Future Teachers' Attitudes on Language Use: Perceived Linguistic Identities of English Teacher students

Bachelor's thesis
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Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos

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Työn nimi – Title
Future teachers' attitudes on language use:
Perceived linguistic identities of English teacher students.

Oppiaine – Subject	Työn laji – Level
Englannin kieli	Kandidaatintutkielma

Aika – Month and year	Sivumäärä – Number of pages
Tammikuu 2022	22

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on hahmottaa, millaisina englannin kielen opettajaksi opiskelevat opiskelijat näkevät omat kielelliset identiteettinsä, sekä miten he kokevat kielenopetuksen vaikuttaneen heidän kielellisen identiteettinsä muodostumiseen. Aiempi tutkimus aiheeseen liittyen on keskittynyt pääasiassa opettajien ammatillisiin identiteetteihin, ja opettajien kielelliset identiteetit ovat saaneet vähemmän huomiota. Tutkimuksien kohteena on ollut juuri valmistuneita tai opintojensa lopussa olevia opettajia. Tämä tutkimus pyrkii eroamaan joukosta huomioimalla opettajaksi opiskelevat tulevaisuuden opettajat aikaisemmassa vaiheessa heidän opintojaan, sekä paneutumalla ammatillisen identiteetin sijaan pelkästään kielelliseen identiteettiin.

Aineistona tutkimuksessa käytettiin puolistrukturoituja haastatteluita, joita toteutettiin kaksi. Kriteereinä haastateltaville oli, että he ovat englannin aineenopettajaksi opiskelevia, eivätkä he olleet vielä suorittaneet pedagogisia aineopintoja. Haastattelut toteutettiin internetin välityksellä.

Tutkimuksen tuloksista kävi ilmi haastateltavien luokittelevan itsensä monikielisiksi, sekä heidän identifioituvan vahvasti englannin kielen kanssa. Englannin rooli heidän elämässään pohjautui sen aktiiviseen käyttöön arkisessa elämässä ja harrastuksien yhteydessä. Vaikka sen käyttö opinnoissa nousi esiin, englannin käyttö niiden ulkopuolella koettiin kielelliselle identiteetille suuremmaksi tekijäksi. Keskeisenä vaikuttajana englannin käyttöön nousi sen hyödyntäminen kommunikaatiovälineenä erilaisissa yhteisöissä. Tämän lisäksi haastateltavat kokivat kielenopetuksen tarjoaman representaation englanninkielisestä maailmasta positiiviseksi vaikuttajaksi kielellisen identiteettinsä muodostumisessa.

Tulevaisuudessa olisi mielenkiintoista toteuttaa tutkimusta, joka pystyisi määrittelemään miten kieltenopetus tukee kielellisen identiteetin muodostumista, sekä vertailla eri oppikirjasarjojen tarjoamia englanninkielisen maailman representaatioita.

Asiasanat – Keywords
Linguistic identity, multilingualism, language education, interviews, kielellinen identiteetti, monikielisyys, kieltenopetus, haastattelut

Säilytyspaikka – Depository
JYX

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1. Introduction

Linguistic identity has a large impact on how one views languages as a whole and one's feelings towards the act of learning new languages. In the modern global world, in which one can be in contact with anyone no matter how far they are and where immigration and collaboration between cultures is commonplace, knowing more than one language is, for many, a requirement in order to secure a stable future. As schools are one of the main places where one can be introduced to or learn different languages, teachers understandably play an extensive role in how people view languages and language learning. Thus, it is important to better understand how teachers view their linguistic identities, as they can greatly affect students' attitudes towards the role of language, language learning and phenomena such as multilingualism.

Studies into the identities of language teachers have been on the rise in recent years and they have provided insight into how teachers see their professional identities (Kayi-Aydar 2019). This research has mainly targeted pre-service or new teachers. Although previous studies have examined teachers' views and attitudes towards their profession, the linguistic identities of teachers have garnered less attention. In most of the studies mentioning the linguistic identities of teachers, the main focus has been on teacher identity as a whole, of which linguistic identity is only a small part. Some studies, such as Pavlenko (2003) described in more detail below, with teacher linguistic identity at the forefront have been made, but they are a clear minority. This study delves into teacher linguistic identity from the perspective of teacher students. Pre-service teachers have been at the centre of teacher identity research, but they have largely studied those about to enter service as teachers or those with experience of extensive pedagogical practice or short substitute assignments. This study inspects the linguistic identities of teacher students through interviews, and it differs from previous research by having its focus on teacher students at an earlier stage of their studies.

This thesis will begin with an overview into the themes that are important to understand for the topic of linguistic identity. These themes are "identity", "multilingualism" and "linguistic identity in language education". After discussing the main concepts there is a review of previous research relating to teacher identity. Next the present study and its goals will be introduced with a short explanation of the research questions and the motivations behind them. The present study section also covers the reasonings behind choosing

interviews as the research method and thematizing as the method for analysing the data. This section will be followed by analysis of the data gathered from the interviews, and the thesis will finish with a concluding discussion on the findings of the study and its limitations.

2. Background theory and definitions of key concepts

In this section, I will explain some of the key concepts of identity and linguistic identity which form the foundation of my thesis. The focus here is specifically on the linguistic identities of the participants and not their identities as a whole. Therefore, this section will pay attention to how language and identity intersect. Due to the subject of linguistic identity dealing with one's relationship with different languages, it is necessary to also discuss multilingualism, as how the students participating situate themselves as users of different languages will be an essential part of understanding how they construct their linguistic identities. In addition, the role of linguistic identity within language education in Finland will be discussed to give an understanding of how linguistic identity is taken into consideration and what language educations goals for it are. Lastly, this section will give an overview of relevant previous research and a brief description about how my thesis compares to it.

2.1 Identity

According to Kramsch (2009), identity can be seen as the collection of groups, be it social or cultural, with which the individual identifies to be a part of. Baker (2015: 108) takes Kramsch's view and describes identity as a weblike network of social groups and relationships which we orient towards. Both Kramsch and Baker create a distinction between identity and subjectivity. For them, identity refers to a group of social networks, and subjectivity in turn to construction of one's internal and external self, and their projection outwards. However, Baker (2015) acknowledges the close relationship of these two phenomena and points out that some scholars do not make a distinction between them. This is the interpretation of identity, which I will be using in this thesis: identity viewed as one's crafted internal and external self in relation to one's network of social and cultural groups.

Identities are always constructed in relation to others. Our identities are as much about who we are as who we are not. This is most apparent in collective identities. As pointed out

by Schöpflin (2001), group identities are made stronger by creating boundaries and excluding others from the group. Not only are identities constructed based on who are not "us", we assign identities to others. This is exemplified by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 21) in their framework on negotiating identity, which divides identity into three categories.

> The framework we propose differentiates between three types of identities: imposed identities (which are not negotiable in a particular time and place), assumed identities (which are accepted and not negotiated), and negotiable identities (which are contested by groups and individuals).

Although one would most likely desire to have the final say in defining who they are, this is not always possible due to the social nature of identities. As summarized in the framework above, some labels, positive or negative, are applied to identities by other people. What they are, and whether they can be contested or not, changes based on culture, group or point in time (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004: 21).

Identity and language are closely intertwined. It is widely believed that the construction of identity relies heavily on language and discourse (Baker 2015; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). Joseph (2004) takes this view to an extreme and describes language and identity as a unified phenomenon. He argues that identity itself is at its core a matter of language (Joseph 2004: 12). Language shapes our identity by determining how we present ourselves, and how we interact in our social and cultural networks (Joseph 2004: 72-73). Moreover, language forms some of the groups with which we identify. Language can be seen as a unifying symbol of national identity and belonging (Joseph 2004: 94). As pointed out by Baker (2015: 111), the use of different varieties of language or unique dialects can form social groups that are part of our identities. Based on these points, the view of linguistic identity that will be used in this thesis is similar to the definition of identity, but specifically focused on language use: linguistic identity is viewed as one's crafted internal and external self as a language user projected in their network of social groups.

2.2 Multilingualism

Discussions about linguistic identity centre around descriptions of people as language users, and how they see themselves as speakers as well as owners of these languages. In these types of discussions labels such as bilingual or multilingual are used to make sense of one's relationships with the languages at their disposal. According to Aronin and Singleton (2012), there exist different views on how to define and categorize people based on their linguistic capabilities. These definitions usually revolve around factors such as frequency of use and linguistic ability. The strictest definitions of bi- and multilingualism assume speakers to have mastery of all the languages of one's linguistic repertoire and tend to have a fixation on nativeness. In a definition from 1933, Bloomfield (as quoted by Aronin & Singleton 2012: 2) would require native-like mastery of two or more languages. Another strict categorization comes from Braun (1937 as quoted by Aronin & Singleton 2012: 2), who stresses complete equal mastery of languages with the additional caveat of also being used actively. On the other side of the spectrum are definitions such as one from Edwards (1994 as quoted in Aronin & Singleton 2012: 2), which only requires the knowledge of a singular phrase, such as *c'est la vie*, to qualify as multilingual. Within the gap between these two extremes is a definition by Franceschini (2009: 34), which refers to multilingualism as "a product of the fundamental human ability to communicate in a number of languages". The advantage of this definition is that it is sensibly strict to require users to be able to communicate themselves in the target language to a meaningful extent. For the purposes of discussing identity, a definition that allows for anyone who has any contact with a language to assume it as their own would not be very fruitful for differentiating people, as one could adopt any language they know of as a part of their identity. Franceschini's definition is also inclusive enough to be practical. To require a language user to be as proficient in all contexts and aspects of different languages, and to achieve an idealised native (a group, which is not homogenous in their linguistic abilities) level of ability in order to qualify would make a definition so narrow that it would be extremely difficult for a language user to sensibly apply it to themselves in any constructive manner.

So far, I have referred to multilingualism and multilinguals as a singular group. However, based on their linguistic capabilities people can be differentiated from each other under the umbrella of multilingualism. It is quite common when discussing the concept of multilingualism to refer to mono- and bilinguals based on the number of languages they speak, but simultaneously to group together those who speak three or more languages into one as multilinguals (Franceschini 2009). Franceschini (2009: 23) discusses how some researchers specify individuals based on the number of languages they speak using Latin and

Greek to form trilinguals, quadrilinguals, pentalinguals etc. This is further complicated by some researchers making distinctions between individuals within a type of multilingualism. As an example, Wei (2000) classifies bilingual individuals into 36 different categories based on their linguistic abilities and how they learned them, such as *compound bilinguals* who have learned two languages at the same time in similar contexts or *receptive bilinguals* who understand a second language but cannot produce it. For the sake of clarity, in this thesis I will only be using the terms "multilingual" or "bilingual" to refer to anyone who speaks more than one language.

2.3 Linguistic identity in language education

In Finland, linguistic identity has a clear presence in language education. The National Core Curriculum gives guidelines on how language teaching should take linguistic identity into account. It recommends that compulsory education should consider the linguistic capabilities and cultural background of the students (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014: 86). In addition, it is stated that the linguistic identities of all students should receive versatile support, and the students will be instructed to better understand and respect every citizen's constitutional right to their own language and culture (ibid). According to the curriculum, one of the goals set for language education is to guide students to gain further understanding of languages and cultures, as well as, to promote bilingualism and multilingualism.

How well language education achieves the goals it has set regarding linguistic identity can be difficult to measure. However, the teacher students interviewed in this study can give their perceptions on this by comparing their own experiences in language education with the information they have gained from their studies about teaching and the curriculum. On this topic, it is important to note that the students participating in this study have studied under the previous curriculum and not the one described above. The previous curriculum for basic education does mention linguistic identity and indicates supporting students' linguistic identities as one of its goals, but it is not as detailed or extensive as the current curriculum regarding linguistic identity (Finnish National Agency for Education 2004: 12).

Language education should be aware of how its methods could positively affect the construction of linguistic identity. This is important as positive pedagogical experiences can have a beneficial effect on identity development, as well as creating feelings of empowerment (Fielding 2016: 155). Fielding's (2016) framework for bilingual identity negotiation presents

three concepts, which are essential for the development of bilingual identity in children. Although this framework is focused on bilingual identity, I believe the main aspects of it can also be fruitfully applied to linguistic identity as a whole. The first element introduced in the framework is socio-cultural connections. This refers to the child's feelings of membership of a language and culture, as well as the extent of their feelings on how connected their lives are to them. The second main aspect of the framework is interaction. According to Fielding (2016: 155), a child cannot foster connections to a language or culture if they do not have sufficient opportunities to interact in the language. The third, and final, element of the framework is investment. Bourdieu (1977 as quoted in Fielding 2016: 155) explains the concept of investment through the notion of different languages having altering levels of worth based on the setting. Fielding (2016: 155) uses Norton's (2000) work to describe the principles of investment for identity. Norton (2000 as quoted in Fielding 2016: 155) claims that in addition to individual motivation, one requires the support of the target language community in order to identify with it. Furthermore, if one's opportunities for language use and feelings of ownership are limited by a community, their identity can become faced with tensions and conflict (Fielding 2016: 155). These three aspects should be kept in mind when designing language teaching with the goal of positively developing the students' linguistic identities in basic education.

2.4 Previous research

Although there have been considerable developments in the academic study of language, the amount of research centered around how language teachers conceptualize languages as a part of their identities is low (Ruohotie-Lyhty 2019). Aside from this area of research, language teacher identities have been studied increasingly in recent years (Kayi-Aydar 2019). Much of this research focuses on the professional identities of teachers (Kayi-Aydar 2015; Liu & Xu 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013; Tsui 2007). In their study on teacher identity positioning, Kayi-Aydar (2015: 100) mentions the importance of studying how the participants positioned themselves in relation to those around them, as one's own positioning typically implies the positioning of others. Likewise, the studying of future teachers' linguistic identities in my thesis is important, because the students around them will be constructing their linguistic identities in relation to the teacher, as mentioned above in the section on identity. As also pointed out by Ruohotie-Lyhty (2019), a large portion of the research on teacher identities

has focused on pre-service or new teachers (Kayi-Aydar 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty 2013; Tsui 2007). The pre-service teachers in these studies are often very far in their studies and have teaching experience, such as the master's students doing their internships in Kayi-Aydar's study (2015) or the graduate with a teaching position in Tsui's study (2007). Of the limited research on language teacher linguistic identity, Pavlenko (2003) is a good example. Her aim was to bring light to how pre-service teachers view their linguistic as well as professional memberships through autobiographical written assignments. The students participating in the study were an extremely diverse group of ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and all of them had experience in teaching. The study discussed the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers and showed how multilingual / multicompetent pre-service teachers were likely to disapprove of nativeness centered views and prefer categorizations based on linguistic competence. Imagining themselves as multicompetent or multilingual allowed the participants to craft more positive views on themselves, rather than staying in the shadow of nativeness.

Compared to other previous research, my thesis is most closely related to Pavlenko's study (2003). I will focus on gathering perceptions on teacher students' linguistic identities through interviews. Unlike most research on teacher identity, my thesis will not revolve around pre-service teachers at the cusp of beginning their careers, but rather students at an earlier stage of their studies with little to no teaching experience. This gives a foothold to my study to build on previous research as it deals with participants in an interesting period of identity development where they are potentially beginning their transformation from a student to a teacher.

3. Present study

In this section, I will first describe my aims for the study and the research questions I have set. The following section will cover my choices of research methods and analysis as well as explain why I think they are the best choices for this study. Lastly, in this section I will present the data used in this study and give information on the participants.

3.1 Aim and questions

The aim of this study is to gather teacher students' perceptions on their linguistic identities and how they have moulded their linguistic identities over time in language education. Therefore, my research questions are:

1. How do teacher students perceive their linguistic identities?

As already highlighted above, language and identity are closely intertwined, and linguistic identity has a profound effect on how people view themselves. In the context of teaching and language education linguistic identity takes on even more importance. Not only does one's linguistic identity have an effect on how they view the use and learning of languages, but as future teachers, the participants' personal linguistic identity construction is of interest as it is likely to influence the building of learning environments as well as learning itself for their future students (Borg 2006).

2. How do teacher students perceive the influence of language education on their linguistic identities?

As already mentioned, an individual's linguistic identity and personal experiences of language learning have a great influence on one another, so it is essential to recognise how the methods used and attitudes held by language teachers influence the students and their developing linguistic identities. As teacher students, the participants can present interesting views on their experiences in language classrooms, as they now reflect on the past based on the perspectives and information which they have gained from their teacher studies.

3.2 Research and analysis methodology

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. This method is useful for having a guiding outline of points that the interview will cover, but it also leaves room for flexibility, as the interview is not limited to predetermined questions (Denscombe 2014). The question of identity is not a subject easily answered or even understood. Interviews allow for more nuance than written questions, such as in a questionnaire, and the presence of the interviewer

can guide participants if they do not fully understand a question, or they give very limited answers. The use of semi-structured interviews also allows the researcher to direct the conversation forward according to interesting points brought up by the interviewees. The participants of the interviews were teacher students studying at a university in Finland. They were both in their bachelor's studies and had not yet completed their teaching practice programs, which are conducted during the 4th or 5th year of their studies. However, one of the participants had completed a very short teacher training course as a part of their basic pedagogical studies, consisting of a few practice lessons with a partner over the course of a month.

The data collected from the interviews was analysed with qualitative analysis. I used a form of qualitative analysis described by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) called "thematizing". Simply put, this refers to grouping parts of the data together based on the themes which emerge within it (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008: 173). This method is an effective way to analyse the large amount of data provided by the interview process. It allows the grouping and comparing of parts of the participants' narratives together to make conclusions and meanings. I began the analysis process by categorizing parts of the data to make the transcribed interviews more concise, and to filter out parts which are not deemed as fruitful. These categories were designed based on the research questions set for this thesis.

3.3 Data and participants

The criteria for choosing participants were that they are English teacher students in their bachelor's studies with limited to no teaching experience. Both students participating in this study were contacted via direct messages on social media. The data comprises two interviews that we conducted via Zoom. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Before beginning the analysis, the interviews were transcribed, and the participants were pseudonymised as "Interviewee A" and "Interviewee B" so that they cannot be identified from the data.

It is also important to point out that the interviews were conducted in Finnish. The choice of whether to speak English or Finnish in the interview was up to the participants, but both elected to rather use Finnish. This was perhaps due to the initial greetings, as well as the communication before the interview being in Finnish and they felt more natural continuing

with the same language. When directly quoting what was said in the interviews, I have translated the answers to English while making sure the contents of the answers stay intact.

4. Analysis of data through emergent themes

As explained above, the analysis was conducted by first organizing the data into categories based on themes. The two overarching categories, "linguistic identity" and "language education", were designed based on the research questions. Within these two very broad labels were also sub-categories based on themes emerging from the interviews that contribute to answering the questions behind the main categories. These sub-categories are "multilingualism", "English in use", "activities for teaching English", and "representations of the English-speaking world".

4.1 Linguistic identity analysis

This section aims to present how the interview participants view their linguistic identities. This is done by inspecting two themes: "multilingualism" and "English in use". Both are closely related to linguistic identity, and they can assist in understanding the views and attitudes of the interviewees towards themselves as language users.

4.1.1 Multilingualism

On the topic of multilingualism, both interviewees elected to identify themselves as multilingual when asked. The label of multilingualism seemed to be favoured over bilingualism even when specifically asked which one they thought fit better, as illustrated in Example 1.

> Example 1
>
> A: I would probably describe myself as bilingual or more so multilingual if you think about it from the point of view of "everybody" being multilingual, so in that sense I could describe myself as multilingual, because I know other languages as well, but if

you think about the languages I actually use in day-to-day life, in that sense I would say I'm bilingual.

Interviewee A considers themselves to be multilingual "in a sense" but is not entirely confident on whether to use the label "multilingual" or "bilingual". They first propose a view akin to Edwards (1994 as quoted in Aronin & Singleton 2012: 2), which was mentioned earlier to be on the most lenient side of the spectrum of definitions for multilingualism. A then seems to propose another distinction according to which they would be considered bilingual. This definition seems to focus on the necessity for active use of languages and could be seen as being similar to Franceschini's (2009: 34) definition, which centres around communicational abilities in languages. As the more lenient view of multilingualism was directed towards "everybody" and the stricter definition more specifically to the participant, it would seem they set higher qualifying requirements for themselves than others. This slightly hesitant distinction creates a contrast between the two interviewees as Interviewee B was considerably more confident in their answer, as seen in Example 2.

Example 2

Interviewer: Would you consider yourself to be rather multilingual or bilingual?
B: I would describe myself as multilingual, yes.

Although the participants differed in their assuredness of their multilingual status, both were on some level ready to apply this label to themselves. Whereas Interviewee A seemed to consider outside definitions to apply to themselves, Interviewee B confidently answered based on how they felt about their own status.

When asked how they themselves would define multilingualism, their answers were in line with their descriptions of their own multilingualism status. This is presented in Examples 3 and 4.

Example 3

A: Multilingualism is in my opinion when you use more than one language in your day-to-day life or job for example.

Example 4

B: It (multilingualism) is the ability to communicate actively with people in other languages and being capable of conversing in the language you speak.

These definitions are akin to the communication centred classification by Franceschini (2009: 34) with the addition of viewing active use of languages as significant. The topic of activity in language use was further emphasized when discussing possible qualifying factors for multilinguals, as brought up by B in Example 5.

Example 5

B: I think it is quite important to use the language actively, in order to keep up your capabilities.
B: It is enough to use the language in some way. It does not need to be "human to human" contact. The upkeep can be, for example, writing or just listening to music.

Interestingly, despite clearly linking the importance of activeness to linguistic capabilities and their honing, Interviewee B sets relatively modest standards for language skills in order to qualify as a multilingual, as seen in Example 6.

Example 6

B: Well, I think if you can converse even a little then you are able to use the language. You don't need to know details such as all the possibilities for word orders, or syntax, or whatnot, as long as you can get your point across.

Interviewee A echoes similar views to B in their opinion on what active language use can be. In addition to this, as seen in Example 7, they shared the view of extensive linguistic capabilities not being an important qualifying factor for identifying as multilingual.

Example 7

A: [--] if I hear Spanish then I can often understand what those people are saying even though I am not able to start communicating in Spanish in that moment. Still, I think it is enough to understand multiple languages, even if its just a few words. That is in my opinion multilingualism.

The use of language is not seen as simply communicating in it by the interviewees. It would seem they view being in contact with the language, such as when listening to music or overhearing a conversation, as being enough to be considered language use. Even though the importance of activity stemmed, at least partially, from its effect on linguistic capabilities, these anecdotes suggest the participants value active use of languages mainly due to the active presence of languages in their day-to-day lives being an important aspect of identifying with them.

4.1.2 English in use

As can be expected based on their views on active language use, both of the interviewees use English daily. This does not come as a surprise since they are English teacher students, and their studies are mostly conducted in English. However, the role of English in the participants' daily lives extends beyond the academic setting as is shown in the following Example 8 about the use of English from interviewee A.

Example 8

A: Well, in my studies of course it´s pretty much every day. I use a lot of English. In other places as well, you hear it all the time on television and in my inner circle of people there are many English-speaking people. [--] You also hear it on the streets while walking or while taking the metro the announcements are in English and Swedish as well.

Interviewee B brings up similar aspects on the same subject, but whereas interviewee A immediately thought of their studies, B seems to associate the use of English quite explicitly with the time spent outside of their studies. This is shown in example 9.

Example 9

B: I play a lot of videogames and watch Netflix. There, the subtitles are always in English, and I talk in English as well as write a lot in chat (referring to chatting functions in online games). Sometimes I even talk in English as well. [--] For example, at my job there is an English-speaking co-worker, so I talk English with them and while playing games I communicate in English.

What becomes apparent from these two descriptions of language use is the importance of English as a communicational tool for interacting with different groups and communities. The importance of these social networks in the construction of one's linguistic identity has been established above (Baker 2015; Joseph 2004). Based on this, interacting with others in English, be it at work or with friends in real life and online, can be seen as one of the major contributing factors for the interviewees' linguistic identities.

Not only do the participants engage with English more during their free time, but the form of English used is also different when contrasting time spent in and outside of an academic context, as is demonstrated in B's concise answer in example 10.

Example 10

B: In school it is a lot more formal compared to chatting in an online game where the language can be quite willy-nilly.

Both participants share the sentiment that English use during and outside of their studies is different. Compared to B, interviewee A gives a more elaborate answer on the way they use and view English in these contexts, as illustrated in Example 11.

Example 11

A: In my spare time I'm a quite relaxed English user. I don't think too much about if I'm using "correct language". During free time I view it as a tool for communication and the focus is to get my point across. On the other hand, in my studies I use it more in line with my academic goals. I try to learn more of the language, so I use it for that purpose.

As shown in these extracts, the participants use English differently based on the place they are in and the people they are around. English has a much larger role in their lives than just being the language they use while studying at the university. While English does have a central role in the participants' studies and professional goals, it also extends far beyond the academic realm into their hobbies and relationships cementing it as an integral part of their identities.

4.2 The effects of language education on linguistic identity construction

The second main category based on the research questions was "language education" and this section inspects the themes which were assigned to this category. When assigning the data into the label of language education, two sub-categories emerged: "activities for teaching English" and "representation of the English-speaking world". In the following sub-sections, these themes are used to review how they might have affected the participants' construction of linguistic identity.

4.2.1 Activities for teaching English

Thinking back to the exercises present in their language learning classrooms, the participants held one entity as having a notable role across all levels of education: the textbook. When asked about what kinds of opportunities for language use were there in the classroom, the textbook came to mind for both interviewees as seen in the following extracts 12 and 13.

Example 12

A: If I think about the average lesson, then the chapters from the textbook come to mind. We would listen to the chapter from a CD and then do the exercises related to the chapter. These would often be written tasks or translating the chapter.

Example 13

B: We did exercises from the textbook. We did the basic tasks relating to the chapters and then we received homework.

Language lessons being largely based on the textbook seemed to be quite common in the experiences of the participants. This is not much of a surprise as most textbooks follow the goals of the curriculum, making them a great source for tasks and grammar lessons as well as a way to plan out future lessons based on the order of the chapters. From the point of view of linguistic identity, the use of materials based on the curriculum can be seen as very positive, as it aims to support every students' linguistic identity and to guide students to value languages and multilingualism (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014: 86).

How well teaching and the textbook can achieve these goals relies on how they are used. According to the interviewees their experiences were quite repetitive and based on their descriptions, there was not a great deal of authentic or creative language use. Below, in Examples 14 and 15, are a few cases of common tasks as described by the participants.

Example 14

A: There could be some tasks where you were asked about the chapter. Like if some character was at a school, in the task you might be asked what subjects they had that day. [--] The tasks wanted to see if you had understood the content of the chapter.

A: [--] In the textbook there could be a picture with a lot of people doing different things and the task was to discuss with a partner what is happening in the picture.

Example 15

B: We had quite a lot of printouts with translating tasks, basic tests, and some of those A / B tasks where you translate a piece of text with a partner.

B: There were some where you had to find a sentence from the chapter and translate it and there were ones where you would conjugate words to fit sentences.

These tasks are not unsuitable by any means, but if they are the vast majority of tasks done during the lessons, there can be a lack of aspects beneficial for positive linguistic identity development, such as those mentioned in Fielding's (2016) framework. Communicational tasks, such as the ones above conducted with a partner, can allow opportunities for interaction, which is one of the three notions in the bilingual identity negotiation framework (Fielding 2016: 155), but based on the descriptions this was not the case with the tasks at hand as explained in the extracts 16 and 17 about working in groups or with partners.

Example 16

A: [--] It was often connected with a certain vocabulary. For example, the setting would be an airport, and someone would have luggage or something relating to the theme, and you were supposed to use the vocabulary to describe the picture.

Example 17

B: Pretty often it was just with set lines. Very rarely did we have any discussions with more freedom.

Despite the goals of the curriculum to support the students' consciousness of linguistic identities and their construction, based on the examples given it did not seem like the materials had a large impact on the participants in this way. Although these tasks can be great for some students to build confidence in their language skills and familiarity with English, for more advanced students, such as the interviewees, these tasks might not be challenging enough, and they can become repetitive. The participants have already established their feelings on the importance of active language use in authentic contexts, such as in conversation. Based on the interviewees' accounts, it seems that the materials used during language learning lessons did not have much of an impact on their linguistic identities or the ways which they construct them.

4.2.2 Representation of the English-speaking world

How students view the English-speaking world can understandably affect how they construct their linguistic identities. Representation is important as it creates an image for the learner of

where English is spoken, how it is used and by who. The importance of understanding linguistic and cultural diversity is also mentioned in the curriculum. Deepening the students' understanding of the cultural diversity of linguistic communities is one of the goals set by the curriculum across years 7 to 9 (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014: 348). According to the participants, the cultures of the English-speaking world were a common topic during their English classes, as seen in Examples 18 and 19.

Example 18

A: [--] In the chapters we had stories about different people from around the world. That gave a better understanding how English is used around the world and how there are unique forms of English around the world. From it I learned how different English can be and I learned about cultural differences as well.

Example 19

B: The books we used always had a theme like for example a specific country. There were all sorts of different places like Ireland, India, Australia. Those are once which I remember, but there were many different countries and a little about accents and such.

Interviewee B's description of the accents they were introduced to led to an interesting discussion about the attitudes towards different English variations based on how they sound, as illustrated in Example 20.

Example 20

B: Well, the Irish accent was at least considered to be very funny by everyone and the Australian accent was funny as well. American accent was the accent that was seen as normal and like the baseline. British accent was the one a lot of the teachers used.

Despite being introduced to many different variations, the students already held a conception that the American accent was the norm, and it seems it was considered quite desirable. The British accent held a powerful position being the accent preferred by the teacher. This acts as a good example of the status these two variations of English hold within the classroom. Interviewee B also recalled that the variety of accents or their details were not discussed further than how they sound. Formal guidance on pronunciation was limited to repeating after the teacher: "The teacher would tell us what it is and say how it was pronounced".

The textbooks were not the only places where the cultures of the English-speaking world were represented, as English related imagery was scattered around the classroom. As

can be seen from Examples 21 and 22, this was mostly in the form of flags from different countries or posters created by the students.

Example 21

A: We had these different flags and although it wasn't like "decorations", I remember we had presentations up that were about different countries.

Example 22

B: Yeah, we had a lot of like posters and all sorts of books in English such as dictionaries and what not. A lot of "This is Britain" stuff. We also had some basic flags and those phonetic symbols.

Based on these accounts, the teaching seemed to accomplish the goals set in the curriculum. Many different countries and cultures were introduced to the students during English lessons although not in great detail. The participants' experiences also show a focus on native English. The English-speaking world is described as consisting of countries which have English as an official language and Britain as well as America seems to be viewed as having a high status. English is said to be used all over the world, but its use as a lingua franca and the vast amounts of people speaking English as a second or a third language were not mentioned at all. This paints a largely native centred view around the use of English. Seeing English as the language of Britain or America could have a negative effect on students' linguistic identities as they might view themselves as "outsiders". This might, understandably, have unfavourable consequences on the students' socio-cultural connection to English, which is one of the main aspects of Fielding's (2016: 155) framework on bilingual identity negotiation. Focus on native speakers could also lead some to view their skills negatively by comparing them to an idealised "native" level. Despite this, the participants seemed to perceive their experiences as having positive effects on their linguistic identities and claimed that they felt the representation of English present in the classrooms made them feel that English is a global language that belongs to all who speak it.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the participants of this study consider themselves as being multilingual individuals with a strong connection to the English language. Although they see Finnish and

English as being the languages which they are clearly the most competent at, they still view their knowledge and capabilities in other languages to be enough to qualify as multilingual. English is perceived as being much more than just the language which they use during their university studies. It is present in multiple aspects of their lives from hobbies to relationships. The active use of English as a communicational tool with people or in groups arose as one of the most important factors for identifying with the language.

How the participants viewed the effects of language education on their linguistic identities included some negative but mostly positive feelings. Lessons were perceived as often following the same formula. Activities and exercises conducted within the lessons offered little support for understanding or constructing linguistic identities and they seemed lacking in aspects that could positively affect student's linguistic identities. Despite this, the participants felt that as a whole, the lessons had a positive effect on their linguistic identities. According to the perceptions of the interviewees, English was portrayed in an inclusive manner as a global language spoken by many different cultures across the world.

Comparing these results to previous research, a few interesting points can be made. In Pavlenko's study (2003) "nativity" was a central theme. Out of 44 participants 30 discussed the native vs non-native dichotomy. This theme was not mentioned by the interviewees of the present study at all. Interviewees A and B however did value communicative competence, which was an important theme among the other 14 participants of Pavlenko's study (2003). The lack of discussion on nativity can come as a slight surprise as Pavlenko mentions it having been of great personal importance specifically for the international participants of her study, a group which can be seen as comparable to the two participants of the present study. According to Pavlenko (2003), some of the participants in her study reimagined themselves as "multicompetent" or "multilingual" and it allowed them to see their identities and linguistic capabilities in a more positive manner. Comparing this to interviewees A and B, there is a clear similarity as they also identified as multilingual. It is apparent that an inclusive view of bi- and multilingualism can assist in the positive construction of linguistic identities.

Of course, it is difficult to make generalizations based on this study. The perceptions of two teacher students can hardly be used to come to conclusions about teacher students as a whole. In addition, how events are perceived can certainly be quite far off from reality and thus, the discussion relating to the effects of language education on linguistic identity should be viewed with some scepticism. The points relating to it were drawn from what the interviewees could remember during the interviews, meaning they might not accurately

reflect the lessons. Similarly, it is important to be cautious of any implied effects of language education as these were again based on perceptions rather than being measurable results.

In the future, it would be interesting to conduct research that could measure how language education in reality supports linguistic identity construction. On this same topic, it would be interesting to compare the representation of the English-speaking world in different textbooks as that was seen as one of the main ways in which language education affected the linguistic identities of the participants.

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