

JYU DISSERTATIONS 598

Hillamaria Pirhonen

University Students' Language Learner Beliefs and Identities in the Context of Multilingual Pedagogies in Higher Education



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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in Higher Education**

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ABSTRACT

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While working life is increasingly multilingual, multicultural and multidisciplinary, university students in many countries study fewer languages than before. This creates challenges for language pedagogies in university because they are expected to prepare students for operating in these superdiverse contexts. Language pedagogies are also affected by the multilingual turn in second language acquisition (SLA) that has led to conceptualising language learners as multilingual beings. Recent research suggests that multilingual awareness, or constructing a more multilingual identity, could be advantageous for individuals' investment in learning foreign languages. In addition, students' language learner beliefs have a significant role in how they negotiate their learner identities and subsequently succeed and invest in language learning. From these premises, this longitudinal study examines the learner beliefs and identity negotiation of Finnish social science students that took part in restructured multilingual communication and language studies for academic and professional purposes as a part of their bachelor's degree. The students' discourses were analysed to investigate (1) how the students position themselves in relation to societal, sociocultural and individual levels of SLA, (2) how the students negotiate their multilingual and professional identities and how these negotiations intersect, and (3) how the students' language learner beliefs evolve during the three-year research period. The results suggest that university students refer to experience-based evidence, as well as acknowledge, accept or contest positions given or implied by society or an educational institution. The students also placed agency away from themselves to deny responsibility in language learning. The students' identity negotiation was influenced by their learner beliefs. There were changes in students' learner beliefs at the end of the research period. It seems that students need explicit teaching on multilingualism to start developing a multilingual identity. The dissertation concludes with pedagogical suggestions for multilingual teaching in higher education.

Keywords: multilingualism, beliefs, identity, language learning, university pedagogy

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Työelämä on yhä monikielisempää, monikulttuurisempää ja monitieteisempää, mutta samaan aikaan yliopisto-opiskelijat monessa maassa opiskelevat aiempaa vähemmän vieraita kieliä. Tämä on haaste kielipedagogiikalle yliopistoissa, sillä niiden pitäisi valmentaa opiskelijoita toimimaan näissä moninaisissa ympäristöissä. Monikielisen käänteiden myötä vieraan kielen oppimisen tutkimuksessa oppija on alettu käsitteellistää monikielisenä toimijana. Viimeaikaisten tutkimusten mukaan tietoisuus monikielisydestä, tai monikielisen identiteetin rakentaminen, voisi tukea yksilöiden kiinnostusta ja sitoutumista kielenoppimiseen. Lisäksi opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsityksillä on merkittävä rooli siinä, miten he neuvottelevat oppijaidentiteettejään, menestyvät kieltenoppimisessa ja panostavat siihen. Tämä pitkittäistutkimus tarkastelee näistä lähtökohdista käsin suomalaisten yhteiskuntatieteiden opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsityksiä ja identiteettineuvottelua. Nämä opiskelijat suorittivat osana kandidaatintutkintoaan monikieliset ja alakohtaiset viestintä- ja kieliopinnot. Opiskelijoiden diskursseja analysoitiin, jotta voitiin selvittää, (1) miten opiskelijat asemoivat itsensä suhteessa kielenoppimisen yhteiskunnallisiin, sosiokulttuurisiin ja yksilöllisiin tasoihin, (2) kuinka opiskelijat neuvottelevat monikielisiä ja ammatillisista identiteettejään ja miten nämä neuvottelut risteävät, ja (3) miten opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsitykset kehittyvät kolmen vuoden mittaisen tutkimusjakson aikana. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että yliopisto-opiskelijat viittaavat kokemuksiinsa, sekä hyväksyvät tai kiistävät yhteiskunnan tai oppilaitoksen suorasti tai epäsuorasti heille antamia asemaa. Opiskelijat asettivat myös toimijuuden itsensä ulkopuolelle välttääkseen vastuunoton omasta kieltenoppimisestaan. Opiskelijoiden identiteettineuvotteluihin vaikuttivat heidän oppijäkäsityksensä. Tutkimusjakson lopussa opiskelijoiden oppijäkäsityksissä tapahtui muutoksia. Näyttää siltä, että opiskelijat tarvitsevat eksplisiittistä monikielisyysopetusta voidakseen aloittaa monikielisen identiteetin rakentamisen. Väitöskirja päättyy pedagogisiin päätelmiin monikielisestä opetuksesta korkeakouluissa.

Avainsanat: monikielisyys, käsitykset, identiteetti, kielenoppiminen, yliopistopedagogiikka

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When I thought about the source for my interest in language learner beliefs and identities, I ended up in Scotland. I was fortunate to spend some time there with my family during my childhood and teenage years, and those years were crucial to the development of my language learner beliefs and my own linguistic identity. It is impossible for me to imagine my life without the languages I have learned throughout my life, and without the worlds and communities to which I have gained access through these languages. Although I detected already in school that my interest in languages was different to many of my classmates', it was only through my current work as a language teacher that I understood how deeply my own experiences had formed my learner beliefs and identities, and how differently some of my students feel about language learning. Hoping to help my students gain positive and affirmative experiences of language learning and themselves as language learners, I began constructing this doctoral dissertation.

This dissertation examines learner beliefs and identities in the context of multilingual pedagogies. I work at the JYU's Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication (Movi), where we have been developing multilingual, field-specific communication and language teaching. It is thanks to our visionary director (and supportive boss) Peppi Taalas and our previous vice-director, fellow language nerd Juha Jalkanen, that such an ambitious project began. This dissertation would not exist without the work that my colleagues at Movi have done in creating new methods for multilingual teaching in higher education. I want to especially thank my teacher team working with social science students, who were always supportive of my research project and gave me time and space for the data collection. Thank you, Heidi Kuitunen, for all the conversations we have had over the years about multilingual pedagogies, research, and life. A special thanks goes also to my lunch buddy Matthew Wuethrich, who worked around his schedule to proofread this thesis in record time.

I found a home for this project in Applied Linguistics at the JYU Department of Language and Communication Studies. I want to thank Professor Hannele Dufva who helped me out getting started with the project. I was very unsure of myself to begin with, but your interest in my ideas gave me confidence to continue. I cannot thank enough my supervisors Maria Ruohotie-Lyhty and Riikka Nissi. Both of you have always been there to support me, even when Riikka was working elsewhere. I have received good constructive feedback and tips from you both, and there has always been help available when I have needed it. I also want to thank Maria for being my travel-buddy when we flew literally to the other side of the world - an unforgettable conference trip that gave me a great confidence boost. From the Department of Language and Communication Studies, I must also mention Professor Paula Kalaja's support along the way, as well as Professor Karita Mård-Miettinen's kind words over the years and the practical help with the defence arrangements.

Apart from a one-semester-long break from teaching, I have worked on this dissertation alongside my everyday teaching job. It has been a challenging project

but a helpful one in terms of everything I have learned about learner beliefs, identity negotiation and multilingualism, as well as research skills, academic writing and publishing. The doctoral studies have given me access to the scientific community that may have otherwise remained distant to someone who does full-time teaching. Taking part in different conferences has been inspiring and given me more confidence when it comes to my own research. I want to especially thank for all the support I have received from colleagues at AFinLA's annual conferences, as well as the Psychology of Language Learning community. I am also grateful for all the constructive and supportive feedback I received from the editors and peer-reviewers in the journals where I published my articles. The final important milestones of this project are, of course, the preliminary examination and the defence itself. I am so thankful for Professor Ana Maria Ferreira Barcelos's and Dr Heidi Jauni's comments and support as preliminary examiners, and Dr Jauni's agreement to be my opponent in the public defence.

This study would not have been possible to conduct without the people because of whom the whole project began. Teaching languages in university has been a dream job, and every year I am inspired by the students I get to work with. I want to thank all the social science students I have taught and who have given me helpful feedback over the years. Most of all, I will always be grateful for the participants of this study. Without you, this study would not exist.

My own journey with languages and my linguistic identity have been moulded especially by the most important people around me. Without my family and my husband, I would not have had the chance to experience all the things that have made me this language nerd that I am. I took the cover photo of this dissertation in Scotland, and with it, I want to thank my family for all the adventures we have had there and elsewhere. I also want to thank my parents for all the emotional and academic support I have received during this project. Finally, the person that has been the closest to this research process, is my husband Fergal. I cannot thank you enough for being so supportive throughout the whole project. Thank you for all the pep-talks, proof-reading help, and the endless cups of tea.

In Jyväskylä, 15.12.2022

Hillamaria

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Towards multilingual pedagogies in higher education

Individuals, communities and societies have always been multilingual. However, the rapid speed of globalisation has affected multilingualism, language use and language learning in ways that require new understanding of second language acquisition (SLA). The increasing mobility of people, capital and information has created transnational and superdiverse contexts in which individuals interact and work (The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Gunnarsson 2014). Modern working life is increasingly multilingual, multicultural and multidisciplinary (Lehtonen 2017) and the future professional has been argued to be a global citizen possessing a range of multilingual competences (OECD 2018; The Council of the European Union 2018; UNESCO 2019). As institutions preparing individuals for professional life, the challenge for universities is to develop their pedagogies considering these societal and linguistic changes. This is a timely issue also for Finnish universities, where students' language competences do not always seem to match the expectations of future multilingual professional life.

University graduates should possess linguistic and communicative competences to interact convincingly in and about their field as well as to operate in international and multilingual settings (A 1039; The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Gunnarsson 2014; Critchley and Wyburd 2021). Finnish students must study at least one foreign language and the second national language at school, which means that when entering university, a Finnish student can be argued to be multilingual, with competences in a minimum of three languages. On paper, then, Finnish university students meet the goals of the EU, which aims for all European citizens to speak at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue. However, in practice, students' language competences are today less versatile than they have been in the past.

Although Finnish students seem to generally appreciate language competences as useful for working life (Jalkanen and Taalas 2013; Mutta, Lintunen and Pelttari 2017) and the general level of Finnish students' English is arguably high,

their skills in the second national and additional foreign languages are declining (Pyykkö 2017). One suggested reason for the decline in skills in the second national language is its change from a compulsory to an optional matriculation examination subject in 2005 (Palviainen 2011). The strong decline in the studying of additional foreign languages (Pyykkö 2017; The Matriculation Examination Board 2020) may have been affected by the recent changes in how students score points in their university application based on their matriculation examination results, with the new scoring system favouring mathematical subjects (e.g. Kiehelä and Veivo 2020). In addition, recent European research suggests that the strong status of English may negatively affect learners' investment in learning other languages (Henry 2017; Busse 2017). According to Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen (2021, 317), there is a discrepancy where the Finnish national curricula highlight the importance of multilingualism, but English is dominant more generally in society and academic contexts.

It seems that Finnish university students' language competences may not always meet the demands of the increasingly multilingual, multicultural, and multidisciplinary professional life they are about to enter. They may not be invested in language learning, which is Norton's (2013) concept for examining how an individual values language learning and is prepared to work towards acquiring new language skills. Initiatives have been made in comprehensive education to encourage young learners to choose optional foreign language studies. However, even if new initiatives could change the course of language learning in basic and upper secondary education in the future, universities are receiving students with declining linguistic competences. The challenge for universities is then to develop pedagogies that can support learners' development of multilingual competences during their academic studies. The value of internationalisation can already be seen in universities' attempts to increase student and staff mobility and employability, to recruit and integrate international staff and students, and to promote social inclusion alongside the diversification and decolonialisation of academic content (e.g. Critchley and Wyburd 2021). However, promotion of internationalisation has also received criticism for actually meaning promoting the use of English (Fabricius, Mortensen and Haberland 2017) over more socially inclusive ways of using multilingualism.

Multilingual pedagogies can be defined in multiple ways and in relation to different contexts. The context of this dissertation is the development of multilingual pedagogies in a Finnish university. This development work follows the notion of the holistic approach to multilingualism that promotes students' use of their whole linguistic repertoire (Henry 2017; see also The Douglas Fir Group 2016). It can be argued that despite most of the students and staff speaking Finnish as their first language, Finnish university students and studies are far from monolingual and should be studied and treated accordingly. However, developing multilingual pedagogies for this target group is likely to differ from contexts that could be traditionally understood as bilingual education (see e.g. Gorter and Cenoz 2016) or multilingual communities, where learners use more than one language in society, education, and at home. To begin with, members of this target

group may not identify themselves as multilinguals, which can affect their beliefs about and investment in language learning (see Fisher et al. 2020; Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen 2021).

To better understand the starting points of developing multilingual pedagogies in higher education communication and language teaching, it is also worth discussing the definition of language learning. The Douglas Fir Group (2016, 21) argues that language learning is cognitive, social and emotional. According to the authors, this ontological understanding is needed to understand multilingual phenomena in individuals' interactional contexts. The authors note that the forces of globalisation, technologisation and mobility are fundamentally changing language learning. Technological development transforms how language is needed and used as it creates new arenas of sharing and creating knowledge, culture and social networks, for instance. New technologies have allowed for the creation of new shared and imagined communities, since the language learner is no longer tied to the time and space of their geographical location. Mobility, technologies and multilingualism also affect how we conceptualise language learning and learners: when geographical boundaries no longer restrict language learning, it is increasingly problematic to simply label a language "foreign" or describe a language learning situation as a "real-life" versus "classroom" setting (The Douglas Fir Group 2016, 23; see also Cook 2016). Pedagogical understanding of this paradigm shift is needed, as universities prepare students to study and use languages in various multilingual, superdiverse and multimodal contexts.

Multilingual pedagogies in university entail supporting students' competences in understanding and communicating in and about their field at local and global levels, which in a non-Anglophone country such as Finland means at least teaching in the national languages and English (Kaufhold and Yencken 2021). Yet supporting university students' multilingual competences means more than teaching them different languages as separate entities, as languages should instead be integrated to emphasise learners' translingual competences (Gorter and Cenoz 2016). Skills in and knowledge of multilingual phenomena could support qualities of a global citizen such as cultural sensitivity, flexibility, and resilience (see Critchley and Wyburd 2021; Forbes et al. 2021; Ushioda 2017). As suggested in Forbes et al. (2021), multilingual teaching should explicitly focus on multilingualism to help students recognise what it means as well as reflect on their own multilingual resources. This kind of teaching is likely to be needed to help learners develop a multilingual identity which, in turn, would have positive effects on learners' investments in language learning as well as increase transcultural and translingual understandings (Ushioda 2017; Forbes et al. 2021; see also Comanaru and Dewaele 2015). In addition, reflective practices could lead to better self-perceptions and help learners to recognise their own competences and learning (Aragão 2011).

The development of multilingual pedagogies in higher education communication and language studies is a recent phenomenon, so research on the topic is scarce. This dissertation explores university students' language learner beliefs

and identities in a pedagogical context where multilingual pedagogies have been developed. Since 2013, the University of Jyväskylä's Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication (Movi) has created and developed multilingual communication and language teaching that has replaced language-specific courses for academic and professional purposes. However, multilingual teaching still needs to be studied in order to determine what kind of learning outcomes it can provide. The Douglas Fir Group (2016, 32) argues that students' identities and sense of agency are important for their multilingual repertoires because they affect the L2 activities in which these repertoires are manifested. Conversely, students' growing repertoires affect their identities and agency in their learning contexts. It would seem that learners' identity negotiation and multilingual repertoire development are co-dependent. Exploring the student's perspective is also vital because their beliefs about teaching can have major effects on their learning (see e.g. Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Forbes et al. 2021). It is therefore important to examine students' beliefs about languages, multilingualism, and themselves as multilingual learners (or users). Understanding the learner's perspective better can support future development of purposeful multilingual pedagogies in university. The subsequent sections will further discuss the concept of the multilingual learner and present the aim of the study in more detail.

1.2 The multilingual learner in a multi-layered framework of SLA

To explore multilingual learners in a multilingual teaching context, it is worth discussing the theoretical starting points for multilingualism and the multilingual learner. Together with the rapidly evolving, multilingual knowledge economy (The Douglas Fir Group 2016; OECD 2018; Gunnarsson 2014), SLA has experienced a multilingual turn that recognises multilingualism as the reality of societies and individuals, emphasises multiple competences and linguistic repertoires of multilingual language learners or users, and contests the native vis-à-vis non-native dichotomy (Ushioda 2017; see also Gorter and Cenoz 2016; Meier 2017; Henry 2017; Busse 2017). In line with Kuteeva, Kaufhold and Hynninen (2020, 9), the term *multilingualism* is used in this work in a broad sense. This means incorporating two perspectives. First, multilingualism is about the linguistic context, such as a university, operating in multiple languages. For example, the working languages of the University of Jyväskylä are Finnish and English (University of Jyväskylä 2015). Second, the concept of multilingualism is about the diverse language practices of students and staff, where an individual's linguistic repertoire is at the centre (Kuteeva, Kaufhold and Hynninen 2020, 9–10). Multilingualism does not mean parallel monolingualism but instead language users can possess different multi- or translingual competences, and use languages separately and together to create meanings in interaction (e.g. The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Meier 2017). Work and study contexts are inherently multilingual. However,

languages are still mostly taught separately in school and university, and language skills tend to be conceptualised as separate from each other in professional settings such as in job application processes.

The holistic understanding of multilingualism has fundamental implications on how to define the multilingual learner or speaker. Multilingualism in SLA has traditionally been used in the context of teaching learners with multiple mother tongues or whose home language is different from the languages of their education. A multilingual speaker can often be equated with an immigrant (see e.g. the recent publication for “*Addressing the democratic deficit among immigrants and multilingual Finns*”, Seikkula and Maury 2022), which can be appropriate for certain discussions such as ensuring accessibility and participation in education and society. However, recent SLA literature has increasingly conceptualised any user of more than one language as multilingual, and that is also the starting point for defining the term in this dissertation. Contemporary research views language learners as “multilingual social practitioners and agents with dynamic and complex biographies and identities who exist in a multilingual ecosystem” (Meier 2017, 153). In other words, a learner does not have to come from a bi- or multilingual home or be immersed in an L2 environment for them to be considered multilingual. This holistic approach to multilingualism also strives to refrain from traditional dichotomies of native vis-à-vis non-native speaker, and instead promotes the use of terminology such as *language user* (Ushioda 2017; Cook 2016).

This study examines the learner’s perspective on multilingual pedagogies by focusing on learner beliefs and multilingual identities which can be found at the intersection of the multi-layered reality of language learning. Learner beliefs can be defined as learners’ thoughts and feelings about languages, language learning and themselves as language learners (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Kalaja 2016; Mercer 2011; Aragão 2011), and multilingual identities as students’ understandings of themselves as multilingual learners (Wang, McConachy and Ushioda 2021; Fisher et al. 2021; see also Kayi-Aydar 2015; Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro and Ruohotie-Lyhty 2016). Based on the transdisciplinary framework of SLA by the Douglas Fir Group (2016) (see also the framework of multilingual identity negotiation by Forbes et al. 2021), learners’ beliefs and identity negotiation can be placed in the cross-section of societal, sociocultural and individual levels of language learning (Figure 1). In the multi-layered framework of SLA, learners’ beliefs and identities are therefore conceptualised as central to language learning that influence and are influenced by the levels of ideological and societal structures, sociocultural institutions and communities, and individuals’ social activity. It can be argued that learners’ beliefs and identities are an apt point of focus when exploring multilingual pedagogies.

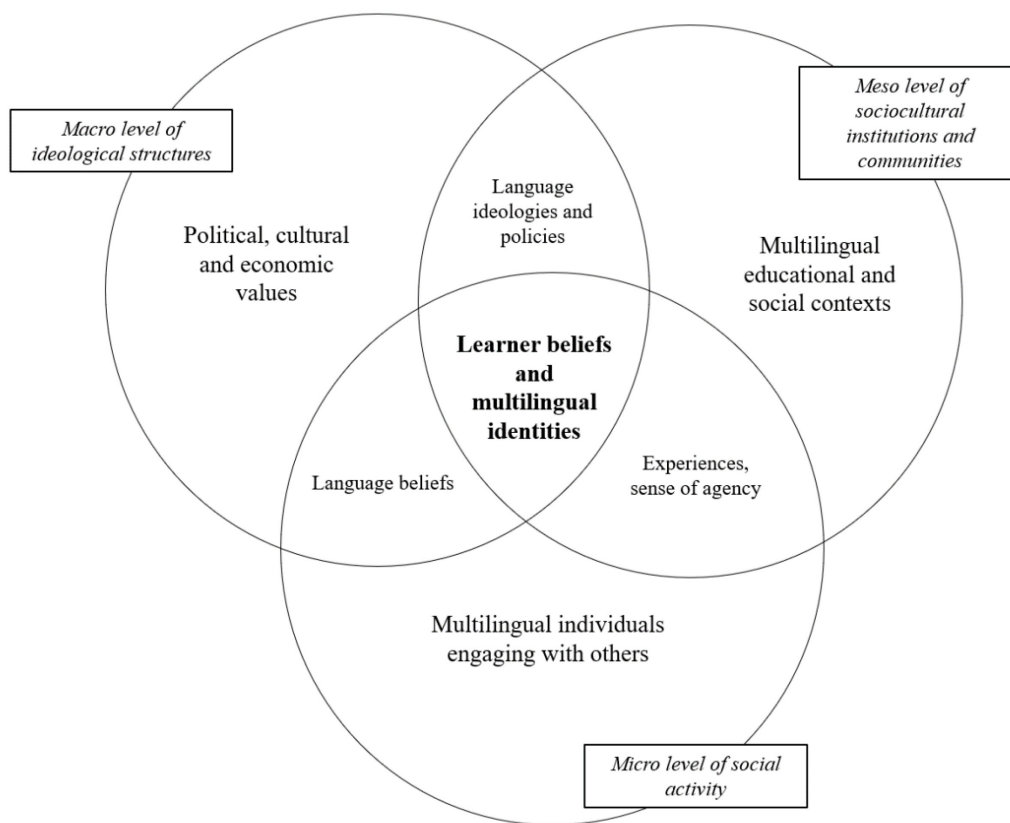


FIGURE 1 Learner beliefs and multilingual identities in a multi-layered framework of SLA (based on The Douglas Fir Group 2016; see also Forbes et al. 2021).

The framework illustrates the different levels of SLA and shows their interconnectedness, placing learner beliefs and multilingual identities at the centre. As has been discussed in this dissertation so far, societal changes resulting from globalisation affect political, cultural and economic values such as the focus on internationalisation and multilingualism. These values steer language ideologies and policies resulting in new multilingual educational and social contexts; for instance, the University of Jyväskylä has begun to support students' participation in multimodal and multilingual environments (e.g. Jalkanen 2017). New pedagogies create new experiences for the students and are also likely to affect their sense of agency, which in turn influence their multilingual repertoires as they engage in social activities. These activities are also connected to the students' language beliefs, which are affected by societal values. All these influential forces are co-dependent. The micro level of social activity affects the students' experiences of language use, their sense of agency and subsequently their learner beliefs and identities. Students' beliefs and identities influence educational contexts and pedagogical decisions, which again can cause changes in language beliefs, ideologies and policies resulting in new societal values. Exploring learner beliefs and multilingual identities within this framework can therefore provide new understanding of how university students perceive language learning in the context of multilingual higher education communication and language studies.

The present study strives to take a transdisciplinary perspective that can create understanding which discipline-specific findings cannot reach (see The Douglas Fir Group 2016, 24). Although SLA itself can be understood as transdisciplinary because it is connected to linguistics, education and psychology, Dörnyei (2020) argues that these fields have not cross-pollinated as much as they could or perhaps should. Psychology of language learning (PLL) is arguably impossible to avoid in language pedagogy, because learning, the learner and the learning conditions are deeply influenced by endless psychological phenomena (for an overview, see e.g. Williams, Mercer and Ryan 2015; Dörnyei 2020). However, while investigation of learner beliefs and multilingual identities can be located in the field of PLL, this dissertation takes a wider perspective. Accordingly, the learner is investigated in their contexts illustrated in the multi-layered framework of SLA (based on The Douglas Fir Group 2016) in Figure 1. The focus is on the learner's reality as they are studying in a programme influenced by national and international language political and pedagogical values and decisions, and this is examined by tools deriving from psychology, and even gender studies, to shed light on the positioning and reality construction of the learner. Learner beliefs and multilingual identities are therefore examined at the intersection of language ideologies, policies, pedagogies, and PLL.

It has been argued that learner beliefs and multilingual identities can have a significant effect on language learning (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Forbes et al. 2021). It is therefore worth exploring these beliefs and identities to better understand students and subsequently develop purposeful teaching methods that can enhance students' investment in language learning. A multi-layered framework provides transdisciplinary perspectives through which it is possible to gain a more holistic understanding of students' language learning realities.

1.3 Aim, research questions and structure of the dissertation

Navigating between the multilingual realities of globalised working life and students' increasingly English-dominant linguistic repertoires, this dissertation explores Finnish university students' beliefs and multilingual identity negotiation in the context of multilingual communication and language studies. Despite coming from predominantly Finnish-speaking backgrounds, Finnish university students can be conceptualised as multilingual actors that have competences in at least three languages. Yet, when starting their university studies, students' awareness of multilingualism can be low as they have not been taught to pay attention to it in comprehensive education (see Forbes et al. 2021; Haukås 2016). It seems that students would benefit from greater awareness of multilingual phenomena and themselves as multilinguals (Forbes et al. 2021).

The dissertation explores university students' learner beliefs and multilingual identity negotiation within a multilingual pedagogical development project, based on their lived experiences of interactional, educational and societal contexts. Utilising a multi-layered framework of SLA (Figure 1), it examines how

multilingual pedagogies in university can affect students' investment in language learning and subsequently prepare students for the challenges of multilingual professional life. The research questions guiding the dissertation are as follows:

RQ1. How do the students position themselves in relation to societal, socio-cultural and individual levels of SLA in the context of multilingual higher education pedagogy?

RQ2. How do the students negotiate their multilingual and professional identities in relation to their language learning, and how do these identities intersect?

RQ3. How do the students' language learner beliefs evolve during their multilingual communication and language studies?

To find answers to the research questions, the dissertation reports on findings based on data collected during a period of three years. Three substudies are reported on in the attached three articles. Each article provides empirical evidence of development of learner beliefs and multilingual identity negotiation during the research period, discussing the overall research questions guiding this dissertation from different perspectives. The three-year research period also allowed for a longitudinal examination of data, which is reported on in the third substudy. After introducing the overall frameworks and central concepts guiding the study, the dissertation describes and discusses the research design and key findings of the articles. It then examines the three main research questions considering the evidence from the three substudies as well as discusses pedagogical implications for further development of multilingual teaching in higher education.

2 FRAMEWORKS AND CENTRAL CONCEPTS

This dissertation explores students' discursive constructions of their learner beliefs and multilingual identities from the poststructural perspective and within a multi-layered framework of SLA. Chapter 2 defines and discusses the concepts of learner beliefs, multilingual and professional identities, agency and positioning in the poststructural paradigm.

2.1 Learner beliefs and identities

Learners' perceptions of languages and language learning have been conceptualised and examined within a plethora of frameworks. The present study focuses on learner beliefs and identities. As Barcelos (2015, 310) suggests, beliefs and identities can be seen as closely connected constructs, our beliefs shaping our identities. This dissertation investigates multilingual learners participating in multilingual higher education communication and language studies. By exploring learner beliefs, it is possible to gain understanding of students' beliefs about languages, language learning and themselves as language learners. Multilingual identity negotiation is worth examining as it is possible that learners do not identify themselves as multilinguals (e.g. Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen 2021), even though a multilingual identity seems to be an advantage in successful language acquisition (Fisher et al. 2020). In addition, since university students' beliefs and identities are likely to be affected by questions about professional life, multilingual identities are discussed in this study in connection with students' emerging professional identities.

The interest in learner beliefs started in the late 1970s with the Good Language Learner (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; see also Barcelos 2015). The term *learner beliefs* was established in the classic studies by Wenden (1987) and Horwitz (1988). Particularly Horwitz's BALLI questionnaire (beliefs about language learning inventory) became largely influential and is still adapted in contemporary research. BALLI represents the traditional approach to learner beliefs that

has received criticism for its etic perspective on language learning, for methodological issues as well as for the conceptualisation of beliefs as existing in the learner's mind (e.g. Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018). In contrast, contextual approaches have attempted to conceptualise and study beliefs from an emic perspective, understanding beliefs as "embedded in students' contexts" (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; see also Williams, Mercer and Ryan 2015; Barcelos 2015). Within contextual approaches, learner beliefs have been studied at least from discursive, dialogical, and sociocultural viewpoints (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018).

Drawing from discursive approaches (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro, 2018; Kalaja 2016), this study defines beliefs as "learners' views and opinions about languages, language learning and themselves as language learners, that are discursively constructed, complex and dynamic, shared in specific contexts and affected by macro-contextual factors such as values and language ideologies" (Pirhonen 2022a). Longitudinal studies such as Kalaja's (2016), Mercer's (2011), Yang and Kim's (2011), Aragão's (2011), and Peng's (2011) illustrate the complex and dynamic nature of beliefs and their positive, affirmative, and negative effects on university students' language learning (see Article 3 for a longer description of longitudinal studies on learner beliefs). In the light of these studies, learner beliefs is a framework through which it is possible to access one viewpoint on the complex psychology of language learning. For instance, research on learner beliefs can provide new perspectives into learners' resistance to teaching methods, learners' and teachers' conflicting beliefs, language learning difficulties, learning strategies and motivation (Barcelos 2015). It is possible to make separations of types of beliefs. For instance, Williams, Mercer and Ryan (2015) make a distinction between epistemological beliefs, implicit beliefs and mindsets, and attributions. However, the definition based on the discursive approach in this study encompasses the different types of beliefs under one umbrella.

Learner beliefs and multilingual identities are interconnected (Forbes et al. 2021, 435), as identities can be understood as "a pool of beliefs" (Ruohotie-Lyhty 2016, 172) that define the individual at a given time and context. Identity is a complex concept that has been approached from a variety of perspectives and conceptualised within multiple frameworks. The three main approaches to studying identities are the psychosocial, the sociocultural and the poststructural. Fisher et al. (2020) note that while some of the key features of these approaches differ, they all agree that identity can be understood as both individual and social, that identification is a process, and that individuals can at least to a degree create and change identities. While acknowledging the complexity of the concept, the present study subscribes to the poststructuralist approach to identities, defined by Norton (2013, 45) as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future". The poststructural approach will be further described in section 2.2.

This dissertation examines students' identities from a multilingual perspective. Multilingual identities have been conceptualised as "the perceived relationship between people's socially situated sense of their current and future selves

and the languages in their expanding linguistic repertoire” (Wang, McConachy and Ushioda 2021, 422). As the focus in this dissertation is a learner of multiple languages, the position of the language learner is further highlighted here. Accordingly, multilingual identity negotiation in this study is understood as the way individuals draw from their learner beliefs to construct themselves as language learners and users, and their relationship with different languages in their lives. Beliefs and identities are closely related constructs that affect each other. As learners construct their beliefs about language learning, they negotiate their own position as language learners and their relationship with their linguistic repertoire, subsequently negotiating their multilingual identities. In turn, multilingual identities influence learner beliefs as the individual’s identity can change their outlook on languages or language learning.

Identities are dynamic positions that are (re)negotiated and (re)shaped in discourse (Kayi-Aydar 2015). This viewpoint does not consider them “pre-constituted” and merely expressed through discursive practices. Instead, they are negotiated in discourse “from the interpretative resources – the stories and narratives of identity – which are available, in circulation, in our culture” (Wetherell and Potter 1992, 78). Identity work is also agentive, because by choosing to exercise agency, individuals negotiate their identities (Davies and Harré 1990). Identity work shapes and is shaped by language learning, as individuals approach language learning from the perspectives of their learner identities, and processes of language learning make new identities available (The Douglas Fir Group 2016, 31–32). For example, gaining access to a new discourse community may change a learner’s identity from a language learner to a language user or a multilingual speaker (The Douglas Fir Group 2016, 32). Section 2.3 will further discuss agency and positioning in discourse, and how exploration of these constructs can be utilised in the analysis of students’ beliefs and identities.

Professional identities are examined in connection with multilingual identities in this dissertation because of the context of multilingual, field-specific academic and professional communication and language studies. The purpose of taking this viewpoint is to investigate how university students connect their language learning with their future professional life. University students’ professional identities have been studied particularly in educational sciences, which is where the definition of the concept is borrowed from in this work. It has been noted that students’ professional identities are connected to students’ experiences and their beliefs that have developed based on these experiences (Barcelos 2016). Previous research also suggests that university students’ professional identity develops as they become members of communities of practice (see e.g. Jackson 2016; Hamilton 2013). In line with Vähäsantanen (2015; see also Barcelos 2016; Ruohotie-Lyhty 2016), professional identities are defined here as “university students’ perceptions of themselves as future professional actors, including their current professional interests and future aspirations” (Pirhonen submitted). As has been proposed by Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen (2021), Finnish university students may not see themselves as multilinguals despite their competences in multiple languages. A further question to explore is the role of a

multilingual identity in students' developing professional identities. It could be argued that the lack of a multilingual identity could inhibit a student from aspiring to an international career, whereas confidence in their multilingual competences could encourage them to seek further opportunities for multilingual and professional communication. Multilingual and professional identity negotiations, it seems, could be interconnected.

Multilingual and transnational professional life is bound to influence both language pedagogy in university and students' perceptions of themselves as future professionals. By examining learner beliefs and identities in this study, it is possible to gain better understanding of these perceptions. Learner beliefs and identities seem to be affected by globalised societal changes as learners negotiate their identities in relation to neoliberalist discourses (see Norton and De Costa 2018). In addition, Duff (2015, 61) argues that, "multilingualism and transnationalism are also tied to identity – that is, how people see or imagine themselves, how they relate to the social world... and thus their sense of belonging to and legitimacy within particular social groups near and far". It is therefore a timely issue to examine how Finnish university students discuss their learner beliefs as well as negotiate their multilingual and professional identities amid these societal forces, and how these negotiations affect their investment in language learning.

2.2 Discursive construction of beliefs and identities

The present study takes a poststructural and discursive perspective on learner beliefs and identity negotiation. This approach focuses on language, and beliefs are viewed as constructed in discourse rather than residing in the learner's mind (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018). Accordingly, it is possible to examine beliefs by studying learners' discourses. However, this approach does not discuss the relationship between learners' beliefs and actions, since the focus is solely on discourse (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Kalaja et al. 2016). The poststructural perspective on identity is used in this research precisely because it attributes a sense of agency to learners (see Fisher et al. 2020). This perspective to identity negotiation considers subjectivities "inculcated, invoked, performed, taken up, or contested in particular discursive spaces and situations in a moment-by-moment way and also consider the symbolic capital associated with those practices" (Duff 2016, 62). Investigation on learner beliefs and multilingual identities in this dissertation builds on a multi-layered framework of SLA. The perspective is poststructural, examining the dynamic construction of reality through language. Accordingly, learners' beliefs and identities can be studied through discourse analysis where the focus is on learners' discursive positioning in relation to societal, sociocultural and individual levels of language and language learning (Figure 3).

The poststructural and discursive approach to learner beliefs and identities operates within individuals' discourses and refrains from making claims about the learner's cognition. Instead, an analysis of a learner's discursive practices

provides the researcher with understanding of how the learner constructs their own reality with language (e.g. Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Kalaja et al. 2016). In the present study, the main analytical tools for investigating learners' discourses originate in position theory and discursive psychology (Davies 2000; Davies and Harré 1990; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992; te Molder 2016). Discourse analysis in this work examines learner's positionings in their own discursive practices and in relation to wider discourses, subsequently constructing their learner beliefs and multilingual identities (Figure 3).

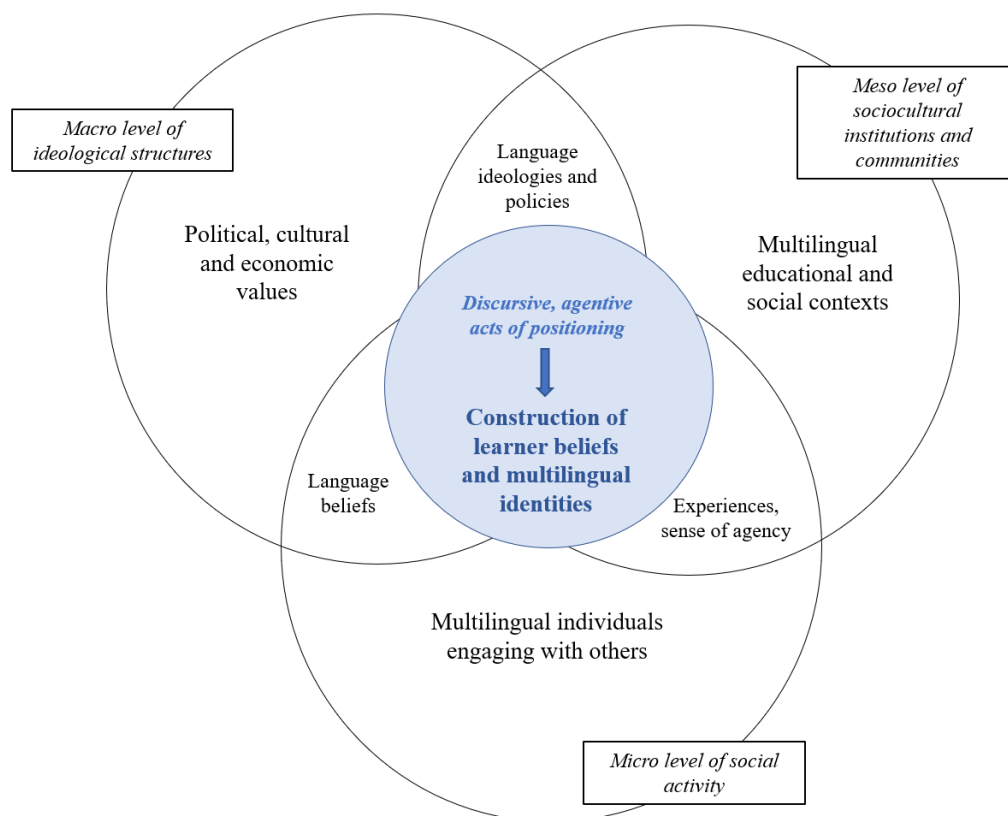


FIGURE 2 Exploring learner beliefs and identities through a poststructural paradigm

The term discourse can be used in different meanings: it can refer to wider discourses circulating in society, to individuals' different meaning-making systems, or more generally to any kind of speech or writing (Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen 2016; Potter and Wetherell 1987). In most cases, it is clear from context which kind of discourses are referred to. However, discourse analysts have also suggested other concepts for describing individuals' discourses. In this dissertation, discourses are understood firstly in the context of wider, societal and social patterns of meaning-making, such as the English-only discourse that is used in the context of claiming that other languages are not as important to know. Gee (2015) calls these "big 'D' discourses". These discourses can be shared in a specific community, and they can be shared, contested, changed or made to disappear. For example, the teachers taking part in developing multilingual pedagogies at

the University of Jyväskylä share their own discourses on higher education language teaching that highlight multilingual phenomena instead of traditional language beliefs. Secondly, Gee (2015) refers to “any stretch of language in use” as “discourse” with a small “d”. In this study, individuals’ writings and utterances are described as discourse, as it is common to refer to them as such when conducting discourse analysis and it is a suitable umbrella term as the present study discusses both written and oral material.

However, to separate all individual linguistic practices from individuals’ more defined systems of meaning-making, the term interpretative repertoires is also used in specific instances in this study. Following Edley (2001) and Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen (2016), interpretative repertoires can be defined as “relatively complete systems of meaning making which are formulated in social practices and take part in constructing social reality” (Pirhonen 2022b). It is possible to identify them by their use of common vocabulary or metaphors used to discuss events or actions (Potter and Wetherell 1987). In discursive psychology, it is argued that individuals are inconsistent by nature, and they draw from different interpretative repertoires to describe, explain, and give reasons for their arguments (Wetherell and Potter 1992). The purpose is then not to find a consistent way of speaking an individual uses, but to examine the variability of their use of discursive practices (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Chapter 3 describes methodology in more practical terms.

The poststructural perspective focuses on discursive constructions of reality. In this viewpoint, language is fundamental in the construction and spreading of discourses that have the power to mould social institutions and practices (Norton and De Costa 2018). At the same time, poststructuralist principles acknowledge the agentive role of the individual engaging in discursive practices. Discourses thus both constitute and are constituted by individuals (Davies and Harré 1990; Baxter 2016). This understanding guides the present study, arguing that learners both shape and are shaped by circulating discourses on the different layers of language learning.

2.3 Agency and positioning in discourse

The central concept for data analysis in this study is positioning, which Davies and Harré (1990) define as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines”. Basing their discussion on the poststructural paradigm, Davies and Harré argue that discourses both shape individuals and are shaped by their agentive actions. Positioning is a useful viewpoint for exploring how students see themselves in relation to languages, language learning and teaching, multilingualism, and professional life. In addition, the term is used to discuss the teacher-researcher’s role in this dissertation. Positioning is agentive in nature, and therefore the concept of agency is also worth discussing in relation to it.

Positioning is used as the main concept for data analysis in this dissertation because it complements the discursive perspective on learner beliefs (see Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018) and multilingual identity negotiation (see Fisher et al. 2020). Positioning is an agentive process which allows for individuals to construct their beliefs and identities as they choose from positions available to them and then speak from the perspective of those positions (Kayi-Aydar 2015; Norton 2013; Davies and Harré 1990). Through positioning, it is possible to analyse the moment-to-moment emergence of positions that learners adopt to construct their beliefs and negotiate their learner identities (Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018), both of which are understood as dynamic in nature (Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Fisher et al. 2020).

According to positioning analysts, individuals position themselves and others in their discourses, and then examine the world from the perspective of that position. Individuals can take up but also resist different positions available to them (Gu et al. 2014; Davies and Harré 1990). The frequently cited notion from Davies and Harré (1990) concludes that “who one is [should always be] an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives”. Therefore, when we examine learner beliefs and identities, positioning gives us one perspective on how learners construct their realities in discourse. At the same time, the positioning perspective is a discursive one and refrains from making claims about the learner’s cognition. This means that the analysis stays on the level of the learner’s discursive actions and does not take a stand on what happens inside the learner’s head (see e.g. Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018). However, in poststructuralist perspectives in SLA, language is at the centre (e.g. Norton and De Costa 2018). In this framework, we can explore how reality is constructed in discourse and, as such, positioning is an interesting and fruitful perspective.

The term *agency* appears frequently in connection to learner beliefs, identities and positioning. Like identities, agency is a complex concept that can be approached from multiple viewpoints. Put simply, agency can be defined as “the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001, 112). Like beliefs, agency has been examined within different frameworks such as the social cognitive theory (Bandura 2000), ecological approach (Biesta and Tedder 2007) and positioning theory (Davies 2000), the latter of which is the most relevant for the present study. Positioning theory and poststructuralist perspectives emphasise the authorship and positioning of the writer or speaker of a discourse (Davies 2000; Kayi-Aydar 2019), that is, how agency and positioning are constructed in discourse and all the time negotiated (Warren 2019). According to this perspective, agency has a clear connection to the context in which it is achieved; it is situational and constructed in interaction (Kayi-Aydar 2015). The discursive *I* is thus a subject position available to the individual, not a personality trait (Davies 2000). Agency is closely connected to positioning since individuals exercise agency depending on how they are positioned in discourse (Kayi-Aydar 2015).

In this dissertation, agency is understood as a situated and dynamic discursive position that the writer or speaker may assign to themselves (reflexive positioning or intentional self-positioning) or others (interactive positioning), or refuse to do so (Kayi-Aydar 2019; Kayi-Aydar 2015; Warren 2019; De Costa 2011; Davies and Harré 1990). Accordingly, individuals can exercise agency through subject positions to which they have access, as positioning allows speakers to adopt agency in discourse by positioning themselves in it (Kayi-Aydar 2019; Warren 2019). Through this process they “(co)construct and (re)shape their self” (Kayi-Aydar 2015, 95). According to poststructuralist views, an individual “can only ever be what the various discourses make possible, and one’s being shifts with the various discourses through which one is spoken into existence” (Davies 2000, 57). Furthermore, this study discusses both learners’ agency and their sense of agency, the latter referring to the participants’ own reflections and understandings of their own agency. In other words, at times it is worthwhile to examine not only whether and how learners exercise agency, but also how they perceive their agency or agentive position in a given context or discourse.

Learners’ agency seems to be emphasised as central in future education but is often only vaguely defined in research concerning it (Hvid Stenalt and Lassesen 2021). Hvid Stenalt and Lassesen (2021, 11) call for greater transparency when it comes to conceptualisation and methodological choices. Based on a systematic review, the authors argue that while research into student agency suggests there is a connection between agency and learning outcomes, this connection should be discussed further with the help of versatile methodologies. The poststructuralist perspective to learners’ agency (Davies 2000; Kayi-Aydar 2019) utilised in this study focuses on how the participants display agency in their discourses through positioning. In particular, the dissertation explores the extent to which the participants construct discourses in which they are active, agentive actors of learning. This complements the discussion on learner beliefs and identity negotiation as the participants’ sense of agency in language learning is discussed (see Hvid Stenalt and Lassesen 2021; İnözü 2018; Williams, Mercer and Ryan 2015). The methodological choices will be further discussed in section 3.2. In sum, positioning and agency are constructs through which it is possible to explore learners’ beliefs and identity negotiation in discourse. It provides the researcher with a perspective of the learner as an active participant both in constructing their discourses and affecting their own learning.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Pedagogical context and the teacher-researcher's position

This dissertation is anchored in the long tradition of language teacher research (e.g. Varghese 2008). In particular, the context of the study is teaching I am involved in, and as such I have conducted the research from a teacher-researcher's position. Aside from wanting to contribute to research on learner beliefs and identities from a multilingual perspective, the motivation for starting this study stems from my development and teaching work at the Centre of Multilingual Academic Communication (Movi) at the University of Jyväskylä. As a part of a larger teacher team, I began to develop multilingual, field-specific communication and language studies for social science students in 2015–2016. The studies were a compulsory part of the students' bachelor's degree, and their purpose was to support the students in their academic studies as well as prepare them for multilingual professional life (see The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Critchley and Wyburd 2021; The Council of the European Union 2018). Since I was one of the teachers in these courses, the students who participated were ones I knew and taught during the whole data collection period. My position as a teacher-researcher had to be considered at all stages of the research process and continued after the publication of the articles as I began using the research results as teaching material.

Movi is a unit responsible for providing communication and language teaching to the university's students and staff. Although the exact requirements and the amount of ECTS credits vary between disciplines, all bachelor's degrees include compulsory communication and language studies for academic and professional purposes, including the first and second national language and one foreign language. For most students at the University of Jyväskylä, these languages are Finnish, Swedish and English, respectively. Traditionally, the languages have been taught in separate courses. However, there was a need to develop this teaching to meet the changing requirements of globalised working life and the new understanding of multilingual competences. Instead of separate courses on

English, Swedish, Finnish written communication and speech communication, we created new multilingual studies that take multilingual phenomena in academic and professional communication as their starting point. The purpose of these studies is to support students in their academic studies as well as prepare them for their future multilingual professional life. Utilising translanguaging practices, the studies attempt to provide support for students' development of multilingual repertoires. In addition, explicit teaching content about multilingualism and reflective practices aims to support a growing sense of multilingual awareness and multilingual identities. The teaching follows the holistic notion of multilingualism that is also described in the University of Jyväskylä language policy:

The language policy promotes dynamic multilingualism, the ability to flexibly and rapidly react to communicative situations, the willingness to resort to even limited language skills as well as an open mind and a positive attitude towards different languages and language use. Modern multilingualism encompasses spontaneous and flexible co-existence of parallel languages in various communicative situations. In different contexts, participants may use the languages that come naturally to them. They need not master all the languages in their repertoire at the same level. The possibility to use different languages increases the opportunity for equal participation and access to a wider array of discourses. (University of Jyväskylä 2015, 1)

The language policy highlights both the dynamic nature of multilingual interaction and the inclusivity in communication it strives for. These kinds of policies are starting points for the development of multilingual pedagogies which are needed to prepare students for the multilingual and multicultural realities of both the university and the outside world (see The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Critchley and Wyburd 2021; The Council of the European Union 2018). Although the perceived benefits of multilingual language education have been written about in both research and policy papers, practical implementations have remained scarce. Movi's new way of organising language teaching is unique in Finnish higher education – and on any level of language teaching in the country.

The communication and language studies discussed in this dissertation consisted of four courses, each of which was worth three ECTS credits. The teaching was planned and implemented by a team consisting of Finnish written and speech communication, English, Swedish and second foreign language teachers. The courses were co-taught, which could mean in practice that the English teacher would teach some classes on information search and academic reading skills, after which the written communication teacher would come in to help the students write an essay based on the sources they had found with the English teacher. Many core assignments had different parts that would be assessed by different teachers. For example, at the end of the course called Academic interaction, the students had small group discussions in English that were assessed from the group communication perspective by the speech communication teacher, and source-based argumentation by the English teacher.

All the data were gathered during the courses, which was a pedagogical decision I made as a teacher. Figure 3 introduces the course names, timing, core content as well as the data collection points, the latter of which will be elaborated

in the following sections. I collected the data between 2017 and 2020 when these courses were piloted for the first time.

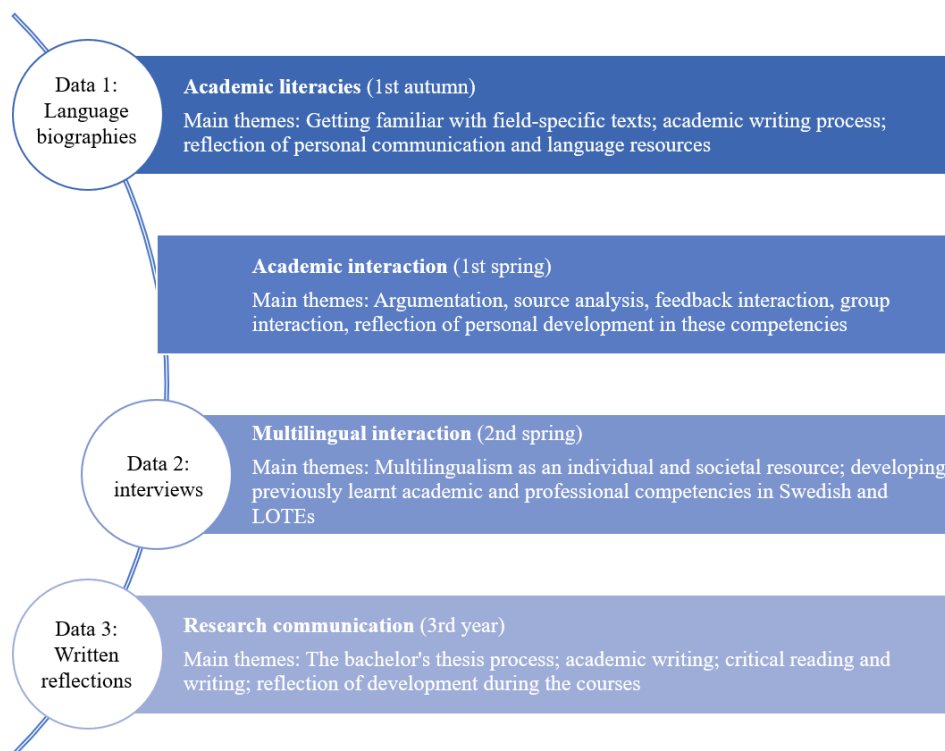


FIGURE 3 Course names, content and data collection points

The four courses lasted from the beginning of the students' first year in university to the end of their bachelor's thesis process, which for most students happened in their third year. The multilingual courses focused on phenomena in academic and professional communication, as summarised in Figure 3. By the end of these studies, the students were expected to be able to operate in their profession and in international contexts at least in Finnish, Swedish and English (A 1039).

Although this dissertation focuses on students' learner beliefs and identities, I as a teacher-researcher must consider my own beliefs during this research process. I have made a methodological choice of researching and writing transparently from a teacher-researcher's position which is evident in all stages of the study, starting from the choice of topic. I have attempted to ensure the integrity of the research throughout the process, one step being acknowledging my own biases concerning learner beliefs. It is important for any language teacher to examine their own beliefs before stepping into the classroom (see Williams, Mercer and Ryan 2015; Gadamer 1986–1987/2004, 34). However, in this research, I must also distinguish my beliefs that have influenced the planning of the participants' communication and language studies, and the participants' beliefs that may differ from my own. In other words, for the participants' language courses, I planned classes that were in accordance with what I believed is important in language learning, but the students viewed the teaching from the perspective of their own belief systems.

The teacher-researcher position was visible during the whole research process. The project began from my needs to understand my students better as a teacher. When developing data collection methods, I considered both what kind of information they would provide the researcher with, and how they could be of pedagogical benefit. I therefore opted to collect data through the students' course assignments. When giving the assignments, I also considered my role as a teacher and ensured that the assessment criteria did not limit the students' way of expressing themselves. The same had to be considered when asking for informed consent: it was made it clear to the students that their choice to participate or not to participate would not affect their course assessment. While two of the three data sets were course assignments, I also interviewed ten of the participants for one substudy. My role as their teacher was particularly important to address during the interview process so that the students would feel comfortable to express their opinions freely despite the teacher-student power relationship (e.g. King and Horrocks 2010).

The data analysis similarly required a careful examination of the double role, particularly in substudies 2 and 3 where I was not able to anonymise the texts from myself. In addition, by the time of I came to analyse the data for substudies 2 and 3, I had taught the participants for three years and knew them well as students. I used positioning theory in the data analysis and, apart from examining the participants' positioning, I had to consider my own positioning as a teacher-researcher and ask myself how I positioned myself and the participants, and how the participants positioned me in their discourses (e.g. Harré and Moghaddam 2003). However, while these questions were important to consider during the research process, I would argue that having a somewhat personal connection to the participants was not a disadvantage. As I was able to consider the data that were available to me as a researcher as well as the context as a teacher, the poststructural perspective and my teacher-researcher position complemented one another. In addition, understanding the teaching context deeply and knowing the participants outside of the data they provided, helped me in making suggestions for further research and development.

Possibly due to my teacher-researcher position, it has been important to me to consider the ethics of presenting my analysis in my articles, conference presentations, staff training, and my own teaching. I have wanted to be sensitive to the data in the sense that it is not simply anonymous discourse but the real reflection of 14 actual students that I have personally met and taught. From experience, I think a good test for any teacher-researcher is to present their own research results to the participants or other students. I have discussed my research results with classes that have even had some of the original participants in them. That has allowed me to properly examine my tone in how I report the results, as well as test how to adapt the information I have gathered into my pedagogy.

3.2 Data

3.2.1 Participants

The data were collected as part of multilingual communication and language courses that were piloted for students in the department of social sciences and philosophy. The purpose was to longitudinally examine the pilot studies from students' perspective, and I created criteria for choosing participants from the whole cohort of first-year social science students.

The students were all studying for a degree in social sciences and philosophy, and chose a major subject at some stage of their bachelor's studies. They did not all have to make a choice at the same time, so when I asked about it in their second-year interviews, some had a major in mind whereas others did not. The students had the option to major in social and public policy, sociology, philosophy, or political science. Graduates from these fields might work within organisations, businesses, education or politics as administrators, teachers, researchers or entrepreneurs, for instance.

The participants were chosen based on their age. Although measures have been made to allocate an increasing amount of study places for newly graduated upper secondary school students, during the time of the data collection it was common for first-year university students to have one or more "gap" years between upper secondary school and university. As learner beliefs are affected by a variety of life experiences, participants were chosen so that their backgrounds were as homogenous as possible. All the participants had started their university studies directly after upper secondary school graduation, barring some of the participants who had been in compulsory military or civil service. None of the participants had been on exchange in upper secondary school. The participants came from different parts of Finland, all of them had Finnish as their mother tongue and had studied through Finnish at school. All these criteria were met by 14 of the students taking part in the first pilot course.

As the purpose was to conduct a longitudinal study, the participants for dataset 2 were chosen from the same pool of students that had taken part in the first substudy. I found out which students were still taking Movi's pilot courses and were available for interviews, and this resulted in ten interviews. For dataset 3, I chose those participants who had taken part in both previous substudies. By the time of the analysis process, seven students had completed the assignment I used for dataset 3. The participants were given a number (Student 1–Student 14) and these numbers remain the same across all the three substudies.

TABLE 1 Participants

Pseudonym	Participant in study 1	Participant in study 2	Participant in study 3
Student 1	x	x	x
Student 2	x	x	x

Student 3	x	<i>unavailable</i>	
Student 4	x	x	x
Student 5	x	x	x
Student 6	x	x	<i>changed their major</i>
Student 7	x	x	<i>changed their major</i>
Student 8	x	x	<i>took years off</i>
Student 9	x	x	x
Student 10	x	x	x
Student 11	x	x	x
Student 12	x	<i>unavailable</i>	
Student 13	x	<i>unavailable</i>	
Student 14	x	<i>unavailable</i>	

3.2.2 Data collection

I collected separate data for each substudy but also utilised data from substudy 1 in substudy 3 to gain a longitudinal perspective into the learners' beliefs. The data and their analysis methods are summarised in the table below and elaborated in the following sections.

TABLE 2 Data and methods

Article	Data	Methods of analysis
Pirhonen, H. (2022). Towards multilingual competence: Examining beliefs and agency in first year university students' language learner biographies. <i>Language learning journal</i> 50 (5), 613–626. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2020.1858146	Written language learner biographies ($n = 14$)	Discourse analysis (discursive psychology, positioning theory)
Pirhonen, H. (submitted). Aspiring multilinguals or contented bilinguals? University students negotiating their multilingual and professional identities. <i>Language learning in higher education</i> .	Semi-structured individual interviews ($n = 10$)	Discourse analysis (poststructural perspective on identities, positioning theory)
Pirhonen, H. (2022). "I don't feel like I'm studying languages anymore." Exploring change in higher education students' learner beliefs during multilingual language studies. <i>Journal of multilingual and multicultural development</i> (ahead-of-print), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2063874	Written language learner biographies ($n = 7$) and reflective essays ($n = 7$)	Discourse analysis (discursive perspective on learner beliefs, positioning theory)

The data consisted of the participants' interpretations of the themes they were asked to reflect on and discuss, both in a written format and in an interview situation. This type of data consists of the participants' own interpretations of the themes the researcher prompts them to discuss. In other words, it does not reveal the actual state of events or phenomena. These interpretations are then analysed by the researcher, who then interprets it from their own subjective perspective,

their own understanding of the world and the theoretical framework they have chosen to use (Puusa 2020). It has been argued that qualitative research is, to a large extent, based on the linguistic and social interaction between the researcher and the participant, both of whom significantly influence the results (Puusa 2020).

Before beginning the data collection, all the participants gave their informed consent. It was highlighted that taking part in the studies was voluntary and participants could pull out any time they wanted. It was also made clear to the participants how their data were to be stored and reported on. The participants were able to choose that the collected data could be read by other researchers and that it could be used for teaching purposes. All the participants gave their consent to these options. The data were stored in encrypted drives provided by the university, and only I had access to them. I also anonymised the data as I processed them, so if they were to be used by other researchers, the participants could not be identified.

3.2.2.1 Written reflections

As I was conscious not to give my students extra work as a teacher, I created assignments that were simultaneously pedagogical tools and data collection methods for the first and third rounds of data collection. Since the primary reason for conducting the study was to develop higher education language pedagogies, the research supported the piloting of these pedagogical tools. While analysing the data they provided, I was able to reflect on their use as teaching materials, and as a result have continued implementing them in my teaching. I chose to collect reflective texts in which the students could freely express their beliefs about language learning, as the purpose was to examine students' discourses that could help answer the research questions of this study. According to poststructural perspectives (e.g. Norton and De Costa 2018), we use language to construct our realities. I was therefore able to examine the participants' discursively constructed realities about language learning and themselves as language learners through their reflective texts.

Using course assignments as data had to be carefully considered while explaining the assignments and their assessment criteria, as well as in different parts of the analysis process. First, I piloted the instructions with volunteers to ensure that they were understandable, and that the gathered data would provide the type of information I needed to answer my research questions. When giving the instructions, it was made clear to the students that they should write their reflections honestly without trying to please the teacher with their answers. In addition to ensuring that the instructions worked, I purposefully wrote very loose assessment criteria for these tasks so that the students could write freely without worrying about passing the assignments. In practice, a student would pass the assignment if it was of the appropriate length and answered most of the questions presented in the instructions. Although it is likely that the students chose their expressions to suit the task and its audience, they did not seem to shy away from presenting strong opinions that might contradict a language teacher's views, and they did not seem to mind describing themselves as unmotivated or

lazy, for instance. This could be because of the relatively casual and non-hierarchical relationship between teachers and students in the Finnish education system, and as a teacher I found it an encouraging sign that the students wanted to be honest rather than to please me.

For the written course assignments that I used as datasets 1 and 3, I created tasks that encouraged the students to reflect on their language learning experiences and feelings about them. The first assignment at the beginning of the students' university studies was a language learner biography, a task that has been suggested to be a useful reflective tool by many scholars in the psychology of language learning (e.g. Williams, Mercer and Ryan 2015; Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018). This task was given to the students in their very first class of the Academic literacies course and the focus was to reflect on the times before entering university, in September 2017. In this task, the students were asked to draw a timeline of their life and place memorable events, moments, and observations about language learning on it. Based on the timeline task, the students wrote an essay in which they discussed the most memorable situations and their effect on their language learning, and they were encouraged to discuss what kinds of feelings they had about those situations. The task also included a short discussion on future aspects. The students were asked to continue their timeline from 2017 to 2030 and think about what they envisioned for their near future when it comes to language learning. In this part, the students wrote about their thoughts, hopes, and concerns about language learning in university and in future working life. The text was written in their mother tongue of Finnish to ensure they could write as freely as possible.

For dataset 3, I created a task based on the language biography. Students received this task at the end of their last communication and language course (Research communication), which they completed alongside their bachelor's thesis seminar. As the students chose to participate in the seminars in different semesters and even years, the last data collection point varied, depending on the participant, from December 2019 to December 2020. In this assignment, the students were asked to read the biography they had written at the beginning of their studies and discuss memorable events and observations about language learning during their bachelor's degree studies. They considered how their feelings about language learning had changed since writing the biography, and again envisioned their future in working life in relation to languages. This task, too, was written in Finnish, and as with the language learner biography, the assessment criteria were loose so as to encourage honest and personal discussion. As this task was so closely connected to the biography, I did not pilot it separately but examined the first essays in December 2019 and decided that the task worked as expected. The task was based on the notion of stimulated recall, the idea being that reading the old essays would remind the students of the mindset they had had at the beginning of their studies and possibly make visible to them the changes that had happened to them since. This seemed to have the expected effect as many participants commented in their essays on how eye-opening it was

to read back on their old text and realise how much had happened to them both in terms of their writing and their thought processes.

I chose autobiographical reflections as data because through writing about their own lives, participants describe their personal experiences and their own interpretation of these experiences (Barkhuizen et al. 2014; Johansson 2005). An autobiographical account is not a historical fact but a retrospective reflection in which the speaker constructs events by organising and interpreting their memories (Taylor and Littleton 2006, Biesta and Tedder 2007; Johansson 2005). In writing these texts, the students were able to identify and reflect on their beliefs (Aragão 2011) and agency (Biesta and Tedder 2007). The use of these reflective texts allowed for an analysis of students' discursive construction of learner beliefs and agency.

3.2.2.2 Interviews

For dataset 2, I interviewed ten students in February 2018 during the course named Multilingual interaction, which was at the mid-point of their communication and language studies. I chose interviewing as a data collection method for two reasons. First, I did not want to ask the students to write anything that would seem like extra work, and I would not have been able to collect such rich data within the pedagogical goals of the course that was ongoing at that moment. Second, the topics that were covered in the interviews could be considered more challenging than those of the reflective essays. Like in the written reflections, in interviews the participants were able to discursively construct their realities, which was what I wanted to explore because the focus was a poststructural understanding of identity negotiation (e.g. Fisher et al. 2020). To ensure that I could guide the students to discuss these topics at a deeper level than in a short homework text, I wanted to sit down with them and discuss the topics in peace. I also assigned a small language diary task for all the students, and utilised that as a starting point for the interviews.

Designing the interview process is delicate especially in this situation, where the interviewer was also the participants' teacher. As Wengraf (2001, 44) describes it, the interviewer and the interviewee have their social roles, "past/future histories" and interactional goals which should be considered: it is crucial for the researcher to critically assess the impact of asking someone to participate in the interview. I approached the students at the end of a class and told them I was interested in researching their thoughts and opinions to develop the teaching they were taking part in. I assured them that taking part in the interviews (or refusing to do so) would have no impact on their course assessment. As a thank you for participating in the interviews, the students were given some lunch coupons for the campus cafeterias, paid for by my department.

Both during this discussion and at the beginning of the individual interview sessions, I addressed the power relationship of the situation (King and Horrocks 2010, 136). I stressed to the students that I wanted to hear their honest thoughts and opinions as only by understanding their viewpoint would I be able to develop our teaching. While I focused on asking questions and listening to the

participants' stories during the interview sessions, I also joined the discussion by sometimes telling them how I felt about the topic or told them a related story to create an empathetic atmosphere. My aim was to express to the interviewees that I was also a language learner with my own feelings and experiences, and that I did not have any more answers than they did. Rather, I was curious about the topics and wanted to learn more with the help of the interviewees (see e.g. Puusa, Juuti and Aaltio 2020).

While it became clear in the data analysis that some of the participants' remarks during the interviews could have been as formulated for the benefit of the teacher-researcher, the participants to a large extent spoke honestly and even very critically about language learning, discourses on language learning, and at times our teaching. Although I was the participants' teacher, I was a part of larger teacher team, which is perhaps why the students felt safe to be critical of the teaching: it was not personal towards me or my classes. In addition, I made it clear that I was very invested in developing the courses that at the time were only in their pilot phase. As an interviewer, I felt as if the students were interested in helping in this development.

I designed the interview questions based on the research problem and questions of the second substudy. I aimed at asking questions on an everyday level that would not be too difficult or abstract for the participants to answer (Puusa 2020). Accordingly, the questions focused on the participants' experiences and feelings about language learning. I also utilised a short language diary task (based on e.g. Albury 2018) the students had done as a home assignment to begin the interview discussion. I began the interview by asking the participants to tell me about how they use languages in their everyday life based on the language diary task they had in front of them. This encouraged them to start telling me about themselves in an effortless way. In addition, by asking them to tell me stories right at the beginning of the interview, they became acquainted with answering the subsequent questions with longer answers, too (Hyvärinen 2017). I piloted the interview questions twice, making small adjustments after each time.

I chose semi-structured interviews to ensure that the interviews would be similar enough and I would receive answers for similar questions from each participant (Puusa 2020). However, the interview structure was loose to allow for longer conversations on a specific topic when I felt that the interviewee had more to say about it. Sometimes I changed the order or even wording of the questions to suit the interview situation, and in this way the interviews had elements of a thematic interview. The interviewees were different in terms of how thoroughly they would discuss my questions, which meant that for some I gave more prompts and to others I merely listened.

King and Horrocks (2010, 134) note that even if we examine interviewees' utterances as socially constructed shared meanings, these meanings do not exist before the interview. Meanings are constructed in interaction during the interview and therefore it is important to scrutinise the interview situation and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. King and Horrocks (2010, 134) state that in qualitative interviews "we unavoidably co-create or co-

construct the events that take place”. The qualitative researcher should critically reflect on their “multiple selves” in the research process and how each of these selves can affect the co-construction of a qualitative interview and the research process as a whole (King and Horrocks 2010, 134–136). It is also important to note that a research interview is a conversation that only happens because it is initiated and guided by the researcher and is thus a social construction created in that interactional situation (Puusa 2020). This is vital to understand when analysing the interview data: the interviewees’ utterances should be treated as their subjective interpretations of events and phenomena that the interview focuses on, and the researcher’s analysis is then an interpretation of the interviewees’ interpretation, not of the discussed events (Puusa 2020).

3.3 Methodology

This section describes the processing of the data and presents the analytical tools used. Positioning analysis and poststructural perspectives were utilised in each substudy. In addition, interpretative repertoires were analysed in the first substudy, and all substudies made use of different ways of exploring co-occurrences in the data.

3.3.1 Processing the data

The students uploaded their reflective essays (data 1 and 3) to their Moodle workspace, from where I downloaded them to an encrypted drive provided by the university. I anonymised the files and gave each student a number by which I would refer to them during the analysis and writing process. I also deleted other recognisable details such as names of people, towns, and schools, at the beginning of the process. The interviews were recorded with two devices, and those files and their transcripts were stored on the same encrypted drive. Again, I anonymised the transcripts. I transcribed the interviews verbatim. As the purpose was to examine the participants’ discourses instead of doing a detailed conversation analysis, I did not use a more refined transcription model. I analysed both the essays and the transcripts using Atlas.ti software that allowed for qualitative coding but also more quantitative examination of the codes.

3.3.2 Analytical tools

Subscribing to poststructural and discursive understandings to learner beliefs and identities, I utilised discourse analytical tools in the data analysis. The main theoretical viewpoints in the analysis are informed by positioning analysis (Davies and Harré 1990; van Langenhove and Harré 1999; Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018; Kayi-Aydar 2015) which I utilised in all substudies. In addition, the first substudy examined participants’ use of interpretative repertoires whose roots are

in the early, poststructural end of discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1992, te Molder 2016).

3.3.2.1 Positioning analysis and poststructural perspectives

I examined the participants' positioning in each substudy, combining Davies and Harré's (1990) theoretical background on positioning analysis (see section 2.2) with the discursive and poststructural understandings of learner beliefs and multilingual identities (section 2.1). Positioning theory is a theoretical framework rather than a clear methodological tool, resulting in various ways of interpreting and utilising it in research. The present study focuses on the notion that individuals choose to adopt, challenge or resist different positions, and when speaking from a position, they conceptualise the world from that position. For example, if a learner chooses the position of a disengaged student, they then discuss language learning from that perspective, possibly finding negative aspects in language learning or criticising teaching. By conducting positioning analysis, I was able to explore these different perspectives constructed through the participants' positionings. The focus of positioning analysis in the present study was to explore the positions themselves; in other words, what kinds of learners or qualities of a learner emerged in the participants' discourses. I combined the positioning perspective to the discursive and poststructural understandings of learner beliefs and identities. The focus of analysis and subsequently the exact methodology varied in the substudies.

In the first substudy, I utilised positioning analysis to examine the participants' subject positions connected to their interpretative repertoires (see section 3.3.2.2). The purpose was to explore how the participants positioned themselves as language learners, and how agency was connected to this positioning. The latter question emerged during initial close-reading of the data, subscribing to Harré's (1995, 134) notion of responsibility:

there is fundamental difference in discursive role between those acts in which I, the speaker, take responsibility for my actions and those in which I give reasons for them. Giving reasons for an action may be a way of disclaiming responsibility...

The participants seemed to give a great deal of reasons for their actions, which led to a question of how this affected their sense of agency as language learners. I coded the action and the agent in each text excerpt, which resulted in the discovery of an agentive and a non-agentive subject position.

The second substudy was concerned with the participants' multilingual and professional identity negotiation, which I analysed with a framework I constructed based on positioning analysis and poststructural perspectives into identity (Davies and Harré 1990; Wang, McConachy and Ushioda 2021; Forbes et al. 2021). The analysis framework below shows how the analysis considered the interviewee's positioning towards their self-beliefs and emotions; educational and social contexts; societal beliefs and ideologies; and the interview situation.

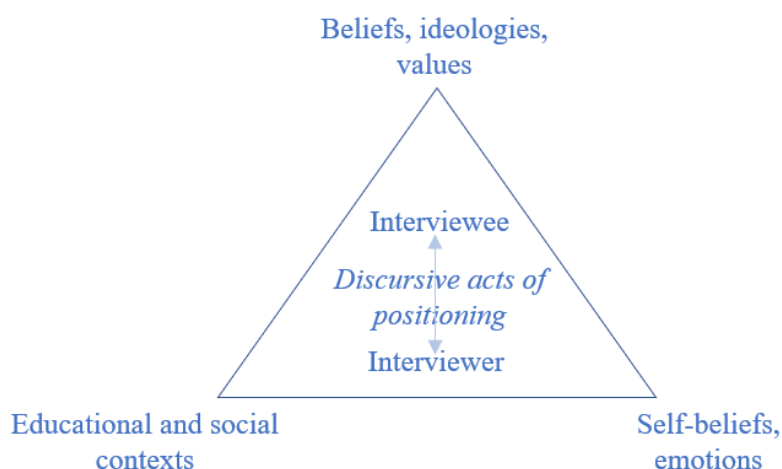


FIGURE 4 Positioning analysis of multilingual and professional identity negotiation (Pirhonen submitted)

In the analysis process, I first studied the data thematically to locate the extracts in which the students positioned themselves in relation to the learning experiences, learner beliefs, significant others, language education, prevailing discourses and ideologies related to language learning and multilingualism, as well as in relation to professional life, the interview, and the interviewer (Figure 4). Next, I identified the participants' positioning in these extracts by analysing them discursively. In practice, this meant an analysis of pronouns, verb forms, modality, adjectives, adverbs, and opinionated statements in the participants' utterances, as well as an examination of the implicitness or intentionality of the participants' positioning (see Davies and Harré 1990). In addition, van Langenhoven and Harré's (1999, 26–27) notion of positions being "defined with respect to bipolar dimensions" supported the analysis since the participants positioned themselves in polarised discourses. All positions except for one had a clear opposing position.

In the third substudy, I examined the participants' positioning towards languages and language learning, and how these positionings changed during the data collection period. The analysis was informed by positioning theory (e.g. Davies and Harré 1990) and the discursive perspective on learner beliefs (e.g. Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018). Again, I began with thematic analysis to identify each utterance relevant to the research questions. I then coded the data with discursive analytical tools by asking (1) What is the context of this utterance and which language or languages are discussed in it? (2) How is the learner positioned in relation to the context and possible other characters, and which discursive features

are used in these positions? (for a more detailed description, see Pirhonen 2022a). Several rounds of close reading and refining the coding led to an emergence of six positions that the participants used in the data. By examining changes in their densities across the two datasets, I was also able to draw conclusions on changes in the learners' beliefs. I will discuss the examination of co-occurrences in the data in section 3.3.2.3.

3.3.2.2 Discursive psychology and interpretative repertoires

In the first substudy, I utilised tools from discursive psychology. Arguably the most influential pioneers in discursive psychology have been Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, whose early publications (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992; Potter 1996) influenced the present study. As noted by te Molder (2016), discursive psychology is connected to poststructuralism since it considers reality as being constructed through talk. The most common data examined in discursive psychology is "natural" talk and the analysis is closely related to conversation analysis. Particularly later work in the field is closer to conversation analysis than poststructuralist perspectives, but in the present study I have utilised the analytical idea of interpretative repertoires which can be examined also in written texts. The focus of analysis is on the purpose of a discursive act rather than on analysing whether the utterance is "true" (Stenner 1993; te Molder 2016). I chose the concept of interpretative repertoires over closely related terms such as discourses, because analysing interpretative repertoires was useful in conceptualising the students' discursive practices when giving reasons for their language learning (see e.g. Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen 2016). The term *discourse* is widely used even within this present study and often in different meanings, and thus interpretative repertoires provided a clearer analytical item (see section 2.2).

As with all analytical tools and perspectives, the examination of interpretative repertoires provides us with one possible viewpoint and understanding of the language learner. It refrains from making claims about the learner's cognition as it solely focuses on discourse (Potter and Wetherell 1987). The viewpoint understands the learner's utterances as discursively constructed while also stemming from discourses around them. For the present study, this narrow view was purposeful since the aim was to focus on the individual learner and their negotiations of meaning over inspecting more ideological levels of societal discourses, for example.

In practice, this form of discourse analysis consisted of close reading of the data to detect common vocabulary, expressions, and metaphors (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter 1996). Based on the close reading, I created a coding system which I then refined over several rounds of reading and revisiting the coding. Crucial to note in discourse analysis is that coding does not focus on themes (in contrast to content analysis, for example) but on different discursive practices, such as variability in use of interpretative repertoires. This analysis method was successful in the first substudy as it served its purpose in examining different repertoires the participants utilised to discuss their past language learning.

3.3.2.3 Analysing co-occurrences in the data

Apart from analysing the data discursively to examine the participants' use of positions and interpretative repertoires, I also explored their co-occurrences with each other and in relation to different languages. The use of the Atlas.ti software allowed for an analysis of these kinds of co-occurrences. Although Atlas.ti also provides the analyst with numerical data, this type of data is in a way artificial in the type of studies I conducted. In other words, it was possible to find exact numbers of different codes or their co-occurrences, but without analysing the actual utterances behind these numbers, I could have misled the reader. For instance, in some cases there could be so few occurrences of certain codes that a small change in actual numbers could result in a significant percentual change. However, I utilised these tools purposefully and qualitatively in the different substudies, and at times simple counting of occurrences revealed trends and changes that were worth reporting on in the articles.

The first substudy was concerned with connections between different languages and interpretative repertoires. These co-occurrences were simple to find as I had coded each excerpt in relation to repertoire, position and language. When reporting the data in my article, I constructed a table that showed the exact number of each repertoire, position and use of language to examine noteworthy tendencies. As the purpose was to show the tendencies to use different repertoires, the table provided an interesting perspective on the topic. Most importantly, this counting of different repertoires revealed the surprisingly small use of agentive positioning, which was one of the key findings of that research. At the same time, just looking at numbers would have been too narrow a view. For example, by analysing the utterances connected to Swedish I was able to show that even when the students used the affordance repertoire, these stories often included an affective element though I had not categorised them under the affective repertoire.

In the second substudy, I used the co-occurrence tools to explore the intersection of multilingual and professional identities. Having only interviewed ten students, this is a prime example of a study where it would have been misleading to make statistical analysis of the use of different positions. However, a numerical overview of the coding guided me to further examine certain higher densities of co-occurrences qualitatively, which resulted in two interesting position clusters. While just a starting point for further studies on this relatively unknown intersection, the findings can provide the reader of the article with a new perspective on these phenomena.

The purpose of the third substudy was to explore change in students' learner beliefs and I did this by examining changes in the densities of different positionings across the two datasets. As noted above, statistical analysis and percentages would have been unsuitable for this type of qualitative study, but the co-occurrence tools showed tendencies that I was able to report on in the article. Again, I did not simply trust the numbers but examined each change by close reading of the utterances connected to these numbers. Through this process it was possible to ensure that the coding had been consistent, and the changes

seemed clear. Analysing change in this way could be debated in terms of the information this kind of counting of positions provides us with. I argue that there were clear changes in the densities of the positions, which indicated a change in beliefs about language.

4 KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLES

4.1 Article 1

Pirhonen, H. (2022). Towards multilingual competence: Examining beliefs and agency in first year university students' language learner biographies. *Language learning journal* 50 (5), 613-626. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2020.1858146>

Focusing on beliefs about language learning upon entering university, this article examined first-year university students' learner beliefs and agency in their written language learner biographies. The purpose was to gain understanding of how students perceive language learning at the beginning of their studies. The premise of the research was the increasingly international working life our teaching should prepare students for, and the discrepancy shown in recent studies suggesting that students learn fewer languages than before. In addition, the students had just started the multilingual communication and language studies that we were piloting at the time. The study had a strong pedagogical motive as the aim was to tailor our language teaching better to new university students.

I collected language learner biographies ($n = 14$) that the students wrote as course assignments, and analysed them discursively to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Which interpretative repertoires do the participants use to describe factors that have affected their learning of different languages (EFL, SFL¹ and L3)?
- 2) Which subject positions are adopted in the repertoires?

The key terms, interpretative repertoires and subject positions, come from the field of discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter 2005; Potter 1996; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992, Edley 2001), which studies how phenomena (here: beliefs and agency) are constructed "through descriptions of actions, events, objects, persons and settings" (Edwards and Potter 2005, 242).

¹ Swedish as a foreign language. Despite it being a national language, in practice all the participants had studied it as a foreign rather than second language.

Interpretative repertoires are systems of meaning making that individuals construct in social interaction and which construct social reality (Edley 2001; Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen 2016), and can be identified by examining vocabulary and metaphorical registers in discourse (Potter and Wetherell 1987). A subject position is “a ‘part’ allocated to a person by the use of a story” (Stenner 1993, 114), and I used this concept to study how the participants assigned agency to themselves or away from themselves in their discourses (Kayi-Aydar 2019; De Costa 2011).

The participants used four interpretative repertoires to discuss their language learning in their texts. I named the repertoires the affordance, affection, attribute, and action repertoires. To indicate the positioning of agency, the participants adopted two subject positions: the dependent and the independent agent. The results are numerically summarised in Table 3.

TABLE 3 Overview of results in article 1

Repertoire	Position	Featured language			
		English	Swedish	L3	Total
Affordance	Dependent agent	24	14	15	53
Affection		15	15	8	38
Attribute		8	3	4	15
Action	Independent agent	10	5	4	19
Total		57	37	31	125

The results indicate that the participants were most likely to adopt a position of dependent agency, which means that they attributed reasons for their language learning to something other than their own agentive actions. The affordance, affection and attribute repertoire all discussed language learning in a way that emphasised that the learner was dependent on their surroundings (in the case of the affordance repertoire), affective or motivational reasons (which they described as something they could not affect) or their own competences, which were considered as inherent skills the learner could not influence. Only in the action repertoire did the participants position themselves as independent agents, taking responsibility for their own learning. As the use of the action repertoire was low compared to the three others together, the results suggest that first-year university students did not perceive themselves as very agentive language learners.

I examined the use of the interpretative repertoires also in relation English, Swedish and L3s as my intention was find out whether the students spoke differently about different languages. For a teacher familiar with the general linguistic environment of a Finnish university student, the results were unsurprising,

yet an important reminder about the starkly different role of English and other languages in students' beliefs. English was a language the students learned and used in informal contexts, whereas LOTEs including Swedish were languages primarily learnt in the classroom. In addition, Swedish had an emotionally charged status compared to both English and L3s. The students' stories echoed general discourses about Swedish in Finland. It seemed that the common assumption was that learners have attitude problems towards it. When the participants discussed their relationship with Swedish, they either mentioned attitude problems they had (had) or explained that they had liked Swedish more than many other people. It seemed therefore important for them to mention that they were aware of affective tensions of Swedish learning. The result that English had a different status to other languages is one that will be further discussed in the subsequent sections as it was a theme that arose in every article. Similarly, the L3s were constructed consistently as languages that either exist in the classroom or in a target language (TL) country, another result that will be discussed in connection with the other articles.

4.2 Article 2

Pirhonen, H. (submitted). Aspiring multilinguals or contented bilinguals? University students negotiating their multilingual and professional identities. *Language learning in higher education*.

In this article, I focused on the multilingual aspect of the participants' studies, aiming to better understand the participants' linguistic identity negotiation. The purpose of our communication and language courses was to support the students in multilingual academic and professional communication, but the learner's investment in these studies is at the core of successful language learning. One way for promoting investment in language learning is to support learners' multilingual identity development (Fisher et al. 2020). In this study, I investigated our students' multilingual identity negotiation to better understand their investment, or lack thereof, in developing multilingual competences. In addition, because these studies were also about professional communication and since the students were studying towards a degree in a specific field, I also examined their professional identity negotiation to investigate the intersection of the students' multilingual and professional identities. The pedagogical motivation was to develop our teaching of multilingualism to better support the construction of multilingual identity negotiation.

I interviewed ten students in the middle of their second-year language course called Multilingual interaction. My research questions were as follows:

- 1) How do the students negotiate their multilingual learner identities?
- 2) How do the students negotiate their identities as future professionals?
- 3) (How) are the students' multilingual and professional identities connected?

The key concepts in this article were multilingual and professional identities, and positioning which I used as the primary analytical tool. I defined multilingual identities in accordance with Forbes et al. (2021, 434), “using it as an ‘umbrella term’ to capture how individuals understand themselves as language learners and users of multiple languages” (Pirhonen submitted). This definition includes the learner’s sense of themselves as a language learner as well as their positioning in relation to societal and institutional discourses (Wang et al. 2021) through which they negotiate their relationship with different languages. Professional identities were defined in this study in following Vähäsantanen (2015) as “university students’ perceptions of themselves as future professional actors, including their current professional interests and future aspirations” (Pirhonen submitted). The poststructuralist perspective on identity negotiation was complemented with positioning through which we can investigate how individuals agentively locate themselves in relation to others and others’ discourses in their own discourses (Davies and Harré 1990).

The participants used seven positions to negotiate their language learner identities, three of which were specifically about using English. In addition, the participants used two positions for professional identities. Aside from one position (the accustomed English learner), the positions were used as counterparts from which the participants chose one in a given situation. This was in line with van Langenhoven and Harré (1999, 26–27) who argued that positions are often “defined with respect to bipolar dimensions”. This meant that by adopting a certain position, a participant often opposed the counter-position; for example, a disengaged learner denied the position of an engaged learner. The table below summarises the positions.

TABLE 4 Overview of results in article 2

Position groups	Positions	Number of accounts	Brief description	Example
Language learner positions	Engaged Learner	43	Learner as the active agent responsible for their own learning; is interested and enjoys language learning	<i>I wanted to learn; [I think learning English] is a sensible investment</i>
	Disengaged Learner	41	Learner denying the position of an engaged learner; limited interest in language learning	<i>I didn't have time, energy and motivation to invest in it; I don't even know how to study languages</i>
	Good Learner	48	Learner appropriating / accepting meso and macro level discourses on language learning and multilingualism	<i>In life you do benefit from languages; I could practise it more</i>

	Critical Learner	36	Learner criticising / denying meso and macro level discourses on language learning and multilingualism	<i>In a bigger picture [using only English] is more cost-efficient; there is a lot of propaganda in this</i>
English learner positions	Confident English Learner	30	Learner content with their English skills; active user of English in their free time	<i>I don't even understand why they teach anything in Finnish after basic studies; for a long time I've read all books in English</i>
	Insecure English Learner	27	Learner discontent with their English skills; comparing their skills with others'	<i>I have low self-esteem [when it comes to English]; you get this feeling that "you don't know enough"</i>
	Accustomed English Learner	52	Learner receptively using English; downplays / takes for granted their skills	<i>It's mostly just listening and like receiving ; well of course the role of Finnish and English is obvious</i>
Professional identity positions	Aspiring professional	22	Learner with relatively clear dreams and visions of their future profession; actively working towards it	<i>That is practically everything I want to do with my life; in this field you write in English because there's no point writing just to the Finnish audience but to the whole world</i>
	Unsure student	14	Learner with relatively vague thoughts about their future profession; voices worries and uncertainties	<i>I often get this crisis that "will I ever get a job"; [us social science students] share a common anxiety about working life</i>

The results indicate that when negotiating multilingual identities, the participants discussed (a) their investment in language learning (engaged and disengaged learner), (b) their stance towards institutional and societal discourses on language learning (good and critical learner), and (c) their identities as learners and users of English (confident, insecure, and accustomed English learner). The use of these different positions resulted in two multilingual identity constructions I named aspiring multilingual and contended bilingual (see Henry 2017). As I conclude in the article, the multilingual identity negotiation was aspiring

rather than a description of the students' personal feelings; the participants that negotiated a multilingual identity mostly voiced beliefs about language learning that they considered were generally acceptable. Therefore, in this dataset there was no visible "core" multilingual identity negotiation that Fisher et al. (2020) and Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen (2021) discuss. Instead, the students voiced discourses around them that claim they should become multilingual students and professionals. This identity construction thus seemed one that some of the participants felt they *should* adopt.

In contrast, the emergence of three English learner positions that were not prompted by the interview questions shows the important and taken-for-granted role English had in the participants' lives. Even those participants that were insecure about their skills used it fluently in their day-to-day lives. The students positioned themselves either as confident or insecure English learners, but each of them also adopted the accustomed English learner position. The use of code-switching from Finnish to English during every interview further highlighted how natural a part the language played in the students' discourses. The emergence of these positions shows that although few of the students had begun negotiating a multilingual identity, they all had a strong L2 identity. Possibly because of the L2 identity construction, however, many of them negotiated a contentedly bilingual identity over a more multilingual one, emphasising their need for and interest in English, and portraying LOTEs as extra competences or compulsory school subjects they had learned or would study in the future if they had time and motivation, or a specific reason such as needing it in their work.

The two positions that the participants used to negotiate their professional identities were the aspiring professional and the unsure student. In sum, aspiring professionals had clear visions of their future work, whereas the unsure students did not. The participants adopting the latter position also expressed general insecurities about the high demands of work life and expected language competences. In the last phase of the data analysis, I examined the intersections of multilingual and professional identity negotiations (Figure 5).

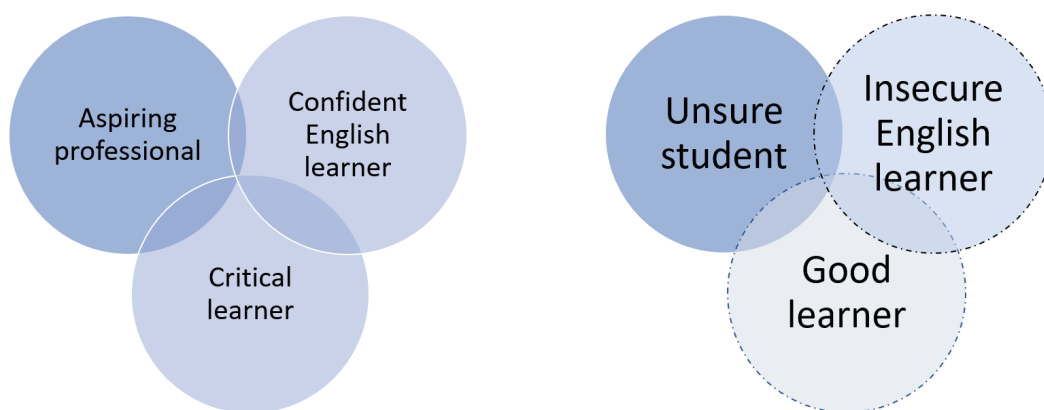


FIGURE 5 Position clusters in the data.

I discovered that the aspiring professional position was connected to the critical learner and confident English learner positions. In the article, I speculate whether these participants felt they could be more critical and realistic about language competences required in their future working life because they had a clear vision of what it would be like. These students adopted a contentedly bilingual identity, possibly also due to their confidence in their own English skills. In contrast, the unsure student position often co-occurred with the insecure English learner and good student positions. It seemed that these students were generally more insecure and unsure of both their linguistic resources and their future work. Based on the data in this study, it is not possible to state whether their impressions of a multilingual and high achieving working life led them to be insecure about it, or whether their general insecurities caused them to envision a workplace that would be difficult for them to reach.

4.3 Article 3

Pirhonen, H. (2022). "I don't feel like I'm studying languages anymore." Exploring change in higher education students' learner beliefs during multilingual language studies. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development* (ahead-of-print), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2063874>

My third article examines the question that initiated this whole project: What happens to university students' learner beliefs during their multilingual language studies? This longitudinal study investigates change in beliefs based on data collected at the beginning and end of the participants' communication and language courses that lasted for the three years of their bachelor's studies. The purpose of this research was to discover changes or stabilities in our students' beliefs about languages and language learning in order to further develop our multilingual communication and language courses. Although the primary aim of the study was pedagogically motivated, I also wanted to contribute to the field of learner beliefs studies. The context of the study provided a novel environment for examining learner beliefs in university, and so my theoretical aim was to publish a study useful for developing multilingual language teaching in higher education.

I compared two sets of data in this article: the language learner biographies written by the participants at the beginning of their first year, and reflective essays they wrote at the end of their communication and language studies. The research questions were the following:

- 1) How do the students position themselves towards languages and language learning in the data?
- 2) What kinds of language learner beliefs do the students construct through these positionings?
- 3) How do the beliefs change during the research period?

The key concept is learner beliefs, which I define in line with Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro (2018) and Mercer (2011) as "learners' views and opinions about

languages, language learning and themselves as language learners, that are discursively constructed, complex and dynamic, shared in specific contexts and affected by macro-contextual factors such as values and language ideologies” (Pirhonen 2022a). Subscribing to the discursive tradition of learner beliefs research, I chose a positioning perspective to examine how the participants constructed their beliefs in their discourses through positioning (e.g. Davies and Harré 1990).

The results revealed that the participants held both dynamic and stable language learner beliefs. The participants adopted six positions in their discourses to construct their beliefs, which could be divided into two main beliefs about the nature of language (Table 5).

TABLE 5 Overview of results in Article 3

Language as a subject		
Position	Discursive features	Example
<i>Receiver of teaching</i>	positive or negative statements describing the teaching conditions or the teacher expressions of gaining or receiving descriptions of the learner’s motivation evaluations of the learner’s skills expressions of receiving grades descriptions of “completing” a language	<i>I completed the academic Swedish surprisingly easily – I passed both the oral and the written part on my first try and the latter even with quite good points.</i>
<i>Good learner</i>	claims highlighting that languages are beneficial statements portraying a motivated learner evaluative statements of their previous lack of effort being disappointing	<i>There are considerable benefits for knowing both of these languages in career opportunities [in my field].</i>
<i>Opponent</i>	expressions of purposeful opposition to language learning expressions of negative attitudes resulting in opposition to learning statements of problems in teaching doubtful expressions related to future language learning	<i>I could even claim that I have in some way rebelled against the idea of “compulsory internationalisation”</i>
Language as a means of communication		
Position	Discursive features	Example
<i>Language user</i>	descriptions of situations where the learner has used, uses or will use the language in their studies or their free time, such as in connection to culture, entertainment, friends or travel	<i>English has especially found its way into my world through compulsory courses, interesting articles and podcast lectures.</i>
<i>Receiver of language</i>	descriptions of language use situations and their effect on the learner descriptions of situations implying learning or lack thereof.	<i>I believe that the best way for me to learn languages would be [in a country of the target language] so that there would be continuously input that would activate and quicken the language learning process.</i>
<i>Skilful learner</i>	expressions of development and success expressions of heightened sense of confidence	<i>Last summer I was in France [with friends], and to my surprise I managed surprisingly well in French despite all these years [when I hadn’t used it].</i>

The three positions connected to the language as a subject belief were more frequently used in the first dataset, whereas in the second dataset, the use of the other three positions increased. This indicated a shift in beliefs towards perceiving language as a means of communication.

Next, I explored the use of the six different positions in more detail to explore change and stability in the participants' beliefs about English, LOTEs and language learning in general. There were initial differences between how the students discussed English and LOTEs, as English already had a different status in the students' language biographies. The students had learned and utilised English in their free time before university, but during their studies it also became a natural field-specific study language. The students' confidence to use English grew during the research period as well. In contrast, LOTEs were mostly discussed as (school) subjects in both datasets, although in the second set, the participants acknowledged that they could learn LOTEs in a TL country. Common to both these beliefs was that the students positioned themselves as relatively non-agentive receivers of teaching or language, rather than claiming responsibility for their learning or showing a particular investment in learning the language in informal contexts. On the other hand, some of the participants also became more agentive when discussing LOTE learning, particularly in terms of opposing it. Perhaps they had hedged their opinions more in the language biography, but in their reflective essays they were more likely to state views that they probably knew would oppose my thoughts as the reader. Overall, the data indicated that English became more a means of communication whereas LOTEs were more likely to be subjects the student would learn in class or in a TL country.

In terms of general beliefs about language learning, three key changes occurred. Firstly, the participants began to assess their learning based on their confidence to use a language. This contrasted with the belief that learning is evidenced in grades, which was prominent in the first data. Secondly, there was change in beliefs about the nature of language learning. Language *learning* was to a great extent replaced with language *use*, a notion that was captured in the quote from Student 1 that I chose as a part of the title of the article: "I don't feel like I'm studying languages anymore". Thirdly, the second dataset showed some signs of an increasingly multilingual perspective on language learning. The students had participated in multilingual language courses and this teaching was at times reflected in the students' essays. Although this was not very prominent in the data, it was a sign that multilingual teaching could affect learner beliefs at least on an individual level.

5 DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 discusses the three research questions of this dissertation in light of the three substudies and discusses their theoretical implications. Based on these discussions, it gives suggestions for pedagogical development and future research.

5.1 Experience-based positioning and contesting prevailing discourses

In this dissertation, I have utilised poststructural positioning analysis and created an analytical framework through which it has been possible to investigate students' beliefs and identities related to language learning in the context of multilingual pedagogies. The first research question of the dissertation asks how the students position themselves in relation to societal, sociocultural and individual levels of SLA in this pedagogical context. Positioning analysis revealed that the participants constructed their learner beliefs and multilingual identities by sharing them in relation to the context of the study (the multilingual communication and language courses) as well as other contexts of language learning and use. In particular, they positioned themselves in relation to their own experiences and prevailing societal and educational discourses.

In this study, I have defined learner beliefs as "learners' views and opinions about languages, language learning and themselves as language learners, that are discursively constructed, complex and dynamic, shared in specific contexts and affected by macro-contextual factors such as values and language ideologies" (Pirhonen 2022a). Multilingual identities are understood here as the way learners construct themselves as language learners and their relationship with different languages in their lives. Chapter 2 presented a framework arguing that learner beliefs and multilingual identities can be studied by examining how learners position themselves in their discursive acts in relation to the societal, sociocultural and individual contexts of language learning. The results of the three substudies indicate that the participants' positionings considered all three

contextual levels. As was argued by the Douglas Fir Group (2016), whose multifaceted framework of SLA inspired Figure 1 in this dissertation, the three levels can be seen to be in constant interaction. When individuals engage in language use in micro-level contexts, they enter these situations with their experiences of language learning and use in different sociocultural contexts that in turn have been affected by societal ideologies and values.

Positioning analysis was utilised in all the three substudies and a synthesis of the results indicates a wide variety of discursive acts of positioning (Table 6).

TABLE 6 Overview of positioning analysis in the three articles

	Focus of positioning analysis	Results	Discursive acts of positioning
Article 1	Sense of agency; beliefs of themselves as language learners	Two positions highlighting the learner's active agency or dependence on other factors	Placing agency on vs. outside of the learner; positioning in relation to experience-based evidence
Article 2	Negotiation of multilingual and professional identities	Four language learner positions, three English learner positions and two professional identity positions	Acknowledging, accepting, contesting or denying positions given or implied by society or an educational institution (including the interviewer); positioning in relation to experience-based evidence
Article 3	Learner beliefs and their change	Three positions expressing language as a subject and three expressing language as communication	Acknowledging, accepting, contesting or denying positions given or implied by society or an educational institution; positioning in relation to experience-based evidence

In Article 1, positioning analysis is used to examine the students' sense of agency, which they placed either on or outside themselves, the latter being more common. In Articles 2 and 3, the students constructed their learner beliefs and identities by acknowledging, accepting, contesting or denying positions given or implied by society or an educational institution. In all the three substudies, the students also positioned themselves in relation to their own experiences of language use, presenting experiences as evidence for their beliefs. At times, the participants exercised active agency in their positionings. This happened especially when they contested the positions they felt were given or implied by society or education. For instance, the agentive, critical learner position in Article 2 was used when the student questioned the common discourse that learning many languages is necessary for working life.

The participants often positioned themselves in relation to the context of the study and the teacher-researcher. The context of the study was the participants' communication and language courses in university, and the researcher was also

the participants' language teacher. To a degree, these factors had a role in how the participants phrased their thoughts. Acknowledging the receiver of the participants' discourses (the teacher-researcher) guided the analysis and helped make visible the superficial statements that the students at times made about language learning, using uncritical voices such as in the position of the good learner. Conversely, the participants also exercised active agency by questioning or refusing positions that had been suggested to them by the teacher-researcher. For example, some of the participants explained they had learned in class that they could be technically considered multilinguals but that they did not feel like they could claim such an identity (cf. Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen 2021).

The participants drew a great deal from their past experiences when constructing their beliefs about language learning and negotiating their multilingual identities. However, particularly when discussing beliefs about different languages or multilingualism, the participants positioned themselves in relation to macro-level societal values or meso-level institutional discourses, either accepting, acknowledging or contradicting and contesting them. Since the three levels are constantly in interaction with each other, it is often not possible to make clear-cut distinctions between them. For instance, the participants frequently mentioned the emotionally charged status of Swedish. This could be a result of the learner's positioning in relation to all the three levels of SLA: At the societal level, Swedish has a debated role in the Finnish society. It has also a strong legal status due to which it is a compulsory school subject. This affects its status in educational institutions that have the societal mandate to teach the language to everyone, but since its value is often questioned in societal debates, pupils can have emotional responses to studying it. Pupils are then learning a debated and questioned language, an experience which can influence their individual language use, social interactions and competences in it. Negative experiences from learning it in an unmotivating environment can also affect their investment in learning or using it further in informal contexts. This means that when a participant in this study says they are not motivated to learn Swedish, they may be positioning themselves on different layers of experiences and discourses affecting their current beliefs of Swedish, language learning and their own learner identity.

Based on the present study, it seems that it is possible to make observations about learners' beliefs and multilingual identity negotiation through poststructural positioning analysis. This type of discourse analysis can make visible an individual's perspective on what they are saying. In some cases, it is also possible to argue that a learner meant or did not quite mean what they said. For example, the use of the good versus critical learner positions in Article 2 illustrates how the participants either merely recited societal or institutional discourses or assessed them critically and positioned themselves agentively towards them. In addition, examining agency in relation to positioning in all three substudies revealed beliefs that the participants held about language learning. In the third substudy, beliefs about the nature of language learning were visible in the learners' positionings as either active doers or non-agentive receivers. The poststructural positioning perspective on learners' beliefs and identities thus illustrates the

construction of beliefs and identities in discourse and in relation to the multi-layered contexts of SLA.

5.2 Negotiating multilingual identities in relation to learner beliefs and professional identity development

One of the starting points for the present study has been that higher education students from “monolingual” backgrounds should be considered multilingual, but research on multilingualism has tended to focus on learners with multiple home or educational languages. The second research question of the dissertation examines how Finnish university students negotiate their multilingual and professional identities in relation to their language learning, and how these identities intersect. While Article 2 focuses on learners’ multilingual and professional identity negotiations, these themes can be found in all the substudies, considering the understanding that identities are constructed from an array of beliefs (see Ruohotie-Lyhty 2016). Multilingualism is one of the overarching themes in the whole project. The focus has been particularly on learners’ beliefs and awareness regarding multilingualism, as one of the aims has been to better support students’ understanding and recognition of their multilingual competences while creating new theoretical understanding of these issues. These understandings could lead to multilingual identity negotiation which in turn could affect students’ learner beliefs and support their investment in developing their multilingual competences (see Fisher et al 2020). The students who participated in the research for this dissertation were studying languages for academic and professional purposes. Accordingly, the dissertation has also explored students’ emerging professional identities as well as the intersection of multilingual and professional identity negotiation, in order to explore how these identity negotiations are connected. The results indicate that university students negotiate their multilingual and professional identities by drawing from their language learner beliefs and their beliefs about professional life, positioning themselves in relation to the different contextual factors discussed in the previous section.

The participants’ identity negotiation was affected by their beliefs about languages and multilingualism. The studies confirmed the strong, natural, and relatively unquestioned status English has in Finnish university students’ lives (see also Pyykkö 2017; Busse 2017; Henry 2017; Fabricius, Mortensen and Haberland 2017). Students use English in their studies as well as in their free time and assume they will need it a great deal in professional life. Already when the participants entered university, most of them used English in their free time and seemed to take their high competence in the language for granted. However, the common claim that “all young people are good at English” could be contested based on the results of this study: Many of the participants in the first and second substudies addressed their insecurities in using English and described difficulties in learning it at school. In contrast to the taken-for-granted role of English, LOTES

including Swedish were considered as subjects that a student could learn if they had the time and the motivation for it. In the first substudy, Swedish and L3s were analysed separately as it was evident that there was an emotional aspect to Swedish that was less prominent in connection to other languages. Swedish, it seems, is so debated in Finland that individual students felt they had to address the existence of this debate whether they themselves had a specific attitude towards it or not. In other words, the participants tended to either state in all substudies that they had an attitude problem towards Swedish, or they noted how even though other people had such problems, they themselves quite enjoyed studying it. In addition, the students discussed the general usefulness of learning different languages and multilingual skills, suggesting either a belief that learning LOTEs is or is not worthwhile.

Identity negotiation was also influenced by the participants' beliefs about the nature of language learning, which was conceptualised either as formal learning or informal acquiring. In the first substudy, English had two parallel roles, a school subject and a skill some of the students had developed in their free time activities. In the third substudy, it had become a means of communication both in study and free time contexts. Conversely, LOTEs were mostly discussed as school subjects; they were learnt in the classroom and success in learning was affected by institutional affordances such as timetables and teachers, and affective factors such as motivation. One key finding in the first substudy was the low level of agency in the participants' discourses. This suggests that language learning investment was perceived to be, to a great extent, dependent on affordances, affective factors and the learner's inherent characteristics. These beliefs influenced the participants' learner identities as they discussed how and where they had learned different languages and what role these languages and language learning had in their multilingual repertoire.

The participants also negotiated their multilingual identities by expressing beliefs about themselves as language learners. Investment, engagement, and motivation were themes that were discussed in all three substudies. Overall, the students seemed to hold a belief that they were either invested or disengaged language learners, subsequently suggesting that investment is a key factor in successful language learning. Ability and confidence were two additional, closely connected themes that featured in the students' discourses on themselves as language learners. Although in general the students drew flexibly from different positions, they tended to be consistent in their descriptions of themselves as either confident or self-conscious, and successful or to some degree unsuccessful users of a language. Accordingly, they held a belief that it was possible to be "good" or "bad" at languages. The participants constructed their learner identities by comparing their beliefs about what successful language learning is like to their beliefs about themselves as learners, discussing whether they met the perceived requirements of a good or bad language learner.

Professional identities can be defined as "university students' perceptions of themselves as future professional actors, including their current professional interests and future aspirations" (Pirhonen submitted). Article 2 showed

intersections between multilingual and professional identity negotiation. Articles 2 and 3 also suggest that the participants thought about working life in connection with language learning. Two position clusters could be detected in the data in the second substudy that indicated connections between certain language learner and professional identity positions. The clearest one was the use of the critical learner, confident English learner and aspiring professional positions. It thus seemed that many students who had clear future aspirations were happy with their English competences and also positioned themselves critically towards expectations to study multiple languages for the purposes of working life, adopting a contentedly bilingual identity (see Henry 2017). One explanation for this could be that the students with a clear vision of their future work felt they could be more realistic about the language skills needed in it. In contrast, insecure learners of English were more likely to position themselves as good learners, uncritically reciting discourses about language learning and multilingualism they had heard. These participants were also more likely to adopt the unsure student position, so they seemed overall unsure about their future as well as the language competences needed in it.

In Article 3, professional identity was present in the students' discussions on the development of their language skills. Here, the participants seemed to have started the process of becoming future professionals in their field. In particular, English had become a part of their everyday study language and they made references to it suggesting they had adopted English as a part of their future professional skillset. This had not happened much with other languages, so multilingualism and professional life continued to be only a small part in the students' discourses at the end of their bachelor's studies. Although English had already had a strong status in the students' lives at the beginning of their university studies, it was now adopted as a means of communication in academic and professional contexts. While some of the students still discussed their insecurities in speaking English, all of them reported on their vastly improved skills and none of them questioned the inevitable role of it in their linguistic repertoire. It therefore seemed that the students' professional identity was connected to their identity as a user of English.

The contentedly bilingual identity negotiation in Article 2 shows there may be a mismatch between students' beliefs about languages in working life and the realities of global job markets (see e.g. Busse 2017; Pyykkö 2017). Although some of the participants adopted the so-called aspiring multilingual identity, I called this identity construction *aspiring* because it did not seem internalised in the same way as the contentedly bilingual identity did. Rather, it was an identity construction the students perhaps felt they should adopt. Many of them mentioned they knew that they were "technically" multilingual, because we had discussed this in class, but they did not actually feel like they were. It is possible that themes of multilingualism were so new to the participants that they had not had the time to internalise new ideas from the multilingual studies. In addition, the way the word *multilingual* is often used in everyday speech could mean that the students did not identify themselves as being so. This was even explained by some of the

participants in their interviews. Although they had received teaching about multilingualism, they still held on to their previous beliefs about what a multilingual person is like, and felt that their own linguistic repertoire was not broad enough to claim that their linguistic identity consisted of more than Finnish and English.

As noted in Article 2, the students did not seem to negotiate a “core” multilingual identity as suggested by Forbes et al. (2021) and Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen (2021). When the present study is compared to Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen’s (2021) research on students majoring in LOTEs, it is interesting to note that although some LOTE students considered multilingualism as a part of their identity, not all of them did so. If even students majoring in languages did not claim a multilingual identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that social science students hesitated to do so. Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen (2021) suggest that this could be because of the common belief that it is only possible for a person to claim a multilingual identity if they speak many languages to a native-like standard. In addition, the writers speculate that learners can feel ownership differently towards different languages. For example, they may identify with one language while feel detached from another even if they have skills in both, as well as compare their LOTE skills to their English skills in which they often are more confident. The researchers also note that the learners examined languages in their lives in different ways, some mentioning all languages they had some skills in while others only spoke of those they used regularly. The authors suggest that learners see themselves as users of a language based on their belief on who can claim ownership of that language (Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen 2021, 385). These considerations seem applicable also when exploring social science students’ multilingual identity negotiation. For example, the students in the present study often hesitated to claim a multilingual identity, basing this hesitation on their Swedish skills that they considered low. It thus seemed that the students held a belief that in order for them to claim they “know” a language, they had to be at a certain level in it. Further studies could examine what this level is, because at the same time, the participants stated that those skills do not have to be perfect but that it is enough to be understood. This notion is interesting from a teacher’s point of view, because I was able to converse with the interviewees in Swedish in class and I understood them.

The three substudies illustrate the complexity of language learners’ multilingual and professional identity negotiations as well as their interconnectedness. The participants constructed their identities by positioning themselves in relation to different surrounding discourses and comparing themselves as language learners or speakers to their beliefs about language learning. The participants’ multilingual identity negotiation was connected to their emerging professional identities as they compared their beliefs about working life and their beliefs about their own multilingual repertoire and themselves as language learners. Based on the results, it also seems that new multilingual teaching may take time to affect students’ beliefs about multilingualism and themselves as multilinguals. While the participants had received some teaching about these themes, their previous beliefs were often stronger and seemed to fundamentally influence their identity

negotiation. The present study brings new perspectives to studying multilingual and professional identities. Firstly, multilingual identities have been more commonly studied in learners with multiple home or educational languages, but there is less research on learners whose different language competences have mostly been developed in foreign language classes. In addition, the intersection of multilingual and professional identities in university students is a new contribution to the existing body of research. The findings in this dissertation suggest that this intersection could be studied further to better understand students' investment in language learning in higher education contexts.

5.3 Towards becoming a multilingual professional

One of the main theoretical contributions of this dissertation is creating new understanding of university students' learner beliefs by examining them longitudinally and from a multilingual perspective. The third research question, and the question that was the starting point for this study, is how the students' language learner beliefs evolve during their multilingual communication and language studies. The results show that changes occurred in the participants' beliefs about languages, multilingualism, nature of language learning, as well as themselves as language learners. The multilingual viewpoint reveals the complexity of these beliefs and highlights the uniqueness of individuals' experiences of learning and using different languages. At the same time, the results illustrate the persistence of certain core beliefs about languages or multilingualism despite new teaching methods.

The taken-for-granted and important status of English was undeniable in all participants' discourses in Article 1, but as the years progressed, changes could be detected. The second substudy showed that even those students who were insecure about their English competences used English naturally in their free time and academic studies, negotiating an English user identity. Often, they did not seem to appreciate or even notice the high level of their skills as they discussed their English use in their lives. The third substudy revealed that even the insecure English learners had grown their confidence to use English, particularly receptively. English ultimately became a means of communication that was a part of the participants' academic study skills and a tool for future working life. The participants therefore seemed to adopt English as a part of their linguistic identity.

In contrast to English, which the participants began to conceptualise as a skill among other academic communication skills they possessed, LOTE remained subjects or additional skills that could be useful but not necessarily compulsory. In the second substudy, the participants discussed LOTE particularly in the context of future working life. Although many of them acknowledged that their future working life would be somewhat multilingual, many of them were unsure if they would personally need to know languages apart from Finnish and English. Some of the participants made statements about the need for additional

languages, but these statements were mostly uttered from the position of a good learner. This position was used to voice societal or institutional beliefs about language learning, perhaps also for the benefit of the interviewer who was their language teacher at the time. It seemed that the participants did not, at the time of the interviews, perceive LOTEs as vital skills in academic and professional settings. In Article 3, the participants acknowledged that in addition to existing in the language classroom, LOTEs also existed in TL countries. However, in contrast to English that the students used in their free time and studies, they did not find similar uses for LOTEs.

Although beliefs about multilingualism did not strongly feature in the third substudy, there were signs of emerging understandings of it. Some of the participants reported on new perspectives on multilingualism and themselves as multilinguals. In addition, the multilingual nature of the studies received no attention in the students' final reflections. This suggests that the participants had become so accustomed to translingual practices in the classroom that they were not worth a mention. The interviews in Article 2 revealed that although the students had learned in class about multilingualism and in principle understood that they themselves could be conceptualised as multilinguals, for many of them their previous beliefs about the nature of multilingualism were strong. The students hesitated to identify as multilinguals, explaining they did not feel they had enough competence in LOTEs. In sum, the students became accustomed to multilingual practices but identifying themselves as multilingual speakers did not feel as natural.

The results of the third substudy revealed changes in beliefs about language learning. One key finding was the change in beliefs about how language learning is demonstrated, which changed from discussing grades to evaluating competences and confidence. This change happened in particular with English, whereas Swedish was still discussed in terms of grades at the end of the research period. From the teacher-researcher's perspective, one reason for this could have been the fact that while English and Finnish had been assessed through continuous assessment and pass-fail grading, in Swedish the students had received grades and taken part in formal examinations. It therefore seems that pass-fail assessment encouraged students to evaluate their linguistic competences based on their experiences in successful situations of language use. Doing this, the students were able to describe their competences based on experiential evidence. In contrast, the participants' descriptions of their Swedish skills were more limited in nature, most often merely stating they had "passed" it.

Demonstrating learning is closely connected to the other key change in beliefs about language learning in the third substudy, which was the shift from discourses of *learning* language to *using* language. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the shift happened in particular with English, whereas Swedish and other LOTEs remained mostly languages of school or a TL country. In terms of beliefs about language learning, the students had developed a belief that it is possible to learn English through using it, but LOTEs would have to be taught by teachers or an immersive environment abroad. The role of agency seemed

different in these two beliefs, as using (and subsequently learning) English required agentive actions from the learner, but LOTE learning was discussed from the non-agentive positions of receiver of teaching, or receiver of language.

This dissertation's contribution to the field of learner beliefs is the multilingual, longitudinal perspective that made it visible that learner beliefs seem language specific and dynamic. Overall, the study illustrates the complex and dynamic nature of beliefs in line with previous research (e.g. Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Kalaja et al. 2016), the multilingual approach revealing new understanding of the beliefs of learners studying multiple languages. The complexity is visible in the differences between positionings towards different languages within a short piece of text or interview data. The students discussed all languages in their texts and their interviews, and they expressed different beliefs about different languages even within a single sentence. On the other hand, beliefs about one language could be very dynamic, where the student could make seemingly contradictory claims about the same language within a short space of time. The results also indicate that learners' beliefs about themselves as language learners can change a great deal when moving from one language to another. In the data, some students positioned themselves as successful learners of one language and in a completely opposite manner in terms of another. The multilingual viewpoint on learner beliefs helped make these complexities visible. The longitudinal nature of the study made it possible to detect changes over time. These results make clear that university students' learner beliefs merit further study, and that a multilingual perspective can ensure a more holistic picture of the learner and their beliefs.

5.4 Pedagogical implications

The previous sections have discussed the results of the present study and their theoretical implications. In addition, one of the motivations for conducting this study has been to provide more understanding of learner beliefs and identities for pedagogical development, and to better support university students in developing multilingual competences for academic and professional purposes (see e.g. Gunnarsson 2014; The Douglas Fir Group 2016). The present study took place over three years, which means I was able to develop multilingual pedagogies already during the research process. These developments affected social science student cohorts that began their studies in the years after the participants of this dissertation. Some of the pedagogical suggestions I make in this section I have therefore developed based on the results of the study and already tried out. In this section, I discuss pedagogical implications of the present study that can be of use for both my own institution and for any language teacher working in higher education.

University students may hear about multilingualism for the first time at university, and even there the topic is not discussed enough. Huhtala, Kursiša and Vesalainen (2021, 386) suggest that even LOTE students in university may

not identify themselves as multilinguals because languages are taught separately and there is little discussion of multilingual skills, such as different languages each supporting the learning of the other ones. The writers suggest that language courses in university could include more multilingual teaching and learning, which could lead to students' better understanding of multilingualism and support their identity development. The communication and language courses discussed in the present study answer this call. However, it is evident based on the results that at least in the piloting phase of these studies, multilingualism was not discussed enough or in the most optimal way for the students to start constructing multilingual identities. Multilingual pedagogies in language education are new even for most language teachers, who need time and support to understand this complex field first themselves and then to develop new teaching practices that help students' understandings, too. From a teacher-researcher perspective, we as a work community in Movi have gradually gained more understanding of multilingual phenomena in our teaching during and after the piloting of the new courses. It is understandable that this ambitious development work does not achieve all its goals on the first try. In the third set of data, there were small signs of multilingual understanding, which is an encouraging development. It would be interesting to repeat these studies with later student cohorts to examine whether our teaching has begun to have a wider effect in the years after the pilot.

It should also be noted that the communication and language courses discussed in this study only consist of 12 ECTS credits over the course of three years, which means that our influence on the students is limited. The challenge for teachers is to use the available time for supporting students' understanding of multilingualism and themselves as multilinguals as well as possible. Based on the results of the present study, purposeful reflection seems one way to support students' learning (see also Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018; Aragão 2011). In addition, the participants in the second and third substudies referred to what they had learned about multilingual phenomena in the classroom, but perhaps even more practical implementations of these phenomena could help the students in understanding what it actually means to work multilingually or possess multilingual competences. For example, since conducting the interviews for Article 2, I created a multilingual project task for our second-year students in which they must utilise all the languages they know even to a limited extent. In addition, they must reflect on the process and outcomes of that project based on the theoretical perspectives on multilingualism they learn about at the beginning of the course. Another task that has seemed to support many students' understandings of themselves as multilinguals has been a visual language diary I used as a starting point for the interviews and have since developed. This simple task, where the student observes their use of different languages over one week and takes pictures and screenshots of their observations, has been a revealing exercise for many students. When they make their linguistic reality visible for themselves, they are often surprised by what it consists of. These types of practical tasks paired with theoretical teaching and purposeful reflections could serve as a solid basis for future multilingual language courses.

In terms of professional identities, the present study showed that many bachelor's level social sciences students do not have a clear understanding of what their future profession could be. This could make envisioning their future with languages more difficult than for those students clearly studying towards a certain job description, such as a teacher or a social worker. In fact, one of the participants in the present study changed their major to social work because they wanted to know what profession they were studying towards. While considerations of career services in university are beyond the scope of this study, from a language teacher-researcher's perspective it would be beneficial for departments and career services to work together with language teachers. This kind of cooperation could lead to better support for students in understanding, first, what kinds of job opportunities they have with their degree and, second, what those jobs could entail in terms of communication and language use. The present study also indicates that students do not always recognise their own language competences. This could be a problem for the student's confidence, and also for the future development and use of those competences. For example, if a student is not aware of the extent of their receptive Swedish skills, they might never utilise those skills in their studies or for working life purposes. In addition, being able to describe one's language competences could be important in recruitment processes. Therefore, based on the present study, I argue that language teachers should support students in reflecting, recognising and describing their multilingual competences. In addition, it seems evident that when discussing language learning in higher education, it is beneficial to bring a working life aspect to it.

The results regarding students' beliefs about English provide considerations for pedagogical development in university and in my own unit, Movi. First, it is important for language teachers to recognise that in a group of students there can exist a wide range of feelings about confidence and competence when it comes to learning and using English. These emotions should be addressed in the classroom and provide enough support for students who have very low confidence or de facto low competence in English, either of which could hinder their advancement in university studies where a great deal of the material in many fields is provided only in English. In addition, it could be useful and helpful for students' confidence as well as employability skills to learn how to recognise and describe their language skills. As I argue in Article 3 in line with Aragão (2011), reflective activities in the language classroom may bring about understandings of which students would otherwise remain unaware.

The present study shows that learners have resources to utilise English in their lives, but this is often not a skill that could be transferred to LOTE use. A challenge for all university language teachers would be to develop language learning into a transferrable rather than a language-specific skill. At the time of the data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic had caused cancellations and postponing of exchange periods for some of the participants. This meant that as they had planned on learning a LOTE abroad but did not seem motivated to seek opportunities to learn at home, it is possible that some of them did not and might never develop those skills. This showed the importance of the LOTE teacher's

role in encouraging and helping students to find meaningful ways to learn and use different languages both in formal and informal contexts. When planning university language teaching, teachers of all languages could work together to provide support for students for learning new language competences as well as developing previous ones formally and informally, both in their free time and in relation to their studies.

At the end of the research period, the students' beliefs about demonstrating language learning had shifted in terms of English. Possibly because of the pass-fail assessment of the courses, the students had begun to assess their English competences based on their experiences of successful uses of it. However, the same did not happen with Swedish where the students received separate grades despite the overall pass-fail system. This is a pedagogical consideration that is important to examine in the future development of our teaching. The reasons for the different assessment of Swedish are historical and there are ongoing discussions on how to develop it. These discussions are needed if we want to support students in developing more favourable beliefs about learning and using Swedish in terms of making it a part of their multilingual repertoire.

Overall, language teachers could support students in reflecting on their beliefs about themselves as language learners. It was rarely the case in the present study that a participant would consistently claim they were both bad at all languages and a bad language learner. By recognising their strengths in using or learning one language, perhaps students could examine how they could transfer those positive qualities to the context of a different language, or that of multilingualism. Multilingual pedagogies in university language teaching are full of interesting opportunities that could benefit future students studying towards a multilingual professional life.

5.5 Evaluating the dissertation and suggestions for further studies

This dissertation is formed around three journal articles, each of which discusses one of three substudies. The substudies examine learner beliefs and identities in a multilingual language learning setting from different perspectives and at different stages of the participants' studies. This allowed for the longitudinal viewpoint called for in previous research (see Kalaja, Barcelos and Aro 2018). I chose to conduct a qualitative study with relatively few participants so as to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question. While the findings are tied to a specific context, they illustrate a novel viewpoint on the study of learner beliefs and multilingualism. The results could benefit future teaching and research projects in multilingual pedagogies also in other higher education contexts.

This type of qualitative research provides information that illustrates the discursive construction of university students' learner beliefs and multilingual identities. Broadly speaking, the approach to studying these phenomena in this

dissertation is a poststructural one, starting from the premise that social reality is discursively produced and dynamic (e.g. Juuti and Puusa 2020). Therefore, it is possible to study the production of this reality by analysing discourses produced by the participants. The discursive approach to learner beliefs and identities provides a look into how learners make sense of their reality with language. The notion of discourses both constituting the learner and being constituted by them is an important notion for a teacher. While positioning analysis cannot conclude anything about the learner's cognition, it is discursive practises that we are surrounded by in the classroom. The positioning perspective suggests that it matters how individuals position themselves and others in their discursive practices. For example, as a teacher I could make a difference in my students' learning depending on how I position them in my teaching and instructing: I could, for instance, position them as multilingual users of different linguistic resources or as intermediate learners of Swedish.

As discussed in Chapter 3, my position as the teacher-researcher has been prominent in all parts of the project, from choosing the topic and planning the data collection to the analysis and reporting of the results. I have aimed to use this position to my advantage, and the dissertation has provided me as well as my work community with new insights into our students and teaching. My teacher-researcher position has affected the way I have constructed my articles and they provide the reader with a balance of theoretical and practical viewpoints, as the analysis is directly tied to concrete pedagogical development. On the other hand, being so close to the topic and the participants means that the participants might have provided me with slightly different information than they would have to a researcher they did not know.

I also want to briefly address the job market oriented starting point of this research. Neoliberalist values have penetrated discussions on language learning and multilingualism, triggering phenomena such as commodification of language and elite multilingualism (e.g. Barakos and Selleck 2019). Language skills are, in other words, often discussed in the light of their value in the job market, and if an individual knows the "wrong" languages, they are considered not to have language skills, as can often be the case with immigrants. These issues create new questions about inequality in social participation and professional life. The present study has been conducted within a context of learners with relatively secure societal, financial and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, different ethnic or linguistic minorities are not represented in this study but rather the focus is on mainstream university language education and its implications for professional development. Although professional life is highlighted in this research and a great deal in our teaching, it is also important to acknowledge the intrinsic value of languages and multilingualism.

The complex and dynamic nature of learner beliefs has been widely documented in previous studies. The present study adds to existing literature by providing a multilingual viewpoint that has been less examined in belief studies. The few previous studies concerned with more than one language have noted that learners' beliefs about different languages and themselves as users of

different languages can be complex. The results of the present study are in line with these findings. This dissertation has also explored learner beliefs together with multilingual identity negotiation. The context of the study has been unique and provided new information on how higher education students construct their learner beliefs and how multilingual and professional identity negotiation can be intertwined. The dissertation also shows how positioning analysis and a multi-layered framework on SLA can be utilised in investigating learners' discourses.

As is likely to happen with any piece of interesting research, I have more unanswered questions and suggestions for further research than I have been able to examine in this dissertation. Firstly, to continue with the longitudinal, qualitative line of research, follow-up studies on these same participants could provide insight into how students' learner beliefs develop during master's (and possibly PhD) studies as well as in working life: how do the participants' beliefs and experiences about language learning and use change after one, five, or ten years in professional settings? Another interesting question is whether similar studies in different faculties would result in similar findings. Secondly, to obtain more generalisable information about change in learner beliefs, large-scale quantitative studies would be needed. In belief studies, BALLI questionnaires have been widely used and while their scope is limited to themes that can be accessed in a multiple-choice survey, these types of questionnaires could provide us with general information about larger changes that then, in turn, could be analysed more in-depth with qualitative studies. A third suggestion for further research would be to pair reflective assignments and interviews with observation of classroom interaction. One question the present study could not answer is whether students' actions in the language classroom (or another language learning or use situation) reflect the beliefs they present in their discourses. The more perspectives and frameworks we use to examine these phenomena, the better we can understand them.

This dissertation is a teacher-researcher's viewpoint on the complex topic of learner beliefs and multilingual identity negotiation in the context of a multilingual pedagogical development project. Aside from it resulting in new understanding of this phenomena and adding to the existing body of research in the area, the study has had pedagogical implications in my own work. The research process has provided new insights into the research on learner beliefs and identities, along with practical tools for pedagogical development.

YHTEENVETO (SUMMARY)

Vaikka yksilöt, yhteisöt ja yhteiskunnat ovat aina olleet monikielisiä, on globalisaation vaikutus monikielisyyteen, kielenkäyttöön ja kielenopiskeluun ollut voimakas (The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Gunnarsson 2014). Ihmisten, pääoman ja informaation aiempaa suuremman liikkuvuuden myötä yksilöt toimivat yhtä moninaisimmissa konteksteissa, joissa tarvitaan monipuolista kieliosaamista (OECD 2018; The Council of the European Union 2018; UNESCO 2019). Samaan aikaan on kuitenkin huomattu, että useissa maissa, kuten Suomessa, opiskellaan aiempaa vähemmän vieraita kieliä (esim. Busse 2017; Henry 2017; Pyykkö 2017). Tähän haasteeseen on tartuttu Jyväskylän yliopistossa, jossa pakolliset kandidaattitutkintoon sisältyvät viestintä- ja kieliopinnot on uudistettu monikieliseksi, alakohtaisia teksti- ja vuorovaikutustaitoja tukeviksi kokonaisuuksiksi. Tässä väitöskirjassa tarkastellaan yliopisto-opiskelijoiden näkökulmaa näihin opintoihin. Tutkimus keskittyy opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsityksiin, jotka ovat oppijoiden kieliin ja kielenoppimiseen liittyviä ajatuksia ja tunteita (Kalaja, Barcelos ja Aro 2018; Kalaja 2016; Mercer 2011; Aragão 2011) sekä monikieliseen identiteettiin, jolla tarkoitetaan opiskelijoiden ymmärrystä itsestään monikielisinä oppijoina (Wang, McConachy ja Ushioda 2021; Fisher ym. 2021; katso myös Kayi-Aydar 2015; Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro ja Ruohotie-Lyhty 2016). Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, miten monikielillä pedagogiikalla voidaan tukea opiskelijoiden kiinnostusta opiskella vieraita kieliä ja näin valmistaa heitä globalisoituneiden työmarkkinoiden haasteisiin. Väitöskirjan kolme pääkysymystä ovat:

1. Miten opiskelijat asemoivat itsensä suhteessa kielenoppimisen yhteiskunnallisiin, sosiokulttuurisiin ja yksilöllisiin tasoihin monikielisen korkeakoulupedagogiikan kontekstissa?
2. Miten opiskelijat neuvottelevat monikielisiä ja ammatillisia identiteettejään suhteessa kielenoppimiseensa, ja miten nämä neuvottelut risteävät?
3. Miten opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsitykset muuttuvat heidän monikielisten viestintä- ja kieliopintojensa aikana?

Väitöskirja koostuu kolmesta osatutkimuksesta, jotka toteutettiin kolmen seurantavuoden aikana. Tutkimukset on raportoitu liitteenä olevissa kolmessa tieteellisessä artikkelissa. Väitöskirjassa esitellään osatutkimusten lähtökohdat, teoreettiset viitekehykset, toteutus ja tulokset. Lopuksi tarkastellaan kolmea pääkysymystä tutkimustulosten valossa ja pohditaan tutkimuksen pedagogisia päätelmiä.

Kielentutkimuksen monikielisen käänteen myötä monikielisyyttä ja monikielistä oppijaa on alettu määritellä uusilla tavoilla. Monikielisyyys ei tarkoita rinnakkaista yksikielisyyttä, vaan kielenkäyttäjillä voi olla erilaista moni- ja limitäiskielistä osaamista, jota hän kykenee käyttämään joustavasti erilaisissa vuorovaikutustilanteissa tullakseen ymmärretyksi (esim. The Douglas Fir Group 2016; Meier 2017). Kuitenkin on edelleen tavallista, että kieliä opiskellaan toisistaan erillisinä kokonaisuuksina sekä koulussa että yliopistossa, jolloin kielenoppijat eivät totu tarkastelemaan niiden välisiä yhteyksiä. Näin oppijoilta saattaa jäädä huomaamatta oma monikielisyytensä, sillä arkikielessä ”monikielinen oppija”

on usein edelleen kiertoilmaisu maahanmuuttajalle. On esitetty, että kielenoppijat hyötyisivät laajemmasta kielitietoisuuden opetuksesta ja monikielisemmän identiteetin kehittämisestä, sillä se tukisi kielenoppimista (Fisher ym. 2020). Kielenoppijoiden monikielisyys jää usein piiloon myös kielentutkimuksessa, jos esimerkiksi suomalaista kielenoppijaa käsitellään nimenomaan suomen kielen puhujana, eikä hänen muuta kielirepertuaariaan oteta käsitteenmäärittelyssä tai tutkimusasetelmassa huomioon. Tämän väitöskirjan lähtökohta on, että suomalaiset yliopisto-opiskelijat ovat monikielisiä. Opiskelijoiden omat käsitykset ja identiteetit saattavat kuitenkin poiketa tästä oletuksesta.

Käsitykset ja identiteetit paikantuvat kielenoppimisen monitasoisen kehikon keskelle (ks. kuvio 1 väitöskirjan osiossa 1.2). The Douglas Fir Groupin (2016) kuvioon perustuva kehikko koostuu kolmesta risteävästä tasosta, jotka havainnollistavat kielenoppimisen yhteiskunnallista, sosiokulttuurista ja yksilöllistä tasoa. Yhteiskunnallinen taso käsittää kielenoppimiseen liittyvät poliittiset, kulttuuriset ja taloudelliset arvot, sosiokulttuurinen taso käsittelee monikielisiä kasvatuksellisia ja sosiaalisia konteksteja, ja yksilöllinen taso tarkastelee monikielisten yksilöiden vuorovaikutusta. Näiden kolmen risteyskohdassa voidaan nähdä kielenoppijoiden käsitykset ja identiteettineuvottelut, kun oppijat toimivat eri tasoilla ja eri konteksteissa, peilaten omia ja muiden kokemuksia ja diskursseja toisiinsa. Kehikkoa käytettiin tässä tutkimuksessa poststruktuurallisen diskursusinanalyysin lähtökohtana. Osatutkimuksissa tutkittiin opiskelijoiden asemointeja (eng. *positioning*, ks. Davies ja Harré 1990) suhteessa eri kielenoppimisen tasoihin ja niihin liittyviin diskursseihin. Kun yksilöt käyttävät toimijuuttaan ja asemoivat itsensä ja toisensa diskursseissaan, he tarkastelevat maailmaa ottamastaan asemasta käsin (esim. Davies 2000; Kayi-Aydar 2019). Yksilöt voivat paitsi ottaa, myös neuvotella tai kieltäytyä heille annetuista asemoinneista. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan opiskelijoiden asemointeja, joiden kautta voidaan tutkia heidän kielenoppijäkäsityksiään ja monikielisistä identiteettineuvottelujaan.

Tutkimusasetelman lähtökohtana olivat Jyväskylän yliopiston Monikielisen akateemisen viestinnän keskuksen (Movi) uusimuotoiset, monikieliset ja alakohtaiset viestintä- ja kieliopinnot. Työskentelin itse opettajatiimissä, joka suunnitteli ja toteutti tätä opetusta yhteiskuntatieteiden opiskelijoille. Tässä tutkimuksessa toimin opettaja-tutkijan roolissa. Keräsin aineiston omilta opiskelijoiltani kolmen seurantavuoden aikana. Aineistot 1 ja 3 olivat kaikille pakollisia, reflektiivisiä kurssitehtäviä. Ensimmäinen aineisto oli opiskelijoiden ensimmäisenä syksynä kirjoittama kielielämäkerta. Valitsin teksteistä 14 ensimmäiseen osatutkimukseen. Tekstit valikoituvat sen perusteella, että niiden kirjoittajat olivat kaikki suomenkielisiä, suoraan lukiosta yliopistoon saapuneita opiskelijoita. Toinen aineisto sisälsi kymmenen puolistrukturoitua haastattelua, joihin pyysin mukaan samoja opiskelijoita, joiden tekstejä olin tarkastellut myös aineistossa 1. Haastattelin opiskelijoita heidän toisena opiskeluvuotenaan. Kolmas aineisto koostui opiskelijoiden viestintä- ja kieliopintojen viimeisestä loppureflektiosta heidän kolmantena opiskeluvuotenaan. Valitsin mukaan ne seitsemän opiskelijaa, jotka vielä olivat mukana opinnoissa ja jotka olivat osallistuneet myös

kahteen aiempaan osatutkimukseen. Aineiston analyysi sisälsi asemointianalyysiä (Davies ja Harré 1990), tulkintarepertuaarien tarkastelua (Potter ja Wetherell 1987) sekä tarvittaessa myös asemointien ja tulkintarepertuaarien määrällistä tarkastelua Atlas.ti -ohjelmiston avulla.

Ensimmäisessä osatutkimuksessa (artikkeli 1) tutkin ensimmäisen vuoden opiskelijoiden käsityksiä kielenoppimisesta ja omasta toimijuudestaan. Analysoin opiskelijoiden tulkintarepertuaarien ja subjektipositioiden käyttöä heidän kielielämäkerroissaan (Edwards ja Potter 2005; Potter 1996; Potter ja Wetherell 1987; Wetherell ja Potter 1992, Edley 2001). Nämä analyttiset käsitteet auttoivat tarkastelemaan, miten opiskelijat rakensivat käsityksiään ja toimijuuttaan kuvaillessaan tapahtumia, objekteja, ihmisiä ja tilanteita (Edwards ja Potter 2005, 242). Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että opiskelijat käyttivät neljää eri tulkintarepertuaaria kuvaamaan käsityksiään. Affordanssi-, tunne- ja ominaisuusrepertuaareja käytettiin kuvailemaan erilaisia, opiskelijan ulkopuolelle sijoituvia kielenoppimisen tilanteita, tapahtumia, välineitä, tunteita ja arvioita. Näihin repertuaareihin liittyi myös opiskelijoiden yleisesti omaksuma subjektipositio, riippuvainen toimija. Opiskelijat siis pitivät kielenoppimistaan suurimmaksi osaksi jostakin heidän ulkopuolellaan olevasta tekijästä riippuvaiseksi. Näihin tekijöihin kuuluivat jopa opiskelijoiden tunteet, sillä esimerkiksi ”motivaatiopulaa” pidettiin sairaudenomaisena tilana, johon yksilö ei voi vaikuttaa. Neljäs repertuaari oli toimintarepertuaari ja siihen liittyi vähän käytetty itsenäinen toimija -subjektipositio. Vain tässä repertuaarissa ja positiossa opiskelija piti itseään vastuullisena omaan kielenoppimiseensa. Kaiken kaikkiaan siis vaikutti siltä, että opiskelijat antoivat mieluiten erilaisia, itsestään riippumattomia syitä omalle kielenoppimiselleen, niin myönteisissä kuin kielteisissäkin tarinoissa.

Toisessa osatutkimuksessa (artikkeli 2) tarkastelin toisen vuoden opiskelijoiden monikielisten ja ammatillisten identiteettien neuvottelua sekä näiden identiteettien risteyskohtia. Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että opiskelijat neuvottelivat monikielistä identiteettiään asemoimalla itsensä erilaisiksi kielenoppijoiksi sekä englanninpuhujiksi. Eri kielenoppija-asemoinnit (kiinnostunut tai epäkiinnostunut kielenoppija, sekä hyvä ja kriittinen kielenoppija) kuvastivat opiskelijoiden käsityksiä hyvästä kielenoppijuudesta sekä heidän asennoitumisestaan yhteiskunnallisten ja koulutuksellisten diskurssien suhteen. Vaikka haastatteluissa käsiteltiin kaikkia opiskelijoiden osaamia kieliä, englannin käyttö nousi omaan asemaansa: haastateltavat asemoivat itsensä joko varmoiksi tai epävarmoiksi englanninpuhujiksi, mutta myös epävarmat puhujat asemoivat itsensä usein tottuneiksi englanninpuhujiksi. Tämä tarkoitti sitä, että vaikka omasta kielitaidosta olisi oltu epävarmoja, englantia ja sen ymmärtämistä pidettiin itsestään selvänä. Eri kielenoppija- ja englanninpuhujasemointeja käyttäen opiskelijat neuvottelivat itselleen joko monikielisyyttä tavoittelevan (*aspiring multilingual*) tai tyytyväisen kaksikielisen (*contentedly bilingual*) identiteetin. Monikielisyyttä tavoitteleva identiteetti ei välttämättä kuitenkaan tarkoittanut sitä, että opiskelijat olisivat olleet erityisen motivoituneita kerryttämään monipuolista kielirepertuaaria. Sen sijaan he viittasivat ympäröiviin yhteiskunnallisiin ja koulutuksellisiin diskursseihin esimerkiksi kielenoppimisen tärkeydestä; toisin sanoen, monikielisen

identiteetin neuvottelu ei tarkoittanut syvällistä oman identiteetin pohdintaa. Tyytyväiset kaksikieliset pitivät englantia ja suomea itselleen tärkeinä kielinä, mutta eivät kokeneet muulle kielitaidolle olevan erityistä tarvetta tai pitäneet muiden kielten osaamista osana kielellistä identiteettiään. Ammatillisen identiteetin asemoinnit, tuleva ammattilainen ja epävarma opiskelija, kytkeytyivät osin opiskelijoiden kielellisiin identiteetteihin. Erityisesti vaikutti siltä, että tulevasta ammatistaan varmoja olevat opiskelijat olivat myös muita varmempia omasta englanninosaamisestaan ja suhtautuivat kriittisesti monikielisyyttä korostaviin diskursseihin.

Kolmannessa osatutkimuksessa (artikkeli 3) vertasin tutkimushenkilöiden ensimmäisenä ja kolmantena opiskeluvuotenaan kirjoittamia reflektiivisiä tekstejä. Tavoitteenani oli selvittää, miten opiskelijat asemoivat itsensä suhteessa kieleen ja kielenosaamiseen, minkälaisia kielenoppijäkäsityksiä näillä asemoinneilla ilmenettiin, sekä miten opiskelijoiden käsitykset muuttuivat kolmen vuoden aikana. Teksteistä löytyi kuusi asemointia, joista kolme ilmensivät kieltä oppiaineena ja kolme kieltä viestinnän välineenä. Niitä asemointeja, joiden kautta kielestä puhuttiin viestinnän välineenä, käytettiin enemmän kolmannen vuoden teksteissä. Kolmessa vuodessa opiskelijoiden käsityksissä tapahtui kolme merkittävää muutosta: ensiksikin, opiskelijat alkoivat arvioida kielenosaamistaan itsearvioinnin kautta arvosanojen sijaan. Toiseksi, opiskelijat alkoivat puhua *kielenkäytöstä* yhä enemmän *kielenopiskelun* sijaan. Kolmas havainto oli, että kolmannen vuoden teksteissä alettiin puhua kielenoppimisesta aiempaa monikielisimmistä näkökulmista. Vaikka monikielisyys ei ollut suuri teema opiskelijoiden teksteissä, sen lisääntymistä voidaan pitää rohkaisevana merkinä monikielisen korkeakoulupedagogiikan vaikutuksista opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsityksiin.

Osatutkimusten tulosten perusteella voidaan vetää johtopäätöksiä väitöskirjan kolmeen pääkysymykseen liittyen. Tutkimuksista selvisi, että opiskelijat tiedostivat, vastaanottivat, kyseenalaistivat tai kiistivät erilaisia asemointeja, joita he kokivat yhteiskunnan, koulutuksen tai haastattelijan heille tarjoavan. Opiskelijat harjoittivat toimijuuttaan etenkin silloin, kun he asemoivat itsensä kriittisesti suhteessa ympäröiviin diskursseihin. Monikielisen ja ammatillisen identiteetti-neuvottelun tarkastelu osoitti, että identiteetin rakentumiseen vaikuttivat vahvasti opiskelijoiden käsitykset kielistä ja monikielisyydestä, kielenoppimisen luonteesta, sekä heistä itsestään kielenoppijana, alansa opiskelijana ja tulevaisuuden ammattilaisena. Kielelliset ja ammatilliset identiteetit liittyivät myös toisiinsa, sillä opiskelijat rakensivat kielellistä identiteettiään osin suhteessa käsityksiin itsestään alansa opiskelijana ja tulevana ammattilaisena. Kielenoppijäkäsitysten pitkittäistutkimus osoitti, että käsitykset muuttuivat kolmen opiskeluvuoden aikana. Erityisesti englannin kielestä tuli yhä vahvemmin viestinnän väline, vaikkakin muut vieraat kielet jäivät suurimmalla osalla opiskelijoista opiskeltaviksi aineiksi tai kieliksi, joita opitaan ulkomailla. Englannin hegemonia suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa niin tieteessä kuin kulttuurissakin näkyi kaikissa osatutkimuksissa. Englantia pidettiin välttämättömänä kansalaistaitona, mutta muut kielet olivat lähinnä kuriositeetteja, joilla voisi saada lisäpisteitä työnhauksussa tai joita piti opiskella koulussa ja yliopistossa.

Tämän väitöskirjan syntyprosessi on kytkeytynyt vahvasti pedagogiikkaan, sillä sen tarkoituksena oli uuden tieteellisen tiedon luomisen lisäksi olla pedagoginen apuväline yliopiston viestinnän ja kielten opettajille. Väitöskirjan lopussa pohdinkin tutkimuksen pedagogisia johtopäätöksiä. Tutkimustulosten perusteella vaikuttaa siltä, että ymmärrys monikielisydestä ei tule ainakaan suomalaisille korkeakouluopiskelijoille itsestään, vaan siitä pitää eksplisiittisesti keskustella. Opiskelijoiden arkikäsitteet kielenosaamisesta ja monikielisydestä voivat tämänkin jälkeen elää vahvana: esimerkiksi toisessa osatutkimuksessa osa haastateltavista kertoi ymmärtävänsä periaatteessa, että heitä voisi pitää monikielisiä, koska siitä oli puhuttu oppitunneilla. Silti he totesivat, että he eivät pitäneet eri kielten osaamistaan riittävän korkeana, jotta voisivat väittää olevansa monikielisiä. Reflektiiviset tehtävät ja kielitietoisuuden kehittämiseen tähtäävä opetus vaikuttivat kuitenkin hyviltä pedagogisilta välineiltä kasvattaa opiskelijoiden tietoisuutta monikielisydestä. Monikielinen opetus otettiin myös vastaan hyvin, sillä opiskelijat tottuivat nopeasti limittäiskielellisiin käytänteisiin eivätkä edes maininneet niitä kolmannen vuoden teksteissään. Se, että muita kieliä kuin englantia pidettiin oppiaineina tai ulkomailla opittavilta kieliltä, vaatii kielenopettajalta pohdintaa. Tämän tutkimuksen ollessa käynnissä maailmalla levisi koronaviruspandemia, jonka vuoksi usea tutkimushenkilö joutui peruuttamaan vaihto-opintonsa, joiden aikana he olivat aikoneet oppia jotakin vierasta kieltä. Olisikin tärkeää tukea opiskelijoita eri kielten opiskelussa ja käytössä myös kotoa käsin, esimerkiksi tutustuttamalla heidät erilaisiin tapoihin harjoitella ja käyttää kieltä erilaisissa internetin tarjoamissa ympäristöissä ja kulttuurin avulla, sekä auttaa heitä hyödyntämään kieliosaamistaan yliopisto-opinnoissaan. Kolmannen osatutkimuksen tulosten perusteella vaikuttaa myös siltä, että olisi tarpeellista pohtia arviointimenetelmiä. Tutkimushenkilöt olivat saaneet vain arvostuksen hyväksytyksi tai hylättyksi yliopiston viestintä- ja kieliopinnoistaan, mikä pakotti heidät pohtimaan osaamistaan jollakin muulla mittarilla kuin opettajalta saamansa numeron perusteella. Ruotsista opiskelijat saivat kuitenkin erikseen arvostuksen, minkä vuoksi samanlaista itsearviointia ei tämän kielen kohdalla tapahtunut.

Tämä väitöskirja on tarjonnut uusia teoreettisia näkökulmia yliopisto-opiskelijoiden kielenoppijäkäsityksiin sekä monikieliseen ja ammatilliseen identiteettineuvotteluun. Poststrukturalistisen asemointianalyysin käyttö yhdessä kielenoppimisen monitahoisien kehikoiden kanssa vaikutti toimivalta tavalla tutustua oppijan diskursseihin, ja tutkimushenkilöiden kolmen vuoden seurantajakson ansiosta olen voinut kuvata muutoksia opiskelijoiden asemoineissa ja sitä kautta heidän käsityksissään. Uuden teoreettisen tiedon valossa tässä väitöskirjassa on ollut mahdollista myös antaa ehdotuksia pedagogiseen kehittämiseen. Kaiken kaikkiaan monikielinen korkeakoulupedagogiikka vaikuttaa tarjoavan uudenlaisia tapoja tukea opiskelijoiden viestintä- ja kieliosaamista.

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ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

I

TOWARDS MULTILINGUAL COMPETENCE: EXAMINING BELIEFS AND AGENCY IN FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNER BIOGRAPHIES

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Towards multilingual competence: examining beliefs and agency in first year university students' language learner biographies

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ABSTRACT

As working life across the world is increasingly multilingual, multicultural and multidisciplinary, higher education language teaching is faced with a challenge of how to prepare students for it. Many universities have recently developed multilingual pedagogies but central to their success is learners' perceptions of these practices. To fill this gap, this article explores first year university students' language learner biographies to gain insight into how learners construct their linguistic realities. The biographies were studied with discourse analytical methods to examine the participants' beliefs about language learning and their sense of agency in it. The results reveal that participants tend not to portray themselves as agentive learners but rather position agency as an outside factor affecting their language learning. In addition, the participants' discourses differed in terms of languages, which adds to previous studies noting the complexity of learner beliefs. Understanding these dynamics can help teachers address students' beliefs in the classroom and accordingly support learners to create meaning in their language learning. The findings further suggest that beliefs should be studied from multilingual perspectives also in the future.

KEYWORDS

Beliefs; agency; higher education; language learning; discursive

1. Introduction

Globalisation and new technologies have led to a situation where foreign languages and communication have an increasingly important role in the labour market and hence language learners across the world operate in increasingly transnational and superdiverse contexts (Douglas Fir Group 2016; Gunnarsson 2014; OECD 2018). Yet, research in multilingualism suggests that the prevalence of L2 English in a country may negatively affect the interest to learn languages other than English (LOTEs) (Busse 2017; Henry 2010) meaning that the expectations of the evolving working life and the competencies of the labour force are in many countries incompatible. To support learners' multilingual development and answer to the demands of the rapidly evolving knowledge economy, there is a need to develop multilingual pedagogies in higher education (HE). Policy papers and strategic documents on different societal levels mention terms such as multilingual competence (The Council of the European Union 2018), twenty-first century skills (OECD 2018) and global citizenship (UNESCO 2019), all of which are considered central for successful adaptation in changing study and work environments and which are tightly connected to SLA. This article reports on a study conducted in a HE context where multilingualism and global citizenship have recently been added in strategic documents, yet practical pedagogical applications are still under development. A careful scrutiny of

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pedagogical solutions is needed, as language teaching in university can paradoxically lead to increased monolingual teaching when learners' exposure to the target language is maximised (Kelly 2015) and 'international' often in practise means 'in English' (Fabricius, Mortensen, and Haberland 2017). Furthermore, learners' prior language learning experiences may make it challenging to adjust to a multilingual learning environment.

Policies and pedagogies do not automatically create learning if they fail to recognise the learner's own meaning-making processes. Learner beliefs and agency have been widely documented to have a significant role in SLA (Barcelos and Kalaja 2011; Kalaja et al. 2016; Yang and Kim 2011), which is why they should be considered when developing meaningful multilingual pedagogies in HE. As previous research shows the complex nature of beliefs (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018; Mercer 2011b; see also Busse 2017), it is also not enough to study beliefs about one additional language¹ but in addition the intricate relationship between learners' beliefs about all of the languages in their lives. Hence, this article will explore first year university students' discourses to examine how the students make sense of their own relationship with language learning. Its aim is to combine and build on previous discursive belief and agency studies as well as recent multilingualism research to gain insight into how multilingual learners construct their language learning reality. Subsequently, it discusses what this might mean to future HE language teaching that aims to educate global citizens with twenty-first century skills (OECD 2018). The pedagogical objective of the article is to provide new understanding of learner beliefs that could be utilised in HE SLA classes to expand students' language awareness and reflection skills and thus help them develop their multilingual² repertoires as young professionals entering working life.

2. Literature review

2.1. Developing multilingual pedagogies in higher education

As SLA studies have taken a multilingual turn, learners are perceived as multilingual beings with complex biographies (Douglas Fir Group 2016; Meier 2017). However, while a vast amount of this research concentrates on learners from multilingual homes, learners with one home language but various FLs have received less attention. This article argues that to develop multilingual pedagogies, learners must be recognised as multilingual and their awareness of this should be supported. A Finnish university is an apt setting for exploring this notion.

The context of this study is a Finnish university whose main strategic goals include fostering linguistically and culturally aware and globally responsible academic professionals. Finnish working life is increasingly multidisciplinary, multicultural and multilingual (Lehtonen 2017) and graduates are required to have good communication and language skills as well as abilities to work in international settings. Previous studies suggest that Finnish students in tertiary education generally believe that languages have an important role in working life (Jalkanen and Taalas 2013; Mutta, Lintunen, and Pelttari 2017). Meanwhile, Finnish people study fewer FLs than before (The Matriculation Examination Board 2016). Accordingly, there is a mismatch between the generally positive views on languages and the languages actually studied. Research in multilingualism suggests that the prevalence of English in Europe may negatively affect the interest to learn LOTEs (Busse 2017; Henry 2010) and in Finland this seems to be the case both with the mandatory Swedish and optional L3s. It must also be noted that although this article focuses on work and study contexts, developing multilingual pedagogies has a vital role in fostering identities, cultures and symbolic values. Multilingual competence should be seen 'as a life-long capital and reservoir of co-ordinate experiences' and can thus be seen as essential in democratic societies (Stratilaki-Klein 2019).

Finnish university students have some compulsory language studies in their degrees regardless of their major subject. These studies include field-specific academic literacy and communication skills in their mother tongue, the second national language and an L2, which for most students are Finnish,

Swedish and English, respectively. The institution offering these courses in the present study has since 2013 developed multilingual communication and language courses where the focus is on multilingual competencies rather than individual languages. The courses force the students to reconsider their beliefs about language learning as they are faced with a new multilingual ideology they are not familiar with from school. This has posed a question of how the students adapt to the multilingual learning environment when the beginning of HE studies can be demanding as it is (Ketonen et al. 2016). Accordingly, a reflective task was given to new freshmen in this programme to gain insight into the students' beliefs. The study was conducted by the teacher-researcher, who was a member of the teacher team.

2.2. Beliefs about language learning and agency as discursively constructed

As presented above, various measures have been taken to support learners' linguistic competencies in the changing working life. However, a new policy or method is not enough since students may be hindered by their beliefs and they may resist a pedagogical change. Students' relationship with language learning must therefore be examined and addressed in SLA teaching and research. This article explores this relationship through the concepts of learner beliefs and agency that are understood as discursively constructed and therefore detectable in students' discourses. The focus is on learners' beliefs about language learning and their own agency in it.

Drawing from contextual approaches to L2 learner beliefs (De Costa 2011; Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018), this article defines beliefs as 'conceptions, ideas, and opinions' about language learning that are socially and discursively constructed by the learners (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018). As opposed to traditional etic approaches, this understanding of beliefs has moved from cognition to observing beliefs in students' discourses arguing that beliefs are not stable entities in a person's mind but rather constructed in discourse (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018). Beliefs have been shown to significantly influence language learning (e.g. Barcelos and Kalaja 2011; Kalaja and Barcelos *forthcoming*; Kalaja et al. 2016; Yang and Kim 2011). They are complex, situated and dynamic, and they are shared in a specific context (Aragão 2011; Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018; Mercer 2011b). Previous studies also suggest that university students' beliefs are already rather stable yet malleable (Aragão 2011; Ohata and Fukao 2014; Yang and Kim 2011). Methodologies investigating beliefs discursively include sentence completion tasks, drawings and narratives (Kalaja et al. 2019).

Beliefs are closely connected to agency, which Ahearn (2001: 112) defines as 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act'. Of the various approaches to agency, this article draws from positioning theory and poststructuralist perspectives that highlight the authorship and positioning of the writer or speaker of a discourse (Davies 2000; Kayi-Aydar 2019). In this perspective, agency is a situated and dynamic discursive position that the writer or speaker may assign on themselves or others, or refuse to do so (Kayi-Aydar 2019; Warren, 2019) and thus the discursive I is a subject position available to the individual, not a personality trait (Davies 2000). Davies (2000) also discusses agency with the notion of authorship, which agentive individuals can take up in discourse to shape, resist or challenge subject positions available to them.

Previous SLA research suggests that agency shapes and is shaped by beliefs (Gao 2010; Kalaja 2016). Positioning theory can explore how learners position themselves in discourse and how these positionings affect their learner beliefs (De Costa 2011) and beliefs about agency (Inözü 2018). Since positioning theory is rather a theoretical framework than a method, previous studies have utilised various methodologies. As agency is understood here as discursive position, it is justifiable to explore with discourse analytic tools (Edwards and Potter 2005; Potter 1996; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992). The two key concepts from discourse analysis in this study are interpretative repertoires, which are different meaning-making systems utilised by the learners, and subject positions, through which learners portray agency in their narratives. These can be detected in students' discourses and they make it possible to examine students' beliefs about language learning and agency.

3. The study

This article reports on a study examining Finnish first year university students' language learner beliefs and sense of agency upon entering university. The data was collected within the students' first multilingual language and communication course at the beginning of the first semester.

3.1. Research questions

The study was guided by the following two research questions:

- (1) Which interpretative repertoires do the participants use to describe factors that have affected their learning of different languages (EFL, SFL³ and L3)?
- (2) Which subject positions are adopted in the repertoires?

3.2. Data collection

The data consisted of language learner biographies (e.g. Williams, Mercer, and Ryan 2015) which were collected as a course assignment and where the students reflected on their past language learning (Aragão 2011). Although everyone has their individual life experiences which affect their beliefs (Mercer 2011a), the participants were chosen based on their similar age and educational background to minimise variability in terms of these factors. Therefore, students with previous HE studies or gap years were ruled out from this study.

The teacher-researcher asked the students for a permission to use their course work for research purposes but it was highlighted that this would not affect their course assessment and that their work would be used anonymously. The biographies were written for a compulsory course, which could affect the responses to a certain degree. However, the students were encouraged to write honestly about their feelings and the only assessment criterion was that the text had to respond to task instructions. It is also important to think about the role of the teacher-researcher, who must critically assess their interpretations during the research process and take responsibility of how they analyse and describe the data (Johansson 2005). In order to minimise the bias of the teacher-researcher, the chosen 14 texts were anonymised.

An autobiographical account is a retrospective reflection in which the speaker constructs events by organising and interpreting their memories (Biesta and Tedder 2007). Hence, through narratives writers are able to identify and reflect on their beliefs (Aragão 2011) and agency (Biesta and Tedder 2007). This reflective tool can therefore be both a pedagogical tool and a research method: the task can foster the development of the students' meta-cognitive skills (Williams, Mercer, and Ryan 2015) and the teachers can learn about their students' beliefs and sense of agency. It also allows the researcher to analyse these on a discursive level.

3.3. Methods of analysis

3.3.1. Analysing beliefs and agency discursively

Drawing from positioning theory and the discursive turn in learner beliefs research, this article understands learner beliefs and agency as discursively constructed (Davies and Harré 1990; De Costa 2011; Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018). It examines them with tools originating in discursive psychology (DP) (Edwards and Potter 2005; Potter 1996; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992) which have been utilised in some SLA studies (Barkhuizen 2010; De Costa 2011; Kalaja et al. 2016). DP examines how phenomena such as beliefs and agency are constructed 'through descriptions of actions, events, objects, persons and settings' (Edwards and Potter 2005: 242). Descriptions can be analysed in terms of how they are constructed and what is achieved by them (Potter 1996,

98). Hence, DP is apt for examining how students form their beliefs and position themselves as agentive learners in discourse. Two key concepts from DP in this article are interpretative repertoires and subject positions (Edley 2001; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Interpretative repertoires are relatively complete systems of meaning making which are formulated in social practices and take part in constructing social reality (Edley 2001; Jokinen, Juhila, and E Suoninen 2016). They can be identified by the common vocabulary or register of metaphors that are used to describe events or actions in discourse (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that people use various interpretative repertoires to explain and justify their claims as well as disclaim other arguments. In other words, it is possible to detect different interpretative repertoires in one individual's accounts by analysing patterns of content and form. When studying interpretative repertoires, the aim is not to find consensus but to examine the variability of language use in different situations, and the focus is solely on discourse rather than the speakers' cognition (Potter and Wetherell 1987).

A subject position is 'a "part" allocated to a person by the use of a story' (Stenner 1993: 114). Detecting subject positions is a way to examine agency in the text, as agency is a discursive position assigned by the writer (Kayi-Aydar 2019). By analysing positions it is possible to examine the meaning of a narrative as opposed to merely concentrating on its content (Barkhuizen 2010). The focus is then on the effects of a story rather than whether the story is 'true' (Stenner 1993). In this article the interest lies particularly on learners' 'intentional self-positioning' (De Costa 2011: 349), in other words, what kinds of positions the participants adopt in the discourse when it comes to agentive behaviour and taking responsibility in language learning.

3.3.2. Analysis process

Phase 1 of the analysis consisted of coding the 14 texts first in in-vivo style (Saldaña 2016) and then several rounds of close reading to detect interpretative repertoires in the data. The preliminary codes were read and re-read in order to find differences and consistencies in the texts (Potter and Wetherell 1987). In addition, each paragraph was coded in terms of which language it described. Based on the initial coding, three different repertoires about language learning were identified and the analysis was tested on the data. After the testing, a fourth repertoire was also detected.

Phase 2 focused on subject positions to examine ways in which the discursive *I* is constructed in the discourse. As Harré (1995: 134) writes:

there is fundamental difference in discursive role between those acts in which *I*, the speaker, take responsibility for my actions and those in which *I* give reasons for them. Giving reasons for an action may be a way of disclaiming responsibility (-).

Harré's suggestion about the differences in responsibility proved to be a useful starting point for the analysis of agency in the data. The action and agent was coded in each text excerpt, which resulted in the emergence of two main subject positions.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Overview of the results

In line with Wetherell and Potter (1992), the participants flexibly drew from different interpretative repertoires and there were evident differences and consistencies in the repertoires. Four interpretative repertoires and two subject positions emerged from the data. The repertoires were named the *affordance*, *affection*, *attribute* and *action repertoire* and will be described and discussed in Section 4.2. A numerical overview of the data is presented in Table 1 and elaborated in the subsequent sections.

Table 1. Numerical overview of the results.

Repertoire	Position	Featured language			Total
		English	Swedish	L3	
Affordance	Dependent agent	24	14	15	53
Affection		15	15	8	38
Attribute		8	3	4	15
Action	Independent agent	10	5	4	19
Total		57	37	31	125

4.1.1. Subject positions

Following Harré's (1995) notion of responsibility, two subject positions were detected in the data. The participants positioned themselves differently within the interpretative repertoires, either presenting themselves as active agents (*independent agent*) or placing agency on other factors than their own actions (*dependent agent*). The participants adopted the independent agent position in the action repertoire and the dependent position in the three others. The texts portraying a dependent agent describe an outside cause that triggers action in the learner. In the text the account starts with a cause which is followed by the triggered action. The texts portraying the independent agent explicitly state that learning was caused by the learner and hence the participants position themselves as active agents (see also Ruohotie-Lyhty 2011).

4.1.2. Languages

Learners are complex multilingual beings and learners' perceptions of themselves as language users are language and context dependent (Busse 2017; Douglas Fir Group 2016). Accordingly, contrary to previous studies, the participants wrote about all languages in their lives. Once the data was categorised in terms of interpretative repertoires, it was possible to count the number of repertoires per language. The results are presented in Table 1. It must be noted that a quantitative analysis of the data would not be statistically valid considering the number of participants in the study. However, this numerical overview can provide insight into the usage of different discourses and agency in the language biographies and the differences in terms of languages. The next section describes the different interpretative repertoires in detail and discusses how languages feature in the stories.

4.2. Repertoires, positioning and language

4.2.1. Affordance repertoire

The affordance repertoire was the most prominent repertoire in the data. In this repertoire the participants describe their language learning in relation to affordances in their environment (Peng 2011). These affordances include both out-of-school situations (people who speak the target language, the internet) and institutional structures (teachers, timetables). The passages mention an affordance which is followed by an evaluation of its effect. By placing agency on the affordance, the learners could not be credited or blamed for their successes or failures. The passages employ different extrematisation and minimisation techniques (Potter 1996) to explain the impact of the affordance in question. Three descriptive examples from the data are presented and discussed below.

Example 1

My new Swedish teacher was the best thing that could have happened to my learning: Now I was happy to study Swedish and I even started learning it. (S1P8)⁴

Example 2

However, I had to quit studying German in first year [of upper secondary school] because of too many other courses. (S3P4)

Examples 1 and 2 describe school-related affordances that have affected the writers' language learning. Learning is to some degree outsourced to this affordance as the writers blame or give credit to it, portraying a picture of themselves as dependent agents. The writers use their authorship (Davies 2000) to shape this subject position. Example 2 illustrates also the way the writer can resist a position (Kayi-Aydar 2019; Warren 2019), in this case that of an independent agent (active learner) by using the modal verb of necessity 'to have to'. By doing this, the writer disclaims the agentive position available to them to take charge of their learning and continuing the German studies. The same repertoire is also used about out-of-school affordances, such as in example 3.

Example 3

I was first introduced to English before pre-school by computer games but it started properly when I was eight years old, when my neighbour, who was three years older, introduced me to the online video game Runescape which was of course in English. I played this game many days a week (almost daily) almost throughout primary school and my language skills became pretty good even before English teaching started in third grade. (S2P7)

As in examples 1 and 2, the writer in example 3 portrays themselves as learner dependent on the affordance. Although an active agent in the playing, the writer simply states that '*my language skills became pretty good*', thus adopting no active position in the development of their language skills.

As explained above, this repertoire included both out-of-school and institutional affordances. For the purposes of this study it was justifiable to treat them as one repertoire since the repertoire was used to give reasons for language learning, in this case an affordance. However, to discuss how different languages feature in this repertoire, it is worth examining the content of these stories. When this repertoire was used with English, it most often described out-of-school affordances whereas with Swedish and L3 it was almost solely about institutional affordances (see e.g. Busse 2017). This is an expected finding since most television shows, music and social media sites Finnish people watch and use are in English or Finnish. The stories related to Swedish focused on teachers and their niceness or expertise; a few participants also mentioned the usefulness or uselessness of Swedish in the area where they grew up. The L3 stories adopting the affordance repertoire were mainly about reasons for why the students chose an L3 or why they dropped it later. There tended to be other subjects that were more worthwhile, and hence although affective reasons were sometimes the factors that got the students to start studying an L3, over time the L3 became just another school subject that they did not feel that strongly about.

4.2.2. Affection repertoire

This repertoire includes stories related to affective and emotional factors which are seen to influence language learning both positively and negatively. It has been well documented that affective factors have an important role in language learning (Aragão 2011; Williams, Mercer, and Ryan 2015) and it was therefore unsurprising that the affection repertoire was the second-most frequent repertoire. Affect is here a phenomenon outside of the learner and one the learner cannot influence. The passages include affectively charged verbs ('liked', 'wanted'), nouns ('favourite subject') and expressions combining affectively charged adjectives, nouns and verbs (e.g. 'my interest declined', 'bad attitude') (Golombek and Doran 2014). Examples 4 and 5 illustrate the way the learning is tightly connected to affective factors.

Example 4

I suffered from a continuous lack of motivation —. So I decided to give up my French studies in the second year of upper secondary school. (S8P9)

Example 5

Swedish started in seventh grade. I've liked that from the very beginning and hence my grades were 10 or 9⁵ all the way through secondary and upper secondary school. (S14P3)

The writer in example 4 uses the lack of motivation almost as an illness ('I *suffered*') and the only thing they could do was to quit studying it. Such a dramatic word choice as suffering is a form of

extrematisation (Potter 1996) and the aim is to emphasise the effect of affective reasons. In the data there are various similar illness-like states such as attitude problems and lack of interest. In example 5 the writer draws a connection between enjoyment and success in language learning. In the data, interest, motivation or enjoyment is the reason the learner succeeds. In the negative stories such as example 4, the writers disclaim an active agentive position in the discourse (Davies 2000; Kayi-Aydar 2019). Hence, the blame or the credit is shifted to an outside factor, which in this case is in fact in the learner's own mind. It is noteworthy that these internal affective factors are positioned as something a learner cannot influence and accordingly the learner again adopts the subject position of a dependent agent.

In terms of languages, the stories using the affection repertoire were more about (lack of) confidence to use English rather than about the language itself, which is in contrast with the stories featuring Swedish. Almost half of all the stories related to Swedish used the affection repertoire, which could reflect its often perceived, emotionally charged status. As was noted in the previous section, the L3 stories often adopted the affection repertoire when the participants described the beginning of their language learning; however, lack of interest or institutional affordances many times later ended the learning.

4.2.3. Attribute repertoire

The third repertoire with the learner positioned as a dependent agent is the attribute repertoire. Here the participants describe language learning and competence as a trait of an individual. The participants portray their competence as something they cannot influence; they either have or do not have the skills. Language is described as a challenge (Kalaja 2016). The passages use verbs and nouns related to competence ('was able to', 'challenge'), utterances related to grades ('full points') and phrases describing the contingency of success ('surprise', 'luck'). The static nature of language competence is achieved by normalisation techniques (Potter 1996) such as by verbs with an iterative aspect. Metaphorical expressions were common in this repertoire (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Extrematisation (Potter 1996) in the passages highlights the easiness or difficulty of learning ('quite a head for languages', 'a major Achilles heel'). Examples 6 and 7 illustrate this repertoire.

Example 6

— it turned out that I had quite a head for languages and studying German was as easy as pie at the beginning and in fourth and fifth class I got mostly 10s as grades from tests. (S2P9)

Example 7

Also Swedish started in upper secondary school, which turned out to be a major Achilles heel in my language skills. The problem wasn't a lack of motivation because I wanted to learn Swedish, but somehow it just never stuck to my head. (S12P2)

Also in the attribute repertoire, the writers positioned themselves as dependent agents, disclaiming the effect of their own doings (Davies 2000). Example 6 depicts a 'head for languages' that was prominent in the data: the writer suggests that their success in language class is based on this inherent trait. The writer in example 7 contrasts affective factors with skills: that motivation did not help when they simply were not able to learn.

The attribute repertoire was the least used in the data, so it seems that the participants do not hold a strong belief that language competence is an unchangeable state. This repertoire was most often used with English and the stories stated either that the learner was or was not good at it, without pondering reasons behind this. Swedish and L3 competences were more strongly attributed to external affordances or affective factors, although here too the competence was ultimately a trait: for example, in Example 7 the writer acknowledges that affective factors may have a role in language learning, but that the problem lay on the writer's own skills.

4.2.4. Action repertoire

The action repertoire differs from the three others by the writers' positioning as active agents. Here the participants describe their own actions as the factor that has affected their learning. Such actions are language learning, inactive behaviour and practice. The passages include verbs expressing purpose or intention ('decided to go', 'started') and phrases about doing work ('my efforts', 'would require work'), and the subject is the learner themselves. Extrematisation and minimisation (Potter 1996) are used to highlight the agent's efforts. Examples 8 and 9 describe the blame and credit the students give to their own actions.

Example 8

I didn't study English with as high motivation, and the courses in upper secondary school passed by with me just sitting in class, which annoys me now. During a possible gap year I was going to study English to make it as good as possible but instead I got straight into university. (S3P4)

Example 9

My efforts and hard work paid off in the matriculation exams. I got good grades for all languages, Swedish, English and mother tongue, and partly because of that got into university. (S13P6)

The writers in examples 8 and 9 position themselves as active, independent agents responsible for their learning (Davies 2000). In example 8 the writer implies that they should have been a more active student, stating that they were merely 'sitting in class' rather than doing work. In contrast, the writer in example 9 is happy with their efforts that 'paid off'. Example 10 further analyses a learner's own actions.

Example 10

Towards the end of upper secondary school I realised that although I've used English all the time [in my free time], the lack of speaking it has been slightly detrimental to my pronunciation. (S5P7)

Here the writer notes that their own actions have affected their competence. Although the affordance repertoire shows that a great deal of credit in successful learning is given to out-of-school activities, free time featured only a handful of times in the action repertoire. Even here it becomes apparent that English is learned or not learned due to informal learning situations whereas the other languages are rarely met outside of school walls. The lack of free time related stories could be an indication of a belief that language learning is either actively achieved in class or passively acquired elsewhere. Overall, the action repertoire and the independent agent's subject position features in only 19 times in the 125 stories. Accordingly, in all the rest of the passages agency is placed on something else than the learners themselves (cf. Williams et al. 2004). The result poses the question of what makes the participants in the present study refuse the role of an independent learner.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this article has been to construct knowledge on multilingual language learner beliefs and subsequently help further develop multilingual communication and language teaching in HE. The participants used four interpretative repertoires to discuss their language learning and two subject positions to express their sense of agency. Although a relatively small-scale qualitative study, it provides an insight into the discourses of young adult learners studying multiple languages who will enter a multilingual working life. By identifying and understanding learner beliefs, the teacher can better support learners in meaningful language learning.

A major finding of the study was that the number of accounts portraying the learner as an independent agent was very low. Accordingly, it seems that the participants would rather blame or give credit to other factors than their own effort. Even affective factors were portrayed as something learners cannot influence, as if they were something external. Joy, dislike or motivation were equated with other 'inborn' aptitudes for learning, such as an ear for languages. Perhaps it is easier for the learner to portray an internal factor as an external one since this gives them a valid reason for

disclaiming responsibility in their learning. This is worth addressing in classroom reflection but it also merits further studies. Larger, longitudinal and possible quantitative studies on university students' beliefs could shed more light into the matter. An important question is also whether similar results would emerge in different contexts, or whether this is unique to Finnish learners (cf. Williams et al. 2004).

This study differed from previous beliefs research by examining all languages in the students' repertoires. The participants spoke about languages in different ways, which is related to recent multilingual studies on motivation and the self (Busse 2017; Henry 2010, 2017; Mercer 2011a). The ways in which different languages were discussed reflect well on the general mindsets, the Finnish school system and the linguistic landscape of the participants (see also Busse 2017). Learner beliefs have long been characterised as complex, dynamic and even contradictory (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018; Mercer 2011b) and when taking a multilingual perspective, the picture is if anything more complex. Further studies on the matter could explore whether beliefs are more tied to individual languages or whether some are more general.

Pedagogically, the narrative accounts involved interesting reflection and the results could be utilised in future teaching, which was one of the aims of the study design. Apart from setting the language biography task for future students, the results of this study could be brought to discussion in class. The students could even analyse their own biographies from the point of view of these interpretative repertoires and discuss their beliefs and their sense of agency in language learning. Such a theoretical perspective can be used with university students and it could lead to meaningful, reflective conversations in class (Kalaja and Barcelos *Forthcoming*). Drawing from Biesta and Tedder (2007: 139), it is perhaps questionable whether understanding one's beliefs and sense of agency is enough to trigger (a change in) action or whether 'it is change in people's lives that will actually lead to insight and understanding', but in the light of previous studies it seems that reflection can be of use (Aragão 2011; Ruohotie-Lyhty 2011). Although not all teachers have resources to conduct their own research, discussing students' stories, feelings and experiences about language learning could lead to important and even empowering insights.

It seems clear that more research on these issues is needed in order to improve SLA teaching in European HE contexts. The complexity of learner beliefs and agency together with the multilingual turn in SLA requires cooperation from language educators and researchers. Together they can foster the development of young adults' multilingual repertoires by supporting meaningful language learning and subsequently ensure that when entering working life, these learners have the competence and study skills that is required of them.

Notes

1. The term 'additional languages' can be used when talking about both second and foreign languages.
2. Some European literature distinguishes between the terms multilingualism and plurilingualism, where plurilingual competence is that of an individual whereas multilingualism concerns wider communities and societies (e.g. Kelly 2015).
3. Swedish as a foreign language.
4. The data excerpts are translated from Finnish. The original excerpts are listed in [Appendix A.2.#](#).
5. In Finnish schools the grading scale goes from 4 to 10, meaning that 9 and 10 are the highest grades.

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Appendix

A.1.#Language learner biography instructions

A.1.1.#Translation of the task (original in Finnish below)

Draw a timeline that starts from your birth year and continues to year 2030.

Mark on the timeline all the events and time periods that have to do with languages or language competencies from your birth year to year 2017 (languages are both your mother tongue and foreign languages).

Choose those events and time periods that best describe how different languages relate to your life. They can be short moments or years-long time periods and they can have happened anywhere in your life (free time, school, etc.) or even just inside your head.

Write about a 600-word-long text in which you concisely describe the events above. What happened / what did you think or feel? How do you think they relate to your relationship with languages?

Now look at the timeline from 2017 to 2030. Mark on the timeline plans / thoughts / wishes about what you think will happen next with you and languages. What kinds of communication and language skills do you think you will learn during your studies? What kind of communication and language competence do you think you will need in the future in different parts of your life?

Continue the previous text for another 200 words where you describe your thoughts about the future.

Return the assignment in Word-format on Moodle by Thu 28.9.2017. Also take a photo of the timeline and save in to Moodle.

A.1.2.#Original instructions in Finnish

Piirrä aikajana, joka alkaa syntymävuodestasi ja jatkuu vuoteen 2030.

Sijoita aikajanelle (syntymästä vuoteen 2017) elämäsi tapahtumat ja ajanjaksot, jotka liittyvät kieliin ja kielten osaamiseen (kieliä ovat sekä äidinkieli että vieraat kielet).

Valitse ne tapahtumat ja ajanjaksot, jotka mielestäsi parhaiten kertovat siitä, miten eri kielet liittyvät sinun elämäsi. Ne voivat olla lyhyitä hetkiä tai vuosia kestäneitä kausia ja ne ovat voineet tapahtua missä vain elämässäsi (vapaa-ajalla, koulussa, jne.) tai vaikka vaan pääsi sisällä.

Kirjoita noin 600 sanan teksti, jossa kuvaillet tiivistä yllämainittuja tapahtumia. Mitä tapahtui / ajattelit / tunsit? Miten ne mielestäsi liittyvät siihen, millainen suhteesi on kieliin?

Katso nyt ajanjaksoa 2017–2030. Merkitse aikajanelle suunnitelmia / ajatuksia / toiveita siitä, mitä sinun ja kielten suhteen tapahtuu seuraavaksi. Millaisia viestintä- ja kielitaitoja arvelet oppivasi opintojesi aikana? Millaista viestintä- ja kieliosaamista arvelet tarvitsevasi tulevaisuudessa elämän eri osa-alueilla?

Jatka 4. kohdan tekstiä vielä noin 200 sanan verran, jossa kuvaillet 5. kohdan pohdintojasi tulevaisuudesta.

Palauta tehtävä Word-muodossa Moodleen to 28.9.2017 mennessä. Ota myös kuva aikajanasta ja tallenna se Moodleen.

A.2.#Data excerpts in Finnish

Example 1

Uusi ruotsin opettajani oli oppimisen kannalta paras mahdollinen asia: Opiskelin nyt mielelläni ruotsia ja aloin jopa oppimaan. (S1P8)

Example 2

Jouduin kuitenkin lopettamaan saksan lukemisen [lukion] ensimmäisellä luokalla liian suuren kurssimäärän takia. (S3P4)

Example 3

Englannin kieleen sain ensikosketukseni jo ennen esikoulua tietokonepeleistä mutta toden teolla se alkoi --- ollessani 8-vuotias, kun kolme vuotta vanhempi naapurini tutustutti minut, tietysti englanninkieliseen, netissä pelattavaan videopeliin nimeltä Runescape. Tätä peliä pelasini useana päivänä viikossa (lähes päivittäin) lähes koko ala-asteen ajan ja kielitaitoni kasvoi melko hyväksi jo ennen englannin opetuksen alkamista kolmannen luokan alussa. (S2P7)

Example 4

Kärsin jatkuvasta motivaatiopulasta --- . Päädyinkin jättämään ranskanopintoni sikseen toisena lukivuonna. (S8P9)

Example 5

Seitsemännellä luokalla alkoi ruotsi. Siitäkin olen pitänyt kovasti heti alusta alkaen ja arvosananani olivatkin aina 10 tai 9 koko yläasteen ja lukion ajan. (S14P3)

Example 6

--- selvisi että minulla on suhteellisen hyvä kielipää ja saksan opiskelu sujui alussa kuin vettä vaan ja sain nelos- ja vitosluokan kokeista useammin kympejä kuin mitään muita numeroita. (S2P9)

Example 7

Yläkoulussa alkoi myös ruotsin kielen opiskelu, mikä osoittautui valtavaksi akilleenkantapääksi kielten osaamiseni kannalta. Motivaatiosta itselläni ei ollut puutetta, sillä halusin oppia ruotsia, mutta jotenkin oppi ei vain koskaan jäänyt päähän. (S12P2)

Example 8

Englantia en lukenut yhtä motivoituneesti, ja lukion kurssit menivät tunneilla istuessa, mikä jälkikäteen harmittaa. Mahdollisena välivuotena minun pitikin opiskella englantia mahdollisimman hyväksi mutta pääsinkin lukiosta suoraan yliopistoon. (S3P4)

Example 9

Ponnisteluni ja ahkerointini palkittiin kielten osalla ylioppilaskokeissa. Kirjoitin kaikista kielistä, ruotsista, englannista ja äidinkielistä kiitettävät arvosanat, ja osin niiden avulla pääsin tänne yliopistoon opiskelemaan. (S13P6)

Example 10

Lukion loppupuolella huomasin, että vaikka englantia olenkin kaiken aikaa paljon käyttänyt, niin puhumisen jääminen vähemmälle on ollut jokseenkin haitallista kielen lausumiselle. (S5P7)



II

ASPIRING MULTILINGUALS OR CONTENTED BILINGUALS? UNIVERSITY STUDENTS NEGOTIATING THEIR MULTILINGUAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

by

Hillamaria Pirhonen (submitted)

Language learning in higher education

Request a copy from author.



III

“I DON’T FEEL LIKE I’M STUDYING LANGUAGES ANYMORE.” EXPLORING CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS’ LEARNER BELIEFS DURING MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE STUDIES

by

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'I don't feel like I'm studying languages anymore'. Exploring change in higher education students' learner beliefs during multilingual language studies

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ABSTRACT

To educate multilingual global citizens and follow the multilingual turn in language education, universities are faced with the challenge of developing their language pedagogies. This article reports on a study conducted in the context of university language studies that take a multilingual perspective to learning languages for academic and professional purposes. Although multilingual pedagogies have been widely developed in what could be traditionally considered as bilingual education, practical implementations are rarer when considering students that generally have one home language but study multiple foreign languages. To assess the effects of multilingual teaching in this kind of context, the present longitudinal, discursive study examines changes in university students' beliefs about language learning during their studies. The findings show a shift towards perceiving language more as a means of communication rather than a school subject during the research period, although this shift was clearest for English. In addition, there were small signs of multilingual perspectives towards language learning. The study indicates that there are advantages to multilingual pedagogies in higher education. The article discusses challenges in university language pedagogies and gives suggestions for further development of multilingual teaching.

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Multilingualism; beliefs;
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pedagogy

Introduction

As the demands of the rapidly evolving knowledge economy (The Douglas Fir Group 2016; OECD 2018; Gunnarsson 2014) and the multilingual turn in language education (Gorter and Cenoz 2017; Meier 2017; Ushioda 2017; Henry 2017; Busse 2017; The Douglas Fir Group 2016) highlight themes of multilingualism and internationalisation, universities are faced with the challenge of developing their language pedagogies. University graduates should possess multilingual competencies to operate in transnational and superdiverse environments (The Douglas Fir Group 2016; The Council of the European Union 2018), which could be supported by adopting a holistic approach to multilingualism, promoting the use of the students' whole linguistic repertoire (Henry 2017). This means shifting the focus of language teaching towards translingual competencies, integrating languages rather than seeing them as separate entities (Gorter and Cenoz 2017). Such changes in language pedagogies could help to foster students' multilingual skills as well as cultural sensitivity, flexibility, and resilience, all of which are beneficial for a global citizen (cf. Critchley and Wyburd 2021).

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Although multilingual pedagogies have been widely examined in SLA literature, practical implementations remain scarce (Gorter and Cenoz 2017), especially when it comes to academic contexts outside of what could be traditionally considered bilingual education. Contemporary research considers an individual with resources in more than one language multilingual (Meier 2017), which has implications both for how we conceptualise and educate students whose home and school languages are the same but who study one or more foreign language(s). Developing multilingual pedagogies for these students is likely to be different to those bi- or multilingual contexts where the learners are in close contact with all the studied languages in their everyday lives. This paper reports on a study conducted in the context of a pedagogical development project in which university students' compulsory communication and language courses were restructured to create translingual teaching practises promoting the development of students' multilingual competencies (Jalkanen 2017). To the students of these courses, most of the target languages were purely 'foreign' languages, often only existing inside the classroom. During their bachelor's degree studies, the students took part in four multilingual courses that replaced traditional, separate courses on mother tongue and foreign languages for academic and professional purposes.

Moving from traditional to multilingual language learning is likely to cause negotiations of meaning, or changes in beliefs, between the teachers and the students, both of whom have been educated in a system that perceives languages as separate school subjects (cf. Haukås 2016). Beliefs are here understood as learners' discursively constructed views and opinions about languages, language learning and themselves as language learners (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018; Mercer 2011). It is important to examine learners' beliefs in connection to new pedagogical implementations, as they can strongly influence language learning (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018). For instance, discrepancies between learner beliefs and the teaching style can lead to less investment in learning, while on the other hand, beliefs can have an affirmative quality when they are consistent with the teaching ideology (cf. Peng 2011). In this study, the interest lies on the learners' adjustment to a multilingual teaching style and its effects on learner beliefs. The study examines if and how this kind of teaching results in changes in beliefs and subsequently contemplates the nature of these changes: It asks whether the multilingual approach affects the participants' beliefs in a way that could be favourable towards a more multilingual understanding of and an increasing investment in language learning. On the other hand, it considers which beliefs remain stable, and whether multilingual language teaching can negatively affect learners' beliefs.

To explore change in students' learner beliefs during the multilingual language courses, this article examines data collected at the beginning and end of social science students' bachelor's degree studies at a Finnish university. Situated within higher education language pedagogies and the discursive understanding of learner beliefs, the study aims to create a new understanding on multilingual teaching from the perspective of students whose home and school languages are the same but who study multiple foreign languages. Pedagogically, the purpose is to provide information that can be used to develop pedagogical practices to better foster students' beliefs about themselves as multilinguals operating in transcultural and -national environments.

Literature review

Developing multilingual pedagogies in university

To answer to the demands of increasingly multilingual, -cultural and -disciplinary job markets, universities aim to prepare students in becoming global citizens that can operate in international contexts (Critchley and Wyburd 2021). Multilingualism and internationalisation are central themes in development projects on institutional, national, and international levels, as universities work towards goals such as better student and staff mobility and employability, social inclusion, diversification and decolonialisation of academic content, and integration and employability of international students and staff. Such extensive development work is not without its tensions, as

different discourses on language needs for these goals can simultaneously promote multilingualism and English as a lingua franca (cf. Huhtala, Kursiša, and Vesalainen 2021; Darling 2021).

It could be argued that a university student is almost always multilingual. In non-Anglophone countries, students must learn to process academic information through their national language and English to ensure both local and global academic communication (Kaufhold and Yencken 2021). Higher education policies in Europe are also guided by the European Union that promotes learning of at least two foreign languages and names multilingual competence as one of the key competencies of a European citizen (The Council of the European Union 2018). In addition to accessing and contributing to international research, English is often used within the home institution with the increasingly international staff and student population (Kaufhold and Yencken 2021). However, discourses on internationalisation have been criticised for simply promoting English (Fabricius, Mortensen, and Haberland 2017) rather than more socially inclusive uses of multilingualism. Recent research indicates that the taken-for-granted status of English in many countries can lead towards little interest to develop competencies in languages other than English (LOTES) (Henry 2017; Busse 2017). For example, in Finland, this means that while students' English-skills are generally high, they study fewer languages than before (The Matriculation Examination Board 2021). Taking all this into account, universities are faced with a challenge of developing language teaching that is socially inclusive and globally responsible, which requires new multilingual pedagogies.

The multilingual turn has encouraged language education to adopt a holistic approach to multilingualism, encouraging students to utilise their resources across languages (Henry 2017). This constitutive view on language learning challenges the traditional dichotomy of a native vis-à-vis non-native speaker as well as concerns the whole range of semiotic resources of the individual instead of focusing on languages as separate systems (Ushioda 2017; Cook 2016). Language education should stress translanguaging and transcultural competencies enabling the learner to 'operate between languages and cultures as informed and educated speakers and mediators' (Ushioda 2017, 474). Gorter and Cenoz (2017) note that although holistic multilingual pedagogies are discussed widely at a theoretical level, there are fewer implementations. The authors review recent advances in multilingual teaching practises that involve translanguaging as well as supporting students' cross-linguistic awareness and metalinguistic skills. However, it seems still more common to implement such practices in bilingual education rather than within language education of students from 'monolingual' backgrounds studying multiple foreign languages, such as is the case in the context of the present article.

Examining change in students' language learner beliefs through positioning

This study explores the change in university students' learner beliefs. The research into learner beliefs since its emergence in the 1980s can be broadly divided into traditional and contextual approaches, the latter encompassing various perspectives on understanding this concept (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018). In this article, I draw from the discursive approach (Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018; Mercer 2011) and define learner beliefs as learners' views and opinions about languages, language learning and themselves as language learners, that are discursively constructed, complex and dynamic, shared in specific contexts and affected by macro-contextual factors such as values and language ideologies. The emic perspective highlights the discursive nature of beliefs in contrast to etic approaches viewing beliefs as cognitive constructs in the learner's mind (Kalaja 2016). Beliefs have been studied in different contexts and during various lengths of time. However, Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro (2018) call for studies related to the status of the learnt language(s), about being a learner of language(s), and the process and outcomes of learning the language(s). In addition, the authors note that longitudinal studies over several years are scarce. This article contributes to these research tasks by examining university students' beliefs about different languages,

language learning and themselves as language learners over the course of three years during which they take part in a pedagogical development project in multilingual language education.

Previous longitudinal studies show that beliefs have a significant impact on language learning and that university students' beliefs can be both stable and subject to change. Aragão (2011) showed that students were able to change their self-perceptions as language learners through languaging about their beliefs and emotions, suggesting that reflective practices can affect change in beliefs. Mercer's (2011) case study illustrated the simultaneously stable and dynamic nature of self-beliefs, challenging 'simplistic models of cause-and-effect and change/stability dichotomies' of belief development (343). Yang and Kim (2011) showed the significance of beliefs in engagement in language learning, as the participants in their study utilised their L2 environment to various degrees depending on their learner beliefs. Kalaja (2016) found that university students of English mostly viewed the 'language as system' and 'as discourse', and little 'as ideology', which is likely a reflection of the ubiquitous and relatively uncriticised role English has in Finland (see also Pirhonen 2021; Huhtala, Kursiša, and Vesalainen 2021). During their studies, English became a more everyday language to the students, and they started describing themselves as users rather than learners of English. Aro's (2016) findings suggest that while children relied heavily on institutional discourses on language learning, as young adults the participants drew more from their own experiences as well as societal and cultural voices. Peng's (2011) study demonstrated how university students' learner beliefs were affected by affordances, that had an affirmative quality when in line with the learner's beliefs. Conversely, if affordances were unavailable or inconsistent with the learner's beliefs, the learner was more likely to question their value. Peng (2011) notes that university students can adjust to the educational ideology they are surrounded by, but contextual factors such as stressful testing and monotonous teaching can impair attempts to promote informed learner beliefs. While illustrating the complex and dynamic nature of beliefs from different perspectives and in different contexts, most of these studies focus on beliefs about L2 English, thus leaving a gap for an exploration of university students' beliefs of all languages they study and use.

From various possibilities for examining beliefs discursively, this article takes a positioning perspective. Positioning is an agentic process where individuals construct their beliefs by choosing positions available to them and then speaking from those positions. Positioning can mean adopting, accepting, or resisting available positions. Accordingly, discourses both impact individuals and are impacted by these agentic actions (Davies and Harré 1990). Using the term position rather than the more static idea of a role, we can focus on the dynamic nature of interaction (Kayi-Aydar and Miller 2018). Kayi-Aydar and Miller (2018, 81) conclude that positioning theory 'draws attention to the ways in which people are constantly changing as their circumstances and contexts change'. Positioning theory is, therefore, useful when analysing learner beliefs which are known to be dynamic; it can help to understand the moment-to-moment emergence of positions through which the learners construct their beliefs. The focus of this study is on learners' self-positioning, in other words, how individuals position themselves in their discourses (van Langenhove and Harré 1999).

The study

This study examines the evolution of social science students' learner beliefs during their bachelor's degree studies. The data was collected at the beginning of the studies' first and at the end of the last semester.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

RQ1: How do the students position themselves towards languages and language learning in the data?

RQ2: What kinds of language learner beliefs do the students construct through these positionings?

RQ3: How do the beliefs change during the research period?

Context of the study

The context of this study is a development project at a Finnish university aiming to educate professionals who can operate in multilingual and international settings. All Finnish university degrees contain compulsory studies in the students’ mother tongue, second national language and first foreign language, which for the majority are Finnish, Swedish and English, respectively. In addition, students are encouraged to study L3s but these studies tend to be optional. While both European and national level policies emphasise the importance of learning at least two foreign languages¹, the strong status of English in Finland seems to have led to sceptical attitudes towards the need for LOTEs (cf. Henry 2017; Busse 2017). The unit in charge of compulsory communication and language studies at the university presented in this article has restructured its teaching by adopting the holistic approach to multilingualism (cf. Gorter and Cenoz 2017). Instead of traditional language-specific courses, students take part in multilingual teaching exploring phenomena in academic and professional communication, utilising purposeful translanguaging. Although the courses are multilingual, the students’ Finnish, Swedish and English are assessed separately.² Figure 1 summarises the content of the four courses, illustrating the multilingual and phenomenon-based nature of the studied themes.

The present study was conducted during the first pilot of these studies. As a part of a larger teacher team, I collected data alongside the teaching. Rather than conducting action research, I started examining the change when it was being implemented and I was assigned as a teacher in these courses. I am a teacher of two languages and as such, found translanguaging natural (cf. Haukås 2016). However, I wanted to investigate the students’ perspective. Before university, they had been learning their mother tongue and foreign languages as separate school subjects, and I,

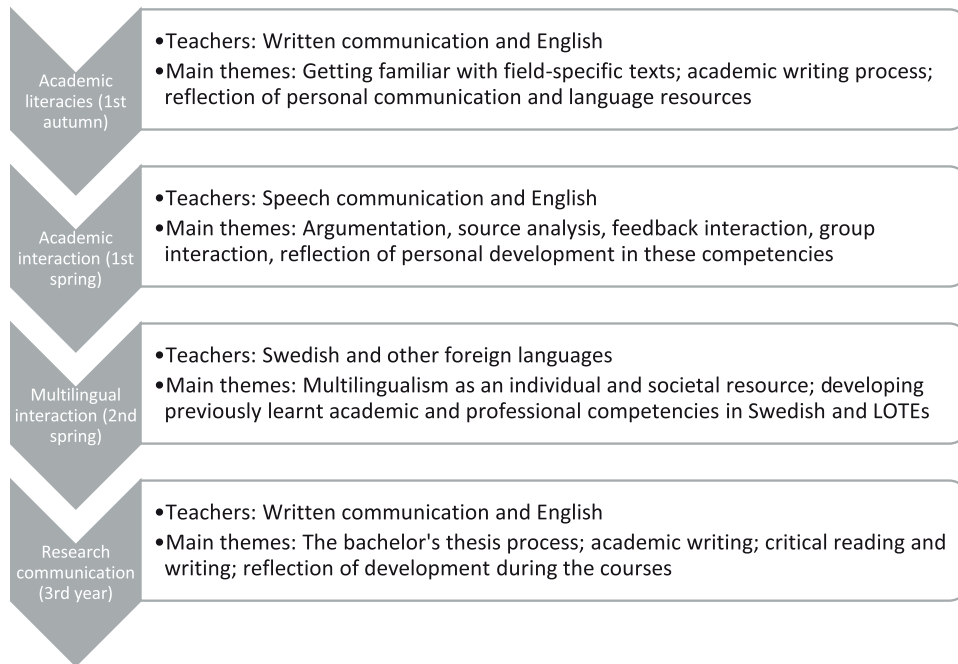


Figure 1. Structure and themes of the restructured multilingual courses for social science students.

therefore, expected that moving to multilingual teaching would affect the students' learner beliefs. Accordingly, I began to examine whether changes in their beliefs occurred.

Data collection

The data consisted of two reflective essays ($n = 14$) that the participants ($n = 7$) wrote at the beginning and at the end of their language courses (Figure 1). Beliefs are affected by experiences from the course of a lifetime, so to minimise variability, the seven participants were chosen based on their age. All of them started university directly after their graduation from upper secondary school,³ which meant that they had not spent years in working life or possibly abroad. The participants granted me a research permission and I stressed that their texts would be anonymised and that the research would not affect their course assessment.

The first essay was a language biography (Williams, Mercer, and Ryan 2015) in which the students discussed memorable events and insights related to their language learning experiences. In the second essay, the students discussed their language learning experiences in university and reflected on possible changes that had happened since the initial language biography essay which they revisited during the writing process. The essays were course assignments as well as a data collection method, which was considered in the analysis process. However, the assessment criteria were loose, encouraging the students to write freely about their feelings before and after their language studies. As a teacher-researcher, I had to focus on my biases, since by the time of the analysis I had taught the participants for three years and knew them well. I utilised the background knowledge, I had on the students as a strength in the analysis process, while continuously examining my positioning of the students as well as their self-positionings.

Methods of analysis

The analysis was informed by positioning theory and the discursive approach to learner beliefs (Davies and Harré 1990; Kalaja, Barcelos, and Aro 2018). Learner beliefs are possible to observe through learners' positioning in which individuals locate themselves and others in discourse (Davies and Harré 1990). The analysis with the Atlas.ti software process began by thematically exerting every utterance, such as a small story or claim, relevant to the research questions. To explore how the participants positioned themselves in these utterances, I coded them using the following questions:

- What is the context of this utterance (e.g. language class, a situation related to language use, general discussion about language learning)? Which language or languages are discussed in it (English, Swedish, other LOTEs)?
- How is the learner positioned in relation to the context and possible other characters (e.g. an agentive/passive student, a learner receiving/resisting the teaching)? Which discursive features are used in these positions (e.g. recurring expressions, evaluative or affective vocabulary)?

The coding occurred in several rounds, moving from open to refined coding. The codes and their discursive features led to six distinct ways of positioning which were used to discuss several beliefs about languages and language learning in the data. When coding, I examined the whole data-keeping an open mind to the possibility that the participants would adopt different and new positions in the final year reflection. However, all the six positions occurred in both data sets and there were no new positions in the second one.

Despite the positions remaining the same, their densities varied, and it was evident that the best way to examine change was to assess the extent to which the positions occurred in the two essays. Accordingly, I examined which learner positions and languages co-occurred, and how the two data

sets differed in terms of these co-occurrences. Through this process, it was possible to analyse how the participants' positionings between the two data sets indicated changes in their beliefs.

Results and discussion

The participants adopted six different positions to discuss their learner beliefs. The positions portray two main beliefs about the nature of language: language as a subject and language as a means of communication. There were differences in beliefs about English and LOTEs including Swedish. In addition, both changes and stable beliefs occurred in the participants' positionings between the two data sets. The next sections will first present the six positions associated with the two main beliefs, and then discuss how positionings revealed changes in beliefs about English, LOTEs and language learning in general.

Two beliefs about the nature of language

Language as a subject

The participants positioned themselves as **receivers of teaching, good learners** and **opponents** to discuss language as a (school) subject. Speaking from these positions, the participants expressed beliefs about the formal nature of language learning: Language learning was measured with grades and languages were subjects among other subjects. Language learning was portrayed as receiving of teaching, emphasising the role of the teacher or educational circumstances such as timetables. Learning was also discussed as being strongly dependent on motivation. In addition, the participants could stress that languages are generally important, but this belief seemed to be directed at the receiver of the essay, the teacher. Table 1 presents the three positions, their discursive features, and an example excerpt.

Table 1. Receiver of teaching, good learner, and opponent positions.

Language as a subject		
Position	Discursive features	Example
Receiver of teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive or negative statements describing the teaching conditions or the teacher • expressions of gaining or receiving • descriptions of the learner's motivation • evaluations of the learner's skills • expressions of receiving grades • descriptions of 'completing' a language 	<i>I completed the academic Swedish surprisingly easily – I passed both the oral and the written part on my first try and the latter even with quite good points.</i>
Good learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • claims highlighting that languages are beneficial • statements portraying a motivated learner • evaluative statements of their previous lack of effort being disappointing 	<i>There are considerable benefits for knowing both of these languages in career opportunities [in my field].</i>
Opponent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressions of purposeful opposing of language learning • expressions of negative attitudes resulting in opposing learning • statements of problems in teaching • doubtful expressions related to future language learning 	<i>I could even claim that I have in some way rebelled against the idea of 'compulsory internationalisation'</i>

The receiver of teaching, good learner and opponent positions depicted beliefs about formal language learning. In the receiver of teaching position, the learner portrays their learning as being dependent on teaching. The learner expects to ‘gain’ skills from teaching. Learning is also influenced by motivational factors or the learner’s inherent language skills. The learner is thus an actor dependent on the learning conditions (cf. Peng 2011). In many cases, the learner’s motivation is described in a positive manner, expressing the learner’s interest to learn. However, the learner is still non-agentive, not taking responsibility in learning. While the receiver of teaching position is about the learner’s dependence on gaining skills from teaching, the good learner position is adopted when the student wants to make claims about language learning that seem to echo societal and institutional discourses on the benefits of language learning (cf. Aro 2016). Here the student describes themselves as a learner that knows what is expected of them. For example, they can stress their motivation but on the other hand, give a justification for why they have not studied a language despite the motivation, or the statements are evasive, using conditionals to highlight that something would be ‘nice’ but might not happen. This suggests that they want to depict themselves more motivated than they perhaps are. In contrast, the opponent positions themselves against language learning, teaching or discourses suggesting they should study more languages. The positioning is an active process of questioning or refusing a position (e.g. Davies 2000) they feel is placed on them by society, the university, or the language teacher. Overall, the use of the receiver of language, good learner and opponent positions were adopted less in the second data. This indicated a shift towards perceiving language more as means of communication, which will be discussed next.

Language as a means of communication

Through positioning themselves as **language users**, **receivers of language** and **skilful learners**, the participants discussed language as a means of communication. As they spoke from these positions, they expressed the need for languages in their free time or studies. In addition, learning was evidenced through descriptions of successful encounters the participants had had with the language, in contrast to the beliefs associated with language as a subject, where the participants described success with grades. The positions, their discursive features and examples are described in Table 2.

The language user, skilful learner and receiver of language positions highlighted communicational contexts of language learning and use. The language user uses languages in their studies or free time, or describes how they will use them in the future. The focus here is on language use and what language enables them to do. While learning is a by-product of doing, the learner is still agentive in the sense that they are actively choosing to do something in the target language.

Table 2. Language user, skilful learner, and receiver of language positions.

Language as a means of communication		
Position	Discursive features	Example
Language user	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> descriptions of situations where the learner has used, uses or will use the language in their studies or their free time, such as in connection to culture, entertainment, friends or travel 	<i>English has especially found its way into my world through compulsory courses, interesting articles and podcast lectures.</i>
Receiver of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> descriptions of language use situations and their effect on the learner descriptions of situations implying learning or lack thereof. 	<i>I believe that the best way for me to learn languages would be [in a country of the target language] so that there would be continuously input that would activate and quicken the language learning process.</i>
Skilful learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressions of development and success expressions of heightened sense of confidence 	<i>Last summer I was in France [with friends], and to my surprise I managed surprisingly well in French despite all these years [when I hadn't used it].</i>

In contrast, the receiver of language positions their learning solely dependent on outside factors. Compared to the receiver of teaching position, here the learner expects to acquire language skills due to outside factors forcing them to use the language, rather than expecting someone to formally teach them. The factor is either explicitly described as something that ‘transfers’ skills to the learner or there is a clear implication that a certain situation would make the learner use the language. Importantly, the learner is non-agentive, which distinguishes it from the language user position. This position is most often used in connection to future aspirations, for example, when expressing hope that the learner would ‘gain’ language during exchange. The communicative element of language use is also present in the skilful learner position in which the student evaluates their language learning based on what they can do with the language, discussing their progress in the language or their heightened sense of confidence. This contrasts with the receiver of teaching position highlighting grades as evidence of learning. All these three positions were adopted more frequently in the second data. The next section will describe the beliefs that were depicted with different positions.

Change in beliefs about languages and language learning

By exploring how the different positions were used in the data, it was possible to examine change in the learner’s beliefs about language learning. The next sub-sections will discuss change and stability in beliefs about English, LOTEs, and language learning in general.

Change in beliefs about English

There were already significant differences between how the participants discussed English and LOTEs when entering university. English was not only a school subject but also a language they used in their free time in contrast to LOTEs including Swedish that rarely existed outside of school. However, the participants started recognising their informal English learning in greater quantities during university. In fact, they rarely used the receiver of teaching position in relation to English in the second data, stressing that they had learned it in other contexts than formal language teaching. Examples 1 and 2 illustrate this shift.

Example 1⁴

Naturally, because I had developed my English skills [by playing video games] already before we started learning it in school, I was ahead of most pupils (-) In fact, my English grade was 10⁵ throughout primary school. (-) English was still so easy for me [in secondary school] that I never received a lower mark than a 9 for a test but my grade remained a 9 because I never put my hand up in class. (Student 2, Data 1)

Example 2

The one thing that I have developed in [when it comes to languages during university] is using English. Situations in which I have ended up using it have been e.g. helping out exchange students (-), political debate on the internet and generally following things [in the world]. Because I have had the chance to use it more also orally during my studies, my pronunciation and my confidence related to it have grown a lot. Because of that, using English is now a lot easier for me than before. (Student 2, Data 2)

In Example 1, the student positions themselves as a language user by mentioning their use of English in their free time, but the main point of this story is located in the classroom where the student positions themselves as a receiver of teaching. They highlight their grades and do not discuss any active studying – rather, they stress their inactivity in class. Example 1 illustrates the way English was commonly discussed in the first data: It was both a language of free time and a school subject, but those two aspects seemed separate from one another (cf. Aro 2016). While the participants positioned themselves primarily as receivers of teaching and to a smaller extent as language users when discussing English in the first data, in the second data they shifted to speaking from the language user and the skilful learner positions. In Example 2, the student positions themselves as a

language user describing their use of English in different, everyday situations, and as a skilful learner as they assess their skills based on their feelings and confidence. This contrasts with discussing grades like in the receiver of teaching position and highlights the strengthening of the language as means of communication belief.

It seems that already when entering university, the participants knew of the many uses of English in their free time. However, by the end of their bachelor's studies, it had also become their everyday study language. Student 1 illustrates this development in Examples 3 and 4, describing English-language entertainment in the first essay and field-specific language use in the second.

Example 3

At the same time my English skills developed and improved. Most of the entertainment I consumed was in English. (Student 1, Data 1)

Example 4

English has especially found its way into my world through compulsory courses, interesting articles and podcast lectures. (Student 1, Data 2)

In both examples above, the student positions themselves as a language user but the uses of the language become more versatile in the second data set as the student discusses their use of English as a natural part of their studies. This development happened even to those who struggled with English in school and solely portrayed themselves as receivers of language in the first data. Student 4's journey is an example of this.

Example 5

The level of English teaching was already quite high and as at the same time I was studying two new, interesting languages, (-) I had problems with studying English. (Student 4, Data 1)

Example 6

I feel like I've got a lot better at English compared to my freshman autumn. The biggest reason for this development is the large amount of English material in my studies. Getting familiar with these texts, finding the main ideas, and summarising the texts has developed my English skills (-). (Student 4, Data 2)

In Example 5, the student depicts English as a school subject and describes their difficulties with it, speaking from the position of a receiver of teaching. In Example 6, they position themselves as a language user who has become accustomed to studying through the language. The participants spoke about English a great deal in their second essay and acknowledged the changes that had happened due to English becoming a part of their academic study skill set. The language user position illustrated the natural part the language had in the participants' lives and the skilful learner position depicted an increasing confidence in their competencies.

Change in beliefs about LOTES

While English became an increasingly natural part of the students' lives, there were less of such developments in discourses on LOTES. Both data sets depicted LOTES as school subjects, although in the second data, it was increasingly acknowledged that a LOTE can be learned by living in a country where that language is spoken. Common to both beliefs was that the students positioned themselves as relatively non-agentive receivers, of either teaching or language. Despite Swedish having a different status than other LOTES in Finland, there were no noteworthy differences between them in this analysis. This sub-section will, therefore, discuss Swedish and other LOTES together.

Many participants positioned themselves as receivers of teaching at the beginning and end of their studies, maintaining the belief that LOTES were mainly (school) subjects. Examples 7 and 8 illustrate this from Student 1's perspective.

Example 7

In Swedish, I did pretty well despite my lack of interest. (Student 1, Data 1)

Example 8

I completed the academic Swedish surprisingly easily – I passed both the oral and the written part on my first try and the latter even with quite good points. (Student 1, Data 2)

In both examples, Swedish is a subject in which the student succeeds, but this is not due to the students' actions. Rather, the student positions themselves as someone to whom success in Swedish is happening, even if they are not motivated, or not expecting it. The frequent use of this position in the first data is likely to reflect language teaching in the Finnish school system which, despite conscious efforts to highlight communicative aspects of language, must support students in passing national exams. The belief that language is a subject that can be 'completed' is particularly evident in Example 8, where the student discusses the academic Swedish studies. It is noteworthy that although the students had to pass certain assignments also in Finnish and English during their multilingual language courses, only Swedish was discussed in the data as something that had to be passed. English was never portrayed as a completed subject but rather a skill that would continue to develop.

At the end of the participants' studies, LOTEs mostly remained to be subjects that existed in the classroom, or in the target country, in which the student would have to live to learn them. In Example 9, Student 10 positions themselves as a receiver of language when they discuss how they would learn language best, expecting their environment to force them to learn.

Example 9

From the future, I hope that I end up learning languages more and more in for example working life or in some other "practical way" (-). I believe that the best way for me to learn languages would be [in a country of the target language] so that there would be continuously input that would activate and accelerate the language learning process. (Student 10, Data 2)

The use of the receiver of language position was minimal in the first data, which suggests that at that point the participants saw language as a skill to be gained in class. Although still not invested in placing much responsibility on themselves to learn LOTEs in the second data, the use of the receiver of language position displays the belief that languages are learned through use in informal contexts. This position was mostly used in relation to Swedish, which may imply that there was a wish to learn it more, but the learning would have to happen during exchange. In Example 10, Student 1 discusses their cancelled exchange in Sweden, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Example 10

The Swedish language is still there at the back of my mind and my thoughts about exchange in Sweden remind me that this year has been globally very strange. The Covid restrictions took away my exchange [in Sweden] (-). Despite Covid I dream of an exchange semester or a master's programme in the neighbour country once the world calms down. (Student 1, Data 2)

The implication seems to be that to learn Swedish, the student should spend time in Sweden. Although the students had found English in their free time, they did not seem to have knowledge or motivation to find affordances in other languages.

Although their beliefs about learning LOTEs did not change a great deal, the participants started voicing their thoughts about it more strongly, indicating more agentive positioning than before. Examples 11 and 12 illustrate the shift from the good learner to the opponent position. In Example 11, Student 10 discusses their future university studies from the perspective of language learning and the importance of internationalisation, positioning themselves as a good learner. When revisiting this theme while writing the second essay, they choose not to hedge their problem with language learning expectations in university, adopting the opponent position.

Example 11

Studying foreign languages still isn't a passion for me, but I know that in the field of social sciences knowing languages and internationalisation are especially important qualities when applying for jobs, for example. In fact, I dream of starting German studies. In addition, I have started to dream of going on exchange to e.g. Europe. So, during my university studies, I hope to learn a new language (-). In addition, I of course hope to deepen my skills in English and Swedish. (Student 10, Data 1)

Example 12

From the first day of my studies, I have had a clear understanding about how important language skills and internationalisation are in the field of social sciences. I could even claim that I have in some way rebelled against the idea of "compulsory internationalisation" because foreign languages have never been my strong point and I haven't been very passionate about them (-). According to my own experience, many students (including me) find the expectations of internationalisation even pressuring and language learning should be an internal skill the student should have already at the first year of their studies. (Student 10, Data 2)

In Example 12, the student uses strong vocabulary to highlight their opposing view on 'compulsory internationalisation' that they 'rebel' against, also stressing the 'pressure' they feel. This illustrates the agentic shift in vocalising learner beliefs during their university studies. However, it can be concluded that LOTEs remained mostly as subjects to be learned in class or abroad. In other words, the students did not seem to incorporate these languages into their everyday lives the way they had done with English.

Change in beliefs about language learning

Although the previous sections discussing beliefs about English and LOTEs have already touched upon language learning, the data analysis revealed three key changes in beliefs about language learning that were not language-bound: evidencing language learning, the place and nature of language learning, and the emergence of multilingual perspectives.

During their studies, the participants started assessing their learning based on their confidence about their language competencies, which was a significant change to the belief that learning is evidenced in grades. Student 5 in Example 13 positions themselves as a receiver of teaching, describing their French skills by referring to their grades. In Example 14, they speak from the skilful learner position, assessing their skills based on their observation that they were able to use the language.

Example 13

Studying French was fun at the beginning, but the excitement died down a bit – even though I got 9s all the time (-). In ninth grade, I experienced a strong sense of success: even though I didn't feel I knew very good French, I surprisingly received full grades for an oral French exam. (Student 5, Data 1)

Example 14

Last summer I was in France [with friends], and (-) managed surprisingly well in French despite all these years [when I hadn't used it]. Pronunciation and especially conjugating words of course didn't go quite right but mostly I was understood in everyday situations. I also understood surprisingly well a (-) chat my friend had with the taxi driver. (Student 5, Data 2)

When discussing evidence of learning, the change from the receiver of teaching position to the skilful learner was even in connection to English and LOTEs. This suggests that the belief was not language-dependent.

The data indicates a shift in beliefs about the nature of language learning. Although it did not occur to the same extent with LOTEs compared to English, the participants increasingly discussed languages as a means of communication, stressing that they are learned in informal contexts. Student 1 explicitly expresses the shift in their beliefs in Example 15.

Example 15

In my language biography languages are separate school subjects. This is the biggest change that I can see in how my relationship with foreign languages has changed during the three years. I don't feel like I'm studying

languages anymore. I use multilingual communication naturally and continuously in my studies, so the experience of studying languages is left in the past. (Student 1, Data 2)

Although many other participants did not express the shift in beliefs this explicitly, the decrease of positions associated with the language as a school subject perspective – and the increase of the other three – shows that language *learning* had somewhat been replaced by language *use*. This could be a natural progression due to the use of English in social science studies: even for those students to whom the language had been strictly a school subject, had started using it for academic purposes. English had thus become an everyday language that they could use confidently (cf. Kalaja 2016).

Finally, there were some signs of a more multilingual perspective to language learning. Example 15 reflects the discourses and practises related to the holistic multilingual teaching the participants had taken part in, as the student discusses the uses of ‘multilingual communication’ that have taken over languages as ‘separate school subjects’. The language studies had emphasised the use of the students’ whole linguistic repertoire and encouraged them to utilise also their receptive multilingual skills. Student 11 in Example 16 tells a story from the position of a skilful learner about how they were able to put this teaching into practice.

Example 16

While writing my bachelor’s thesis I looked for sources for my topic and (–) I ended up using a Spanish source. It was nice to notice that I understood the text so well that I could use it as a source, even though it’s been quite a while since I studied the language. I am sure that knowing French supports understanding Spanish, which was nice to notice also like this in practise, because you often hear about languages supporting one another but you don’t understand yourself how true that is. (Student 11, Data 2)

Apart from being another example of evidencing learning in language use, Example 16 illustrates traces of multilingual competencies that the participants had gained and were, to a small extent, able to reflect on. Although the participants rarely discussed LOTEs as languages that could be used in practise in their studies, this example is an exception that suggests that at least on an individual level, the multilingual teaching could affect the students’ beliefs and possibly guide them towards more multilingual thinking.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to examine change in university students’ language learner beliefs during degree-specific multilingual courses. The results indicate a clear shift towards perceiving language as a means of communication as well as some signs of multilingual perspectives, but also provide points to contemplate for further development of higher education language pedagogies.

Although the participants recognised the many uses of English in their first essays, over the years it evolved into a language that was an essential part of not only their free time but also their studies. The same change was not detectable in the participants’ LOTE discussions, the competence to use English in different situations seldom transferring to their use of LOTEs. For example, the students rarely mentioned using LOTEs in their studies, even though it could be fruitful in social sciences. Conversely, there were some signs of multilingual competencies, as some of the participants explicitly discussed phenomena related to them. These stories were connected to discussions about multilingualism we had had in class and it could be, therefore, suggested that the language teacher in university can support learners in recognising multilingual phenomena and developing their multilingual and metalinguistic competencies. As LOTEs remained mostly as school or target country languages, it would be important for teachers to help students in finding interesting and purposeful ways to use those languages. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many students’ exchange programmes were cancelled. The participants

expressed a belief that LOTEs are learned in the target country, which could mean that they would not seek opportunities to learn those languages while in Finland. It would, therefore, be important for language teachers to help students find ways to incorporate LOTEs in their daily lives. As Aro (2016, 47) concludes, '[t]he walls of the classroom need not constitute a barrier, separating the language inside from the language outside'.

Another sign of languages becoming increasingly understood as means of communication was the decrease in stories involving grades. In the second essay, the participants expressed their successes in language learning by describing situations in which they had successfully used the language, which could also signify that the learners were invested in language learning for other reasons than for receiving good grades. This could have been affected by the fact that their language courses were assessed with a pass/fail scale which forced them to assess their own learning based on something else. However, due to the official status of Swedish, the students received separate grades for the Swedish part of their studies although they were embedded into the multilingual courses. The Swedish part included an exam, which could have affected the way the participants discussed the language as something that is 'completed'. English and Finnish skills were not assessed with a formal exam, and there was no discussion of 'completing' those competencies. It could, therefore, be concluded that examinations can affect learner beliefs, possibly unfavourably (cf. Peng 2011). In the future, Swedish examination practices should be reassessed; if we as language educators want the students to change their beliefs about Swedish, we should show them how to use it naturally and give less value to examinations.

The language courses discussed in this study utilised translanguaging to illustrate and get the students used to 'real-life' multilingual practices (Ushioda 2017). While there were some traces of this work in some of the students' essays, the small amount of these stories did not reflect the classroom practices from the teacher-researcher's perspective. I had observed the students as they had become used to a flexible use of their multilingual competencies in class and believed that these actions also became natural for them after the first few weeks of their studies. Future research should include classroom observation with stimulated recall interviews to better understand multilingual processes in the classroom. However, the fact that these practices featured somewhat in the reflective essays, suggests that the students were aware of them. In addition, the final essays did not involve criticism towards or wonder about translanguaging courses, which could be taken as a sign of at least being used to these new practices.

During their studies, the students took part in multilingual language courses, but they had also studied social sciences and used languages in their free time, all of which could have affected their beliefs. However, it is in the language courses where the students were taught to pay attention to their language repertoires as well as develop their reflective skills. It could be, therefore, argued that the metalinguistic competencies they had gained in these courses helped them to observe and reflect on their language journey, and without this support, the second essays could have looked different. It is also possible that without prompting them to think about their language learning, they would have not reflected on it to this extent, which could have resulted in less changes in beliefs (cf. Aragão 2011).

This article adds to previous longitudinal studies on learner beliefs by exploring them in a multilingual context. The results suggest that learner beliefs are complex, dynamic, and subject to change, and in line with Mercer (2011), their nature is even more complex when examining beliefs about multiple languages. The most important pedagogical implications of this study are that, at least in a context where English has a strong role, LOTE teaching should emphasise real-life uses of different languages and support learners in adoption of those languages as natural parts of their everyday lives. In university, LOTE teachers could work closely with the students' department to find ways to purposefully utilise languages for academic and professional purposes. This should be done to ensure that learners acquire multilingual competencies and subsequently cultural sensitivity, adaptability and other qualities that are required of them in working life. The future is multilingual, and we must prepare our students to operate in it.

Notes

1. Swedish for most Finnish students is taught as a foreign language despite it being a national language. Finnish schools are normally either Finnish- or Swedish-speaking, which could be argued to foster parallel monolingualism rather than bilingualism (Repo 2020). The second national language is a compulsory school subject and is a required skill for e.g. civil servants. While the south and west coasts of Finland even have areas where the majority language is Swedish, for a large part of the citizens it remains a school subject as English dominates the media, for example.
2. This is due to the degree requirements. Finnish and English are evaluated through continuous assessment, but Swedish has been traditionally assessed with exams. There are ongoing discussions on how to modernise assessment of Swedish in higher education in Finland.
3. Although measures have recently been made to ensure that more students would get a place in university directly after graduating from school, many do not receive a study place with the first try; so-called gap years are thus very common in Finland.
4. The examples are translated from Finnish.
5. The grading scale in Finnish schools is 4–10, 10 being the highest grade and 4 fail.

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