

# FINLANCE



A Finnish Journal of Applied Linguistics

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**Social and cognitive perspectives  
on language awareness**

Volume XIV 1994

Edited by Hannele Dufva



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Language Centre for Finnish Universities  
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Finland

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# CONSCIOUSNESS AS A SOCIAL AND DIALOGICAL PHENOMENON

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This paper discusses some ideas concerning the nature of consciousness, as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Voloshinov, and Lev Vygotsky. What the approaches of these Russian/Soviet scholars share is that they all emphasise the immanent sociality and dialogicality of consciousness. They reject the idea that the consciousness of an individual would inherently be individual and would become socialised only later, under the pressure of his social environment. They all argue that human consciousness is inherently social and becomes individualised only through the social. Therefore, it seems evident that for Bakhtin, Voloshinov, and Vygotsky the relationship between the individual and the social is not a binary opposition as is commonly assumed, for example, in the Cartesian tradition. On the contrary, in their view, an individual psyche can be characterised as **both individual and social**. An individual is social in the sense that his psyche is formed in the dialogue between himself and his social environment. On the other hand, the individuality of an individual psyche is guaranteed by the individual's unique position in this ever-lasting dialogue with his social environment. The self is never independent of and isolated from the outer world, but its existence presupposes the existence of other selves.

**Keywords:** consciousness, dialogical, social, Bakhtin, Voloshinov, Vygotsky

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The terms **social** and **dialogical** have become increasingly popular in current psychology, linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociopsychology etc. The names frequently referred to in connection with these concepts are those of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), Valentin Voloshinov (1894-1936) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). The ideas of Bakhtin, Voloshinov, and Vygotsky that remained almost unknown in the Western world until 1970 and 1980, have recently aroused attention among Western thinkers. They have

influenced the thinking of such scholars as Ragnar Rommetveit, James V. Wertsch, Ivana Markovà, and Klaus Foppa, to name but a few. However, it must be emphasised that these Western scholars have not only drawn from the heritage of their spiritual ancestors, but also systemized and extended these ideas to develop the so called **dialogical paradigm** (cf. Markovà & Foppa 1990, 1991; Wertsch 1985, 1991; Wold 1992).

The ideas worked out by Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Vygotsky share many important features. One reason for this may be that they all lived and worked under similar circumstances. The general intellectual atmosphere of the first turbulent years of the new Soviet Union during which the sociality of human cognition was emphasised undoubtedly had an impact on thinking of these Russian/Soviet scholars. Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's influence on each other's thinking is quite clear, because they belonged to the same intellectual circle where different aspects of philosophy and culture in general were discussed. In fact, two books and several articles published under the name of Voloshinov (the so called disputed texts) have been treated by Bakhtin scholars in many occasions (especially in the Soviet Union) as if they were written by Bakhtin himself<sup>1</sup>. Without going to any details of this dispute, it can be stated that there seem to be good grounds for accepting the view taken by, for example, Morson and Emerson (1990) who convincingly argue that Voloshinov is the real author of the works ascribed to him. This interpretation also explains the fact that Voloshinov's works contain clearly Marxist elements which is not the case with Bakhtin. Ascribing the authorship to Voloshinov, however, does not change the fact that his works were greatly influenced by Bakhtin.

Vygotsky's relationship to Bakhtin and Voloshinov is not as unambiguous as that of Bakhtin to Voloshinov. Although, all three Soviet

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<sup>1</sup>For discussion, see Clark & Holquist (1984) according to whom Bakhtin is the real author of disputed texts, and Morson & Emerson (1989, 1990) who take the opposite position. For an agnostic intermediate position see Todorov (1984).

scholars developed their basic concepts and categories at the same time (1920-1930), Vygotsky lived and worked geographically apart from both the other two. In those days, Bakhtin and Voloshinov worked mainly in Leningrad while Vygotsky lived in Moscow where he had moved into after joining the staff of the Institute of Psychology in 1924. There is no evidence that Vygotsky ever met Bakhtin or Voloshinov, and he never actually explicitly referred to their thoughts in his work (cf. Kozulin 1990: 180). This does not, however, mean that Vygotsky was totally unfamiliar with their thinking. One possible explanation is that in those days the social and dialogical character of human cognition was regarded as self-evident, and there was thus no need to refer to someone in particular.

To emphasise the indisputable similarities in the works of Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Vygotsky is not to say that their thinking or approaches are identical. This, of course, would be impossible, because they were interested in different things. Vygotsky was a professional psychologist. Voloshinov, in contrast, can be characterised as a Marxist philosopher of language, while Bakhtin's main work deals with various issues of literature. They all, however, share the interest in the nature of human cognition which they approach in their work from different points of view.

## **2 VYGOTSKY: DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Vygotsky, like Voloshinov (but unlike Bakhtin), was a Marxist and based his work on psychology on the Marxist philosophy. When working towards a new Marxist theory of psychology, he approached the problem of consciousness from a developmental point of view. Vygotsky emphasised the important role of consciousness in explaining human action. In fact, the concept of consciousness became so central in Vygotsky's thought that A.N. Leont'ev and A.R. Lurija (1956: 6), who were his students and



co-workers in Moscow, suggest that the intellectual career of Vygotsky could be characterised as a "struggle for consciousness".

In his writings, Vygotsky attacked two schools of psychology existing in Soviet Union in the early 1920's. On the one hand, he opposed the **Pavlovian** approach according to which human consciousness could be reduced to physiological reflexes and explained in purely biological terms. On the other hand, Vygotsky did not accept the so called **idealistic** approach either which saw consciousness as a subjective and metaphysical quality that could be approached only through intuition and introspection. The solution that Vygotsky suggested for both the theoretical and the methodological problems of the study of the nature of consciousness was his **cultural-historical** approach. This approach, according to Wertsch (1990: 62), can be characterised as a "perspective that explicates how it [i.e.. mental functioning] reflects and shapes the cultural, historical and institutional setting in which it occurs".

It is well known that Vygotsky considers human activity different from the activity of animals, because of humans use tools. In this respect, Vygotsky sees no difference between psychic activity and activity in general. One of the main tenets of Vygotsky's theory is that psychic activity of human beings is differentiated from that of animals by the use of **tools**, that is, human psychic activity is **mediated**. According to him, the tools that mediate psychic activity always have a meaning, in other words, they are **signs** (Leont'ev & Lurija 1956: 8). Thus, Vygotsky sees consciousness as an essentially **semiotic** phenomenon based on the system of signs. For him signs are special "tools for spiritual production" and psychic activity can, consequently, be defined as **sign mediated action**. It is worth noting that in Vygotsky's use a sign "is a symbol with a definite meaning that has evolved in the history of culture", as noted by V.V. Davydov and L.A. Radzikhovskii (1985: 54). Vygotsky's category of sign includes not only language, which is the most important mediating tool, but also other kinds of sign systems such as mathematical symbols etc. As the above charac-

terisation by Davydov and Radzikhovskii shows, meanings always have a historical dimension, that is, they are always formed by their use in preceding situations.

In Vygotsky's main work *Myshlenie i rech'* (Thought and Language<sup>2</sup>) the developmental aspects of speech and thinking are considered from both phylogenetical and ontogenetical points of view. With regard to **phylogenesis**, Vygotsky's (1956: 131) position is the following. Firstly, he argues that the development of thinking and speech have different genetic origins. According to him (1956: 119), this hypothesis is supported by the results of Köhler's study on intelligence in chimpanzees in which it was shown that intelligence developed independently from language. Secondly, he argues that thinking and speech develop along different lines and that the relation between speech and thinking is not static, but, in contrast, changes in the process of development in both quantitatively and qualitatively. By this he means that there is no fixed correlation between the development of intellect and speech, on the contrary, phylogenesis must be seen as a dynamic interrelationship between intellect and speech (Kozulin 1990: 152-153). Thirdly, Vygotsky argues that it is possible to distinguish a preverbal phase in the development of thought, on the one hand, and a preintellectual phase in the development of speech, on the other.

**Ontogenetically**, the relation between speech and thinking is similar to that in phylogenesis: they have different origins and they develop along different lines besides which there exists preintellectual speech as well as preverbal thinking (Vygotsky 1956: 134). In the development of a child, however, the developmental lines of speaking and thinking become intertwined at a certain point as thinking becomes verbal and speech intellectual. Without going into details of this influential and

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<sup>2</sup>A more appropriate translation for *Myshlenie i rech'* would be Thinking and Speech. This is also noted by Emerson (1986).

pioneering work, I will discuss only the aspects that are the most relevant for the purpose of this article.

From the present point of view, Vygotsky's arguments against the Piagetian account of language development seem especially interesting. One of the main objects of critique presented by Vygotsky (1956) in his *Myshlenie i rech'* is the Piagetian account of egocentric speech. For Piaget, egocentric speech is only a mechanical accompaniment to autistic thought which is not addressed to anyone in particular. It is a stage between the phases of primary autism and socialisation period of the child (Emerson 1986: 29). Vygotsky, in turn, argues that early forms of speech must be regarded as immanently social. Vygotsky (1956: 86) makes his position clear when he states that the early speech of a child is purely **social**, and it would be wrong to name it **socialised**. By this he means that the use of the word 'socialised' in this context would presuppose something that was originally asocial and only later through development became social which is not the case with child language.

For Vygotsky early speech forms represent a child's attempt to communicate with his social environment (Kozulin 1990: 173). The child's egocentric speech is dependent on his social environment, as was convincingly shown in the experiments reported in *Myshlenie i rech'*. Vygotsky (1956) showed that the amount of egocentric speech was radically reduced when a child was placed with deaf-mutes or in a noisy room. Thus, if the child assumed that his speech was not heard by anyone he had no reason to speak. This result, among others, convinced Vygotsky of the correctness of his hypotheses, that speech is social from the beginning.

According to Morson & Emerson (1990: 212), Vygotsky's attack against the Piagetian notion of egocentric speech can also be understood in a much broader sense, as a critique of the underlying assumption of the child's mind being originally autistic, and the view that it becomes socialised only under the pressure of the environment. This point is made explicit also by Vygotsky himself. In *Myshlenie i rech'* (1956: 89) he states

that the developmental process of a child's thought does not proceed from individual to socialised, but that the actual direction of development is from social to individual. Thus, Vygotsky sees that the development of an individual consciousness always occurs through the social, that is, the individual consciousness is both formed by and reflected in the social environment of the individual.

### 3 VOLOSHINOV: CONSCIOUSNESS, SIGNS AND IDEOLOGY

Although Voloshinov's main interest was to develop a Marxist philosophy of language, he was, among other things, concerned with questions of psychology as well (see Voloshinov 1976). This kind of eclecticism is characteristic not only of Voloshinov but also of Bakhtin and Vygotsky. They did not see various issues of psychology, language, and culture as distinct from each other as it is customary to do nowadays. On the contrary, they all saw the various forms and products of human activity as closely interconnected.

From the present point of view, Voloshinov's approach to language seems especially important. Its basic ideas are presented in his *Marksizm i filozofija jazyka* (Marxism and the Philosophy of Language) originally published in 1929. In his philosophy of language, Voloshinov attacks two lines of linguistic thought he calls **individual subjectivism** and **abstract objectivism**. He argues convincingly that language cannot be regarded either as a property of an individual psyche, as is supposed in individual subjectivism, or as an abstract invariant system, as is supposed in abstract objectivism. Although Voloshinov's critique of abstract objectivism is addressed against Saussurian linguistics, it can be regarded as an overall rejection of the so called Cartesian tradition of linguistics, that is, linguistic theories that regard language as a decontextualised, abstract and a

timeless system. Thus, Voloshinov's work provides convincing arguments against the mainstream Western linguistic thought the culmination of which is Chomskian linguistics. Unlike the Western linguistic tradition where the language system is categorically separated from its use, Voloshinov emphasises that it is impossible to study language apart from the social context of its use. Furthermore, Voloshinov's philosophy of language cannot be separated from his general view of the nature of human action and human psyche. He sees the individual as being ultimately social, and communication as a form of social interaction.

Voloshinov's main work, *Marksizm i filosofija jazyka*, does not only deal with language, but also examines interconnections that exist between language, psyche, and ideology. Hence, the concepts of **sign** and **ideology** play an important role in Voloshinov's philosophy of language. The main tenets of his approach to consciousness are as follows. Firstly, consciousness can be manifested and become real only in the material of sign (Voloshinov 1973: 11). Secondly, the logic of consciousness is always the logic of ideological interaction, and therefore, objective psychology can be based only on the science dealing with ideology (Voloshinov 1973: 13). Next, these tenets will be examined in more detail.

According to Voloshinov (1973: 25) objective psychology cannot be based on biology or physiology, because a subjective conscious psyche is ultimately a social and ideological fact. Although Voloshinov rejects the reduction of consciousness to purely physiological processes, he does not accept the subjective or intuitive approach to consciousness either. He maintains that the subjective inner experiences of an individual psyche, interpretable only in terms of social factors, must be given an objective definition. Voloshinov's solution is to define the reality of inner psyche as sign reality (1973: 26), which, according to him, means that every subjective mental experience is manifested to the individual in signs. Hence, in this respect, signs can be regarded as constitutive factors of

consciousness, for outside the material of sign the psyche simply does not exist.

The concept of 'the material of sign' is, however, somewhat obscure. On the one hand, Voloshinov (1973: 29) emphasises the central role of the **word** (*slovo*) in inner experience and maintains that the most important form of the material of sign is **inner speech**. On the other hand, he says that the material of sign does not consist only of inner speech. According to Voloshinov (1973: 28-29), the material of sign is any organic activity or process of the human body, for example, body movements, breathing, articulation, in short, "*anything and everything occurring within the organism can become the material of experience, since everything can acquire semiotic significance*". One might see Voloshinov's line of thinking as follows. In order to reject the idealistic view of subjective consciousness, Voloshinov aims to show that consciousness can be given an objective definition. In other words, he argues that subjective experience has a material basis. On the other hand, in order to avoid crude physicalism, where subjective consciousness is reduced to biology and physiology, Voloshinov assigns semiotic function to organic activity. In this both/and solution, consciousness is viewed as **both material and subjective**, and therefore, it is defined objectively enough to meet the demands of Marxist science without denying the subjective dimension of consciousness.

For Voloshinov (1973: 26), who argues that any subjective psychic experience exists only in signs, the subjective psyche is an arena where the organism and the outer world meet in signs. Thus, he sees signs as an **intermediating** link between the inner experience and the outer world. He writes:

"Psychic experience is the semiotic expression of the contact between the organism and the outside environment. That is why *the inner psyche is not analyzable as a thing but can only be understood and interpreted as a sign.*" (1973: 26.)

"By its very existential nature, the subjective psyche is to be localized somewhere between the organism and the outside world, on the *borderline* separating these two spheres of reality." (1973: 26)

As the above quotations clearly show, Voloshinov maintains that subjective psyche must be kept apart from the physiological processes that take place in brain, because brain is located in the individual while his psyche is not. In this respect, it would not be fair to insist that my psyche is only mine, because it is formed through the interaction with the outside world and other psyches.

As noted above, Voloshinov maintains that in order for psychology to be an objective science, it must be based on the theory of **ideology**. The central role that Voloshinov assigns to ideology has recently been acknowledged in Western studies concerning the relationship between ideology and language (cf. Joseph & Taylor 1990, Simpson 1993). It is worth noting that Voloshinov's concept of ideology is different from the everyday interpretation of the term as 'false consciousness'. Voloshinov, however, does not provide a clear and explicit definition for ideology although it plays such a central role in his philosophy of language and social interaction in general. According to Gardiner (1992: 13), who has examined the theory of ideology of the Bakhtin Circle, the term 'ideology' in Voloshinov's use refers to "the process whereby meaning or 'value' is conferred on the natural and social worlds". Laine (1990: 189) notes that, for Voloshinov, ideology means a level of socio-cultural activity which is the base of meanings and consciousness, existing through material signs. Thus, to put it less technically, ideology can be viewed as a pair of spectacles through which an individual observes and evaluates the outer world. However, ideology is not a property of an individual psyche. Ideology - which functions as a medium of social interaction - is located, as Voloshinov (1973: 12) argues, in social sign material between socially organised individuals.

The importance that Voloshinov assigns to ideology becomes understandable when one considers his assumption that psychic experience exists only in signs. In Voloshinov's thinking, a sign and ideology can be seen as mutually presupposing each other. Where sign is present the ideology is present as well, and where the sign is not present the ideology is also absent (Voloshinov 1973: 10). This means that every sign is necessarily ideological, and everything that is ideological is also semiotic in nature. This interconnection between the sign and the ideology also makes an individual consciousness an ideological fact. This becomes clear if we keep in mind that the individual subjective consciousness exists only in signs, and signs, in turn, are ideological in their nature. Or, as Voloshinov (1973: 11) puts it, consciousness becomes consciousness only when it becomes filled with ideological, that is, the material of sign in social interaction.

Thus, every sign is, at the same time, an ideological fact, and because of its ideological dimension a sign always shapes our idea of reality. This is made explicit by Voloshinov (1973: 10) when he states that

"A sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality - it reflects and *refracts* another reality. Therefore, it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth." (italics added)

In this respect, the individual psyche can also be viewed as an inherently social phenomenon. Our reality is formed and **refracted** by signs that, in turn, emerge in the social interaction between the individual and the others. In other words, the other is always present in the individual psyche, because the signs in which our psychic experiences are manifested and through which our idea of reality is formed are social in nature.

To sum up, Voloshinov regards the nature of an individual subjective psyche is regarded as immanently social and dialogical. Firstly, the individual psyche is social because of its location in an intermediate position between the individual and outer world. The subjective psyche



is constantly interacting with the outer world, in other words, it is always in dialogical relationship with the events of the outer world. Secondly, the individual psyche is social because the sign material of the psyche has a social origin. Psychic experience by an individual is based on the interpretation of signs that, according to Voloshinov (1973: 21), are formed in the interaction process between people who are socially organised. This means that the meaning of a sign is never a property of an individual, but a result of social interaction, i.e., dialogue between the individual and others. Dialogicality can also be regarded as an internal property of an individual psyche or consciousness, because of the structure of inner speech that provides the sign material for the psyche. Voloshinov (1973: 38) argues that the structure of inner speech is dialogical, and thus its units are wholes that resemble the lines of a dialogue. Hence, in this respect, consciousness can be characterised as a place where different voices interact, to use a Bakhtinian metaphor.

#### 4 BAKHTIN: THE DIALOGIC SELF<sup>3</sup>

Bakhtin, whose ideas had a great influence on Voloshinov's thinking, is best known for his work on literature, or aesthetics of verbal creation in general as the title of his Russian collection *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Aesthetics of Verbal Creation) suggests. In fact, Bakhtin's reputation or even fame in the West has been almost entirely based on his work on Dostoevsky and on theories of the novel. Bakhtin, however, was not only a literary critic and philosopher of language but also a versatile thinker interested in the various aspects of human life<sup>4</sup>. Especially in his early

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<sup>3</sup>The English translations for Russian terms are taken from Morson & Emerson 1990.

<sup>4</sup>See Clark & Holquist 1984, Holquist 1990 and Morson & Emerson 1990 for discussion of Bakhtin's life and ideas.

work - which until now has not been very well known in the West - Bakhtin struggled towards a more general philosophical theory including the aesthetical, moral and ethical aspects of human action.

Already in his early manuscripts, written in 1919-1924, and later published under the titles *K filosofii postupka* (1986) (Towards a Philosophy of the Act) and *Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi dejatel'nosti* (1979b) (Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity), Bakhtin showed interest in problems of the self, which he continued to examine from different points of view, constantly reworking his concepts and terminology. What unites his theories of the **self** dating from different periods is that Bakhtin kept on stressing the immanent sociality and dialogicality of the self throughout his intellectual career. The most crucial point in Bakhtin's thinking is the assumption that an individual consciousness cannot be understood as a phenomenon apart from other consciousnesses and the social environment of the individual. The reason for this is that an individual consciousness develops and exist only through the social sphere. In this respect, an individual consciousness can be viewed as a (never complete) project of unfinalizable dialogues between the individual and his social environment. Moreover, Bakhtin, as noted by Morson & Emerson (1990: 180), questions the traditional subject-object distinction, since for him there is no static self which could be opposed to a static given world. According to Bakhtin (1979b: 8), the world acquires its shape, structure, and determinacy only through our relationship to it. Thus Bakhtin sees the relationship between an individual consciousness and its social environment as essentially dynamic and interactive. Next, I will try to give an overall picture of Bakhtin's contribution to the dialogical modelling of the self.

In his theory of the self, developed in *Avtor i geroi v esteticheskoi dejatel'nosti*, Bakhtin operates with three different aspects of the self. These aspects, or distinctions, are the following: **I-for-myself** (i.e. how my self appears to my own consciousness), **I-for-others** (i.e. how my self appears to others) and **the-other-for-me** (i.e. how other appears to me) (Bakhtin

1979b: 23, 35-36, cf. also Morson & Emerson 1990: 180). In Bakhtin's thinking, the self is clearly social as the above categorisation shows; the existence of any individual self necessarily presupposes other consciousness(es). What is relevant is that I (as well as reality in general) looks different from my own point of view than from the point of view of the other. Despite the fact that we mutually share the environment or 'surroundings' (*okruzheniya*) in which we act, our realities never completely match. We observe the outer world from different points of view, and, therefore, our '**fields of vision**' (*krugozor*) are never exactly identical. When I observe another person, however close to each other we might be, I always see something that he is not able to see, for example his face, body parts etc. Correspondingly, another person sees something that is outside my 'field of vision'. For this phenomenon Bakhtin (1979b: 23) uses the term '**surplus of vision**' (*izbytok videniya*). The individuality of my **self** and the **other** is based on and guaranteed by this 'surplus of vision'. My idea of reality is always based on the observations that I make from my 'field of vision', that is, from my perspective to reality. Furthermore, the 'field of vision' of an individual is always defined by his or her unique location in time and space. Consequently, since it is impossible that the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of two or more individuals could ever be exactly the same, my self is always individual and unique<sup>5</sup>. Or as Clark and Holquist (1984: 78) put it, the difference between the self and the other "is in the gap between a time, space, and evaluation that are appropriate to me and a time, space, and evaluation that are appropriate to others".

It is quite obvious that for Bakhtin the relation between 'individual' and 'social' does not represent a binary opposition. On the contrary, it can be argued that for him these terms are complementary to each other. In this respect, Bakhtinian thought radically differs from Cartesian tradition

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<sup>5</sup>Holquist (1990: 22) argues that time and space are relative categories for Bakhtin and, therefore, can be characterised as Einsteinian notions.

in which the distinction between 'individual' and 'social' is seen as an essentially binary one. Bakhtin (1979c: 311) writes:

"I become conscious of myself and become myself only by opening myself for the other, through the other and with the help of the other. Most important acts, constituting self-consciousness, are defined by the relationship to other consciousness." (translation mine)

In this view, individual necessarily presupposes social and is dependent of it, because an individual self develops and exists only through social interaction. Individual consciousness is formed in the unfinalizable **dialogue** between the self of individual and other selves, all representing different perspectives to the world. Thus, for Bakhtin, consciousness is **both** an individual **and** a social phenomenon.

Later on, when language became more central to his thinking (see especially Bakhtin 1975, 1984), Bakhtin turned to what may be called metalinguistic aspects of self formation. He examined the self in terms of inner speech and **dialogue**, which, by then, had emerged as the main concept of his philosophy. In order to understand the role of language in the formation of consciousness, it is necessary to say few words about the Bakhtinian notion of language. Bakhtin argues that the notion of language as a unified system of forms is only an abstraction resulting from isolation of language from its ideological functions and its historical becoming. For Bakhtin (1975: 101), in contrast, language represents a diversity of concrete ideological and social 'fields of vision' (*krugozor*). For an individual consciousness surrounded by numerous heteroglot languages, a language is a concrete opinion of the world and is located on the border of the self and other. This means that the words of a language become one's own only when an individual populates words with his or her intentions and, at the same time, commits himself or herself to the 'field of vision' represented by the language in question. Bakhtin (1975: 108) argues that, at each moment, an individual consciousness faces the necessity to choose

between different languages representing different 'fields of vision'. In an individual consciousness, these different languages and 'fields of vision' are juxtaposed and regarded with each other's eyes, in other words, they are in dialogical relationship with each other.

Dialogue, however, is not only a metalinguistic concept. Bakhtin also sees it as a metaphilosophical principle, i.e., as an overall principle governing human life in its all varieties.

"Dialogic relationships are ... an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life - in general, everything that has meaning and significance." (Bakhtin 1984: 40.)

"Life is by its very nature dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds." (Bakhtin 1984: 293.)

As these quotations show, Bakhtin views life as a dialogue between the individual self and its social environment. Consequently, he sees the individual consciousness as emerging, acquiring its form, through this dialogical interaction. According to Morson & Emerson (1990: 218) Bakhtin started to imagine "self as a conversation, often a struggle of discrepant voices ... speaking from different positions and invested with different degrees and kinds of **authority**". As the above characterisation shows, Bakhtin viewed consciousness as an **essentially** dialogical phenomenon (see also Radzikhovskii 1985), and therefore, he kept on constantly stressing that understanding the nature of the self necessarily presupposes understanding the nature of dialogue.

One important consequence of the dialogical understanding of the self is that it led Bakhtin to reject any clearcut categories including the Freudian dichotomy between the conscious and the unconscious (cf. also Morson & Emerson 1990: 192). This does not, however, mean that we would always be conscious of what happens inside us. In Bakhtin's view, consciousness consists of or, as one could say, is created by different **het-**

**eroglot** voices, some of which are louder than others. In other words, the relation between the conscious and the unconscious is not a binary opposition but rather a continuum. We are simply more conscious of some facts than of others. This means that our minds are not necessarily rule-governed machine-like constructs as is usually assumed in the Rationalist tradition. A good example of this line of thinking is the cognitivist approach to mind in which the mind is reduced to computer-like algorithms (cf. Still & Costal 1991 for a critique of cognitivism). In Bakhtinian thought, our minds can be seen as **multivoiced** and **interactive**, which means that the simultaneous presence of messy and contradictory competing beliefs in our mind is not only allowed but seen as its normal state. It is worth noting, however, that in spite of its apparent chaoticness and indifference to the rules of classical or Aristotelian logic, Bakhtinian mind is by no means illogical. Its logic is just dialogical.

The rejection of the **conscious/unconscious** distinction provides a good example of Bakhtin's attitude towards distinct and absolute categories which play a central role in the Western scientific tradition and philosophy of science. As early as in his article *K filosofii postupka* he attacked the tradition of (natural) sciences - called by him **theoretism** - in which science is identified with an attempt to reduce particular events to general abstract rules or laws. Bakhtin (1986) writes:

"It is a sad misunderstanding, the legacy of rationalism, that truth can only be that sort of truth that is put together out of general moments, that the truth of a proposition is precisely what is repeatable and constant in it ... " (p. 110, quoted from Morson & Emerson 1989: 7.)

"The will is actually creatively active in act, but by no means generates a norm ... " (p. 101, translation mine.)

"But from an act, not from its theoretical transcription, can its meaning content be revealed ..." (p. 91, translation mine.)

These statements by Bakhtin, as noted by Makhlin (1992: 16), are not directed against the possibility that there exists a genuine scientific philosophy but against the Rationalistic interpretation of the concept.

Bakhtin struggles towards an objective theory of cognition but, at the same time, argues that this cannot be achieved by relying on the Rationalistic presuppositions. In certain respects, this position taken by Bakhtin resembles in an interesting manner that of William James made explicit in his *Pragmatics*:

"He [i.e. pragmatist] turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power. [...] It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth." (1978: 31.)

Bakhtin (1986) argues that any actual, particular, human act is irreducible to an abstract rule because of its inherent 'eventness' (*sobytiinost'*). Transhistorical (timeless) objective laws cannot explain human action, because people always act in a concrete social context, in a certain place and time. To conclude, Bakhtin who has always emphasised the 'messiness'<sup>6</sup> of the world, prefers the models that could be characterised as essentially uncategorical, nonsystemic and interactive, and of course, dialogic.

## CONCLUSION

Vygotsky, Voloshinov and Bakhtin all emphasise the inherent sociality and dialogicality of consciousness. They all argue that an individual consciousness can develop only in relationship with other consciousnesses. Although there are striking similarities in thinking of these Russian scholars, their ideas also differ in some important respects. One essential

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<sup>6</sup>Recently, Hopper (1988, 1994) has expressed similar thoughts in which he emphasises the emergent and nonsystemic nature of language.

difference in their approaches is their attitude towards the notion of **system**. While the idea of consciousness as a system is alien for Bakhtin, for Vygotsky and Voloshinov psyche is a system. In their view, the psyche is a system that interacts with and is inseparable from sociological and organic systems. It must, however, be emphasised that for Vygotsky and Voloshinov, a system is not a stable construct the existence of which is postulated **a priori**. For them, the system of an individual consciousness emerges through social interaction between the individual and the outer world. Furthermore, this system is flexible, and its flexibility is regarded as a precondition for its development. In contrast, Bakhtin, who emphasises the messiness of the world, avoids the notion of a system. From his view, consciousness can be described in terms of an ever-lasting dialogue between different voices, that is, as an unfinalizable and open-ended **project**.

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## EVERYDAY KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE: A DIALOGICAL APPROACH TO AWARENESS

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In this article, preliminaries to a dialogical approach of everyday knowledge are discussed. Also, cognitivist approach to the analysis of mental knowledge (and, especially, knowledge of language) is criticized, and, instead, a dialogical approach is argued for. In dialogical thought, the notion of interaction is crucial: mental knowledge emerges in interaction. Therefore, knowledge is not static in character. In opposition, it allows the element of variation and change, and is based on the constant flow of stimuli between the mind and its environment.

**Keywords:** awareness, language, cognition, dialogism

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In the present paper, I will discuss the preliminaries to a critical approach to **everyday knowledge of language**. The term 'everyday knowledge of language', as used here, refers to what (ordinary) people know about language, and/or how this knowledge appears in their talk. The primary focus is on how people describe their relation to language through their experiences and recollections on **foreign language learning and teaching**.

Everyday knowledge has been approached before within various theoretical frameworks and under various names. In (cognitive) anthropology, the knowledge used to be referred to as **folk models**, but lately, the notions of **cultural model** (Keesing 1987), or **cognitive schemata** (Kamppinen ed. 1993) have been assumed. Everyday knowledge has also been studied within **personal construct theory** (see eg. Kelly 1955) and **phenomenographical research** (see eg. Marton 1981; Säljö 1982). It has been also referred to as **subjective theories** (see Grotjahn 1991). There is

an extensive literature on **metalinguistic knowledge** (see eg. a good survey of Gombert 1992) and/or **metacognitive knowledge** (see eg. Wenden 1987). The **consciousness of foreign/second language learners** has been under a lively discussion (see eg. Hulstijn and Schmidt eds. 1994). From a slightly different, and perhaps more pragmatic, point of view, the issue has been approached in terms of **language awareness** (see eg. Hawkins 1984; James and Garrett eds. 1991), or, **critical language awareness** (Fairclough ed. 1992). A related view is also the study of **metaphor** that may throw light on how language itself may form the mental knowledge (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Here, I will argue for a dialogical approach to the everyday knowledge. First expressed by the Russian (then Soviet) scholars Voloshinov (1930/1973) and Bakhtin (1986), the notion of language and knowledge as a **dialogue** has been getting increasing attention in recent discussion (Markovà and Foppa 1990; Markovà and Foppa 1991; Holquist 1991). The basic assumption in this article is that the description of the mental (or, the description of what people know) cannot be regarded in terms of internal-individual only (see also Lähteenmäki in this issue), but that it has to be regarded as a **systemic whole**. This system consists of the organism and its environment (see Järvillehto 1993), or, in other words, of an individual and his/her context. Mental knowledge is clearly derived from series of interactions in which a person acquires information from his/her physical world and social sphere, a view which reminds us also of the work of G.H. Mead (1934). Furthermore, it is also possible to assume that mental fundamentally is interaction. Therefore, the dialogical approach is not only epistemological but an ontological commitment as well.

This also seems to indicate that the conventional division between cognition and its context as two separate and isolated spheres of **internal** and **external** is rather misleading. The dividing line between mind and its context is very hard to draw (see Järvillehto 1993). Therefore, cognition

and context are here considered as two aspects of the same phenomenon. This claim has several consequences, and it also means a challenge for several frameworks in which cognitive phenomena have been studied. Especially, what can be broadly called the **cognitivist approach** is clearly to be reconsidered. As used here, this term covers all such directions of linguistics, psychology and language learning research in which cognitive is dualistically seen in terms of internal, as an opposite for external context/environment (for criticism, see Still and Costal eds. 1991).

In the following, I will discuss everyday knowledge of language in the light of a corpus collected at the Language Centre for Finnish Universities, University of Jyväskylä. In this corpus, subjective views of **foreign language**, **language learning**, and **language**, in general, are being collected. The corpus consists of the **Pilot Study Data** (essays written by Finnish students, and some interviews) and a corpus called **Life with language**. The Life with language -corpus was collected using a questionnaire (ie. 'tune-in'), a group discussion (ie. 'focus-on') and a lengthy interview (ie. 'reflect in-depth'). As the subjects, some ten in number, were clearly not accustomed to reflect on questions about language **an sich**, at a 'linguistic' or 'theoretical' level, they were first asked about their more easily accessible experiences of foreign language learning, and the conversation was slowly lead towards the more 'linguistic' issues, such as their views of language and thought, for example.

The method produced good results in the sense that we were able to record also such material that is necessarily missing in a single experiment. Many of our subjects, for example, told that after completing the questionnaire, or after the group discussion, they had thought about some issue or other that seemed to be left for 'brewing', as is obvious from a remark in the example (1):

(1)

*niiku aina tämmösissä tilanteissa ni sitte vasta jälkeenpäin et ai niin että semmosta on*  
'as always in situations like these I only afterwards (remember) that oh well  
that (should have been mentioned)'

(From an interview)

Below, I will focus on certain theoretical and methodological issues of this type of research, but I will also give examples about the content of the everyday knowledge of language. Our findings will be discussed in more detail in a forthcoming report (Dufva, Lähteenmäki and Isoherranen, forthcoming).

## 2 EVERYDAY KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE

### 2.1 Grammars or chaos?

Everybody has personal recollections and experiences of language, or of matters linguistic. It also seems that these observations and experiences result in some sort of subjective views that can also be verbalized, if necessary. But what is the precise quality of these views? Are they to be described as **theories**, unambiguous and uncontradictory systems of elements? What kind of relation does the mental knowledge have to observable reality? Is our knowledge just hearsay, or is it confirmed by facts? How do the views relate to such widely used notions as **beliefs**, **attitudes**, or **stereotypes**? What kind of relation do the subjective views have to the academic theories of theoretical linguistics, or cognitive research, for example? What is the role of 'mental grammar', as understood in Chomskyan linguistics, in the knowledge of language? Is the knowledge of language distinct from the machinery by which language is actually perceived and produced? Furthermore, how conscious is this

knowledge? Is it explicit and accessible, or does it lie on a more implicit level? How static is the knowledge? The questions are many.

The data we have at hand consists of what we could call end products of thought: some 100 premeditated written essays and several hours of fairly spontaneous talk. Our starting point was that the mental knowledge is reflected in talk and/or written essays/compositions. The relationship between, say, a spoken expression and the mental knowledge is not a direct one, however. For example, some expressions obviously have several layers for the explorer to unravel. Consider the following simple example (2):

(2)  
*mä ajattelen suomeks*  
 'I think in Finnish'

(From an interview)

A subject claims that she thinks in Finnish. There are at least two claims embedded: one is that she thinks in Finnish (as compared to English, for example). The other, and a more underlying claim is that **thinking occurs verbally** (as compared to, for example, nonverbal visualization). The interpretation of the relationship between what the subjects say and what they think is a delicate one. What is important to note that it is a process of interpretation: we do not have a direct access to the mind of our subjects.

Our second assumption was that talk about language actually reflects the workings of the mind in a rather adequate manner: its organization is not necessarily better or worse than the organization of the mental knowledge. This assumption implies a rejection of such hypotheses in which mental knowledge is regarded in terms of a well-organized system(s) of static knowledge structures. In contrast, we would like to emphasize the fact that mental knowledge is liable to **change and development**. It has been customary to think that mental knowledge may well

change on the longitudinal scale, as happens when children grow up, learn new things and adjust to new environments, ie., when things are **learned** (or forgotten or lost, as seems to happen in aphasia, for example). Less recognized, probably, is the fact that an element of change, or variability, is present at a more temporary level also. Mental knowledge cannot be satisfyingly described in absolutely stable and static terms.

It could be argued that the everyday knowledge of language lies dormant in the mind. When people are asked to consider an issue, they do not simply access a piece of information from their memory storage, or a chapter from their mental encyclopaedia. The knowledge of language is not particularly unambiguous in nature (as compared to mathematical knowledge, perhaps) and neither is it easily expressed as facts (as compared to some pieces of encyclopedic knowledge perhaps). What the subjects seemed to do, especially in their talk, was to **reconsider** a given issue. To focus one's attention on a point means, at the same time, submitting it for reconsideration, or perhaps, in the case of less conscious issues, considering it properly for the first time.

This means that mental knowledge is not necessarily reported or given **as such**, or rather, there may not necessarily exist what we could call a **steady state** of mental knowledge. As a potentially existing notion is raised on the level of conscious talk, it is also reflected upon from different points of view. Therefore, it may be acknowledged as such, but it may also be further modified, complemented, changed to an opposite view, or rejected altogether. Reflection, and the accompanying talk, **generate** knowledge rather than access it from the memory storage. Knowledge **emerges** rather than is being fetched. This view emphasizes the nature of mental knowledge as varying and liable for change. At the same time, it implies that mental knowledge representations are different - more vague and fuzzy - than generally considered. Consider the following example (3) in which a male subject talks about what kind of memory he has.



(3)

*mä luulisin että mulla on näkömuisti... mut siis toisaalta mulla on aika hyvä kuulo-  
muisti...*

*ja tietenki tääkinhä iästä muuttuu tää muistaminen... ennen mulla oli aika hyväkin  
muisti*

'I think I have a visual memory... well, on the other hand, I do have a rather good auditive memory...and it is a question of age as well...I used to have a fairly good memory before'

(From an interview)

When the subject reflects how he would describe his memory, he clearly considers the issue from various points of view, and brings in new observations as he proceeds. It is typical for reflective talk like this that even **self-contradictory** comments may emerge. Partly, this may be due to the fact that subjects ignore a less conscious aspect at first, and when this aspect occurs to them, their original claim or argument may be altered. Thus the mental knowledge of our subjects was not best described in terms of a water-proof theory or schemata. In opposition, the knowledge did not seem to be subject to the laws of the Aristotelian logic. But, what may look a contradiction at first, may ultimately be a result of a deeper reflection and closer analysis, as shown in the example (2) above.

This knowledge, as it appears in talk, and as it can be hypothesized to exist in the mind, is not necessarily best described as '**either - or**' type of knowledge. Rather, it could better be described as being '**on one hand - on the other hand**' type of knowledge, where shades of grey exist, in addition to black and white. In other words, the knowledge is fuzzy, rather than dichotomous and/or categorical. This is also shown in the manner the subjects verbalize their thoughts in talk. In oral interviews they use frequently expressions like: *now that I come to think of that... well it depends on how you look at it...* or the like. In written essays, on the other hand, more exact wordings dominate.

This is not say, however, that the knowledge of our informants ('naive' speakers as they are) is a weird or faulty form of knowledge. On

the contrary, it can be argued that this is the way the mental knowledge (of anybody) is. Thus it seems that everyday knowledge of language is 'on the move', in a state of potential variation and change. This knowledge is not 'imprinted' in a static and stable form at some mental 'location', once it has been 'acquired' and left there to be 'accessed'. Rather, we prefer to think that mental knowledge is being processed in a continuous manner. Simply being awake means taking in new information. The flow of new stimuli necessarily affects the existing mental knowledge, even if the changes are subliminal: diminutive in scale and unconscious in nature. And when some point is brought unto conscious reflection, as occurs in talk, for example, more noticeable modifications are likely to occur. Thus the mental knowledge exists in a relationship to its context. Both the material world (ie. the physical reality) and the cultural sphere constantly bring in new information.

Therefore, it seems evident that mental knowledge cannot be regarded as a decontextual and asocial phenomenon, as has been typical for the cognitivist approach. Mind is not isolated: one has to consider both its immediate and its wider context. These may include the circumstances people live in, the background they come from, the situations they are involved in, the language they speak etc. Until now, the linguistic and cognitive sciences have been primarily concerned with the abstract and general, and ignored the context. Therefore, it might be strongly recommended to turn to the study of the material (concrete) and particular, and to allow the inclusion of the context.

## **2.2 Approaches to language - private or public?**

The variability of the everyday knowledge is also evident in the fact that it seems to consist of different kinds of knowledge, as regards the degree of 'subjectivity'. Thus, one part of everyday knowledge is commonly

expressed in a rather cliché-like and formulaic form: often it is something many subjects mention and/or refer to as a fact. These frequently occurring claims seem to be tied to **culturally and socially** accepted values and norms, and they seem to form a body of **common knowledge**, typical of a society, or a group, and its ideology. Reflections of the cultural climate as they are, these notions are, in a sense, political statements and/or cultural commitments. They are therefore collective rather than personal in nature. Thus the linguistic and cultural conventions of the community cannot be ignored in the study of everyday knowledge. But there is clearly another part of everyday knowledge that is more **personal** and based on direct subjective experience and/or reflection. A person's memories and recollections of certain incidents are a sign of this kind of knowledge. Consequently, the types of mental knowledge may range from (widely accepted) 'cultural models' to (individual) 'idiosyncratic theories'.

When one considers the accessibility of the mental knowledge, it would, at first, seem to differ. Some information appears to be more easily verbalized than other. There seems to be reasons to suggest that the most explicit knowledge about language (here: the knowledge that is rapidly accessed and easily verbalized) was often also cultural, perhaps stereotypical. People tended to respond first with slogan-like expressions like *It is important to learn foreign languages*. It might be suggested that the accessibility would be due primarily to frequent and/or authoritative repetition. Therefore this knowledge may also be rather 'uncritically assumed' or, unreflected, in nature.<sup>1</sup> Partly, however, the slogans are reflections of a 'research effect': the subjects have expectations concerning the typical research questions and produce culturally acceptable responses to these. In that, initial responses also tend towards what could be called 'politically correct' in a broad sense.

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<sup>1</sup> It is natural that explicit knowledge may also result from a thorough reflection.

Thus the more personal, subjective and experiential knowledge about language seemed to be more suppressed at first. Often it was also thought of as unimportant. Even when subjects specifically were asked to reflect on their **own** experience, they tended to regard it through the eyes of somebody else, some nameless authority perhaps. Sometimes the subjects were explicitly surprised, when being asked to express their subjective view. For example, when a female language student is asked about what she considers to be her verbal strengths, she responded in an uncertain manner (4).

(4)

*jaa-a, kielenkäyttäjänä? enpä oo kyllä aikasemmin tullu tuota ajatelleeks niinku tuolla tavalla että "vahvuuksia"*

'well, as a language user? well I have never come to think of that before in that manner - my strengths?'

(From an interview)

The subjects' cautious attitude towards their own knowledge and a reliance on an external authority seems to be related to the values of the linguistic community in general, and to the tradition of language teaching, in particular. These effects are discussed in more detail below (3.2. and 3.3.).

### 2.3 Whose knowledge? The role of the explorer

Everyday knowledge may not only be an interesting object of study of the 'naive' (sic) consciousness. It could also be treated as an important - even if indirect - source for the theories and models of linguistics and cognitive science which brings in new insights into how people acquire knowledge, how this knowledge is represented, and what the relation of this knowledge to language is.

In collecting data, the primary aim was to explore the mental reality. That is why we did not stick to apriori concepts of linguistics and/or cognitive science. We tried to favour open-ended questions, and let our subjects speak in a fairly spontaneous manner. In the interviews natural conversation was aimed at. The interviewer did not aim at expressing his/her own opinions and attitudes, but did not try to avoid it, either. In addition, interviewers referred to their own experiences when appropriate, in an attempt to elicit related ones. These methodological choices already stress the fact that we did not want to verify a given hypothesis or find evidence for a certain theoretical point. Rather, it was our aim to have a look at the quality of mental knowledge.

The approach was thus inductive in nature. We did not want to force the data into apriori categories and schemata. Therefore, classification and categorization were not considered of primary importance. This choice was made because this is a trap all too common in the research of what 'naive' people are supposed to know. When dealing with children, illiterate people, or 'primitive' people, or all other 'scientifically unsophisticated' groups, it has been almost a rule to regard their beliefs and knowledge in normative terms (criticism against the ethnocentric view has been expressed by Michael Cole, see eg. Cole and Scribner 1974). The lay knowledge (or, the knowledge of naive speakers) has often actually studied in respect of what the science 'knows', and therefore, it is labelled with terms that imply its inferiority.

The research that has been carried out within the framework of 'phonological awareness' is a good example of this 'ethnocentrism'. The research problem is usually posed as follows: are children aware of the fact **that speech consists of certain discrete entities called phonemes?** This formulation naturally presupposes that speech **does** consist of discrete segments. Therefore, what children really know about the sound structure of speech (or how they are able to analyze what they hear, or what they themselves articulate) is not what is studied. On the contrary,

the scientist will only get results regarding the fact whether the child will agree with the common knowledge of the scientific community. The results therefore directly reflect what the linguist/psychologist knows or **thinks he knows**, not what the subject knows. The results are influenced by the apriori linguistic concepts and categories in a manner that resembles predestination.

We do not want to deny, however, that researchers play a role in their study. When considered systemically, they are simply one factor that contributes to the results. This has to be recognized, and the commitments and priorities have to be acknowledged. Obviously, there was a given background philosophy present in our study as well. A dissatisfaction towards the cognitivist paradigm and a reliance on the dialogical approach has obviously guided our notions towards certain solutions. In short, we see research in terms of a cycle. It consists of several dialogues that occur between the data, the theory and the researcher(s). In what follows, I will discuss some results that are being produced within this cycle: the sources from which mental knowledge seems to be derived from.

### 3 EVERYDAY KNOWLEDGE: THE SOURCES

As argued above, everyday knowledge of language is generated in interaction. Therefore, what is represented in the mind gets there through various types of interaction. Below, the sources for everyday knowledge are divided into three sections that could be called **personal**, **social** and **institutional**. It is evident that in reality these types of knowledge are intertwined. Any given person's knowledge of a given issue may be a mixture of experiences, hearsay and instruction. Therefore, the sections are presented here for the purpose of analysis, and they are not to be understood as cognitive categories.

### 3.1 Personal experiences - personal views?

One obvious source for everyday knowledge is one's direct experience. Biographical data, narratives, life stories, and recall of certain incidents and episodes that can be elicited from people, both in written and oral forms constitute a part of the 'personal data bank'. Here, for example, several persons reported their **first memories** (about a certain aspect of foreign language learning). The first memories often seemed to stress the enjoyment that was felt when mastering a foreign language, as is obvious from a recollection of a female subject (5).

(5)

*sitten me lähettiin kaksossiskon kans yksin pitkin Pieksämäen raittia ja toinen juoksi aina etemmäks ja toinen huuti että "kom hit" aina kun joku tuli vastaan, me oltiin niin ylpeitä kun me osattiin ruotsia*

'then me and my twin sister we went running along the roads of my home town - every now and then one ran ahead of the other and she called 'kom hit' whenever anybody could hear us - we were so proud we could speak Swedish'

(From the group discussion)

The personal memories were often - perhaps naturally - strongly emotional. Intensive feelings, both of **success** and **failure**, were commonly reported. And although the first experience of a foreign language was often that of empowerment, frequently a disappointment seemed to follow. For example, people vividly recalled their moments of humiliation in foreign language learning, as becomes obvious from the example (6), in which a young man tells about his first English lesson, at the age of about 9 years.

(6)

*niin tuua esille ensimmäisen englannin tunnin tota noi missä mentii perinteisee mallii että poikien piti sanoo "I am a boy" ja tyttöjen "I am a girl" - siinä sitten kiltisti istuttii ja ootettii vuoroo ja paniikissa mietittii että meneeköhä se nyt oikein se vastaus ni meikäläisen vuoro tuli ni "I am a girl" - elikkä siinä oli sitte siinä hirvee niiku nolaus koko homma*

'I'd like to tell about my first English lesson - we proceeded in the traditional manner: boys were supposed to say 'I am a boy' and girls were supposed to say 'I am a girl' - there I sit and wait for my turn in a panic thinking whether my answer will be correct - and then my turn comes and I say 'I am a girl' - and there it was, a horrid embarrassment altogether'

(From an interview)

Even though the subjects were clearly not very accustomed to reflect on themselves as language learners, or language users, they readily dived into introspection, when urged to do so. A small example is given in (7).

(7)

*mulla on aina ollu aika hyvä sanavarasto*

'I always had a fairly large vocabulary'

(From an interview)

### 3.2 Socio-cultural views - common knowledge?

All everyday knowledge is not directly personal and subjective in character, but reflects 'hearsay' knowledge - the common knowledge of the society. Consequently, our Finnish informants speak not only as individuals but as mouthpieces of the Finnish culture and some of its subcultures. The background of our subjects, their linguistic and cultural community, is the national state of Finland with its two official languages (ie.



Finnish and Swedish), semi-official Sami, and a fairly small number of other language minorities.

Finnish is fairly young as a standard national language, and did not receive its present unproblematic status until 1917, when Finland gave its Declaration of Independence. As late as at the beginning of the 19th century, Finnish was primarily an oral language of the (lower-class) majority. During a few decades only, advanced by strong nationalist movements, the Finnish language progressed from near-oblivion to being a fairly well codified and standardized language of its own, which had, in addition, a flourishing literature and in which it was possible to acquire higher education. Considering this socio-cultural development, it is no wonder that **linguistic purism** resulted. Only what was native and indigenous was considered as **pure** language. There followed a great emphasis on the cultivation of the mother tongue, and foreign influences (as represented by, eg., Swedish and Russian) were seen as evil. Early 19th century nationalism even went to a length where language teaching itself was seen to be a dubious enterprise: *It is dangerous to teach foreign languages to a youngster*, claimed A.I. Arwidsson, an early Finnish nationalist.

The recent social and cultural history of Finland has a direct bearing on what we think today of language, of foreign languages, and of foreign language learning. Some of the 19th century ideas still remain, while others have been replaced by more fashionable views. At present, the importance of foreign language teaching is much emphasized, and all our informants, practically without an exception, seemed echo this sentiment and agree with it. The necessity of learning foreign languages is one of the most obvious pieces of everyday knowledge about language in modern Finnish society. This is often justified by the peculiarity of the Finnish language (*'Nobody understands Finnish'*), and by the increased need to communicate in international settings.

Under closer scrutiny, it is obvious that old attitudes do have their influence on the notions of foreign language learning. Swedish, for example, is taught to all in the Finnish educational system, but it drastically divides opinions. For some, it is **pakkoruotsi** (literally: 'obligatory Swedish') towards which strongly negative feelings are expressed, as seen in (8) where a female subject reacts to a preceding speaker who has claimed he likes Swedish.

(8)  
*mulla on semmone geneettine inho*

'I feel a genetic repulsion against it (ie. Swedish)' (laughs)

(From the group discussion)

The past is also present in the relationship to the mother tongue. As a result of the puristic attitude and the emphasis on correction, a fairly **error-centred** view to language usage seems to linger. This is not surprising considering the recent history. The norms for the Finnish language have been quite recently codified and standardized. The error-centrism, however, also relates directly to instruction - or how language is dealt with at school.

### 3.3 An institutional view - teachers rule OK?

The role of the educational system in the development of the everyday knowledge about language cannot be belittled. The background education of mother tongue teachers takes place primarily at the university Departments of Finnish Language where the prospective teachers major. One background factor for the mother tongue instruction is the strong support the society has given to linguistic matters, in the sense that it maintains a well-organized language policy which is actively exerted by The Finnish

Language Board, a Research Institute and several publications. On the whole, while the official view has long been rather normative, signs of a more liberal language policy can presently be seen. Second language teachers are trained at university language departments in co-operation with the Teacher Training Colleges. Foreign language teaching has a long tradition in the Finnish school system, and generally, all pupils are educated in at least two foreign languages, most often Swedish and English. German, French, and Russian are fairly common as well. Both on the basis of the data and our native intuition, it seems justified to claim that mother tongue instruction and foreign language teaching are seen as two rather separate spheres, and they are simply felt 'to be different'.

In both spheres, however, the institutional view to learning is expressed by the **official teaching policy**: the national curriculum, syllabus design and actual learning materials seem to play a prominent role in the everyday knowledge of language.

(9)

*tietysti opetussuunnitelmat rajaa sitä että mitä opetetaan*

'certainly the curriculum will set restrictions to what is being taught'

(From an interview)

(10)

*mulle tuli nyt vasta mieleen että tommosiin niikun kielenopetuskirjoihin ni niihin ei puututtu yhtää et nekin kumminki vaikuttaa hirveesti että jotkut opettajat menee niitten mukaan just sillei että*

'it occurred me only now that we did not discuss the textbooks much, even though they have an enormous influence too, some teachers adhere to them to the amount that...'

(From an interview)

But it is primarily teachers who mediate the institutional view to their pupils. The role of the teacher in the formation of linguistic knowledge is therefore crucial. The teacher is a linguistic authority for his/her pupils: s/he mediates information, but also ideology. In the present data, the

**teacher view** presents itself either directly or indirectly in many comments made on formal teaching, materials and methods, often also in direct comments about the teacher as a person, as in (11).

(11)

*se oli aivan sama mitä mä sanoin ni se opettaja korjas kaikki siis mun ääntämisen*  
'it did not matter what I said this teacher she corrected just about everything  
in my pronunciation'

(From an interview)

Taken as a whole, our data seems to give a rather unflattering picture about language teaching. Especially, complaints about an emphasis on errors and mistakes were repeatedly brought forward, one example being the lament in (12).

(12)

*että just tää virheiden bongaminen must se on jotain ihan järkyttävää et mä tunnen itteni täysin nollaks ku joku bongaa koko ajan vaan niitä mokia mitä mä oon tehny*

'it was this error-hunting that made me mad, I feel a complete zero whenever somebody continually watches over me - waiting for me to make a mistake'

(From an interview)

The instruction the subjects felt to be error-centred seemed to result in a certain anxiety towards language usage. Although the school was finished, *those red error marks are fresh in the memory*, as one of our subjects put it. The subjects also often described their language skills as being *blocked*. Although they claimed that they had learned grammatical rules well enough and a sufficient amount of vocabulary, their knowledge seemed *to be put under lock and key*. This mental block was most vividly described by several informants, as in (13).

(13)

*ja se meidän kouluajan opetushan teki sen että vieläkin on hirveä kauhu puhua kieltä mä pelkään siis helvetin paljon kun menen Tukholmaan esimerkiksi...mä harjottelen jo etukäteen...kuitenkin mä lukkiinnun siinä vaiheessa ku se kysyy jotakin siis*

'yes it did that to me, the instruction during my school years, that I am still in a terror whenever I have to speak a foreign language - when I travel to Stockholm, for example, I'm terrified - I practice a lot beforehand - but when they ask me something I am completely shut up'

(From the group discussion)

Thus, the subjects saw their language knowledge in very static, immobile terms. Although they possessed a great amount of knowledge, it was frozen in nature. Sometimes they argued that the doors for this knowledge could be opened by dramatic circumstances, or, as one of our informants put it, by *lots of booze, or a rage*. Several subjects, perhaps a majority, felt dissatisfied with the instruction they had got. It was interesting, however, that almost all the subjects thought that their experiences were something that belonged to the past, and that these memories were results of an *old-fashioned* teaching method (14), indicating that times had changed, and more advanced teaching methods were currently used.

(14)

*I was instructed in a very old-fashioned way - I had to learn the German texts by heart, for example*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

#### 4 PERSONAL THEORIES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Next, I will briefly discuss **personal theories** the subjects seemed to hold on the question of 'how languages are learned'. As indicated already by the examples above, school experiences are decisive in the formation of one's personal view to language, and therefore, presumably, to language

learning as well. And, although dissatisfaction with both mother tongue and foreign language instruction was generally expressed, our subjects, most interestingly, seemed to experience language learning in terms of **institutional instruction: you learn languages because you are taught them**. Perhaps a majority of our subjects expressed - either explicitly or implicitly - that in order to learn a language, you will have to be taught.

(15)

*naturally you can't learn a language by yourself - you need instruction*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

At the same time, this seems to indicate that the subjects see themselves in rather passive terms, as vessels into which information is poured, rather than as active agents in the process of learning. This is also shown also by the large number of metaphorical expressions which stress both the passive role of the learner and the sometimes violent nature of the event: knowledge will be *forged, crammed, or packed* into the *head* of the learner by brute force. The process is usually teacher-directed.

But, as we argued above, everyday knowledge of language is varied and tolerant in nature. Therefore, also these personal theories can contain complementary and alternative views to language learning. Some alternative views obviously arise from own negative experiences, and are presented as a criticism. Several people, for example, pointed out that one actually **learns by doing**. These subjects often referred to their own experiences of language learning outside school, and claimed that language is best learned by active participation in either spoken or written communication. Spoken language skills were especially emphasized, and the teaching of oral communication was seen as something that was generally missing in school instruction.

(16a)  
*you learn a language best by speaking it*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

(16b)  
*you must somehow start from the use of that language*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

Others still brought in the argument that learning requires receptive skills: **learning by observing and/or listening**. The reception was described as active in nature: conscious observation of what others do, attentive listening to features of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, etc.

(17)  
*I have learned best by listening*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

A finer point still was expressed by those who compared the learning process to **absorption**. These subjects understood language learning as a natural and spontaneous process, often either unconscious or only slightly conscious in character. Often the informants who saw learning as a natural result of being exposed to a given language, seemed to have a multilingual or multicultural background experiences. They had, for example, spent lengthy periods abroad, or were from bilingual families. Some also pointed out that this is the way children learn.

(18a)  
*I sort of caught Swahili, being there with these people - I learnt it by using it and speaking it*

(From an interview, Pilot Study Data)

(18b)

*a child's mind is like a sponge...*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

(18c)

*since you watch TV anyhow you cannot help learning some English...*

(From an essay, Pilot Study Data)

Furthermore, it is interesting (although not surprising) to note that everyday thought contains several ideas also typical of the scientific models of language. Ordinary people also observe learning processes, and are able to discuss their views - when given opportunity. The most powerful influence on our subjects' ideas, however, seemed to be the institutional view to teaching. Language learning, for our Finnish subjects, was commonly nearly identical with 'getting formal instruction in language'. Again, the socio-cultural and teacher-evoked models of thought seemed to overshadow the more personal observations.

Some of our subjects, however, did have their own theory about how they would teach a foreign language. Such areas as **teaching of culture** and/or **communicative skills** were emphasized, and also **spoken language skills** were stressed. One informant describes her own method like follows (19).

(19)

*miten mä opettasin kieliä? mä opettasin just silleen viittomakielen ja kaiken tällasen kautta...leikin ilon hauskan hilpeen huvattoman hullun...**'how would I teach a foreign language? through sign language and something like that...play, joyfulness, fun, through hilarious and crazy things...'*

(From the group discussion)

The data clearly show that any 'ordinary speaker' has a great capacity for discussing language learning and teaching, and even the finer points of language, as some of the comments in the interviews suggest. What is



more, the 'ordinary speakers' seem to think that talking about language is both interesting and rewarding. This seems to indicate that talking about language could be seen as a central means in the development of the learners' knowledge of language, and, to some extent, their language skills (see eg. Bain 1991, James and Garrett eds. 1991). Moreover, the material we have analyzed seems to imply that a 'user's view' to language could also be fruitful to the linguistic analysis in general.

## 5 THE NAIVE AND THE NON-NAIVE?

As seen above, the everyday knowledge of language, as it appears in the talk of 'naive speakers' relates most lively to their personal experiences, to the values and attitudes of the community they live in, and the teaching they had received at school. It has been customary to regard everyday knowledge as different from and inferior to the scientific one. But, where do professional linguists derive their models from? And are they really **fundamentally** different from what ordinary people think? Yes and no. It is obvious that in some respects the academic theories are much more sophisticated than everyday ones, and as a consequence of the current paradigm of science, based on the notions of logic and coherence. But in some respects, they are just as vulnerable as everyday theories - being intrinsically related to a given (scientific and social) community: its past and present, its values and priorities.

Therefore, although the internal coherence and the degree of sophistication of an academic model of language may be higher than that of an everyday theory, its fundamentals are similar. The basic theoretical assumptions are similarly related to external social and cultural assumptions and beliefs, just as the fundamentals of the naive theories are. If the foundations of present-day linguistics, for example, are examined, it may be discovered that an essentially normative attitude still prevails - even

though modern linguistics purports to be descriptive. The values of a given society, or a given culture are closely tied with the theoretical assumptions and, also with theoretical concepts.

Therefore, it can be argued that modern linguistics - despite of its claims for descriptivity and priority of spoken language - is basically an idealistic and normative science in which the norms for 'language' are set according to the written ideals (see eg. Linell 1982; Harris 1980; Dufva 1992). Thus, there is a direct relation to be seen to the fundamental socio-cultural (and written language biased) values that the Western society has held over the past millennia, or two. The idealistic view to language was enhanced by the Cartesian dualism which has been prevalent in theoretical linguistics for the past three decades, and which has resulted in the cognitivist view of language: language as an acontextual and ahistorical mental organ. These developments have overshadowed other potential paradigms to a degree that the cognitivist approach has appeared to be the only alternative. Dialogical thought, as also shown in the article of Lähteenmäki (in this issue), is one alternative and, at the same time, one way out of the dualistic cul-de-sac.

Similarly, the influence of socio-cultural values has been prominent in foreign and second language research. Culturally-biased judgements are not rare. Theory is based primarily on English, and therefore, results tend to reflect an 'Anglo-centric' view (for criticism, see eg. Phillipson 1992). And, as foreign/second language research is also affected by the same fundamentally Cartesian view to cognition as theoretical linguistics, an acontextual and abstract perspective to language learning prevails. The notion of native competence, for example, is doubly idealistic, being both decontextualized and abstract (for criticism, see eg. Mey 1985; Kachru 1986).

Scientific thought is a development of everyday thought. It could be argued that linguistic science should be as alert to being critically aware as any naive speaker should. Over the past three decades, a great

deal of thought and reflection has been invested in the internal coherence of the linguistic theory, or linguistic theories. Their ecological validity, however, which has been largely ignored this far, would appear to be a central issue in the future discussion. Also, the expert theories should be regarded critically, their sources should be discussed, and their commitments explored (as happens currently within several areas; see eg. van Dijk 1993; Hodge and Kress 1993).

The acknowledgement of and research on the **ordinary speakers' perspective** has thus important consequences. One is the fact that the speakers themselves seem to benefit from talk which increases their awareness of language, and, perhaps, also their language skills. The second point is that the ordinary speakers' views are relevant for language teachers in their professional development. Last but not least, the ordinary speakers' views are fresh material for linguists who like to reconsider their theories. Therefore, the views of naive speakers are central in the acknowledgment of the **experiential** view into linguistics and into the science of language teaching.

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# VIERAIDEN KIELTEN OPPIJOIDEN KÄSITYKSET KIELENOPPIMISESTA: VAIHTOEHTOISTA MÄÄ- RITTELYÄ JA TUTKIMUSTA

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In this paper I will give a brief review of the current approach to the study of EFL students' beliefs about second language acquisition/learning (SLA), spelling out its basic assumptions about these beliefs and the research methods used. The approach views beliefs (or metacognitive knowledge) as cognitive entities with three types: person, task, and strategy. Beliefs are further characterized as stable and storable. In other words, the focus is on what students think of various aspects of SLA. The research methods used are for the most part those used in experimental research (questionnaires or controlled interviews) to get (indirectly) under the skulls of language learners. Furthermore, there is an underlying assumption that these beliefs directly affect students' behavior, e.g. the use of language learning strategies.

I will go on proposing an alternative to the current basically cognitive approach to the study of learner beliefs. This approach (which is widely advocated, for example, in social psychology these days) regards beliefs (and attitudes) non-cognitively. This means that the focus is on what students have to say about different aspects of SLA in discourse, that is, in stretches of talk or writing. Furthermore, this approach assumes that these beliefs are contextualized, and so they can vary not only from one student to another, but more importantly also from one context to another by one and the same student. With a redefinition of beliefs come reconsiderations of research data and methods used.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition (SLA), beliefs, metacognitive knowledge

## 1 JOHDANTO

Vieraiden kielten oppijoiden käsitykset (**beliefs**) kielenoppimisesta ovat soveltavan kielitieteen uusia tutkimuskohteita. Nykyisinhän korostetaan kielenoppijoiden itsenäisyyttä ja omaa vastuuta oppimisestaan ja tästä johtuen oppijoiden tietoisuutta tekemisistään, esimerkiksi käyttämistään

oppimisstrategioista ja niiden tuloksellisuudesta oppimisen kannalta. Tähän liittyy myös kiinnostus kieltenoppijoiden käsityksiin kielenoppimisesta: millaisia nämä käsitykset ovat ja mikä on mahdollisesti niiden rooli kielenoppimisessa. Suomessakin on näiden tutkiminen jo alkanut (mm. Annola & Saarelainen 1994, Lähteenmäki 1994<sup>1</sup>).

Tarkoitukseni on selvittää kieltenoppijoiden käsityksistä tehtyjä tutkimuksia: erittelen alkuun, mitä eri tutkijat ovat ymmärtäneet käsityksillä, ja sitten miten he ovat niitä tutkineet, siis millaisilla tutkimusaineistoilla ja tutkimusmenetelmillä. Muilla tieteenaloilla esitetyn kritiikin pohjalta ehdotan sitten käsitysten määrittelylle ja niiden tutkimiselle uusia vaihtoehtoja. Havainnollistan näitä lopuksi analysoimalla osan radiohaastattelua, jossa haastateltavana on työtön suomalainen lehtinainen, joka kyllästyi joutenoloon ja lähti Saksaan työnhakuun ja samalla kielitaitoaan parantamaan.

## 2 MENNEITTEN MUISTELUA

Aikaisempia tutkimuksia kielenoppijoiden käsityksistä ei hirveän montaa ole, mutta niille vähäisille on yhteistä samantapaiset oletukset käsityksistä ja menetelmistä, joilla niitä voidaan tutkia, joten voitaneen puhua suhteellisen yhtenäisestä tutkimussuuntauksesta.

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<sup>1</sup>Tämä on Korkeakoulujen kielikeskuksen, Jyväskylän yliopisto, "Tietoisuus ja tiedostuminen kielenoppimisessa ja -opetuksessa" -tutkimusprojektin pilottivaiheen raportti.



## 2.1 Määrittelyä 1

Horwitz (1987) määrittelee käsitykset<sup>2</sup> yleisesti vain kieltenoppijoiden mielipiteiksi. Wenden (1986a) tarkentaa käsitysten alkuperää: hänen mielestään näiden mielipiteiden tulee perustua oppijoiden omiin kokemuksiin tai alan asiantuntijoiden mielipiteisiin<sup>3</sup>. Myöhemmin Wenden (1987c, 1991: 33 - 51, ks. myös Flavell 1979, 1981) selventää itse käsitysten luonnetta: ne ovat vakaita; ne ovat sellaisia asioita, joista kieltenoppijat osaavat puhua; lisäksi ne ovat joskus tosiasioiden mukaisia, ja joskus taas niiden vastaisia, väärinä. Edelleen hän väittää niiden olevan kolmentyyppisiä: käsitykset voivat koskea itse kieltenoppijaa, kielenoppimistilannetta tai sitten kielenoppimisstrategioita. Wendenin mielestä kieltenoppijan käsitykset kielenoppimiseen liittyvistä asioista ovat yhtä kuin hänen metakognitiivinen tietämyksensä (**metacognitive knowledge**)<sup>4</sup> asiasta (ks. myös Valtanen tässä julkaisussa). Abraham & Vann (1987) olettavat jo teoriassa käsitysten vaikuttavan suoraan kieltenoppijoiden käyttäytymiseen, esimerkiksi heidän oppimisstrategioiden valintaansa. Tukea heidän oletukselleen antaa Wenden (1986b, 1987b) omilla empiirisillä tutkimuksillaan.

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<sup>2</sup>Holec (1987) näyttää käyttävän milloin sanaa *representation*, milloin **belief**.

<sup>3</sup>Tutkijan kannalta tämä on ongelmallista, koska silloin ei riitä, että kartoitetaan, mitä käsitykset ovat, vaan on myös selvitettävä käsitysten alkuperä. Lisäksi voisi kuvitella, että käsitykset voivat perustua myös kokemattomuuteen tai tietämättömyyteen asiantuntijoiden mielipiteistä.

<sup>4</sup>Tutkijan kannalta näiden kahden käsitteen, siis **belief** ja **metacognitive knowledge**, käyttö synonyymeinä on monella tapaa ongelmallista. Käsitteiden eroja ovat selvittäneet mm. Abelson (1979) ja Nesper (1987). Jos pitäydytään jälkimmäiseen termiin **knowledge**, on merkittävää, ettei käsitettä ole sen enempää tarkennettu. Tehdäänhän muualla ero mm. eksplisiittisen ja implisiittisen tietämyksen välille, samoin kuin deklaratatiivisen (**declarative**) ja proseduraalisen (**procedural**) tietämyksen välille (ks. esim. Anderson 1982). Lisäksi tämä merkitsisi sitä, ettei kyselylomakkeiden Likert-tyyppisiä väittämiä ja vastausasteikkoja Olen täysin samaa/eri mieltä (joita esimerkiksi Horwitz käytti tutkimuksissaan) voisi käyttää.

Laajasti ymmärrettynä Wenden (1987a) katsoo käsitysten olevan osa kunkin kieltenoppijan oppimisstrategioita, jolloin ne kattaisivat oppijan tietämyksen esimerkiksi vieraan kielen oppimiseen vaikuttavista persoonallisuustekijöistä, menestyksekkään vieraan kielen oppimisen yleisperiaatteista, eri kielten oppimisen helppoudesta ja vaikeudesta. Abraham & Vann (1987) puolestaan olettavat käsitysten muodostavan kokonaisuuksia (**sets of beliefs**), jolloin voidaan puhua kunkin kieltenoppijan kielenoppimisen filosofiasta.

On hyvä erottaa käsitteellisesti toisistaan kieltenoppijoiden käsitykset ja asenteet. Wenden (1991: 52 - 59, ks. myös esim. Agheyisi & Fishman 1970, Cooper & Fishman 1974) katsoo asenteiden eroavan käsityksistä siinä, että niillä on kaksi lisäulottuvuutta: ensinnäkin asenteet ovat myönteisesti tai kielteisesti arvioivia, ja toiseksi ne ohjaavat käyttäytymistä<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.2 Tutkimusaineistoja ja -menetelmiä 1

Näin kognitiivisesti määriteltyinä<sup>6</sup> käsityksiä ei voi suoraan havainnoida, joten tutkimuksissa on turvauduttu epäsuoriin keinoihin. Teen seuraavaksi tarkemmin selkoa kahdesta urauurtavasta tutkimuksesta: toinen tutkijoista päätyi käyttämään kyselylomakkeita, toinen puolestaan retrospektiivisiä haastatteluita, jotka sitten analysoitiin sisällöllisesti.

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<sup>5</sup>Ero kannattaa myös tehdä käsitteiden **belief** ja **conception** välille. Jälkimmäistä ovat käyttäneet fenomenografian (**phenomenography**) edustajat (ks. esim. Marton 1992 ja Marton & Svensson 1992), ja se määritellään yksilön ja ilmiön väliseksi suhteeksi: opiskelijoilta on kysytty mm. mitä he ymmärtävät oppimisella. Enkvist (1992, 1994) on tutkimuksissaan soveltaen esittänyt saman kysymyksen yliopistotason kieltenopiskelijoille.

<sup>6</sup>Ks. kuitenkin dialogista näkemystä kognition ja tietoisuuden luonteesta, Lähteenmäki tässä julkaisussa.

Horwitz (1987)<sup>7</sup> halusi eräässä tutkimuksessaan saada selville, kuinka yleisiä eräät käsitykset vieraan kielen oppimisesta olivat kieltenopiskelijoiden keskuudessa. Horwitz haastatteli ensin yli sataa kieltenopettajaa ja kieltenopiskelijaa ja laati sitten heidän esittämiensä käsitysten pohjalta kyselylomakkeen, *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory*. Kyselylomakkeessa oli 34 väittämää koskien kielenoppimisen problematiikan viittä osa-aluetta: 1) kyky oppia vieraita kieliä (**aptitude**), 2) vieraiden kielten oppimisen vaikeus, 3) ja sen luonne, 4) viestintä- ja oppimisstrategiat ja 5) motivaatio vieraiden kielten oppimiseen. Horwitz pyysi 32:ta englannin kielen (ESL) opiskelijaa lukemaan kyselylomakkeen väittämät ja kertomaan, olivatko he samaa mieltä vai eivät. Suurin osa näistä opiskelijoista (prosenttiluvun vaihdellessa 75-91 välillä) oli mm. sitä mieltä, että

- lapset oppivat kieltä helpommin kuin aikuiset
- jotkut kielet ovat helpompia oppia kuin toiset
- englantia oppii parhaiten englanninkielisissä maissa
- jatkuva toisto ja harjoittelu on kielenoppimisessa tärkeää
- he halusivat amerikkalaisia ystäviä.

Wenden (1986b, 1987b)<sup>8</sup> puolestaan halusi eräissä tutkimuksissaan tietää, mistä kielenoppimiseen liittyvistä asioista (käyttämiensä oppimisstrategioiden lisäksi) opiskelijat kykenivät tekemään selkoa omin sanoin. Wenden pyysi ensin 25:tä englannin kielen (ESL) opiskelijaa pitämään noin viikon verran päiväkirjaa arkipäivän tilanteista, joissa he olivat käyttäneet englantia. Tämän jälkeen tutkija haastatteli heitä päiväkirjamerkintöjen pohjalta kysellen mm. miksi he osallistuivat kirjaamiinsa tilanteisiin, mitä

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<sup>7</sup>Muita tutkimuksia tällä menetelmällä, mutta eri opiskelijajoukoilla, ks. Horwitz (1988) ja Annola & Saarelainen (1994). Käytännön sovelluksia, ks. Horwitz 1985.

<sup>8</sup>Valmisteilla on Pro gradu -tutkielma wendeniläisittäin, tekijänä Päivi Hokkanen, Englannin kielen laitos, Jyväskylän yliopisto. Käytännön sovelluksia, ks. Wenden 1986a, 1991.

he niissä oppivat tai miten he toimivat virheittensä kanssa. Haastattelut kestivät keskimäärin 90 minuuttia, ne nauhoitettiin, purettiin ja analysoitiin sisällöllisesti (**content analysis**) kahdella eri tavalla. Ensi vaiheen analyysissään Wenden (1986b) luokitteli käsitykset koskemaan viittä kielenoppimisen osa-aluetta: 1) englannin kielen, eli opiskelijoiden opiskelun kielen luonne, 2) opiskelijoiden englannin kielen taito, 3) heidän kielenopiskelunsa tuloksellisuus, 4) heidän oma roolinsa kielenoppimisessa sekä 5) heidän käsityksensä parhaasta tavasta oppia kieltä. Toisessa vaiheessa Wenden (1987b) analysoi tarkemmin kieltenoppijoiden esittämiä eksplisiittisiä käsityksiä kielenoppimisesta. Koko opiskelijajoukon puheesta löytyi 14 erilaista tällaista käsitystä, teemaa, sellaisissa lauseympäristöissä kuin *I think ...*, *The best way to learn is ...* tai *You have to ...*. Eniten kielenopiskelijat puhuivat kielen harjoittelun ja arkipäivän tilanteissa käytön tarpeellisuudesta. Osa opiskelijoista korosti englannin kielen puhumisen ja kuuntelun tärkeyttä, osa taas kieliopin ja sanaston tärkeyttä. Muutama painotti tunteiden, minäkuvan ja kielellisen lahjakkuuden merkitystä kielenoppimisessa. Edelleen Wenden löysi yhteyksiä opiskelijoiden käsitysten ja heidän käyttämiensä strategioiden väliltä.

Määritelmien ja tutkimusmenetelmien välillä ei näissä tutkimuksissa ole ristiriitaa (ks. mm. Cohen 1987, Wenden 1991: 77 - 96). Tosin mittausapojen epäsuoruudesta johtuen ongelmaksi jää edelleen mittaus-  
ten validius: päästiinkö mittausavoilla kiinni niihin käsityksiin, joiden oletetaan olevan kieltenoppijoiden päässä todellisuudessa. Ja toisaalta: kuinka yleistettäviä mittaus tulokset ovat? Lisäksi etenkin Wendenin käsitysten teoreettinen käsitteellistäminen ja aineiston analyysistä saatujen käsitysten luokittelu ovat vain osittain yhteensopivia: kuten jo näimme, Wenden puhuu teoriassa kolmentyyppisistä uskomuksista (**person**, **task**, ja **strategy**) ja jakaa tutkimusaineistonsa, eksplisiittiset käsitykset, samoin kolmeen pääluokkaan (**Use the Language**, **Learn about the Language** ja **Personal Factors Count**), mutta ei tee tarkemmin selkoa miten jälkimmäiset suhteutuvat edellisiin tai toisiin päin.

Aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa on siis pyritty kieltenoppijoiden käsitysten kuvaukseen ja syy- ja seuraussuhteiden osoittamiseen esimerkiksi käsitysten ja oppimistrategioiden välillä. Tutkimukset on tehty tietyllä koehenkilöjoukolla tiettyinä ajankohtana, eli ne ovat poikittaistutkimuksia (**cross-sectional**). Tämä on ollut perusteltua, kun käsitysten on ajateltu olevan suhteellisen vakaita. Poikkeuksena on Holecin (1987) tutkimus, jossa itse asiassa kävi ilmi, että kielenoppijoiden käsitykset kielenoppimisesta, tai oikeastaan opiskelusta (**studying**), muuttuivat sen jälkeen kun he olivat muutaman kerran käyneet neuvonpitoa opinto-ohjaajansa (**counsellor**) kanssa: heidän käsityksensä omasta, opettajan ja oppiaineiston roolista muuttuivat. Heistä tuli aktiivisia ja vastuullisia oman opetuksensa tuottajia, kun he aikaisemmin olivat kokeneet itsensä passiivisiksi opettajan ja kurssikirjojen kuluttajiksi.

### 3 TULEVIEN TÄHYILYÄ

Tällaista käsitysten (ja myös asenteiden) tutkimustraditiota on jo kritisoitu jonkin aikaa muilla tieteenaloilla, esimerkiksi sosiaalipsykologiassa (mm. Potter & Wetherell 1987, Antaki 1988, Billig et al. 1988, Middleton & Edwards 1990, Edwards & Potter 1992, Shotter 1993). Kritiikki lähtee siitä, että on tajuttu, että kielenkäyttö on paljolti toimintaa, ja edelleen että kieli luo todellisuutta (**socially constructing**) ja toisaalta se muokkaantuu yhteisössä vallitsevien aatesuuntausten, valtasuhteiden, jne. mukaisesti (**socially constructed**). Katsotaan, että ilmiöitä voidaan tulkita useammalla kuin yhdellä tavalla ja arkitietämystä maallikkojen käsityksiä ja selityksiä kaikessa epäsystemaattisuudessaankin pidetään tutkimisen arvoisena siinä kuin asiantuntijatietämystä (tutkijoiden tarkkaan mietittyjä teoretisointeja ilmiöistä). Tämä puolestaan johtuu uudenlaisesta tieteellisen tietämyksen (**scientific knowledge**) määrittelystä (ks. esim. Woolgar 1988).

Tältä pohjalta vaihtoehdoksi tarjotaan uudenlaista määritelmää käsityksistä (ja asenteista) ja siitä johtuen uusia tutkimusaineistoja ja -menetelmiä (ks. tarkemmin Potter & Wetherell 1987).

### 3.1 Määrittelyä 2

Vaihtoehtoisesti kielenoppijoidenkin käsitykset voisi ymmärtää ei-kognitiivisiksi<sup>9</sup> yksiköiksi siinä mielessä, että ne eivät muodostaisi kielenopiskelijan päässä loogista aukotonta systeemiä vaan muokkautuisivat tai jopa muotoutuisivatkin vasta vuorovaikutuksessa muiden kanssa. Käsitysten katsottaisiin siten olevan sosiaalisia eikä yksilöllisiä. Tällöin tutkija olisi kiinnostunut siitä, mitä kielten opiskelijoilla on sanottavaa kielten oppimisesta diskurssissaan, siis puheessaan tai kirjoituksessaan. Toisin kuin aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa, käsitysten oletettaisiin olevan riippuvaisia tilanteesta ja (enemmän tai vähemmän) vaihtelevia. Käsitykset voisivat siis vaihdella oppijasta toiseen, mutta myös tilanteesta toiseen, ja jopa samassa tilanteessa oppijat saattaisivat esittää ristiriitaisia käsityksiä. Tästä seuraa, että kielenoppijan käsitysten ja käyttäytymisen välillä ei välttämättä olisi suoraa yhteyttä.

### 3.2 Tutkimusaineistoja ja -menetelmiä 2

Tällä tavalla määriteltynä käsityksiä voitaisiin tutkia suoraan kielenoppijoiden arkipäivän puheesta ja kirjoituksesta. Aikaisemmat tutkimusmenetelmät vain eivät olisi sopivimpia tähän tarkoitukseen. Kyselylomak-

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<sup>9</sup>Perinteisesti ei-kognitiivisiksi määritellyiksi. Ks. vuorovaikutukseen ja dialogisuuteen perustuvasta kognitiivisen toiminnan määritelmästä Dufva, Lähtenmäki tässä julkaisussa. (toim. huom.)

keiden käytön ongelmana on se, että ne rajoittavat kieltenopiskelijoiden toimintaa kahdella tavalla. Ensinnäkin ne rajoittavat sitä, **mihin** opiskelijat voivat reagoida (kyselylomakkeen väittämät) ja toisekseen ne rajoittavat sitä, **miten** he voivat niihin reagoida (ympyröimällä kyselylomakkeen vastausvaihtoehdoista yhden, eli osoittamalla joko olevansa samaa mieltä tai eri mieltä irrallisten väittämien kanssa). Itse asiassa kyselylomakkeilla mitataan kieltenoppijoiden käsityksiä vain teoriassa, paperilla, minkä Wendenkin (1987c, alaviite 5) myöntää, eikä heidän tuotoksissaan, puheessa tai kirjoituksessa.<sup>10</sup> Retrospektiivisillä haastatteluilla päästään jo kiinni kieltenoppijoiden (omiin ajatuksiin ja) puheeseen. Näidenkin käytössä on kuitenkin ongelmansa, varsinkin jos niitä analysoidaan sisällöllisesti. Tällöin aineistoa yleensä luetaan valikoidusti ja sen luokittelu jää usein melko karkeaksi, mikä ei välttämättä anna oikeutusta aineistolle kokonaisuudessaan.<sup>11</sup>

Vaihtoehtoiseksi aineistoksi sopisi parhaiten kieltenopiskelijoiden puhe ja kirjoitus arkipäivän tilanteissa. Käytännössä tällaisen aineiston, varsinkin puheen, hankinta lienee vaikeaa, joten todennäköisesti joudutaan turvautumaan kieltenoppijoiden haastatteluihin. Mutta tällaista aineistoa on sitten analysoitava kokonaisuudessaan haastateltavan ja haastattelijan yhteistuotoksena (**joint-production**). Kirjoitettua aineistoa löytynee myös esimerkiksi sanomalehtiartikkeleista, yleisönosastokirjoituksista ja tietokonevälitteisistä keskustelupiireistä.

Niin kuin aikaisemmissakin tutkimuksissa tavoitteena voisi olla kieltenoppijoiden käsitysten kuvaaminen. Mutta sen lisäksi tavoitteena voisi olla käsitysten tehtävien eli funktioiden kartoittaminen kieltenoppi-

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<sup>10</sup>Potter & Wetherell (1987: 39) puhuvat kyselylomakkeiden käytöstä strategiana, jolla pyritään aineiston yhdenmukaistamiseen (**strategy of restriction**).

<sup>11</sup>Sisällön analyysi suhteellisen karkeine luokituksineen on toinen tutkijoiden käyttämä tällainen strategia, **strategy of gross categorization** (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 41).

joiden puheessa tai kirjoituksessa.<sup>12</sup> Toisin sanoen tarkattaisiin myös sitä, mihin he käyttävät käsityksiään puheessaan tai kirjoituksessaan esimerkiksi asioiden perusteluun, selittämiseen jne. Toisin kuin aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa tutkimustulosten yleistettävyys ei olisi enää päällimmäinen huoli.

### 3.3 Esimerkki

Havainnollistan tällaista ajattelutapaa käsityksistä ja niiden tutkimisesta yhdellä esimerkillä. Kyseessä on radiohaastattelu ohjelmasta "**Saksaan hanttihommiin**" (YLEN YKKÖNEN 9.8.1994). Haastattelijana ohjelmassa on Kaarina Alanen ja haastateltavana Päivi Heinonen, nuori suomalainen journalisti. Päivi oli ollut työttömänä puolitoista vuotta, kun hän sitten käytyään kotimaassa erilaisia kursseja päätti lähteä Saksaan hakemaan töitä ja siinä samalla kehittää saksan kielen taitoaan. Päiviä onnisti: hän pääsi melko pian töihin Kölnin lähellä sijaitsevaan perhehotelliin huonesivoojaksi.

Ohjelmassa pätevät haastattelun pelisäännöt: haastatteliija tekee kysymyksiä, haastateltava vastaa. Tässä tapauksessa kumpikin, niin haastatteliija kuin haastateltava, ovat kuitenkin maallikkoja ohjelman lopuksi käsitellyn aiheen suhteen. Haastatteliija nimittäin kysyy Päiviltä tämän senhetkisestä saksan kielen taidosta:

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<sup>12</sup>Bowers & Iwi (1993) ovat tutkineet kuinka yliopisto-opiskelijat eri aiheita koskevissa haastatteluissa tulivat (ohimennen) puhuneeksi ja ilmaisseeksi oman käsityksensä yhteiskunnasta (*society*). Kävi ilmi, että nämä käsitykset poikkesivat huomattavasti tutkijoiden antamista teoreettisista määritelmistä. Edelleen nämä tutkijat (Potterin & Wetherellin 1987 ajatuksia soveltaen) tarkkasivat sitä, mihin opiskelijat puheessaan näitä käsityksiään yhteiskunnasta käyttivät, ts. mikä funktio niillä oli heidän argumentoinnissaan.



- 1 Haastattelija: miten sulta sujuu saksa  
 2 Päivi H.: [huokaisee] huonosti sujuu huonosti sujuu mä käyn aina kerran viikossa öhm öö masentumassa saksan tunnilla kansalaisopistossa ja se on jotenki niin epätoivosta mä en tiedä minkä tähden mä en luota niinku taitooni puhua mut kyllä se nyt tietysti paremmin sujuu tällä hetkellä ku silloin ku mä tulín että mutt kan- hirveen kankeeta ja hankalaa hankalaa on päästä vanhoista estoista eroon kieliestoista
- 3 Haastattelija: kiitos vaan kouluopetuksen  
 4 Päivi H.: [nauraa]
- 5 Haastattelija: niin  
 6 Päivi H.: ett siit on tullu tällane hirvee kynnyks puhua niin juu juu mä huomaan sen hyvin täällä ett siis jos mä puhun sellasten ihmisten kanssa jotka on jotenkin mua arvokkaampia joka joilla on tavallaan sellanen opettajan rooli esimerkiks tää just herra ja rouva Jakobso(h)n nää omistajat niin mä jännitän niinku puhumista paljon enemmän niitten kanssa ku se ett mä puhun työkalaverien kanssa tai sitte jossain kadulla ett se on koulu ulottaa lonkeronsa ikuisesti ihmiseen tai en mä tiedä minuun ainakin mutt varmaan on monia ihmisiä joihin ei mutta tota kyllä mä vakuuttunut siitä oon että kyllä mä vuoden päästä huomattavan paljon paremmin puhun ku nyt

("Saksaan hanttihommiin" YLEN YKKÖNEN 9.8.1994)

Haastattelun lopussa pohditaan siis koulun vaikutusta vieraan kielen oppijoihin. Mielenkiintoista on se, miten keskustelu tästä aiheesta käydään. Puheenvuorossa 1 haastattelija kysyy yleisesti Päivin saksan kielen taidosta. Puheenvuorossa 2 Päivi vastaa saksan sujuvan kangerrellen: hän väittää olevansa kielen käytössään estynyt. Seuraavissa puheenvuoroissa 3 ja 5 haastattelija ehdottaa tähän syyksi koulua. Puheenvuoroissa 4 *niin* ja 6 *niin juu juu* Päivi myöntää alkuun varovasti asian olevan yleisellä tasolla näin. Sitten hän jatkaa pohtien asiaa omien kokemustensa pohjalta ja päättyy yleistämään *koulu ulottaa lonkeronsa ikuisesti ihmiseen*. Koulun vaikutuksesta, eli haastattelijan puheenvuorojen 3 ja 5 puheenaiheesta, tulee kesken Päivin puheenvuoron 6 puheenaihe, ja Päivi siis omin sanoin myöntää koulun vaikutuksen. Mutta hän pehmentää heti väitettään lisäämällä *tai en mä tiedä* ja puhumalla vain omista kokemuksistaan, *minuun ainakin* ja antamalla vastakkaisia esimerkkejä, *on monia ihmisiä*

*joihin ei.* Eli omalta kohdaltaan Päivi on valmis myöntämään koulun kielteiset vaikutukset saksan kielen käyttöön, toisten osalta hän on ristiriitainen: toisaalta myöntää, toisaalta kieltää. Tärkeintä on siis se, että Päivin käsitykset muokkautuvat vuorovaikutuksessa haastattelijan kanssa.

Sitä jää vain miettimään, miten Päivi olisi vastannut horwitziläisiin väittämiin koulun vaikutuksesta vieraiden kielten oppijoihin tai mitä saisimme tulokseksi, jos tämä kohta olisi analysoitu wendeniläisittäin eli tarkaten vain Päivin puhetta. On tosin muistettava, että tämä radiohaastattelu eroaa aikaisemmin käytetyistä jo siinä, että se ei ole varsinaisesti retrospektiivinen haastattelu.

#### 4 PÄÄTÄNTÄ

Taulukko 1 tiivistää jo tehdyt tutkimukset, tutkimusten päämäärät, tutkimuskohteen, määritelmät käsityksistä sekä käytetyt tutkimusaineistot ja -menetelmät. Samoin se tiivistää vaihtoehdot näille. Tutkimuksia kieltenoppijoiden käsityksistä (tai asenteista) ei tosin vielä ole tehty tässä viitekehyksessä:

Taulukko 1 Katsaus tutkimussuuntausten määritelmiin ja tutkimustapoihin

	Nykyinen tutkimussuuntaus	Vaihtoehtoinen tutkimussuuntaus
Tavoitteet	Käsitysten kuvaus ja syy- ja seuraussuhteiden toteaminen esim. käsitysten ja käyttäytymisen välillä	Käsitysten kuvaus ja funktiot
Tutkimuskohde	Käsitykset päässä (ajattelu)	Käsitykset puheessa tai kirjoituksessa (diskurssi)

Käsitykset	- kognitiivisia	- sosiaalisessa kanssakäynnissä syntyneitä
	- vakaita	- vaihtelevia
	- sanoiksi puettavia	
	- tosiasioiden mukaisia tai niiden vastaisia	
Tutkimusmenetelmät	Kyselylomakkeet	Diskurssianalyysi
	Retrospektiiviset haastattelut (sisällön analyysi)	

Tiivistäen: aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa kielenoppijoiden käsitykset kielenoppimisesta on ymmärretty oppijoiden päässä oleviksi kognitiivisiksi rakenteiksi. Käsityksille on katsottu olevan tyypillistä, että ne ovat suhteellisen vakaita, sanoiksi puettavissa olevia, joskus tosiasioihin perustuvia, joskus taas eivät. Tutkimuksen kohteena on ollut, mitä kielenoppijat ajattelevat kielenoppimiseen liittyvistä asioista, ja sitä on voitu tutkia vain epäsuoria menetelmiä käyttäen.

Vaihtoehtoisesti käsitykset voisi määrittää sosiaalisessa vuorovaikutuksessa syntyneiksi, jolloin ne olisivat riippuvaisia tilanteesta ja siten enemmän tai vähemmän vaihtelevia. Tutkimuksen kohteena olisi se, miten kieltenopiskelijat hahmottavat kielenoppimisen ikään kuin ohimennen arkipäivän diskursseissaan.

Ero näiden kahden suuntauksen välillä on se, miten ne suhtautuvat teksteihin, tutkittavien henkilöiden puheeseen tai kirjoitukseen. Tähän saakka teksteillä (jos niitä on ylipäättään käytetty tutkimusaineistona) on ollut vain välinearvo: ne ovat olleet heijastusta oppijan päässä olevista ajatuksista. Nyt siis ehdotetaan, että niillä olisikin itseisarvo, eli tekstejä voitaisiin tutkia sellaisenaan. Uudentyyppisellä aineistolla ja diskurs-

sianalyttisillä menetelmillä haettaisiin myös vastauksia hiukan eri kysymyksiin kuin aikaisemmin.

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## METACOGNITION AND READING IN L2

### A case study of a Finnish reader of English

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Metacognition is discussed, first, from a theoretical point of view, and, secondly, in the light of a case study of a Finnish reader of English. Two interrelated aspects of metacognition are introduced: metacognitive awareness and metacognitive control. Recent research on metacognition in L2 reading is reviewed, and introspective and retrospective research methods are discussed. For the case study, data from a think-aloud protocol and a reading strategy interview were analysed. The subject was asked to verbalise her thoughts whenever she detected a pause in silent reading. The hypothesis that reading would be interrupted when the subject became aware of faltering comprehension, took strategic action or checked comprehension was confirmed. The protocol was further analysed to see how the subject dealt with comprehension problems. The analysis was based on Ellen Block's (1992) model of comprehension monitoring comprising three phases: evaluation, action, and checking. The subject's monitoring process was often incomplete in the sense that the checking phase was missing. The strategy interview indicated that the subject was aware of having various cognitive and metacognitive strategies at her disposal. Although thinking aloud clearly interfered with comprehension, the method appears suitable for studying L2 reading where comprehension problems serve as triggering events in monitoring, making the reader aware of not understanding and forcing her to take conscious action to restore lost comprehension. Although introspection is widely used for studying the hidden processes in reading, caution is suggested in generalising findings from think-aloud data.

**Keywords:** foreign language reading, metacognition, comprehension monitoring, awareness, introspection

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to cognitively based views, reading is an active and constructive process that involves both the linguistic and other types of knowledge readers bring to the reading situation as well as various flexible, adaptable strategies they use to make sense of the text (Dole et al. 1991). In addition, skilled readers are aware of their cognitive resources as well as able to



monitor their ongoing comprehension and regulate the use of reading strategies. In other words, skilled readers exhibit well-developed metacognitive behaviour.

It is this metacognitive competence, and comprehension monitoring in particular, that is considered a central factor in differentiating between skilled and less skilled readers (Baker & Brown 1984; Dole et al. 1991). Compared to 'novices', skilled readers are better able to know when and how well they have understood. They are also more aware of how they control their reading, and able, if required, to verbalise their awareness (Block 1992). Skilled readers monitor their comprehension more or less automatically, but when comprehension fails, they are able to solve the problem by taking appropriate corrective action (Block 1986; Casanave 1988). Comprehension monitoring is especially important in foreign language reading as readers are more likely to encounter linguistic and cultural comprehension problems than when they read in their mother tongue.

In this article, metacognition is first discussed from a theoretical point of view and recent research on metacognition in L2 reading is reviewed. The second part of the article deals with one particular example, a think-aloud protocol produced by a Finnish student reading an expository text in English. Together with her retrospective reading strategy interview, it illustrates how metacognitive awareness and comprehension monitoring work in practice.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Two aspects of metacognition**

Metacognition can be characterised as a person's awareness of his thinking and learning processes, and his ability to exercise control over these processes. With regard to reading, for example, a skilled reader is aware

of task requirements, and of how best to approach the text. He knows what he is reading for, and is able to identify the aspects of the message important for his purpose. He also knows how well he is likely to understand a specific topic. In addition, the reader is aware of possessing a set of reading strategies, knows when, where, and how to apply them, and is able to evaluate, monitor, and regulate his understanding as well as to resolve comprehension obstacles (Baker & Brown 1984).

Thus, there are two clusters of closely related mental activities under the umbrella of metacognition. Metacognitive awareness, or knowledge about cognition, refers to a person's knowledge of his own cognitive resources, of the requirements of the task at hand, and of strategies for approaching the task. It also covers the awareness of the ongoing reading process. Metacognitive control, or regulation of cognition, utilises this knowledge for regulating cognitive processes (Brown 1985). According to Brown, metacognitive knowledge is relatively stable, storable, in some cases fallible, and develops fairly late in childhood. Metacognitive control, in contrast, is relatively unstable and subject to change, as it varies according to task demands. It is not as easily storable because it occurs without considerable effort, even automatically, and it is relatively age independent in the sense that even young children are able to control their activities in solving simple problems. Although maturation and practice make monitoring processes automatic, some triggering event can raise them to the level of consciousness. In skilled reading, for example, metacognitive control of comprehension proceeds fairly automatically, but becomes a more conscious and planned activity when triggered off by a perceived failure to understand. When they surface to the level of consciousness, monitoring processes also become storable and can be studied by using different types of mentalistic measures, as will be seen below.

## 2.2 Metacognitive awareness

It is generally assumed that metacognitive awareness concerns three types of cognitive knowledge (Garner 1987; Wenden 1987). Knowledge about **person** is knowledge about ourselves as learners, about our learning styles and proficiency level as well as more universal knowledge about human learning. We may know from experience that we learn more efficiently by reading a textbook than by attending a lecture, but also that this is not true for all learners. Knowledge about **task** concerns the purpose, nature and demands of a specific task as well as our estimate on its level of difficulty. Thus, we are aware that reading for pleasure is qualitatively different from reading for study or that background knowledge helps us in making sense of what we read. We also have knowledge of **strategies**, that is, we know how appropriate specific strategies are for the task at hand, how effective a strategy is likely to be, and what kind of principles lie behind the choice of a strategy. For example, we may know that underlining and note-taking are helpful study aids or that there are several options for finding the meaning of an unknown word. Metacognitive knowledge is highly interactive, for person, task and strategy variables are interdependent (Garner 1987). It develops through maturation and learning, but as noted above, can also be fallible: our knowledge about our cognitive resources, the nature and demands of a task or the effectiveness of our reading strategies may prove false.

Another aspect of metacognitive awareness is the reader's awareness of the reading process itself. Anderson (1994) regards this as one of the most important skills for second language learners to master, because by being aware of what they are doing while reading helps learners to verify and evaluate their own strategies. Awareness of the reading process is also a precondition for self-regulation, i.e., the ability to monitor comprehension and evaluate one's own cognitive activities (Baker & Brown 1984). Readers' awareness of how much and how well they understand is again the basis for taking corrective action when necessary.

Research on metacognitive awareness in foreign language reading has mainly dealt with the readers' awareness of reading strategies. Padron and Waxman (1988), for example, studied the effect of Hispanic ESL students' perceptions of their reading strategies on their reading achievement by using a self-report questionnaire and a standardised reading comprehension test. Their findings, which support previous metacognitive research with monolingual readers, indicate that the readers' perceptions of the strategies they use have a predictive validity for their reading achievement. In another questionnaire study, Carrell (1989) studied the readers' awareness of various types of reading strategies and their reading ability in L1 and L2. She found that the relationship of reading strategies perceived as effective to reading performance was not as evident in L2 as in L1, but in both cases those who reported using 'global' or meaning-based strategies were somewhat more proficient readers than those who reported using 'local' or word-based strategies. Similarly, in her experiment concerning actual and reported strategy use, Barnett (1988) concluded that reader perception of strategy use interacted significantly with comprehension: students who thought they used strategies generally considered effective performed better than those who did not think they used such strategies. All these studies thus suggest that readers are both aware of and able to verbalise the reading strategies they use, and that their perceptions reflect, at least to a certain degree, their use of these strategies in an experimental context.

### 2.3 Metacognitive control

The second aspect of metacognition, controlling or regulating the reading process, makes use of metacognitive knowledge (Block 1992; Casanave 1988). Prior to reading, **planning** involves attending to the purpose of reading, being aware of one's resources, and anticipating prospective difficulties. During reading, the level of comprehension is constantly **monitored**, and the reading rate and the use of strategies are **regulated**.

When problems are encountered or comprehension failure occurs, **corrective action** is taken: the meaning of unknown words is checked, and clarification is sought by rereading portions of the text or by reading ahead. In addition, metacognitive control involves the **evaluation** of the outcome of reading, that is, checking whether the goal has been reached or whether there is need for revision. Metacognition also involves the testing, evaluating, and revising of one's own strategies (Brown 1985).

Metacognitive control is a process that the reader is able to apply to novel reading situations. Well-developed (and often automatised) monitoring skills are characteristic of skilled reading. Good readers are able to constantly monitor their level of understanding and adjust their reading strategies or take corrective action when necessary. They are also more competent than poor readers in judging what is worth reading and how the task should be approached, for example, with regard to time available for study (Garner 1987; Dole et al. 1991). In contrast, poor readers are less aware of comprehension failures, and when they notice them, either unable to identify the source of the problem or to know how to remedy the situation. The detection of comprehension failures and the use of repair strategies to restore lost comprehension appear to distinguish expert readers from novices in L1 reading (Dole et al. 1991). As for reading in a foreign language, there is tentative evidence that metacognitive control is one of the factors that distinguish good readers from less proficient ones (Block 1992; Grabe 1991). This is hardly surprising as the ability to use metacognitive skills efficiently belongs to the mental apparatus of skilled readers, regardless of the language in which they read, provided, of course, that their command of the language is adequate. For example, Davis and Bistodeau (1993) found no significant differences in metacognitive comments made by native English and native French adult readers with regard to the topic or language of the text. Thus, it seems that good L1 readers reading in a foreign language are likely to monitor comprehension more effectively than are poor L1 readers, as the studies by Block (1992) and Sarig (1987) below suggest.

Block (1992) carried out a think-aloud study on comprehension monitoring of L1 and L2 readers as they read a passage of expository text. The data revealed a regular process of monitoring which consisted of three phases: evaluation (problem recognition and source identification), action (strategic plan and attempt at solution), and checking (check and revision). This process was more complete with the more proficient readers. In both L1 and L2, the less proficient readers had difficulties in detecting comprehension problems and in taking corrective action even when they were aware that a problem existed. They also seemed to favour word-based reading strategies, while the more proficient readers used more global strategies to repair comprehension failures. A similar tendency was also noted by Carrell (1989) in her study above. Anderson (1991), who studied individual differences in strategy use in second language reading and test-taking, came to the conclusion that it is not enough for readers to master particular reading strategies but they must also know how and when to apply them, and be able to determine how successful they are in using a particular strategy. In other words, effective strategy use calls for planning, checking, evaluating, and revising.

In her think-aloud study on high-level reading in L1 and L2, Sarig (1987) found that comprehension monitoring moves, as she called the actions the reader took while processing the text, such as ongoing self-evaluation, identification of misunderstanding, mistake correction, and conscious change in carrying out a task, contributed highly to success in reading. Although the reading process was characterised by a high degree of individuality, the same processes seemed to underlie the performance of each subject in both languages which suggested that reading strategies were transferred from their L1 (Hebrew) to the foreign language (English). With regard to comprehension monitoring, Sarig concluded that success depended on the reader being constantly aware of the task and of the need to control task performance, as well as on the reader's ability to identify comprehension failure, to recruit resources for error correction, to correctly evaluate the chances of handling a difficulty, to control decoding efforts, and to tolerate fuzzy comprehension.

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the above studies, both retrospective and introspective methods were used to study metacognition. Retrospective questionnaires were used by Padron & Waxman (1988), Barnett (1988), and Carrell (1989) to study the metacognitive awareness of L2 readers, in particular the strategies that the readers thought they used in reading in a foreign language. In each case, the questionnaire was administered after the students had completed a reading comprehension test, thus fulfilling the criteria for immediate retrospection (Cohen 1986). As metacognitive knowledge is considered relative stable and stable (Brown 1985), readers are regarded as competent to discuss their strategy use and other aspects of cognition within the realm of conscious awareness. Strategy inventories obtained by using a questionnaire are problematic, however, because although readers may be aware of potential reading strategies, they do not necessarily use them (Stemmer 1991). They may also claim to use strategies they think they ought to use, or indicate those that they know are considered effective or those that might be expected by the researcher (Matsumoto 1993).

In the studies on metacognitive control cited above, introspective methods were used to collect the data. After an initial training session, Block (1992) instructed her subjects to verbalise their thoughts after reading each sentence of the text. Sarig (1987) asked her subjects to think aloud while attending to two tasks: main ideas analysis and synthesis of overall message. Verbal reports were more or less concurrent with the reading process, and can therefore be regarded to represent the readers' internal on-line processing (Matsumoto 1993). However, as Stemmer (1991) points out, we cannot expect subjects to provide a comprehensive account of how their internal processing works but have to infer the process from the product, i.e. think aloud data, within a suitable theoretical framework and in the light of findings from related research. In the present study, metacognition forms the general framework within which the data is analysed.

There are also some concerns about the veridicality of concurrent verbal reporting. For one thing, reporting while reading may change the nature of the reading process, in which case the resulting protocol does not correspond to what goes on in silent reading. Further, when cognitive processes such as monitoring become automatic, as presumably happens in skilled reading, they are no longer easily available to consciousness and, consequently, to verbal reporting. On the other hand, it is hypothesised that when we are faced with a problem in reception or production, some of these processes become unautomated and conscious because of additional processing demands, and these attended processes are then available for introspection (Block 1986; Davis & Bistodeau 1993; Færch & Kasper 1987). In foreign language reading, there is likely to be a certain number of blocks to comprehension which serve as triggering events in comprehension monitoring, and make the reader to take deliberate and planned action to restore lost comprehension. Thus, as Block (1986, 1992) points out, think-alouds are most informative about the reading process in those instances where readers have difficulties in understanding the text, as frequently happens in L2 reading.

## **4 CASE STUDY OF A FINNISH READER**

### **4.1 Description of data collection**

The purpose of presenting the think-aloud protocol and the reading strategy interview of a Finnish reader of English is to illustrate metacognition in action. The data was originally obtained for a pilot study in which different methods of data collection were tried out to study reading strategies in L2. The original experiment consisted of four parts: a background information questionnaire, a written recall task, a thinking aloud task preceded by a training session, and a structured interview of reading strategy use with questions about the text and the reader's difficulties.



The same running authentic expository text, discussing test anxiety in university students, was used for the recall and think-aloud tasks. Four first-year university students of applied linguistics, all of them with 10 years of English at school, participated in the experiment, but only the findings obtained from the think-aloud protocol and strategy questionnaire of one subject will be discussed here. This particular subject was chosen for her verbal ability, and because her think-aloud protocol was the most detailed and informative.

The method for obtaining think-aloud data was adapted from Cavalcanti (1987). The Finnish students were asked to read the text silently and to think aloud whenever they detected a pause in their reading. In this way, it was hoped that some measure of naturalness could be preserved in the task, and that thinking aloud would not very greatly interfere with reading. The subjects were asked to verbalise everything that came into their mind when they noticed they had stopped reading, and indicate the pause by marking it in the text. The researcher also marked the pauses in her text to make subsequent matching easier. The task was preceded by a training session to ensure that the subjects understood what was expected of them. The subjects performed the thinking aloud task in Finnish, although the language was not specified in the instructions. The protocols were taped and transcribed for analysis.

Think-aloud data from a 'pause protocol' seems particularly suitable for studying comprehension monitoring, because pauses in reading are likely to occur when comprehension problems are detected by the reader and need to be attended to before going on with reading. Such problems could result from, for example, not understanding the meaning of a portion of the text or a particular vocabulary item, from finding a structure difficult to understand, from forgetting the referent of a pronoun, from losing the thread of the argument, or from the lack of relevant background knowledge. Pauses could also occur when the meaning of a word, sentence or portion of the text is checked, or the level of comprehension evaluated. In addition to shedding light on the monitoring process, a pause protocol can provide information on the

readers' awareness of their cognitive processing, that is, how well they know what they are doing while reading.

The awareness of reading strategies was further explored with the help of a strategy questionnaire (see Appendix). The questionnaire was compiled from the reading strategy inventories by Hosenfeld (1977), Block (1986), Sarig (1987), Barnett (1989) and Anderson (1991). The subjects were interviewed after they had completed the think-aloud task. The questionnaire contained 43 most commonly cited reading strategies, and the subjects were asked whether they thought they used, sometimes used or never used these strategies when reading in L2. If necessary, the researcher explained what was meant by a particular strategy. Findings from the interview will be discussed only in so far as they relate to metacognition.

## 4.2 Analysis of think-aloud data

The think-aloud protocol was transcribed, and the subject's verbalisations were embedded in the text with the aid of pause marks () made by the subject and the researcher. Some prompts were needed in the beginning of the session to get the subject going, and these were also transcribed in the protocol. The passages and sentences within the passages were numbered, and each sentence was combined with the accompanying comments.

The verbalisations of the subject were first analysed to discover what had caused the pauses in silent reading. It was hypothesised that reading process would be interrupted, for example, when the reader became aware of faltering comprehension, identified a specific comprehension problem, took corrective or strategic action, or wanted to check her comprehension. These instances would then serve as triggering events to make automatised monitoring processes conscious to the reader as well as stable, and observable. The subject's statement immediately following a pause in reading was regarded as a reaction to such a

triggering event, and consequently interpreted as the immediate cause for that particular pause.

Next, the sources of specific comprehension problems were identified, and the reader's attempts to deal with them were analysed. The analysis was based on Block's (1992) model of the comprehension monitoring process proposing that the process comprises, in its most complete realisation, three phases and six specific steps. In the **evaluation phase**, the problem is either explicitly stated or implicitly acknowledged by taking some action, and its source is identified. The **action phase** comprises a strategic plan statement and/or an attempt to solve the problem. The final **checking phase** involves checking the result of the action, revising the solution if necessary, and providing the actual solution. Block found that the monitoring process operated in a similar manner in native and foreign language reading, but that it was less complete with less proficient L1 and L2 readers, and somewhat dependent on the nature of the problem (in Block's data, a vocabulary problem or a referent problem). It was hypothesised that similar phases and steps in monitoring could be detected in the think-aloud protocol of the Finnish subject.

### 4.3 Findings from think-aloud task

On the whole, the subject's reading performance was characterised by frequent pausing: a total of 61 pauses occurred during the reading of the 512 word text. The subject's verbalisations ranged from short comments on her actions, the text, or a specific linguistic point to longer articulations describing her struggle to make sense of a sentence or a passage. As explained above, the reader's immediate verbalised reaction to a pause in silent reading was interpreted as the immediate cause for the interruption of the reading process. In accordance with this interpretation, the majority of the pauses occurred when the subject reread either a part of a sentence (7), the whole sentence (16) or a longer portion of the text (3). Rereading

was thus very characteristic of her reading behaviour. The second most frequent cause for the interruptions was vocabulary: the subject stopped reading when she detected a word or group of words that she did not know or was uncertain about (18). Pauses also occurred when the reader went back in the text to check an earlier mentioned piece of information (8), reacted to the content or to some textual feature (5), and translated a word and/or verified its meaning by saying it aloud (4).

The following extract from the protocol illustrates some of the above cases. The first number refers to the passage and the second to the sentence within that passage. Note that '-' and '--' in the protocol indicate the relative length of a pause in thinking aloud during which the subject usually silently reread a portion of the text, searched for a piece of information by looking back or ahead in the text, or failed to report what she was thinking.

#### Example 1.

##### 5.1. In summary ()

//nyt täs, ahaa tää alkaa lähestyy loppuaan, hyvä, kun täs tuli tämmönen kokoo- kokoonpaneva (now here, aha this is coming to an end, good, because here there's this kind of a sum- summarising)// REACTION TO TEXT

##### **there are three general approaches to test anxiety. ()**

//tossa pisteen kohas palattiin katsomaan et montaks niitä nyt oli, kolme tommosta yleistä (there after the full stop I went back to see how many there were, three sort of general)// CHECK INFO

##### 5.2. The physiological or ()

//tulee hetken tauko kun pitää kääntää sivua ja tarkistaa vielä lauseen alku (now there'll be a short pause as I've got to turn the page and check the beginning of the sentence again)// REREAD PART OF SENTENCE

##### **behavioral approach stresses ()**

//nyt tuli toi 'stresses', se on ilmeisesti verbi sitten tässä tää on (now there's that 'stresses', it's obviously a verb here then this is)// VERIFY

**the disruptive ()**

//sitten outo sana tässä toi 'dis-rup-tive' - jatketaan eteenpäin, katotaan sitte uudestaan (then an unfamiliar word here that 'dis-rup-tive' - let's read on, let's come back to it later)// UNKNOWN WORD

**effects of arousal and emotionality. ()**

//virke -- luetaas koko kappaleen ensimmäinen lause -- siis - jätetään myöhemmäksi, siirrytään seuraavaan (sentence -- let's read the first sentence of the passage -- so - let's leave that for later, let's move to the next)// REREAD SENTENCE

As can be seen from the above example, the subject is both aware of what she is doing, i.e., of her comprehension monitoring process, and able to state the cause for interrupting silent reading. She is also able to verbalise her plan for the next 'move', as the end of the above extract shows. In spite of frequent pausing and rereading, she seems, nevertheless, to be able to keep the meaning of what she is reading in mind, as her comments on and reactions to the content of the text suggest. Below are further examples of these comments and reactions.

## Example 2.

**1.4. When they did a factor analysis of the Text Anxiety Questionnaire, ()**

//nyt pitää kattoo mikä toi ny oli toi tossa noi kolme sanaa ni - tää oli siis sen tutkimuksen nimi (now I must check what that was now those three words there - so that was the name of that study)// CHECK INFO

**Liebert and Morris ()**

//ja nyt muistuu mieleen mikäs vuosi sit - joo tuolta katotaan vuosi (and now it occurred to me that which year then - yeah let's look the year there)// CHECK INFO

**did indeed find these two factors ()**

//ja nyt pitää palata kattomaan mitkä ne kaks faktoria nyt olikaan - nyt otetaan tost ykkösen perästä toi parit ensimmäisen sanat ja - kakkosen jälkeen ja (and now I must go back and see what those two factors were then - now let's take those first couple of words after number one and - after number two and)// CHECK INFO

The above example shows how the reader pauses not because she has difficulties in understanding the language but because she concentrates on the content and her 'monitor' alerts her to the fact that she has forgotten a previously read piece of information needed at this point for satisfactory comprehension. She also knows where to look for the missing information, which further indicates that she has succeeded in keeping the meaning of the text in mind.

Some of the interruptions, however, did not concern immediate comprehension problems. The following examples show how the reader reacts when her prediction is not confirmed (Example 3.), and makes a comment on the content (Example 4.). After having read the last sentence of passage 4., she is aware that her comprehension of the passage is less than adequate. There still remains something that she must clarify before going on with reading. She does not verbalise the source of the problem, but presumably refers to two unfamiliar vocabulary items in passage 4. (one of which appears in Example 3.) which she had skipped without solving their meaning.

Example 3.

**4.2. According to her ()**

//sit tos 'her' sanan jälkeen tuli ai et se onkin nainen (and then there after 'her' I thought that hey it's a woman) REACTION TO TEXT

**analysis, calm students pay most attention to test items. ()**

//taas katotaan lause uudestaan -- mä jäin miettiin tätä 'item' sanaa - no kyl se varmaan käy myöhemmin mitä se tässä tarkoittaa (again let's review the sentence -- I stopped to think this word 'item' - well it will probably become clear later what it means here// REREAD SENTENCE

Example 4.

**4.5. Wine was able to reduce test anxiety effects ()**

//mmmmmm...// REACTION TO TEXT (rising intonation)

**by showing students how to attend to the test, and not to their internal states. ()**

//tossa, olipas hienoo kun pysty alentamaan noita vaiku- vaikutuksia -- katotaas mitä se olikaan -- mmmm - mitä se ois ollu mitä en äsken ymmärtäny - no joo -- joo no nyt kävi kokonaisuus selville tost kappaleesta (there, that was great she was able to reduce those eff- effects -- let's see what it was -- mmmm - what could it have been that I didn't understand a moment ago - well yeah -- yes well now the meaning of the entire passage became clear)// REACTION TO TEXT + PROBLEM RECOGNITION

In addition to finding out what had caused pausing in silent reading, i.e. what had interrupted the flow of the reading process and triggered off a reaction from the reader, the protocol was further analysed to see how specific comprehension problems were dealt with, and whether the monitoring process comprised the steps suggested by Block (1992). This analysis showed that, except for straightforward translations and comments on the content, the pauses occurred when the reader recognised a specific problem or faltering comprehension; in the majority of the cases, she also explicitly identified the source of the problem (Evaluation phase). Fairly frequently, she verbalised a plan for dealing with the problem, and acted on it either by proposing a solution, by guessing, or by giving up and/or referring the problem to later consideration (Action phase). Rarely, however, did she perform a specific check to test her solution, and there were no instances of revised solutions (Checking phase). The example below illustrates the steps of the monitoring process.

Example 5.

### 2.1. Emotionality, or excessive ()

//nyt tuli monta vaikeeta sanaa (now there were several difficult words)// PROBLEM REC + SOURCE IDENT

#### physiological arousal ()

//pitää miettiä mikä tää oli, selvitin merkityksen, muistan sen, piti vähä aikaa kaivella muistilokeroita (must think what this was, I figured out the meaning, I remember that, I had to search my memory a while)// PROBLEM REC + SOURCE IDENT + PLAN (+ SOLUTION?)

**may or may not be detrimental. ()**

//tätä sanaa piti vähän mietiskellä, muistin [R: detrimental?] joo (I had to give some thought to this word, I remembered it [R: detrimental?] yeah)// PROBLEM REC + SOURCE IDENT + SOLUTION

**to student performance. ()**

//ja sitte luetaan koko lause uudestaan -- mmmm (and then let's read the whole sentence again -- mmmm)// PLAN + CHECK

**2.2. Some level of arousal is absolutely necessary for a student to learn, retain, ()**

//toi sana ei muistu mieleen, mut se ei oo tärkeekään - ymmärrän ajatuksen ilman sitäkin (I can't remember that word but it's not important either - I understand the idea even without it)// PROBLEM REC + SOURCE IDENT + SOLUTION

**and perform. 2.3. The optimal level of arousal for any given task depends on a person's history, physiology, and state of health.**

**2.4. If emotionality goes beyond that optimal level, ()**

//pitää vähän palata pari lausetta taaksepäin ja kattoo uudestaan mitä si- (must go back a couple of sentences and look again what th-)// PROBLEM REC + PLAN

**performance may begin to deteriorate. ()**

//tosson outo sana - mut sen voi arvata että - että se on jotain negatiivista (there's an unfamiliar word there - but one can guess that - that it is something negative)// PROBLEM REC + SOURCE IDENT + SOLUTION

**2.5. But emotionality is not a universally negative variable. ()**

//ja tossa katotaan koko kappaletta vähän ihan uudestaan (and there I'll just review the whole passage a little again)// PLAN + CHECK

It is difficult to decide whether rereadings represent checks on the reader's solutions to specific problems or whether they simply result from thinking aloud interfering with keeping the meaning of a sentence or a passage in mind. In the latter case, they can be regarded as checks on the overall meaning of a portion of text that has escaped the reader's memory. The reader made, however, some attempts at checking her solutions to vocabulary problems, although these usually resulted in either her giving up (Example 6.) or referring the problem to later consideration (Example 7.; see also the end of Example 1. for a similar solution).



Example 6.

#### 5.4. The second approach ()

//tos piti kattoo mikäs se ensimmäinen (there I had to go and see what the first one was)// PROBLEM REC + PLAN + SOLUTION  
flows ()

//mikähän... (I wonder what...)// PROBLEM REC

**from the worry or cognitive component of test taking. ()**

//katotaas virke uudestaan, mä miettinny tota 'flow' sanaa -- otetaan vielä kerran -- toi 'flow' verbi on vähän outo, se niinku jotain 'virrata' mut se ei ehkä tohon ei tohon oikeen käy -- nyt tää virke ei oikein avaudu -- unohdetaan se (let's look at the sentence again, I've been thinking that word 'flow' -- let's read once again - - that 'flow' is a bit strange, it's something like 'virrata' but maybe it doesn't really fit there -- now this sentence doesn't really open up -- let's forget it) PROBLEM REC + PLAN + SOURCE IDENT + PLAN + SOLUTION + CHECK + SOLUTION (give up)

Example 7.

#### 4.3. Anxious students, on the other hand, attend to their internal states, ()

//nyt pitää vähän palata -- koitetaan lukea lause loppuun asti ja otetaan uudestaan jos ymmärtäis nyt kokonaisuudessaan (now I've got to go back a little -- let's try and read the end of the sentence and then read it again if I could understand it as a whole)// PROBLEM REC + PLAN

**their physiological arousal, and especially their negative self-talk. ()**

//ja vielä kerran -- tuo on vähän outo tuo 'attend' sana tossa että - tuttu sana mut mites se nytte tähän liittyy -- katotaan ny vähän tätä ja palataan myöhemmin siihen lauseeseen -- jos katotaa taas rivin alkuun nii (and once again -- that's a bit strange that word 'attend' there so - a familiar word but how does it tie in with this now -- let's have a look at this and come back later to that sentence -- if we go back to the beginning of the line so)// PROBLEM REC + PLAN + SOURCE IDENT (+ SOLUTION?) + CHECK + PLAN + SOLUTION (come back later) + PLAN

Like Block's (1992) less proficient readers, the subject identified a considerable number of vocabulary problems, which suggests that her appro-

ach to reading was largely word-based. This bottom-up processing style was also reflected in her verbalisations: she frequently referred to unknown words as being obstacles to comprehension, and concentrated on trying to understand individual sentences instead of longer stretches of text. The protocol included 28 instances where the reader commented on an unknown word, on some of them more than once ('arousal', 'interfere', 'response'). In 18 cases, she was able to solve the problem by inferring the meaning from the immediate context, by making a guess, or by deciding that knowing the exact meaning was not essential to comprehension. Except for the final checking phase, the monitoring process in dealing with vocabulary problems seemed, more or less, to follow the steps suggested by Block. Also, monitoring a referent problem appeared to proceed in a similar manner, as can be seen from Example 2. ('these two factors') and Example 6. ('the second approach') above. On the whole, referents posed few problems to the reader. She had no difficulty in finding any of the referents she searched for, even when they were further away in the preceding text, and she evidenced no need to check her solutions.

#### **4.5 Findings from Reading Strategy Interview**

After the think-aloud task, the subject was first asked some general questions about the text (difficulty, familiarity, interestingness). She was then asked to choose from a list of reasons those she thought might have caused her problems in understanding the text, and add her own reasons. This was followed by the reading strategy interview based on a questionnaire with 43 most commonly cited strategies. The researcher presented the strategies one by one, explaining them if necessary, and asked the subject to consider whether she used, sometimes used or never used that particular strategy when reading expository text, such as the reading passage, an article or a textbook, in a foreign language.

The general questions shed some light on the task, research conditions, and the interpretation of findings. The subject considered the language of the passage fairly easy to understand, but the topic difficult to follow, unfamiliar, and rather uninteresting. According to the subject, her problems in comprehending the text resulted from complex sentence structures, from not understanding what the writer was striving at, and from the text being of little interest. She reported that comprehension was further hampered by her being unable to concentrate on reading and to keep what she had read in mind. Interestingly, she did not refer to the vocabulary as causing her problems, although she had frequently stumbled on unknown words while reading. In addition, she reported that the reading situation had made her feel anxious. This oppressive feeling together with difficulties in concentrating and little interest in the topic may have caused her to give up more readily than she would ordinarily, i.e. when reading silently, have done. Consequently, the subject's performance in the think-aloud task must be interpreted very cautiously, and cannot be generalised as fully representing the way she normally reads expository text in L2.

Because unknown words had caused problems to the reader, the strategy interview was first checked to see how she perceived her strategies in dealing with vocabulary in L2 reading. It turned out that the subject was not in the habit of looking up every unknown word in a dictionary, nor did she translate while reading. On the other hand, she often checked words because she was curious to know their meaning, even when she did not regard them as essential to understanding. She admitted that she rarely tried to figure out the meaning of a sentence before resorting to a dictionary, but reported she utilised contextual clues, breaking a word into its components, her knowledge of other foreign languages, and pronouncing a word silently in her mind as strategies to clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words. She often skipped words she failed to understand, but usually came back to them later. This lookback strategy appeared frequently in the protocol, although the outcome of rereadings was seldom confirmed. There were instances of the subject

using contextual clues to infer the meaning of an unknown word, in most cases correctly, but the other reported vocabulary solving strategies did not appear in the protocol.

Although the subject reported using several meaning-based strategies generally considered characteristic of good reading behaviour (skimming for the gist, using background knowledge, varying reading rate, stopping to think what she had read, revising, using examples for clarification, simplifying complex sentences, attending to textual and contextual clues), she did not predict what a text might be about or what the author was going to say next, nor did she pay attention to the organisation of the text. Also, she felt she was not always able to distinguish main points from supporting details. She preferred to read everything with equal care, and not to skip examples because they were, as she commented, usually the nicest part of a text. The reported global strategies did not appear in the protocol, with the exception of rereading and using textual clues to solve referent problems. The scarcity of global strategies could have resulted from thinking aloud interfering with overall comprehension and/or by the reading passage being too short for the application of these strategies. The subject's general word-based approach to reading could also have been a contributing factor.

The subject's perception of her metacognitive skills was very definite. She was certain of knowing whether she did or did not understand, and had a clear idea of the repair strategies she employed when problems arose. She reported being able to notice when her concentration was beginning to flag, and admitted that her chain of thought was easily broken when she was confronted with figuring out the meaning of difficult structures or vocabulary. She also considered herself able to evaluate whether her guesses were correct. The protocol shows that the subject did indeed recognise comprehension problems, but could not always solve them satisfactorily, although she employed lookbacks, reading ahead, and guessing from context as repair strategies. In some cases, she was able evaluate whether the problematic point was essential

to comprehension or not, but still tended to concentrate on understanding words instead of the overall meaning.

How well, then, does the subject's perceived strategy use correspond to her reading behaviour in the experimental context? This is a difficult question to answer, because, during the think-aloud task, she used only a few of those strategies she reported using when reading in a foreign language. It is also likely that she considered her strategy use more in general terms, and less in relation to the task performed. It seems, nevertheless, that the subject was aware of using various reading strategies as well as able to reflect on their use. She was also aware of monitoring her comprehension, of detecting and dealing with comprehension problems, and of having a set of repair strategies at her disposal.

## 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was, first, to discuss metacognition in L2 reading from a theoretical point of view and in the light of previous research, and secondly, to provide an example of metacognition in action by presenting findings from a think-aloud protocol and reading strategy interview of a Finnish reader of English. Two interrelated aspects of metacognition were introduced: metacognitive awareness, or a person's awareness of his thinking and learning processes, and metacognitive control, a person's ability to exercise control over these processes. Metacognitive competence is generally regarded as a central factor in skilled reading in the mother tongue. In foreign/second language reading, research on metacognitive awareness has mainly concerned the readers' awareness of reading strategies, studied by retrospective methods such as questionnaires and interviews. Findings from these studies suggest that reader perception of strategy use is, at least to a certain degree, related to reading performance. Introspective methods such as thinking aloud have

been used for studying comprehension monitoring, the ongoing activity of evaluating and regulating one's comprehension of written text. These studies suggest that metacognitive control, i.e., the ability to monitor the level of understanding, adjust reading strategies, and take corrective action, is one of the factors that distinguish proficient L2 readers from less proficient ones.

Data from a think-aloud protocol of a Finnish reader of English was analysed to discover how the reader monitored her comprehension when reading expository text. It was hypothesised that silent reading would be interrupted when the reader became aware of faltering comprehension, detected a problem, took strategic action, or checked comprehension. The subject's immediate verbalisation after a pause was interpreted as a reaction to such an event. It was found that rereading a phrase, sentence or a portion of text to seek clarification, maintain comprehension or check comprehension caused the majority of the pauses. The second most frequent reason for pausing was detecting and dealing with vocabulary problems. In addition, checking a piece of information, reacting to content, and translating interrupted silent reading. As hypothesised, most of the pauses in reading thus occurred in connection with comprehension failure or specific comprehension problems. The protocol was further analysed to see how the subject dealt with such problems. The analysis was based on Block's (1992) model of the comprehension monitoring process comprising three phases and six specific steps: evaluation (problem recognition and source identification), action (strategic plan and action/solution attempt), and checking (check and revision). The model appeared to work adequately with the data which suggests that there is indeed regularity in the comprehension monitoring process. The subject's monitoring process was often incomplete in the sense that the checking phase was missing, but the other steps were well represented in the protocol.

Background questions asked before the strategy interview shed some light on the subject's performance in the think-aloud task. She found the topic of the passage uninteresting and difficult to understand,

had problems in concentrating, and felt uncomfortable with the research situation. Each of these factors may have affected the subject's performance negatively, making her, for example, to give up when attending to comprehension problems. The strategy interview did not yield particularly valuable information with regard to the subject's performance in the think-aloud task, mainly because it concerned general strategy use in L2 reading. Few of the reported strategies appeared in the protocol, partly because the reading passage was too short to allow the use of more global strategies, and partly because of the reader's word-based approach to reading. Nevertheless, the subject appeared to be aware of having various reading strategies at her disposal, and to have a clear perception of her comprehension monitoring and repair strategies, some of which did appear in the protocol. A preconstructed list of strategies was not, however, very useful, and more interesting information could have been gleaned from a more informal interview.

There were also other methodological problems with the study. It appeared, although not unexpectedly, that thinking aloud interfered heavily with comprehension. The subject frequently reread parts of the text after having paused, for example, to figure out the meaning of a word, because verbalising apparently caused her to forget what she had been reading. On the other hand, she clearly was aware of her difficulties in keeping the meaning of what she had read in mind, which can be interpreted as evidence of her comprehension monitoring working properly: she knew when she had not understood and used repair strategies to remedy the situation. Another interfering factor may have been the use of L1 for thinking aloud, although it was clearly the most natural choice for the subject. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that concurrent thinking aloud does not affect task performance if the attended information is already verbally encoded (Ericsson & Simon 1987). In carrying out the task in the mother tongue, however, the subject has to activate both her L2 to read the passage and L1 to verbalise her thoughts, and this may interfere with task performance (Færch & Kasper 1987). It is, however, more likely that the sheer cognitive load of being required to

report one's thoughts while trying, simultaneously, to make sense of a foreign language text influences both comprehension and monitoring processes.

Block's (1992) model of comprehension monitoring process proved helpful in describing how the process worked. There were, however, problems in interpreting the verbalisations of the subject, and in inferring the phases of the process from the data. For example, it was sometimes hard to decide whether the subject had really solved a problem she had recognised, as she rarely confirmed her inferences or guesses. Also, the checking phase was often problematic to verify from the protocol. In addition, longer verbalisations contained pauses during which the subject reread the text, as her explanations clearly indicate, but also those during which she just stopped thinking aloud. There is no way of knowing what went on in her mind during such pauses.

In spite of these reservations, findings from the think-aloud protocol suggest that the subject knew when she did not understand, was able to pinpoint the sources of comprehension problems, and had a set of repair strategies for attending to these problems, although not always successfully. In addition, she was able to verbalise the monitoring process which shows that she was aware of how she controlled her reading. She was also aware of having specific reading and repair strategies at her disposal, although whether she in fact used them all could not be attested from the data. Thus, the subject exhibited metacognitive behaviour characteristic of skilled readers, although her word-based processing style appeared more typical of less proficient L2 readers: she identified a considerable number of vocabulary items as obstacles to comprehension, and mainly dealt with them locally, i.e., within one sentence. On the other hand, unlike Block's (1992) less proficient readers, she had no problems in finding antecedents for referents, even when these were located further away in the text. It could be that the subject's word-centered reading style partly reflected her interest in words and their meaning in general, as the strategy interview suggested.



It would be rather bold to claim that metacognitive processes inferred from think-aloud data would completely mirror those in silent reading where processes occur very rapidly and often automatically, where much of what goes in the reader's mind remains below consciousness, and where there is no pressure for verbalising one's thoughts. Nevertheless, introspective data provide one way of getting information about processes that would otherwise remain hidden. When interpreted with due caution, findings from think-aloud protocols offer fascinating glimpses into the mind of the reader.

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#### APPENDIX: Reading strategy interview<sup>1</sup>

People vary in the ways they read texts. On the basis of the previous task and your general reading experience, consider how well the statements below describe your way of reading expository text in English (for example, a textbook or an article).

	Subject's answer
*Before starting to read a text in detail, I skim it through to get a general idea of what it is all about.	yes
*Before starting to read a text, I try to think what the topic might be, on the basis of the title.	no
*Before starting to read a text, I try to recall what I already know about the topic.	no
I read the heading and start immediately reading the text.	no
*When I'm reading I'm able to predict what the writer is going to discuss next.	not really
*My previous knowledge about the topic makes it easier for me to understand what I'm reading.	yes
*I use less time for reading passages that deal with things I'm already familiar with.	yes
I read all the passages of the text with equal care.	no
*When reading a text, I'm able to distinguish main points from supporting details.	not always
*I use examples to clarify the meaning of the text.	yes

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<sup>1</sup>\*strategies generally considered effective

- \*If I have understood the matter at hand, I skip the related examples. no, examples are the nicest
- \*I use the writer's clues (for example, moreover, first, secondly) to follow his reasoning. yes
- \*I pay attention to the structure of the reading passage (subheadings, textual organization). no
- \*When I notice that I haven't understood what I've been reading, I go back in the text and try again. yes
- \*When I notice that I don't understand a particular passage, I read on hoping that it will become clear to me. yes
- \*When I notice that I haven't understood something, I try to figure it out on the basis of what I have read. yes
- \*From time to time, I stop and think about what I've been reading. yes
- \*When I read, I make notes in the margin. no, I use a notebook
- \*When I read, I underline the points I consider the most important. yes
- \*I read the whole text through and then revise the main points. depends on the text
- \*When I have finished reading a passage, I revise it. sometimes
- \*When reading, I know when my concentration begins to falter. yes
- \*When I read, I have a good idea about what I have understood and what I have not. yes
- \*I read the points I consider important more carefully than the rest of the text. no, I read everything with equal care
- \*I read faster through sections which I find unimportant with regard to the matter under discussion. yes
- I forget what I have been reading when I have to stop and figure out the meaning of difficult words or structures. yes
- \*When guessing the meaning of an unfamiliar word, I find that my guess is usually correct. yes

- \*I have noticed that I understand what I'm reading even though I don't know the meaning of every individual word. yes
- \*If I can't figure out some point, I skip it and go on reading. yes, but come back to it later
- \*I try to simplify the structure of difficult sentences in order to understand them more easily. yes
- I translate parts of the text into Finnish in my mind. no
- I translate parts of the text into Finnish and write down the translation. no
- When I read, I'm in the habit of translating the text into Finnish. never
- Each time I encounter an unfamiliar word in the text I check its meaning in a dictionary. not always
- I write the Finnish translation of an unfamiliar word in the text. sometimes
- \*When I look up a word in a dictionary, I read the example sentences. no
- \*I use a dictionary only when there is no other way of finding out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. no, I also use it for fun and out of interest
- \*When there is an unfamiliar word in a text, I try to guess its meaning from the context. yes
- \*I try to figure out the meaning of a sentence before looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. sometimes
- \*When there is an unfamiliar word in a text, I try to guess its meaning on the basis of the other languages I know. yes
- \*I try to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words by breaking them up into their components (un/certain/ty). yes, I use 'basic words' to help me
- \*I pronounce an unfamiliar word in my mind in order to identify it. yes
- \*If I don't understand a word, I skip it and go on reading. yes, but come back to it later to check

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