FINNISH YOUNG ADULTS' EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES OF MULTILINGUALISM IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Monikielisyys on huomattavasti lisääntynyt Suomessa viime vuosikymmenten aikana, ja muutos jatkuu edelleen. Sosiaalinen media on alati kehittyvä ja dynaaminen verkosto, joka tavoittaa nykypäivänä jo miljardeja käyttäjiä. Alun perin internet oli pääasiassa englanninkielinen, joskin tilanne on nykyään kovin erilainen; sosiaalisen median aikakaudella monikielisyyteen törmää helposti päivittäin.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus on kartoittaa kahden suomalaisen nuoren aikuisen kokemuksia monikielisyydestä sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä selvittää, millaisia asenteita heillä on eri kieliä kohtaan. Tutkimuskysymykset olivat seuraavat:

1. Miten suomalaiset nuoret aikuiset kokevat monikielisyyden sosiaalisessa mediassa?
2. Millaisia asenteita suomalaisilla nuorilla aikuisilla on monikielisyyttä kohtaan sosiaalisessa mediassa?

Tutkimusta varten haastateltiin kahta 18–29-vuotiasta aikuista, jotka käyttävät monikielistä sosiaalista mediaa päivittäin. Molemmat haastateltavat näkivät monikielisyyden sosiaalisessa mediassa positiivisena asiana ja perustelivat, miksi eri kielien osaamisesta on hyötyä. Molemmilla haastateltavilla oli hyviä kokemuksia monikielisyydestä sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä positiivinen asenne monikielistä sisältöä kohtaan.

Tutkimuksen aineistona toimineet haastattelut toteutettiin maaliskuussa 2022 Zoomin välityksellä. Aineisto analysoitiin laadullisella sisällönanalyysillä. Tutkimus on hyvin pienimuotoinen, eikä sen tuloksia voida yleistää. Toisaalta tutkimuksen tulokset ovat kuitenkin omiaan herättämään keskustelua monikielisyydestä ja sen hyödyistä sosiaalisessa mediassa, ja mahdollisesti myös muissa yhteyksissä.

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1   INTRODUCTION

Social media is becoming increasingly important, with billions of users (Dean 2021). Social media has users from all over the world, and consequently, countless languages are represented throughout different social media platforms. With that many users and languages, there must be all kinds of texts on these platforms. In order to better understand one another and to detect any negative associations for certain languages, it is important to investigate how people see these texts written in different languages and what kinds of thoughts they evoke. According to Gardner (1985), attitudes towards languages need to be studied and clarified further, for they affect our motivation to learn languages, and the way we see other people who speak a language other than ours. Garrett et al. (2003) support this claim and point out that linguistic varieties may lead to assumptions or beliefs of the speaker – or, in the case of social media, the writer. The issue needs to be addressed, since we encounter attitudes towards languages daily (Garrett 2010). In a similar vein, Leppänen and Peuronen (2020) argue that there is a need for more studies related to multilingualism and language use on the Internet.

Increasing immigration and globalisation are some of the main factors of the change in Finland's linguistic landscape (Suni & Latomaa 2012). Finland has become more multilingual than ever before in recent decades, and the change is still ongoing. I study in the language awareness and multilingual pedagogy program (LAMP) and have a great interest in multilingualism in general. In this study I investigate and attempt to bring up some of the issues and underlying attitudes there may be towards multilingualism, and potentially raise awareness of these issues.

As the theoretical background for my study, I will be using previous studies on attitudes to language (Garrett et al. 2003; Garrett 2010). Somewhat extensive research

about social media has already been conducted in many parts of the world (e.g. Langmia et al. 2013). However, social media is so complex that it provides research topics for many purposes. In this study I want to approach the theme of social media use from a more linguistic point of view – I am interested in the aspect of language use, particularly in Finland. It would be interesting to learn what kinds of experiences and attitudes young Finnish adults have about languages in social media. I chose young adults (between the ages of 18 and 29) as the participants for this study because they represent an age group that uses social media intensely (Langmia et al. 2013). There are two participants in this study whose interviews will be used as data.

2 MULTILINGUALISM IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Due to its constant evolution, it is not comprehensively defined what social media entails (Langmia et al. 2013: 9). In the Oxford dictionary (2022) social media is defined as "websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking". In addition to this definition, social media can also include analogic media, such as letters to the editor of traditional newspapers. However, this study focuses on digital social media platforms; specifically on multilingualism and experiences and attitudes of languages in social media.

According to Leppänen and Peuronen (2012: 385), multilingualism on the Internet has not been studied for long. This is partly due to the fact that English used to be the dominant language of the Internet in the beginning. Most website and Internet users were English-speaking (Alis Technologies 1997; Androutsopoulos 2006a: 420, cited in Leppänen & Peuronen 2012), and English was often the choice even when communicating with someone that one did not share a language with (Durham 2007, cited in Leppänen & Peuronen 2012). Moreover, Internet was designed to support the American Standard Code for Information Exchange, which favoured English in terms of alphabet and character set (Warschauer and De Florio-Hansen 2003, cited in Leppänen & Peuronen 2012; Danet & Herring 2007: 8-9; Paolillo 2007: 72). By the early

2000s there was a shift from monolingualism to multilingualism on the Internet, with Chinese and Spanish becoming the most used languages after English (Leppänen & Peuronen 2012). It could be argued that this, in a way, predates the study of multilingualism in social media.

The emphasis in the first section is on the platforms that are the most popular on a global scale. I will introduce some of these platforms and their basic functions and principles. I chose these particular platforms because they are the biggest social media platforms in the world, when looking at the amount of users (The Top 10 Social Media Sites & Platforms 2021). The five most popular social media platforms were also mentioned by at least one of the participants interviewed and therefore they are relevant to this study. The second chapter will focus on the language policies these popular social media platforms have, and the third chapter will explain the situation in Finland. Finally, the fourth chapter is about language attitudes.

2.1   (Multilingual) social media platforms

The social media platforms introduced in this section have many similarities, especially the four first ones. The platforms are listed here in alphabetical order, not by their popularity.

Facebook is a social networking service where users create their own profiles and can then add other users as *friends* by sending them *friend requests.* In addition to their friends, users can follow pages, such as celebrities or companies, create posts, and share links on their *walls*. Users can react to each other's posts using different reactions (Like, Love, Care, Haha, Wow, Sad, Angry), out of which *Like* is the original and most well-known reaction – the rest of the reactions were added in the recent years and did not exist in the first versions of Facebook. (Facebook 2022.)

Instagram is a photo and video sharing platform. Users can create profiles and then *follow* other users, and *like* and comment on their pictures. Users can choose whether they want to post their content in their *feed* (permanent) or *story* (only visible for a limited time, usually 24 hours). (Instagram 2022.)

TikTok is a video-sharing platform. Unlike videos on YouTube, TikTok videos are typically relatively short (only a few minutes long). Users can leave comments on each other's videos and share them on other social media platforms. (TikTok 2022.)

YouTube is a video-sharing platform. Many of the videos can be watched without logging in. However, users must be logged in to upload their videos on the site. Other users search for videos based on the titles. Users can leave comments on the videos' comment sections or express their opinions about the videos using the *like* and *dislike* buttons. Users can also comment on other comments and either down-vote or up-vote them. The videos uploaded on the platform vary in length, but they can be up to 12 hours long. (Youtube 2022.)

Compared to the other four platforms introduced, *WhatsApp* is a platform that follows a slightly different principle. It is an instant messaging service linked to the user's (smart)phone number and it is often used for private messaging between two users. However, it can also be used for group messaging – this is a key factor in defining Whatsapp as a social media application. Users can also update *statuses* that disappear after 24 hours. (Whatsapp 2022)

2.2   Language policies of social media platforms

Language policies and choices are crucial in producing media. It is always a choice, whether explicit or implicit, to use one language over another, or to mix them (Kelly-Holmes 2013). Depending on the circumstances, the choice may not always be the language user's to make – it may be up to the community or people in power to decide which languages are allowed to use. According to Kelly-Holmes (2013: 2), language choices, in a way, dictate whose voices are heard and whose are not.

A great number of the most popular social media platforms are multilingual nowadays. Platforms support a varying number of languages, meaning that the application can be used in these languages. However, in reality, the number of languages used *on* the application might be higher. Table 1 presents five biggest social

media applications (Searchenginejournal 2022) and how many languages they can be used in.

Name of the application	How many languages the application can be used in
Facebook	111-112 (Facebook 2022)
Instagram	32 (Instagram 2022)
TikTok	40 (Tiktok 2022)
YouTube	76 (Youtube 2022)
WhatsApp	40-60 depending on your smartphone (Whatsapp 2022)

Table 1. How many languages the biggest social media applications can be used in

Digital social media giants Instagram and Facebook, for instance, are owned by the same company, Meta. Therefore, they have similar language policies: users can choose from a limited number of languages in which they want to use the applications. Beyond that, it is up to the users which languages they use to write posts and to comment on them, since the company has not forbidden any languages from being used on the applications.

One language specialty one may come across in social media is *code-switching*. Code-switching essentially means alternating between two or more languages within one conversation (e.g. Poplack 2001). Code-switching can include a much deeper meaning than one would think: code-switching can be a sign of solidarity or attitude towards something or someone, such as a specific ethnic group. However, code-switching is often disapproved and seen as 'lazy' or 'impure.' (Garrett, 2010.)

2.3   Social media use in Finland

Social media use has significantly increased in Finland in recent years. In 2020 69% of Finns, aged 16-89, used social media. Many senior citizens have started using social media services, reading online news, and watching online television. (Kohvakka & Saarenmaa 2021). The most popular social media platforms in Finland in 2020 were Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, when looking at all age groups. The results vary slightly when looking at young people's (aged 16-24) statistics: for that age group Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat were the most used platforms. (Kohvakka & Saarenmaa 2019).

In spring 2020 the world was hit by a global COVID-19 pandemic which accelerated social media use all over the world. In addition to the 'normal' pastime, social media has facilitated studying, working, and meeting friends and family. The use of social media, and media in general, clearly increased in Finland during the pandemic (Kohvakka & Saarenmaa 2021).

2.4   Language attitudes

In order to define language attitudes, one must understand what is meant by *attitude* in general. According to one definition, *attitudes* refer to "all the objects –- that have to do with affect, feelings, values and beliefs" (Henerson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon 1987: 13, cited in Garrett et al. 2003). Language attitudes can be seen in various contexts an linked to a myriad of phenomena (Garrett 2010). The study of language attitudes can focus on many kinds of phenomena, from word level to societal issues (Garrett 2010), but this thesis mainly touches on whole languages and the attitudes that young adults have of them.

There are some previous studies on attitudes to languages that have been conducted in Finland. Mäkelä and Posti (2018) wrote their Master's Thesis on language attitudes that Finnish people have about different languages. The results showed that English

was seen as the most useful language. Russian was seen as the third most important language to know right after Finnish and English, but it was also regarded both an interesting and ugly language. Swedish was seen as the fourth most useful language after Finnish, English and Russian, but also seen as the most boring language by 25% of the participants. Mäkelä and Posti's (2018) study found that there are regional differences in the attitudes that Finnish people have towards different languages. However, it is worth pointing out that Mäkelä and Posti's (2018) study is relatively narrow with 413 participants.

Kansikas (2002) has written their Master's Thesis on language attitudes that Finnish upper secondary school pupils, aged 16-18, have about eight European languages (English, Russian, German, Estonian, French, Finnish, Swedish and Spanish). Kansikas' (2002) study found that according to Finns the ugliest language was Russian. French was considered the most beautiful language of the eight languages. English was seen as the most precise and the easiest language. This study is also very narrow with only 72 participants.

Language attitudes have been also been studied abroad, for example in Hungary (Dörnyei et al. 2006). The study was conducted for the first time in 1993, then repeated in 1999 and 2004. The purpose was to study Hungarian school children's views about five languages (English, German, French, Italian and Russian). English ranked the highest, Russian the lowest. German had the position of a lingua franca in the area which was also evident in the data. The popularity of English, Italian and French had also risen. Language attitudes have been studied elsewhere, too, but generalising the results is somewhat problematic; many studies have focused on a small area and there has often been only a small selection of languages towards which the attitudes are studied. Therefore, it proved to be difficult to find previous studies about language attitudes from abroad that were relevant to this study.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

This chapter presents the research questions and the aim of the study, and how the data were collected and analysed. Additionally, the data and the participants as well as the methodical choices will be introduced. The interview questions are presented in the appendix.

3.1 Research questions and the aim of the study

This study investigates the experiences and attitudes that young Finnish adults have about multilingualism in social media. The aim of this study is to find out more about intercultural communication and how people react to different languages. There are two research questions to be answered in this thesis:

1. How do Finnish young adults experience multilingualism in social media?
2. What kinds of attitudes do Finnish young adults have about multingualism in social media?

The aforementioned research questions were influenced by gaps in previous research.

3.2 Data collection

The data for this study consist of two interviews and their transcriptions. The data were collected by interviewing two Finnish young adults who use multilingual social media daily. The interviews were conducted in March 2022 via Zoom. The participants were interviewed about their views on multilingual social media use in a semi-structured interview with 14 questions. Only the sound was taped in the interview. Interviews were chosen as the data collection method for this study due to the nature of the research questions – when investigating what someone thinks about a certain topic, it may be worthwhile to ask them straight (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018:

84). A semi-structured interview as a material collection method was an appropriate way to collect the material because the participants had an opportunity to tell in their own words about their experiences.

The interviews took approximately 20 minutes each. The participants were given the interview questions in advance and they were also asked if they preferred to be interviewed in Finnish or English. Both participants chose Finnish – perhaps because both participants speak Finnish as their mother tongue and they are able to talk about their own experiences most effortlessly in Finnish. However, the participants did code-switch during the interview, and therefore the data are multilingual.

3.3   Data analysis and ethical considerations

The data of this study are analysed using qualitative content analysis. This particular method was chosen for this study because it suits the aspirations of this study: I have formed two descriptive research questions for this study and therefore qualitative content analysis is a good choice for the method (Schreier 2012: 44).

The answers were categorised according to prominent themes, such as the situationality and the importance of multilingualism. First, the participants' responses were analysed separately. After the analysis, I searched for similarities and differences between these two interviews. I will analyse both interviews separately, then re-examine some of the themes that emerged in both interviews, and lastly the themes that emerged in only one of them.

The transcribed interviews have been anonymised and stored appropriately on my computer. Once the thesis has been handed in, the data will be destroyed. Before the interviews I provided the participants with the privacy notice and got written research permits from them. The participants' identities are hidden and they will be referred to as 'Participant 1' and 'Participant 2' in this study.

3.4 The participants

The participants of this study are two adults in their twenties from different regions of Finland. I knew the participants beforehand and invited them to participate in the study, because they suited the target group. It is possible that this affects the results, however, the results of this study are not to be generalised anyway, due to the small amount of participants.

Participant 1 knows at least four languages (Finnish, English, Arabic, and some French). They use Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Discord, and Tinder weekly. They have come across posts in English, Finnish, Swedish, French, and Arabic on social media.

Participant 2 reported that they know five to seven languages depending on how knowing the language is defined: Finnish, English, Swedish, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and French. They said they use social media quite a lot. They use Snapchat, WhatsApp, Tiktok, and Instagram, but also more unfamiliar ones, such as VLIVE and KakaoTalk. VLIVE is a South Korea based platform where celebrities can post live videos, chats and shows for their fans (VLIVE 2022). KakaoTalk is a messaging application, also popular in South Korea (KakaoTalk 2022).

4   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will be discussing the findings of the analysis that I conducted for this study. In the following two sections I will discuss the participants' experiences and attitudes separately and together on the third section.

4.1 Participant 1's experiences and attitudes of multilingualism in social media

Participant 1 said that they get posts in their newsfeed – and therefore use multilingualism – in many different languages, including Finnish, English and French. When asked about their experiences, they said it is nice to see posts in many languages. French, in particular, is a beautiful language in their opinion:

> (1) "Ja ranskan kulttuuriset (postaukset) on tosi hauskoja *naurahtaa* mä tykkään. Ne on enemmän uplifting koska ne on niinku.. Ne on sitä erilaista tiiätsä. Koska most of the content is in Finnish or English, nii sit se on kiva kun siellä on jotain muutakin."
>
> "And the (posts from) French culture are very funny *laughs* I like. They are more uplifting because they are like… They are the different kind you know. Because most of the content is in Finnish or English, then it is nice to have something else there too.

As excerpt 1 illustrates, Participant 1 associates posts in French with laughter and lightheartedness. They also see it as a positive thing that there are multiple languages presented in their newsfeed. Nevertheless, Participant 1 believes that the algorithms are biased; they follow people from certain countries but they do not get much content in that language. Instead, they get content mostly in English:

> (2) "Ne algoritmit toimii niin hyvin siinä että ne antaa mulle englanninkielistä kontenttii melkein koko ajan. Esimerkiksi jos puhutaan TikTokista nii siellähän on todella paljon [Pohjois-Afrikkalaisen maan] tiktokkaajia ja mä oon myöskin hakenu ja mä myöskin seuraan niitä, mut silti se algoritmi ei päästä niitä läpi mulle nii se on tosi outoo."
>
> "The algorithms work so well in that they give me content in English almost all the time. For example on TikTok, there are many tiktokers from [a North African country] whom I have also searched there and also followed yet the algorithm still won't let them through for me so that's really odd."

In other words, Participant 1 has noticed an uneven distribution of languages on TikTok and wonders why it is so. They reported that they use multilingualism by following many users who make content in Arabic, yet most of the content on their feed is still in English.

Participant 1 said that they usually use English or Finnish when reading posts on social media. What languages they use depends on the person they are interacting with. Usually, it is Finnish or English, plus Arabic and French on special occasions.

They also reported that they would like to use Arabic more, but they feel like they do not have anyone to speak it with and therefore it has deteriorated.

If Participant 1 knows someone knows multiple languages, then they might code-switch the languages. Participant 1 thinks it is liberating to be able to use different languages. Other than that, they thought it was hard to say what being able to use different languages means to them or what kinds of thoughts it evokes. Participant 1 could not think of a specific occurrence related to language use in social media they wanted to share.

Participant 1 said no one has reacted to their language choices per se because other people know that Participant 1 speaks many languages, and has family in other parts of the world. However, sometimes people may ask about certain wishes in Arabic which Participant 1 does not mind answering – in fact, they are happy to talk about it:

> (3) "M: No miltä se tuntuu kun ihmiset kyselee että mitä toi tarkottaa?
>
> P1: On se semmonen… Ah! Niinku tiiätsä sellanen ilonen (asia että) se haluu tietää jotain tästä. Niin kauan kun se ei oo mikroaggressio"
>
> "M: So how does it feel when people ask you what that means?
>
> P1: It is like… Ah! You know like I'm happy they want to know something about this. As long as it is not a microaggression"

As excerpt 3 illustrates, it makes Participant 1 happy when people show interest towards a language Participant 1 is using, as long as it is not a microaggression. Participant 1 is happy to answer people's questions specifically to spread awareness of different cultures and their celebrations, such as Eid al-Fitr.

4.2   Participant 2's experiences and attitudes of multilingualism in social media

Participant 2 reported that they have come across at least 12 languages on social media. When asked about their experiences, they described their thoughts about how social media connects people from all around the world:

(4) "Maailma on aika iso paikka kuiteskin ja sitte kaikki nää maailman ihmiset jotenkin löytää toisensa tämmösistä sosiaalisen median palveluista nii se on aika aika mielenkiintonen juttu et -- kuinka paljon ihmisiä on ja miten me ollaan oikeesti ihan eri puolilla maailmaa mut silti tämmönen sosiaalisen median joku ykskin video tai kuva voi niin paljon keskusteluu herättää meis kaikissa."

"The world is quite a big place after all and all these people in the world somehow find each other from these social media services, I think it is quite interesting -- how many people there are and how in reality we are on the other sides of the world but still a single video or picture in social media can evoke conversation in all of us."

As evident in excerpt 4, Participant 2 sees it as a great thing that people from all around the world use social media and meet each other through it. They did not describe how they feel about multilingualism per se, but they are happy about the conversation engaged between people from different cultures.

Participant 2 reads texts mostly in English; Finnish and Korean come after that. When they post on social media, they usually use Finnish or English, sometimes Korean. They also use the same languages – mostly English, Finnish and Korean – in other types of interaction, such as private messaging. When asked what affects their choice of language, they described how it depends on the (assumed) audience; they know roughly what languages the audience and/or recipients know so they want to ensure that the readers understand the posts.

(5) "Siihen (kielivalintaan) vaikuttaa se, että julkasenko mä ite jotain sisältöö vai oonko mä vaikka katsoja -- ajattelen mitä kielii seuraajat puhuu tai ymmärtää nii sillä kielellä sitten julkasen -- yrittää valita sen kielen sen perusteel et mahdollisimman moni sais siit selvää."

"It (the choice of language) depends on whether I myself post content or if I am a viewer – I consider what languages the followers speak or understand and then post in that language – trying to pick the language so that as many people as possible would understand it."

As excerpt 5 illustrates, Participant 2 explains how their decision about which language to choose depends on the audience's language resources. Participant 2 disclosed that very often they end up using English, which is in line with Leppänen and Peuronen's (2020) theory about shared language: internet users tend to favour English as the shared language because it is so widely used (Danet & Herring 2007). When asked about what it means to them that they are able to use these languages in these contexts, Participant 2 said that they are happy about the fact that they are able to use multiple languages.

(6) ”Välillä vaikka kielellä ei oiskaan sinällään väliä niin jotenkin toisella kielellä osaa ilmaista sen asian jotenkin ehkä paremmin nii se on kyl hyvä et pystyy käyttää montaa eri kieltä”

”Sometimes, even though language doesn't matter as such, it is easier to express oneself in one language than the other so it is good that one can use multiple languages”

As excerpt 6 illustrates, Participant 2 has a very positive attitude towards knowing many languages and sees them as useful in expressing themselves precisely. When asked, Participant 2 did not recall a specific situtation where they have used a language in social media. Instead, they gave a more specific answer about how using many languages widens one's worldview.

(7) ”Ei nyt erityisesti mitään tilannet mut jotenkin se että tavallaan maailmankuvakin laajenee siinä samalla kun pystyy eri kielillä julkasemaan juttuja ja lukemaan julkaisuja ja näin edelleen nii jotenki -- se käsitys maailmasta laajenee siin samalla.”

”Not a specific situation but somehow the fact that (one's) worldview widens as one can post and read things in different languages and so on, then somehow – the idea of the world widens as well.”

Again, as apparent in excerpt 7, Participant 2 has very positive experiences about using many languages in social media, and sees it as a very useful skill to read and publish posts in different languages. Participant 2 reported that they have always received a positive reaction form others when they have used different languages in social media. At the end of the interview, Participant 2 was asked if they wanted to add anything, and they nicely summarised their thoughts about multilingualism:

(8) ”Ihan vaan ylipäätään on hienoo et meillä on paljon kieliä ja monikielisyys on on mun mielestä niinkun ollut tosi elämää rikastava asia niinku itselle”

”Overall, I think it is great that we have lots of languages and for me multilingualism has been a very enriching thing in my life”

Based on the Participant 2's answers, it is clear that they have good experiences about multilingualism and they have benefited from being able to use many languages on social media.

4.3   Discussion

Certain elements emerged from both participants' answers. Firstly, both participants could distinguish a number of different languages they have encountered and also

name them; both participants mentioned at least five languages they have come across on social media. Both participants said it is important to be able to use many languages in social media. This was justified by being able to express oneself more precisely and reaching a wider audience as opposed to using only one language.

Both participants disclosed that their use of multilingualism usually depends on the platform and targeted audience. Neither of the participants reported any languages in particular that they would react negatively towards. Both reported that it is refreshing to encounter different languages on social media and saw it as a positive thing that there is multilingualism in social media. Both participants said that being able to choose the language is liberating and that the choice of language depends on the situation.

In addition to similarities, there were also differences in participants' answers. Participant 1 mentioned using a specific language for e.g. communicating with relatives and people from the same community, however, they would like to use it more often. Participant 1 has learned the languages they know and use from practical contexts, such as school or family. Participant 2, on the other hand, had learned a specific language solely due to personal interests, such as music and pop culture. Participant 2 reported using the language regularly.

5 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find out what kinds of experiences and attitudes young Finnish adults have about multilingualism in social media. There were two participants in this study who were interviewed about their social media use and how they view different languages on the platforms they use. The material was collected by a semi-structured interview and analysed using qualitative content analysis.

There were similar themes in both participants' answers regarding positivity towards different languages – none of the participants expressed any negative attitudes towards languages. For the most part, the reception they have received for using different languages in social media has been positive. They also saw multilingualism as an asset and recognised the ability to express oneself more precisely when able to choose from a range of languages. Both participants saw it as a positive thing that people can choose the language they want to communicate in and associated it with freedom. There were also some differences in the participants' experiences, for example in their linguistic backgrounds – Participant 1 had learned their repertoire of languages from their family or at school, whereas Participant 2 had learned some languages due to their own interest, in addition to those learned at school.

The results about shared language are in line with Leppänen & Peuronen (2020): when two social media users do not have a shared language, they often choose a vehicular language in order to communicate. Very often users choose English as the vehicular language, since it is very widely used in the Internet, and an important lingua franca around the world (Danet & Herring 2007). This was also evident in the data, as both participants reported using English regularly in social media. This study is based on only two interviews and therefore the results can not be generalized; nevertheless, this study sought to reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The results manage to give an insight to two people's experiences and views about multilingualism on social media. The results of this study shed light on the topic of experiences and attitudes of multilingualism on social media, and could be useful to anyone that uses social media. I believe the central themes of this study - multilingualism and attitudes towards thereof - are important in social conversation as Finland is becoming more multilingual all the time. The subject matter of this study could be extended to further research since it is a very present-day topic. Further research could potentially entail a more extensive pool of participants and it could extend to other countries as well.

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APPENDIX: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Lämmittelykysymys: Kerro vähän itsestäsi ja kuka olet.
Warm-up question: Tell me something about yourself and who you are.)

Mitä kieliä yleisesti ottaen osaat/ käytät?
What languages do you generally use?

Mitä sosiaalisen median alustoja käytät vähintään viikoittain?
Which social media platforms do you use on a weekly basis?

Mihin kieliin olet törmännyt alustalla?
What languages have you encountered on this platform?

Mitä ajatuksia tämä herättää?
How do you feel about that?

Millä kielillä luet julkaisuja alustoilla?
In what languages do you read posts on the platforms?

Millä kielillä itse julkaiset alustoilla?
In what languages do you post on these platforms yourself?

Millä kielillä olet muuten vuorovaikutuksessa alustoilla (esim. yksityisviestit)?
In what languages do you otherwise interact on these platforms (e.g. direct messages)?

Jos käytät eri kieliä eri alustoilla, mikä vaikuttaa kielivalintaasi?
If you use different languages on different platforms, what are the factors that affect your choice of language?

Mitä sinulle merkitsee se, että pystyt käyttämään näitä kieliä näissä yhteyksissä?
What does being able to use these languages in these contexts mean to you?

Onko jotain tilannetta, mikä on jäänyt erityisesti mieleen?
Is there a certain occurrence that has stuck with you?

Miten muut ovat reagoineet siihen, että käytät eri kieliä somessa?
How have others reacted to you using different languages on social media?

Miten käytät eri kieliä eri alustoilla (esim. Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat…)
How do you use different languages on different platforms (e.g. Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat…)

Muuta, mitä haluaisit lisätä?
Anything else you would like to add?