned earlier, quite surprising that

not many of the subjects considered Swedish suitable for Finland, even though Swedish has the status of another official language and it is spoken by many Finns as their mother tongue. An important reason for this might lie in the area the subjects were currently living in. More specifically, the subjects were probably not used to hearing Swedish in the course of their everyday lives in Valkeala which, in turn, affected also their answers on the suitability of Swedish. Therefore, most of the subjects seemed to have ignored the whole concept of using Swedish in Finland.

Overall, the findings of the present study have now been reported and discussed. Finally, the last section of the chapter concentrates on providing information on the validation of quantitative as well as qualitative research in general. But, most importantly, attention is also paid to how these practices work when validating the findings of the present study.

### **6.7 Validation**

In general, the process of validation can be carried out in somewhat different ways depending on the nature of the study. Usually, as Jokinen and Juhila (1991:appendix2:4) point out, the concepts referred to as *reliability* and *validity* are often used when validating the findings of quantitative research. To be more specific, reliability, according to Fowler (1988:84), is considered the extent to which subjects, inspite of the context, will answer a set of questions in a similar way. Respectively, validity is defined as the extent to which the answer given by a subject actually means what the researcher thinks it means (Fowler, 1988:84). In other words, reliability, as defined by Triandis (1971:26), refers to the amount of information which has not been infected by error in the process of measurement. Thus, the instrument is considered reliable, if it can provide a researcher with similar information, when used more than once to measure the same thing. Again, the concept of validity deals with the relevance of the instrument which, in turn, refers to the extent to which an instrument is actually measuring the phenomenon that it is thought to be measuring (Triandis, 1971:26). Therefore, an instrument may well be

reliable, but not valid in terms of the objectives of a study which, if using this criterion, often is a quantitative one.

In contrast, the criterion consisting of reliability and validity which, as mentioned, is widely used in the validation of quantitative research does not usually apply in the validation of qualitative research (Jokinen and Juhila, 1991:appendix2:4). For example, Mäkelä (1990:53) emphasizes, among other things, aspects related with the analysis of the data, when validating the findings of qualitative research. Firstly, the analysis should be versatile enough to avoid the researcher to base his/her interpretations on any random observations. This includes also a clear and consistent classification of the data, which is applied throughout the study. Secondly, the analysis itself should be repeatable, which means that the rules for classification and interpretation of the data are presented with such precision that the same results can be obtained also by other researchers. On the whole, these principles for the validation of qualitative research in general can also be applied to the present study. However, the criterion traditionally used in the validation of quantitative research cannot be utilized here, even though the present study, which has earlier been defined as descriptive (see section 4.4), includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This is because the questionnaire used in the present study does not quite resemble "normal" questionnaires used in traditional quantitative research. Therefore, even though the methods usually perceived as quantitative were used in the present study, as well, the actual analysis of the data had probably more in common with qualitative research. Thus, it is more meaningful to apply the principles defined by Mäkelä (1990) when validating the findings of the present study which, in practice, was done in two ways. Firstly, an attempt was made to classify the data clearly and consistently. In other words, when the subjects' answers were grouped into different categories according to their similarity in meaning, special attention was paid to ensure that the categories actually consisted of similar answers. These categories were then applied throughout the present study to make it possible to compare the subjects' answers to different questions. Secondly, it was also considered essential to show as precisely as

possible how the categories were formed or, more specifically, what kinds of answers were included in different categories. Therefore, when reporting the findings, the categories could be seen to consist of several, slightly different definitions (for example, *ordinary*, *normal* and *familiar* in response to the first question on the English language, see section 6.3.1). This was done in order to make the present study repeatable, so that any other researcher who would perhaps be interested in doing a similar study, would be able to repeat the present study in great detail, if desired. Obviously, to do this, the researcher needs information on not only the questionnaire and subjects, but also on the principles which guided the whole process of classification in the present study. However, the successful validation of qualitative research (and the present study, as well), which includes discussing aspects, such as, the rules for classification and interpretation of the data, is not only up to the researcher. On the contrary, it partly involves, as Mäkelä (1990:59) points out, also the reader who should be given the possibility to either accept or reject the researcher's interpretation of the data.

Mostly, this chapter has concentrated on reporting the findings of the present study. However, the ideas and practices concerning the validation of qualitative and quantitative research, in general, as well as the principles for validating the present study have also been discussed. Finally, the following chapter provides, once more, a brief summary of the findings and an evaluation of the findings and methodology of the present study.

## 7 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, the findings of the present study are first summarized briefly. Next, advantages as well as some problems of the present study will be discussed, and finally, some suggestions for further studies, on the basis of the present one, are made.

### 7.1 Summary of the findings

In general, the purpose of the present study was to find out the language attitudes held by Finns towards different European languages. More specifically, the Finnish subjects of the present study, as explained previously, were asked to name *the most... languages*, as well as to describe a total of eight languages and discuss their suitability. In addition, the differences and similarities in the answers by the subjects with high and lower academic achievements in English and Swedish were also studied.

In response to assignment 1 (*the most... language*), the English language was mentioned on several occasions. To be more specific, English was considered *the easiest, richest and most precise language* by the Finnish subjects. Even though English was regarded as *the most precise language*, the German language was, however, viewed as *the most correct and serious language*. Russian, in turn, received the most negative evaluations and was considered *the ugliest and most difficult language* by the subjects. Furthermore, French was thought to be *the most beautiful language*, while Estonian was regarded as *the funniest*. Lastly, the Swedish language was considered *the poorest*, and Spanish was the language the most subjects wanted to learn.

In assignment 2, the subjects were encouraged to describe and discuss the suitability of eight European languages. The English language was mostly considered nice, easy and normal, and suited for television as well as for

international communication and 'lingua franca'. Russian, however, was thought to be difficult and ugly, and suited for Russia and Russians. The German language was described as aggressive and difficult, but also as funny. Further, German was considered mostly suitable for television and detective series, as well as for Central-Europe. Estonian was regarded as not only nice and funny, but also an imitation of Finnish which is suited for Estonia and Estonians. The French language was viewed as romantic and beautiful, but also as difficult and incomprehensible. In addition to France and the French, romantic tv-series and films as well as music, poetry and literature were thought to be suitable contexts for French by the subjects. The Finnish language was described as nice and lovely, as well as easy, and mostly suited for Finland and Finns. Swedish was also considered the most suitable for Sweden and Swedes, while it was controversially described as nice and ugly, as well as somewhat difficult. Finally, the Spanish language was viewed as nice and funny, followed by passionate and temperamental. Spain and Spaniards as well as travelling were regarded as suitable contexts for the language by the subjects of the present study.

The subjects' views on English and Swedish were quite different, when the answers were divided into two groups on the basis of the subjects' grades on the two languages. More specifically, the English language was mostly viewed as easy, normal and nice; and it was considered suited for everywhere, as well as for television and language of the world by, surprisingly, both subjects with high and lower grades in English. In contrast, the Swedish language was viewed as stupid, as well as nice, again, by both subjects with high and lower grades in Swedish. In addition, the subjects with high grades in Swedish also described Swedish as arrogant and sophisticated. However, Swedish was, unlike English, viewed as difficult and unclear by the subjects with lower grades in Swedish. Both the groups were, though, in agreement on the suitability of Swedish: it was regarded as suited mostly for Sweden and Swedes.

## 7.2 Evaluation of the findings and methodology

Even though the present study made an attempt to avoid the problems often associated with traditional and discursive research on language attitudes, some new ones still arose. More precisely, these problems relate mostly to the concept of defining language attitudes as metalinguistic activity, as well as the methodology used to scrutinize language attitudes held by the Finns in the present study.

To begin with, the metalinguistic view on language attitudes which created the basis for the present study was, in a way, thought to be somewhat problematic. A significant reason for this is certainly the fact that not many studies had been carried out before the present study within this particular view. Consequently, it was considered quite frustrating and difficult to search any further information on the metalinguistic view on language attitudes which, in turn, created difficulties when validating the methods and results of the present study. However, studying language attitudes within the metalinguistic view is quite a novel phenomenon which mostly explains the lack of theoretical information available on the subject. Unfortunately, as far as the present study is concerned, this is why varied aspects and theories within the metalinguistic view, as well as the actual practices in research remain mostly unknown and undiscussed.

In the second place, the central idea in the metalinguistic view, which is to combine the methods used in traditional and discursive research, did not work in the best possible way in the present study. In fact, it was found that neither of these approaches was completely made use of when analysing the results. Especially, this can be noticed when reporting the findings on assignment 2 (*This language is.../This language is suited for...*). More precisely, it was realised only too late that the number of subjects was perhaps too small in order to use any statistical methods other than frequencies and percentages. Similarly, the discursive perspective in the analysis of the results did not succeed quite as well as it was expected. In particular, it was perceived to be somewhat difficult to form categories for different answers the subjects had

come up with. This was due to the fact that it was occasionally quite difficult to decide what the subject had actually meant by his/her answer. In reality, the subjects' answers were often quite eloquent and diverse since they alone were the ones to formulate the answers. Therefore, it was quite a challenging task to group the various answers and, at the same time, not to try to "force" the answers into any inappropriate categories. Nonetheless, a grouping of some kind had to be made which, in turn, inevitably reduced the variability of the answers to some extent. This is, however, a recognized problem within qualitative research in general, but the impact it had on the present study was stronger than anticipated. The subjects' answers were, namely, quite short (one or two sentences) which made it possible to describe the language attitudes, but not so much to explain them, even though that was also considered one of the purposes of the present study. Obviously, to reach this objective, it would have been more useful to collect a more extensive pool of data consisting, for example, of essays or short interviews. On the other hand, the process of analysing the findings would have then turned out to be even more difficult and time-consuming.

Finally, some problems related to the subjects and the questionnaire used in the present study can also be identified. For example, not extremely many subjects were included in the present study and, in addition, they were all members of the same age group (16-18 years). Consequently, the results are not very generalizable as such. In other words, a higher degree of generalization, as far as the results are concerned, would have required a larger and more heterogeneous group of subjects. Furthermore, the questionnaire itself was also experienced as somewhat problematic. To be more specific, it is difficult to make sure that the subjects have concentrated equally much on both assignments in the questionnaire. Especially, the subjects might have thought assignment 2 to be somewhat tedious towards the end because the subjects were required to fill in very similar sentences only concerning different languages. Therefore, it is possible that at least some of the subjects became fed up with doing the assignment before having finished it, which, in turn, had an obvious effect on the results in general. Again, this can



be considered to apply even if the precaution of changing the order of the fill-in sentences in half of the questionnaires was taken to minimize the effect of "getting bored".

Even though the present study was not completely successful in every aspect, some objectives were still reached. One of them is certainly the fact that the subjects were the ones to decide how to formulate their answers. That is, no ready-made answers, from which the subjects would have had to choose the one corresponding to their own view, were placed in the questionnaire. It was thought to be important that the subjects had the chance to convey their views on different languages in their own words. Notably, this was considered to increase the reliability of the views expressed on the languages included in the questionnaire. Moreover, the analysis of the findings in the present study managed to show, if not quite the explanations, at least the more general picture of the language attitudes of young Finns. In addition, it was possible to compare the language attitudes of Finns and Russians, and even to point out some differences and similarities between the two groups. In contrast, the "deeper" study of language attitudes would, as mentioned previously, have required using methods other than those included in the present study. This, however, was not regarded as meaningful within the framework of the present study.

Altogether, the metalinguistic view on language attitudes creates a very flexible environment for research in general. In addition to the present study, which perhaps managed to draw a more general picture of the language attitudes in Finland, the methodology within the metalinguistic view still provides many unexplored opportunities in the field of research on language attitudes. Next, some of these possibilities for future studies are discussed in more detail.

### **7.3 Suggestions for further research**

So far, research on language attitudes has mostly been carried out within the positivistic paradigm. Although, there has recently been attempts to use also discourse analysis as a research method. However, much advantage has not

yet been taken of the possibility of studying language attitudes within the metalinguistic view. Topics for further research on the basis of the present study can, therefore, be easily suggested.

To begin with, the number of subjects was fairly small in the present study; a fact, which mostly excluded the possibility of drawing any wide conclusions on the language attitudes of Finns. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare the results of the present study with other studies, in which the subjects would be members of somewhat different age groups. For example, views on the European languages included in the present study might be somewhat different among Finns between 50 and 60 years. After all, the subjects of the present study were quite young, and they did not necessarily have the same knowledge or experiences as older generations of Finns.

Secondly, further research on the origins of the language attitudes of Finns reported in the present study might also be useful. In other words, the subjects could be willing to clarify their statements in the questionnaire of the present study, for example, by writing more extensive responses or essays on a similar topic. In that way, the chances of getting more information on the nature of language attitudes, as well as on the reasons that have led the subjects to form a certain view on a certain language, would be considerably better. Also, the information acquired would probably be more precise compared with the findings of the present study, which work only at a very general level.

Finally, a prominent topic for further research would undoubtedly be to study attitudes towards foreign languages in other European countries. For example, a similar questionnaire, which was used in the present study as well as in the study by Kashkin (2001), could also be used to scrutinize the language attitudes held by Germans or the French. As a result, it would be possible to compare the findings of studies, similar to the present one, carried out in other European countries. Certainly, the differences in language attitudes, at least, towards some specific languages (e.g. English, French and German), are quite substantial in different parts of Europe. Consequently, it would be interesting to notice how different languages receive different

evaluations depending on the nationality of the subjects - even at the risk of predictability, when some of the European languages are concerned.

In all, the metalinguistic view on language attitudes provides several possibilities for future studies. This, as mentioned, derives mostly from the fact that the metalinguistic view has not yet been much used in research on language attitudes. However, another reason for the metalinguistic view providing a fruitful basis for research can be found in its tolerance of different research methods. In other words, no strict division is made between using the traditional and discursive methods which, in turn, opens up a wide range of possibilities for collecting data. Moreover, this should also help us to reach a better understanding of language attitudes in general, as well as to increase the knowledge of the language attitudes of certain individuals or groups - Finns, for example.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

Hyvä Valkealan lukion oppilas,

Olen englannin kielen pääaineopiskelija Jyväskylän yliopistosta, ja olen parhaillaan kokoamassa materiaalia tutkielmaani varten. Tähän liittyen, toivoisin Sinun täyttävän tämän kieliasenteita koskevan kyselylomakkeen mahdollisimman huolellisesti omia näkemyksiäsi ja mielipiteitäsi mukaillen. Sinun ei ole tarvitse ilmoittaa nimeäsi täyttäessäsi kyselylomaketta, vaan kaikkien vastaajien toivotaan pysyttelevän nimettöminä. Tästä johtuen, kyselylomakkeessa antamasi vastaukset sekä muut tiedot (esim. kurssinumerot) pysyvät täysin luottamuksellisina.

terveisin, Minna Kansikas





**Tehtävä 1. Täydennä allaolevat lauseet omasta mielestäsi sopivimmalla kielellä...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ on kaunein kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on rumin kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on täsmällisin kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on vaikein kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on helpoin kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on köyhin kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on rikkain kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on hauskin kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on vakavamielisin kieli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ on säännönmukaisin kieli.

Haluaisin oppia \_\_\_\_\_ kieltä/kieliä.

**Tehtävä 2. Täydennä jokaisen kielen (1-8) kohdalta lauseet a) ja b).**

**Kohdassa a) täydennä oman mielipiteesi mukaisesti, miltä edellämainittu kieli kuulostaa.**

**Kohdassa b) täydennä, missä ja miten edellämainittua kieltä olisi mielestäsi sopivinta käyttää.**

1 a) Mielestäni espanjan kieli kuulostaa...

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b) Espanjan kieli sopii hyvin...

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b) **Viron kieli** sopii hyvin...

---

---

6 a) Mielestäni **saksan kieli** kuulostaa...

---

---

b) **Saksan kieli** sopii hyvin...

---

---

7 a) Mielestäni **venäjän kieli** kuulostaa...

---

---

b) **Venäjän kieli** sopii hyvin...

---

---

8 a) Mielestäni **englannin kieli** kuulostaa...

---

---

b) **Englannin kieli** sopii hyvin...

---

---

Olen a) tyttö b) poika

**Mitkä ovat lukemiasi kielten viimeisimpien kurssien arvosanat?**

englannin kieli: \_\_\_\_\_

ruotsin kieli: \_\_\_\_\_

saksan kieli: \_\_\_\_\_

ranskan kieli: \_\_\_\_\_

jokin muu kieli, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**KIITOS!**



**LOPPU**