

Identity Exploration through Given Names

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how elementary school aged pupils construct significance to their given name, nickname and their identities while exploring their names. The meaningful nature of given name to identity has been established in the previous literature; however, this relation has earlier gained relatively little scholarly interest in Finland.

Eighteen pupils from a sixth grade class participated in the data generation. The participants created a portfolio concerning their given name and afterwards, a semi-structured interview was conducted to 12 of the participants. Interpretive discourse analysis was used to analyze the narratives.

The results of this study show that the participants were constructing both the significance and insignificance of their given name in the narratives. However, some participants focused more on the significance or insignificance, whereas other participants were inconsistent throughout the data. Additionally, the participants varied greatly on how they constructed their identity when discussing their name. Some participants had strong connections of their given name to personal characteristics, family, and ethnicity, whereas others did not. It was concluded that in order to comprehensively support identity construction more studies are needed to explore the connection of name and identity and the adequacy of researching identity construction through given names especially in multilingual settings.

Keywords: identity, given name, nickname, identity construction

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten alakouluikäiset oppilaat luovat merkityksiä etunimelleen ja lempinimelleen sekä rakentavat identiteettiään käsitellessään nimeään. Nimen ja identiteetin merkityksellinen yhteys on havaittu aiemmassa kirjallisuudessa; aihe on kuitenkin saanut verrattain vähän huomiota aiemmissa suomalaisissa tutkimuksissa.

Kahdeksantoista 6. luokan oppilasta osallistui tiedon tuottamiseen. Osallistujat valmistivat portfolion ja jälkikäteen 12 heistä osallistui puolistrukturoituun haastatteluun. Osallistujien narratiivit analysointiin tulkitsevalla diskurssinanalyysillä.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että tutkimukseen osallistuneet 6.-luokkalaiset rakentavat narratiiveissaan niin merkityksellisyyttä kuin merkitsemättömyyttä etunimelleen. Osan tuotokset olivat kuitenkin epäjohdonmukaisia. Lisäksi osallistujien kesken oli huomattavaa vaihtelua siinä, miten he rakensivat identiteettiään käsitellessään nimeään. Osa osallistujista yhdisti etunimensä vahvasti yksilöllisiin ominaisuuksiin, perheeseen ja etnisyyteen, kun taas osa ei. Nimen ja identiteetin yhteyttä ja etunimien sopivuutta identiteetin rakentumisen tutkimiseen olisi tarpeellista selvittää vielä lisää erityisesti monikielisissä ympäristöissä, jotta identiteetin rakentumista voitaisiin tukea kokonaisvaltaisesti.

Asiasanat: identiteetti, etunimi, lempinimi, identiteetin rakentuminen

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Nomen est omen.”¹ is a well-known phrase around the world and an example of how we construct and construe meaning for name and identity in our everyday lives. Names have interested people for centuries, but the relation of names and identity has previously gained relatively little scholarly interest in Finland.

Names in general have two fundamental functions: they are nouns that either categorize or identify people, beings, subjects or objects (Ainiala, Saarelma & Sjöblom, 2012). The identifying nature of given names will be the focus in this thesis. A given name seems to be a non-negotiated part of identity, and people are seldom interested in contesting their name; yet, the aim of this thesis is to explore what kind of significance elementary school aged pupils assign to their given name while exploring their identity. This thesis begins by introducing the concepts of identity and given name and providing a literature review on relating studies. After stating the research questions, the thesis will continue with three other parts: the methodology, results, and discussion.

1.1 Identity

Identity is a term frequently used in philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Yet, a generally accepted and unambiguous definition of identity is lacking. However, identity is agreed to be something all people have, ought to have, or are searching for – sometimes even without being aware of it (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Moreover, for instance, Côté and Levine (2016) suggest that identity encompasses three principles: integration, differentiation, and continuity. Integration refers to individuals banding together in groups, such as families and tribes. Differentiation means how individuals differ from others and are unique within these groups. Continuity in turn refers to stability of

¹ The Latin phrase “Nomen est omen.” translates into English “The name is a sign.”.

personality over time, which makes the future more predictable as it is based on the past (Côté & Levine, 2016; see also Bamberg, De Fina & Schiffrin, 2011).

In psychology, identity is often understood as a property of persons; it is seen as individual and closely related to the concept of self (Côté, 2006). Whereas in sociology, identity is believed to be produced through social relations and a way of expressing social categories (Lawler, 2014; see also Côté, 2006). Côté (2006) argues that both, psychology and sociology, are needed to understand thoroughly the phenomena of identity. Similarly, it is believed here that one is not defined only by personal aspects of self, but also by the larger groups to which one belongs.

In this thesis, identity is approached from a social constructive perspective generally applied in discourse studies, which focuses more on to social action rather than to psychological constructs of identity (De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006). Bamberg et al. (2011) suggest to study “identity as constructed in discourse, as negotiated among speaking subjects in social context, as emerging in the form of subjectivity and sense of self” (p. 178). A person is not understood to have an identity; rather, the focus is on the processes in which identity is generated in discursive activities. Likewise, Hall (2011) describes identity as fluctuating, inconsistent, fragmented, and multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and opposing discourses, practices, and positions. Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being (Hall, 2011).

As identity is almost synonymous with culture and language (Côté, 2006), it is useful to use it within more specific concepts, such as *cultural identity*, and as an ongoing process. Hall (2011) uses the term cultural identity to refer to a collective self, which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. It is “oneness” or cultural belongingness that overcomes all the other superficial differences. However, identities are constructed through difference and therefore, can only be understood in relation to Other (Hall, 2011). According to De Fina et al. (2011), people define a sense of self by expressing similarities or differences between self and others and are constantly balancing between integration and differentiation with others. However, if society is initially seen as

plural, otherness does not necessarily refer to opposing but can also imply uniqueness or specialty (Löytty, 2005; Riitaoja, 2013). Hybrid identities are created in diverse societies (Löytty, 2005).

Iyall Smith (2008) defines hybridity as “in between-ness”, mobility, and plurality. Globalization produces hybridization i.e., the local influences the global and the global influences the local. This interaction creates new identities, which are distinct in each context. She argues that identities do not necessarily anymore construct an ethnicity or culture. People are rather creating hybrid identities, which may be a blending of two ethnic or cultural categories, while not distinct or pure in nature, experienced as meaningful identity labels by members of these categories (Iyall Smith, 2008). Youth cultures can be seen as laboratories for hybrid cultures, since youth identity is constructed through numerous salient discourses (Nilan & Feixa, 2006).

Negotiation of identities can be considered as identity construction that takes place when identities are challenged (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Ropo, Sormunen & Heinström, 2015). The term “negotiation of identities” is used to refer to “an interplay between reflective positioning i.e., self-representation, and interactive positioning, whereby others attempt to position or reposition particular individuals or groups” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 20). Narratives are considered to play a particularly important role in negotiation of identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). School is regarded as an important context for negotiation of identities for pupils (see e.g. Cummins 2001).

The connection of education and identity has been long acknowledged by numerous scholars (see e.g. Davidson, 1996; Erikson, 1968; Gee, 2000; Kaplan & Flum, 2012; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006). The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education recognizes the socially constructed nature of identity (National Agency for Education = NAE, 2014). In the curriculum, pupils are stated to be building their identity while learning; the mission of education is to support the pupils in building their personal cultural identity and reinforce pupils’ positive identity. Additionally, identity building is regarded as a part of the transversal competences and mentioned in the tasks of the subjects, such as

in Art, Ethics, Finnish language and literature, foreign languages, History, and Religion (NAE, 2014).

As the aim of this thesis is to explore the identity of elementary school aged pupils, a brief discussion of identity development seems warranted. For many years, identity development has been approached through Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of identity as a key developmental task of adolescence. More recently, identity development studies have primarily concentrated on narrative and status approaches, which focus on personal continuity, exploration and commitment in identity development across the life course (McLean & Syed, 2014). It is the narrative approach, which complements more of the view of identity in this study.

In narrative identity development, identity is believed to be constructed across the life course as people link events and experiences in their personal narrative with a view to form a coherent life story (Hammack, 2014). The construction of narrative identity begins in early childhood when the child starts to make meaning of his or her experiences, is at its strongest in adolescence but continues to develop across the lifespan (Hammack, 2014; Huttunen, 2013). In the literature on narrative identity, controversial views exist on the critical period of identity development. For instance, Ahn (2011) emphasizes the importance of early childhood over adolescence.

Narrative identity development and learning are linked with narrative pedagogy. Narrative pedagogy is about supporting the pupils' learning processes of meaning making and narrative construction, and for example, Yrjänäinen and Ropo (2013) consider that identity development is a by-product of these processes. Goodson and Gill (2011), who understand learning as human development and becoming, support this view and propose that education should aim at facilitating dialogue and personal engagement through narrative exchange. Narrative pedagogy creates a basis for data generation in this thesis. Participants create narratives of self through exploration of their given name. Therefore, a more detailed account of given names and a synopsis of literature relating identity and given name will be provided next.

1.2 Given names

In onomastics, the term used for names to refer people is *personal name* (Ainiala et al., 2012). In addition, other expressions exist: first name, forename, and given name (ibid.). Throughout this thesis *given name* will be used, since the given nature of the personal name developed as central in the data of this study, and it is used here to refer to the first official name of the individual.

According to the Finnish Names Act (1998/617, § 32 a), a child must be provided with a given name within two months after the birth. This is in contrast to many other countries and allows parents time for name selection. According to Kiviniemi (2006), name giving has become individualized and diversified during the last three decades in Finland, which is explained by two reasons: the change of Finnish social values and lists of popular names. Nowadays, parents prefer uncommon and unique names due to the need for individual self-determination, they know how to avoid most common names and more information is available of names than before (Kiviniemi, 2006; see also Ainiala et al., 2012). However, the Names Act (1991/617, § 32 b) sets some limitations for given names: a person cannot have more than three given names, and the name cannot be inappropriate i.e., a name of the opposite sex, a surname, or inconsistency with Finnish naming practices.

Given names are central in contemporary Finland. Nowadays, addressing one's interlocutor with a given name instead of title and surname is considered common and acceptable (Lappalainen, 2015). For instance, it is usual that both students and teachers are addressed by their given names at schools and universities. Therefore, it can be argued that especially given names are of importance in identity construction. Having defined the concepts of identity and given name, the next section will introduce previous studies exploring the connection of name and identity.

1.3 Literature on identity and given name

Given names are at the core of identity, because they identify a specific person. In the Western world, name is understood as a symbol of identity, whereas in some other cultures, name is an icon of an individual (Ainiala et al., 2012). Identity and self-concept are believed to start to develop in babyhood through the family's repeated use of the baby's name (Sears & Sears, 2003 as cited in Kohli & Solorzano, 2012, p. 444). Moreover, a given name is one of the first words children learn to say (Kiviniemi, 2006) and write (Bloodgood, 1999; Jalango, 2001).

A given name expresses who we are and who we are not to self and others (Hagström, 2006). Names contain a lot of information; they can indicate gender, ethnicity, race, or social class (e.g. Laham, Koval & Alter, 2012). Therefore, names are believed to highlight belongingness to a certain group but also underline differences between "us" and "them" and can thus be a reason for discrimination (Hagström, 2006). However, it is also argued that nowadays a name does not necessarily indicate who one is (Hagström, 2006, p. 131).

Brennen (2000) claims that given names are processed almost entirely without meaning or feeling and thus, are mere labels to some people. He acknowledges that others are strongly attached to their given name. Additionally, he recognizes that a given name is one of many elements constituting the fluid and complex constellation of identity, but highlights that a name does not necessarily play important role in one's identity (Brennen, 2000). Nevertheless, most of the literature relating name and identity demonstrate the meaningful nature of given name to identity as will be illustrated below (see also e.g. Quaglia, Longobardi, Mendola, & Prino, 2016).

1.3.1 Name giving

Evidence suggests that a given name does not only describe the bearer but the giver. Ainiala et al. (2012) explain that name giving reflects parents' worldview and values, such as religion, political values, education, and other cultural factors. For instance, in the United States, Urbatsch (2018) has investigated that

the higher proportions of Democrats in a state increases the relationship between the presence of Republicans and having more daughters named “Reagan”. This was due to one person’s expression of political identity triggering the opponents’ own identity signals via their child’s name (Urbatsch, 2014). Hence, names can be considered to reflect the background, hopes, and future plans of both individual and family (see also Ainiala et al., 2012; Edwards & Cabellero, 2008).

Edwards and Caballero (2008) have researched “mixed” couples name-giving practices in United Kingdom to find out to which extent their name choices represent an individual taste or reflect a form of collective link to family, race, ethnicity, or faith. According to their study, most parents chose a name they liked, but they simultaneously wanted it to symbolize the mixed heritage of the child and therefore, settled on a “run” of names representing each aspect of their backgrounds. However, parents were concerned how their name choices positioned their children in wider society and would a culturally unfamiliar name increase the risk of prejudice (Edwards & Cabellero, 2008). The concern is evident, since names have been shown to affect appearance and impression formation (see Zwebner et al., 2017 next).

1.3.2 Influences of given name

The recent study of Zwebner et al. (2017) investigated how social perception, such as a given name, influences facial appearance. They examined a face-name matching effect in eight studies in two countries (France and Israeli) by both a social perceiver and a computer and found that the participants examining unfamiliar faces accurately selected the true name of the person from a list of several names, significantly above the chance level. Thus, they argue that people “live up to their given name” in their physical identity (Zwebner et al., 2017).

It has also been established that people with easy-to-pronounce names are judged more positively than people with difficult-to-pronounce names (e.g. Laham, Koval & Alter, 2012; Lee, 2015; Mehrabian & Piercy, 1993). Moreover, people with unusual or difficult-to-pronounce names are claimed to be more likely to change their name or use a nickname (Erwin, 2006, p. 512). Pavlenko

(2001) argued that personal names play a significant role for immigrants when positioning themselves in various contexts to define their new identities.

In the Canadian context, Kim (2007) has found that immigrants with ethnic given name are more willing to anglicize their name even before they experience any problems in relation to their name, if they desire to obtain legitimate old-timer membership in their imagined communities, such as work places in the new host society. The findings of this study suggest that immigrants' name changing practices reflect their symbolic investments in the new surroundings and sense of ethnic identity (Kim, 2007). In Sweden, changing a foreign surname of Slavic, Asian, or African origin to a Swedish-sounding or neutral surname is connected to a noticeable increase in labor earnings, particularly for women (Arai & Thoursie, 2009). Moreover, a Swedish-sounding surname improves one's chances of employment possibilities and thus labor earnings (Arai & Thoursie, 2009).

This topic has been further researched in Sweden and reported that immigrant surname change is a strategy to cope with discrimination and stigmatization (Khosravi, 2012) and a destigmatization strategy aiming for pragmatic assimilation (Bursell, 2012). It is likely that these results apply more or less to other Nordic countries, such as Finland. Besides immigrants, a given name has been established as a predictor of lifetime outcomes, such as income and social status, for majority, and it has been suggested that given names are correlated with factors that affect labor productivity (see e.g. Aura & Hess, 2010). Additionally, the effect of a noble-sounding surname has been found to predict success at attaining management roles in Germany (Silberzahn & Uhlmann, 2013).

1.3.3 Name changing

Name changes are seen as representing identity elasticity in Emmelhainz's (2013) article. She suggests that name changes provide a sense of passage through time and illustrates this by giving examples of baby receiving a name at birth, a woman a name at marriage, and others a new name at conversion or immigration. These name changes mark the spaces when significant events

altered identities and social statuses of people (Emmelhainz, 2013). Additionally, e.g. transgender people often start their transformation process by changing their given name, since the name is considered to index their birth gender (Factor & Rothblum, 2008; Pimenoff, 2006). The notion of imagined identities is involved in this thesis to enable identity elasticity for the participants in the data generation process.

Imagined identities provide room for creativity and desire in identity construction (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Imagined identities are part of the notion of *imagined communities*, which was introduced by Norton (2001) to explain non-participation of students in second and foreign language classrooms. Norton (2013) emphasizes in her theorization of identity how a person perceives his or her possibilities for the future in the identity construction. Similarly, Hall (2011) has argued that identity is always partly constructed in fantasy. Imagined identities aim to reduce the norms and pressure of the surrounding society and thus, give agency to the participants to construct their identities creatively in a third space (see e.g. Lauer, 2009). As participants of this thesis are elementary school pupils, the focus will be on children and adolescence, and their identity construction relating to names in the following.

1.3.4 Name and schooling

Names are in central role during schooling. Keller and Franzak (2016) argue that names and experiences in schools are often connected to the identity development of a child. Moreover, Kohli and Solorzano (2012) have investigated the relation of racial microaggressions and names and schooling in US schools. They believe that when a child goes to school and their name is mispronounced or even changed, it can negate the identity of the child. The participants of the study had experienced a great deal of anxiety, shame, or feelings of “othering” due to their names during their schooling (Kohli & Solorzano, 2012).

It is believed that identities of children are affirmed and a sense of belonging in the classroom community is fostered by highlighting children’s names through the classroom environmental print, daily routines, and literacy activities (Peterson, Gunn, Brice & Alley, 2015). Similarly, according to Barkhuizen’s

(1995) study, teacher-student interaction changes when the teacher learns the names of the students, and the use of names promotes more inclusive interaction in the classroom setting.

Kim and Lee (2011) have examined the naming practices of young Korean American children. They focused on how the adults, such as parents and educators, of these children perform naming practices and what these practices mean to the children. Their findings suggest that children's varying naming practices reflect their developing sense of self. Children were able to be fluid in moving between various contexts by developing multiple selves responsive to different expectation, beliefs, and values (Kim & Lee, 2011). Children in general often have several 'bynames' used in different contexts. Hereafter, these unofficial bynames will be referred as nicknames in this study.

According to the study of Crozier and Dimmock (1999), most elementary school aged children have experienced being called by disliked nicknames, teased, and other forms of verbal harassment. Children dislike approximately one-half of the nicknames that they are called; however, some nicknames can be liked since they serve positive social functions or are widely accepted abbreviated forms of names. The authors propose that unkind nicknames are hurtful since they threaten the identity of the child (Crozier & Dimmock, 1999). Lytra (2003) in turn has examined how identities are made salient in pre-adolescent talk by investing nicknames and teasing. In her study, it was founded that teasing resulted in participants achieving higher degrees of sharing and communicating feelings of closeness. Simultaneously, teasing is noted as central for renegotiating gender roles, identities, and relationships in cross-sex interaction (Lytra, 2013). These results are contrary to Crozier and Dimmock (1999), which may be explained by the slightly older age of the participants affecting nature of nicknames and teasing in the study of Lytra (2003). Additionally, many other scholars have studied nicknaming practices of children and adolescents (see e.g. Busse, 1983; de Klerk & Bosch, 1997; Starks, Leech & Willoughby, 2012).

In the Finnish context, nicknames of school-aged children have been researched, for example, by Mustonen (1997, as cited in Ainala et al., 2012, p.

195–196). The nicknames of school-aged children were found to be typically formed from given names with slang derivational suffixes or are in slang form based on surnames, but they are often also truncated forms or appellative adaptations of the official names of the schoolchildren. Appellative nicknames often refer to the appearance, character, or manners of the person. It is common that many children have different nicknames, which are used in different contexts, such as at home, school, and hobbies (Mustonen, 1997, as cited in Ainiala et al., 2012, p. 195–196).

Hagström (2006, p. 26–27) argues that for children names are simple – they are either nice or stupid without any special reason. Only later on, different associations, expectations, and impressions are connected to various names. However, educators are encouraged to utilize resources and activities to explore and affirm students' names and identities, and it is suggested to engage students in activities that explore written names and their spelling, name origins, family naming traditions, and the importance of names to cultural identity (Peterson et al., 2015). Moreover, Kim and Lee (2011) encourage particularly researchers to pay attention to names when trying to understand the identities that children construct. However, children or adolescents have seldom been involved in the generation of data. In comparison to, for example, Kim and Lee (2011) included only observation of children and interviews of parents and teachers in their data collection.

1.4 Research questions

Given the controversial importance of a given name and identity and its potential pedagogical implications, it was decided in this thesis to take a closer look at significance of given names in elementary school pupils' identity construction. The specific research question are:

1. How do pupils construct the significance of their
 - a. given name?
 - b. nickname?
2. How do participants construct their identities when discussing their given name?

I am interested to discover the different ways in which elementary school pupils construct the significance of their given name and nickname. Moreover, it is intriguing to find out, whether a given name is connected to pupils' identification processes and can exploration of given names support the identity construction processes of the pupils.

2 METHODOLOGY

In the methodology, I will first introduce the approach of the study and then describe the participants, research design, data generation and analysis, and eventually evaluate the research ethics.

2.1 Approach of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine how elementary school aged children construct the significance of their name and their identities while exploring their given names. Moreover, within this study the significance and identity are believed to be constructed in discourse. Examining the constitution of social reality in discourse requires great depth with attention to detail, context, and nuance and therefore, the use of qualitative methods is a reasonable choice (Patton, 2002).

The approach of this study is social constructivism, in which knowledge is believed to be produced through language and viewed as relative to time and place (Patton, 2002). Social constructivism is distinguished from social constructionism and thus, the focus is on individual meaning-making processes in contrast to collective in this study (Howell, 2013; Patton, 2002). In other words, it is believed that human beings do not discover knowledge rather they actively construct it (Schwandt, 2000). In this study, the participants are believed to be actively making meaning of their given name and identity in discursive practices and the researcher is regarded as a co-constructor of the significance the participants assign to their given name.

Discourse analysis in turn investigates how talk and text contribute to the constitution of social reality. In contrast to other qualitative methodologies, discourse analysis does not work to understand or interpret social reality as it exists but to discover the way, in which it is produced (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Conversely, the discourse analysis of this study is interpretive i.e., the analysis aims to provide an understanding of discourse and its role in constituting social

reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Thus, the focus is on both the content and the use of language (Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2011). Moreover, the context in which the discourse is produced is highlighted in a discourse analytic approach (Alldred & Burman, 2005) and therefore, a detailed account of data generation process is provided in section 2.4 Data generation. First, the participants and research design of the study will be described.

2.2 Participants

A school in a medium-sized Finnish city was contacted and collaboration with a sixth grade teacher was established. The school is an urban comprehensive school (grades 1–9) with over 400 pupils of diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds. The collaboration class included 22 pupils, of which 18 participated in the study. Ten of the 18 participants were boys and eight were girls. The ages of the participants varied between 11 and 13 years during the data generation.

It must be noted that the whole class participated in generating the portfolio, but only the portfolios of the consenting 18 participants were analyzed. A semi-structured interview concerning the portfolio and given name was conducted with the twelve participants (six girls and six boys), who had consented for the interview.

2.3 Research design

The collection of data is referred to with the term *data generation*, which is commonly used in research with children. Data generation refers to an active, engaged, and negotiated process, during which the children are generating the data (see e.g. Crump & Phipps, 2013). This is in contrast with the collection of data, which suggests that the data already exist and are ready to be collected (ibid.). Therefore, the children are regarded as research subjects rather than objects to highlight their active participation in the data generation of this study.

In research with children, a multimethod approach is generally used to facilitate children to share their perspectives with an adult-researcher. The

multimethod approach attempts to engage children with the research topic, give versatile opportunities for children to express their views and opinions, and thus create authentic and secure spaces for children to share their voices (Mazzoni & Harcourt, 2014). To facilitate meaningful participation in the data generation, the participants first created a portfolio that included five parts: a mind map, a short questionnaire on nicknames, a parents' interview, a comic strip and a dream name assignment. These above listed instruments and themes were chosen to generate central and versatile topics for discussion in the interview. Before describing the data generation process, the selection of these instruments is explained below.

The objective of the research instruments were to be regarded as child-friendly and to create meaningful participation. Mind maps are often used at schools to organize information and thus are familiar to the participants. Therefore, mind maps were chosen to function as an introduction to the research topic. Earlier research has found nicknames to be central in the social relationships of children and youth (see section 1.3.4 of this thesis) and therefore, it was believed that the short questionnaire would provide important issues for discussion in the interviews.

Moreover, the participants were set to interview their parents to gain information on the representations of their name giving, such as values and background of their family, and consequently to further construct their relationship with their name. By this point, the participants had acquired information regarding their given name and therefore, the purpose of the next instrument was to reflect on the perspectives of the participants on their name. Comic strips were chosen to create an open-ended, engaging, and creative instrument for the participants to express their experiences, views and thoughts on their given name (see Groundwater-Smith, Dockett & Bottrell, 2015). The dream name assignment based on the notion of imagined identities (Kanno & Norton, 2003) and thus aimed to create capacities for identity elasticity (Emmelhainz, 2013). The participants created a story of their imagined identity and simultaneously a description of self as a story is a familiar text type to elementary school aged pupils.

2.4 Data generation process

The data was generated within a four-week period during five sessions in fall 2017. A summary of the data generation process is provided in Table 1. The sessions were instructed by the researcher; however, the class teacher was present during the sessions. Some additional field notes were made during the sessions.

TABLE 1. Data generation process

Session (duration)	Content
Session 1 (20 min)	Introduction to the researcher and study, distribution of consents
Session 2 (80 minutes)	Mind maps and nicknames
Session 3 (90 minutes)	Comic strips
Session 4 (60 minutes)	Dream name
Session 5 (180 min)	Interviews (6)
Session 6 (195 min)	Interviews (6) and returning the portfolios

2.4.1 Sessions

During the first session, the researcher shared some personal information and the pupils introduced themselves to become acquainted with each other and to build trust and rapport. Thereafter, the research topic, methodology, ethics, and some details of the analysis and publication of the thesis were presented to the pupils to ensure informed consent. The pupils were addressed as co-researchers to highlight their role as competent and active agents in the study, and the presentation concentrated on their share of the data generation. Moreover, it was underlined that their participation is voluntary; however in either case, the pupils would generate the portfolio, but only with the consent (Appendix 1.), the portfolio would be documented and analyzed.

The second session was introductory to the given names; the pupils created a mind map of their name (Appendix 2.) based on their research of available sources i.e., the Internet and several baby name books. The pupils were

encouraged to use all the languages they knew and seek information of the spelling variant of their name if limited information was found with their actual name in Finnish. After mind maps, the pupils answered a few questions concerning their nicknames (Appendix 3.). Additionally, the pupils were assigned homework to interview their parents on their name giving (Appendix 4.).

The objective of the third session was to create a comic strip entitled “Me and my name” (Appendix 5.). After some general discussion on comics, the purpose of the assignment was to combine some activity regarding their name, and they were prompted with words like feelings, thoughts, reactions, opinions, and situations regarding their name was explained to the pupils. At the end of the session, the topic of the next session was introduced to provide the pupils time to come up with a dream name. Simultaneously, a picture of newborn was shown to avoid jokes such as “Beer” immediately suggested by one participant. The pupils were asked what name they would have given to themselves when they were newborns if they could have influenced their parents’ choice.

The fourth session concerned dream names and the assignment consisted of two parts: In the first part, the pupils told which name they had chosen and provided reasons for the choice. In the second part, the pupils wrote a story, in which they described how they would be if they were given the chosen name in their name giving ceremony (Appendix 6.).

2.4.2 Interviews

Twelve participants, who had previously given consent for the interview, were interviewed. The interviews were held in a meeting room at the school during the lessons. The researcher sat next to the interviewee and the portfolio of the interviewee in question was on display in front of them. This positioning was done to reduce confrontation and create a more informal setting during the interview. The interviews were recorded with a tape recorder.

A semi-structured interview was chosen to offer the interviewee opportunities to explore relevant issues to self, and it was sectioned according to the parts of the portfolio. Before the actual interview began, the interviewees

were asked a few icebreaker questions to become familiar with the situation and build their confidence (see Tinson, 2009). Besides the questions regarding the portfolio, the interview included additionally questions of their namesakes to discover the participants associations of their given name. The participants were asked to evaluate the importance of their given name to their past and future and possibilities of name changing both given name and surname to explore the significance of their given name in greater detail (Appendix 7.). The interviews lasted altogether 2 hour 51 minutes varying between 9 and 17 minutes: the average length of an interview being 14 minutes.

The amount and extent of the data varied greatly between the participants. The portfolios were scanned and written accounts transcribed before returning the original portfolios to the participants. Additionally, the interviews were transcribed word by word with pauses and overlaps (Appendix 8.), which resulted in 52 pages of interview material with font size of 12 and line spacing of 1,5. The excerpts presented in this thesis are simplified into a more readable form to assist the comprehension of the content.

2.5 Data analysis

In interpretive discourse analysis, the analyzer aims to be utmost open to the data and therefore, the research questions tend to be modified during the analysis (Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2011). In this study, the analysis focused on how language was used to make given names significant or important in various ways but also how to lower its significance (Gee, 2010). Additionally, the analysis concentrated on how language was used to make given name and identity connected or relevant or to make them disconnected and irrelevant to each other (Gee, 2010). The analysis aimed to identify figured worlds of the participants, that is, what kind of significance is assigned to a given name in identity construction in the discourse practices of the participants.

For Gee (2010, p. 76), figured worlds refer to the “ways in which people picture or construe aspects of world in their heads, the ways they have of looking at aspects of the world”. They are regarded as an important tool of inquiry

because they mediate between the micro level of interactions and the macro level of institutions (Gee, 2010, p. 76). In this study, the focus is in micro level stories of given name and since the approach of this study is interpretive discourse analysis, in which both the content and the use of language is seen essential as mentioned in section 2.1 (see also Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2011). Thus, my analysis began by identifying themes of the data.

I used the software *Atlas.ti* to assist the analysis process. Since it is considered typical for discourse analysis to lend features of traditional qualitative approaches (Phillips & Hardy, 2002), I started the analysis process with a *conventional content analysis*, as the existing literature on the research topic is limited (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The analysis aimed to be detached from previous theoretical perspectives and allow the codes and names for the codes to develop on the basis of the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Tuomi & Sarajarvi, 2009).

Therefore, I started by going through the data and coding it according to the content to get a sense of the whole. The first analysis resulted in 46 codes, in which I tried to identify the initial themes by linking the related topics. The data was reorganized so that the data of each participant were merged together. I coded the data according to previously identified themes. The coding was done three times more eventually resulting in the following themes: Custom, Difficulties with comic strip, Descriptions of self, Ethnicity, Experiences, Family, Meaning, Modest feelings or opinions, Name change, Name giving, Popularity, Previous interest, and Strong feelings or opinion. Then, the quotations regarding the previous codes were analyzed to identify the discourse practices i.e., word and grammatical choices and the level of certainty in the narratives, through which the significance of given names and identity were constructed.

As Gee (2010) points out discourse analysis is itself “an interpretation of the interpretative work people have done” (p. 122), and therefore an example of the role of the analyzer as a co-constructor of the significance seems warranted. The analysis process is demonstrated with the following excerpt.

17 Interviewer: Mmm how was it to do the mind map? // Mmm millasta tota ajatuskarttaa oli tehdä?

18 Anni: Well it was quite nice but there were a bit of a bit of that I was a bit disappointed for example that there were so many people named Anni so and everything like like so many or well I mean that I thought there would have been a bit fewer but there was pretty many ((a sigh)). // No ihan kivaahan se oli mutta kyllä siellä tuli vähän semmosia vähän semmosia et vähän harmitti esim toi niinku kuinka paljon Anni-nimisiä on niinku ja kaikkee tämmösiä niinku niin paljon tai siis niinku mä luulin et niitä ois ollut vähän vähemmän mut niitä oli aika paljon ((hymähdys)).

The excerpt was coded into two themes according to the content: Popularity and Strong feelings and opinions. The expression of feelings, the disappointment and the sigh, and emphasis and repetition of the amount were analyzed to construct significance of the given name. Moreover, the reply to the question could have been only “quite nice” as many other participants replied, but instead Anni chose to elaborate her thoughts more carefully by giving an example, which was considered additionally to assign significance to the given name. That is to say, what the participants had chosen to share or to withhold in their narratives was of interest in the analysis as characteristic for discourse analysis.

Each research question was focused respectively and during the process, the research questions were further developed to compliment the data. Eventually, the analysis was summarized into findings using excerpts to illustrate how discourses constituted the significance of given names and identity in the data.

2.6 Research ethics

Research ethics ensure that the study has integrity and credibility (O'Hara, Wainwright & Kay, 2011). I will now consider the research ethics regarding informed consent, research context and research position, and anonymity in this study.

When researching children, multiple consents are needed since several gatekeepers exist in the lives of the children. After establishing the teacher collaboration, a consent from the principle of the school and the City Education Department was gained. Particularly in recent years, informed consent of the

children has become an essential part of research with children. By informed consent, it is meant that the children are provided with age-appropriate information in order for them to make informed decisions (David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001). This was done during session 1 (described in the page 19 of this thesis). Written consent (Appendix 1.) was given by the pupil and her or his legal guardian for the use of the portfolio or the portfolio and the interview for research purposes.

Moreover, the voluntariness was emphasized, since children often think that participation in a research is compulsory in a school context (David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001). The school context and asymmetrical power relationship between the researcher and child participants were recognized in this study (see Punch, 2002). Throughout the data generation process, the participants were assured that there are no right and wrong answers; their genuine views and opinions are of interest. Still, it was acknowledged during the analysis that some participants had felt pressure to give “correct” answers or to say what they thought the researcher wanted to hear during the interview. Nevertheless, the interviews are a central part of the data create space for the participants’ views and not the researchers. Moreover, the actions were taken to reduce the unequal power setting: The data generation continued over several sessions allowing participants some time to get to know the researcher and build trust and rapport. The pupils were addressed as co-researchers to highlight their competence and agency in data generation. Additionally, the researcher positioned herself next to the interviewees to reduce confrontation during the interview.

Promoting a reciprocal research relationship was seen central in this study (see e.g. Barker & Weller, 2003; David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001). Hence, the time and ownership of the participants were respected. The portfolios and interviews were conducted during the lessons, and no additional homework was assigned due to the participation in this study. Additionally, it should be noted that the whole class generated the portfolio but only the portfolios with consent were analyzed, which was done to increase the participation level. The portfolios

required several hours of work, investment and commitment of the pupils, and it was seen important that the original copies remained with the pupils.

Anonymity of the research subjects is often guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms or other identifying labels, such as numbers or letters (O'Hara et al., 2011). However, the given names of the participants are at the core of this study and therefore, the use of pseudonyms seemed unreasonable. Thus, to ensure the anonymity of the participants, the amount of any additional information was limited and although the given names of the children are included, surnames, the school, and teacher remain anonymous and the children cannot be identified. In the excerpts from the data, this kind of identity information is removed and filled with black. After this thesis is published, all the research material will be destroyed. The results of this thesis are presented in the following chapter.

3 RESULTS

In the following, I will start by generally describing the findings of this thesis. Then I will present the findings addressing the first research, in which I begin by describing how the significance of the given name is assigned and continue with how the significance of nicknames is assigned in the data. This will be followed by presenting the findings of the second research question i.e., how participants are constructing their identities when discussing their name. This is done by providing excerpts of the participants' narratives.

The analysis aimed to identify how language was used to make a given name significant but also how to lower its significance, and it was observed that the participants were assigning three kinds of significance to their given name in their narratives: significance, inconsistent significance and insignificance. To illustrate the significance of a given name, the interviewees were categorized in three categories: significant name, inconsistent significance to name and insignificant name (Chart 1.).

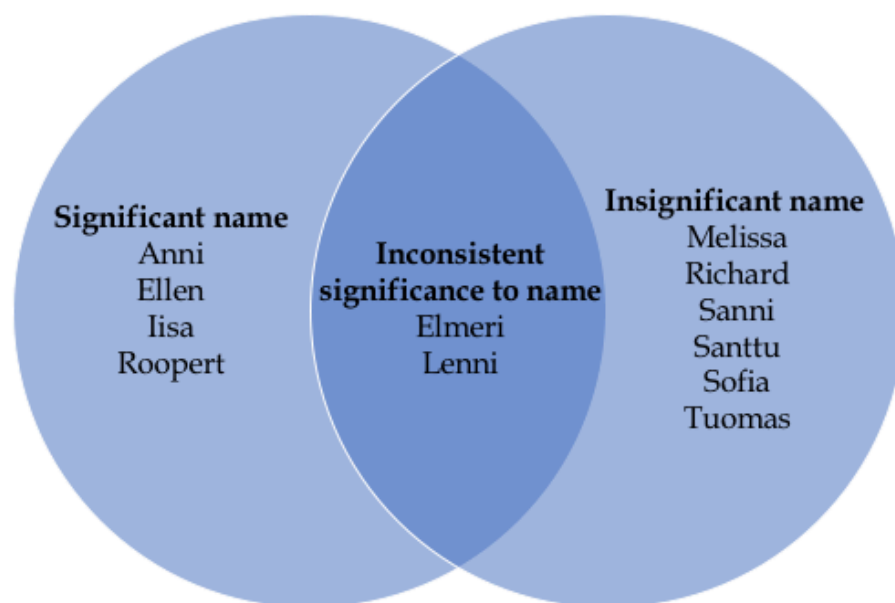


Chart 1. The significance interviewees constructed regarding their given name.

The participants were constructing the significance of their given names particularly in the comic strip, dream name assignment, and interviews. Granted, not all participants were consistent throughout the data and the amount of data varied greatly between the participants; thus, only interviewees were categorized and presented in the chart. However, some differences were found between the groups. These differences will be dealt with in more detail in section 3.1 Given name.

Nicknames were found to be significant for the participants. The participants mentioned altogether 20 nicknames in the data. The majority, 14 of 18 participants had at least one nickname, and the remaining four participants did not have a nickname. Some of the participants were constructing their identity through personal characteristics, family, and ethnicity when discussing their given name. The significance of a given name as an identity construction tool varied between the participants.

3.1 **Given name**

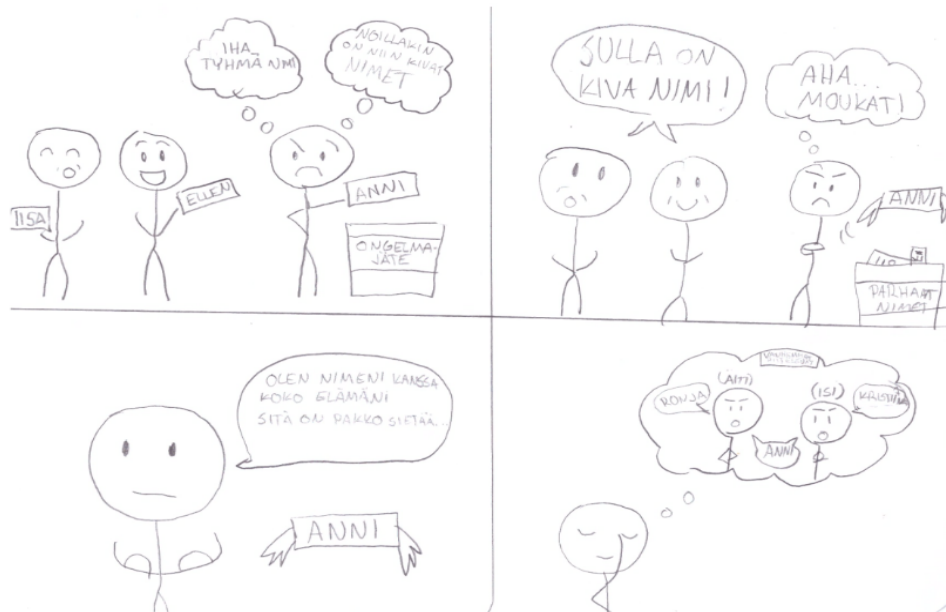
The participants were constructing significance, inconsistent significance, and insignificance with regard to their given name in their narratives. The participants, who expressed strong feelings or opinions towards their given name, previous interest to the given name, such as discussions at home or online research about own name, and ease of creating a comic strip, were identified as constructing significance to their given name (section 3.1.1). Whereas, the participants, who expressed modest feelings or opinions towards their name, had difficulties to create the comic strip, did not express previous interest and/or did not consider their name significant to their past or future were identified as constructing insignificance to their given name (section 3.1.3). This left a few pupils, who were characterized by both of the previous categories, to form the category: inconsistent significance for a given name (section 3.1.2).

3.1.1 Significance assigned to a given name

The participants were assigning significance to their given name by expressing strong feelings or opinions of their name as mentioned above. For instance, Ellen strongly stated that she likes her given name in the comic strip and the dream name assignment. In the interview, she used the adverb “really” altogether 11 times to emphasize how much she likes her given name and how she has enjoyed the data generation process. She elaborated to like her name, since it is smooth, melodious, and beautiful. Most of the participants argued that their given name fits to them but they could not clarify why. Although, some said that they are so used to their name it was nevertheless identified as constructing the insignificance of the given name because it was understood that their name was just a label they were used to. Similarly, Lisa reasoned to like her name since it suits her but also because of her own preference and her parents’ choice.

The fact that parents had chosen and given their name to them was significant to many participants. Elmeri and Sofia even chose the other name options their parents had been considering for them in the dream name assignment. Parents’ influence on their children has been studied from various points of view of, such as impact on children’s physical activity, obesity, academic achievement and socialization of gender roles, and parents have been found to play a pivotal role in children and adolescents’ perceptions and behavior (see e.g. Frome & Eccles, 1998; Scaglioni, Salvioni, & Galimberti, 2008; Welk, Wood, & Morss, 2003; Witt, 1997 among others). The pivotal role of parents was correspondingly presented in the results of this study.

By contrast, Anni was assigning significance to her given name by expressing throughout the data generation process that she did not value her given name. Starting from the parents’ interview, in which she used a phrase: “not that my name special is // eihän sentään nimeni kummoinen ole”. She continues in the comic strip (see Picture 1.), in which she describes that other girls in her class, Lisa and Ellen, have nice names and her own name is stupid. In the third box, she says that she is stuck with her name for her whole life and she just needs to cope with it.



Picture 1. Anni's comic strip.

In the interview, Anni explained that she was disappointed to find out how many namesakes she had but enjoys that her name is common in children's programs. However, it is different with fictive characters according to her. She would not like her friends to have the same name as her; she wanted to be special like her classmates Iisa and Ellen. Similarly, Sofia said that especially when she was younger the popularity of her name bothered her and she wanted to have a more special name.

Similarly, the rareness of a given name was observed as significant to many participants. Roopert wrote in the dream name assignment:

I chose the name Roopert since many people don't have this name. It is a fine name and there isn't same named people like at school and in hobbies, the name doesn't mix. // Valitsin nimen Roopert koska monella ei ole sitä nimeä. Se on hieno nimi ja ei ole vaikka koulussa saman nimistä ja harrastuksessa ei sekotu nimi."

The lack of namesakes was significant also to Iisa. While doing the portfolio, she mentioned that she had just recently met another person called Iisa. She returned to this in the interview when asked how has her thoughts changed now when she maybe has thought of her name more closely. Discovering new namesakes seemed to be extremely important to Iisa as illustrated in the excerpt below:

139 Interviewer: Well had you thought before we started to do this portfolio and before I came to your class of your name? // Jooh olitko

sie aiemmin ennen kuin me tehtiin tätä portfolioa ja ennen mie tulin teän luokkaan miettinyt sun nimeä?

140 Iisa: Well (.) I have talked a bit with mum and dad where it comes from and so on. // No (.) oon mä vähän just tota äitin ja isän kaa tälleen jutellu et mistä se tulee ja tälleen.

141 Interviewer: How is it like when you have thought about it and have your thoughts changed now when you have looked into your name more and reflected it maybe more? // Miltä se niinku silloin ku sie mietit sitä ja onko sun ajatukset muuttunut siitä nytkö sie vähän tutustunut siihen enemmän ja pohtinut ehkä enemmän?

142: Iisa: Mmm well I dunno know really. Cause I did not actually know before this year I like found out that like I didn't know more than one Iisa like before this year. When we went there to the music school and there was another Iisa ((we had been talking about it while doing the portfolio)) // Mmm no emmä tiä kyllä. Ku niinku mä en tiennyt vasta tänä vuonna mä sain niinku tietää että ku mä en tienny muuta ku yhen Iisan niinku tätä vuotta ennen. Sit me mentiin just sinne musiikkiopistolle ja sit siellä oli toinen Iisa ((tästä ollut puhetta portfolioa tehdessä)).

143 Interviewer: Mmm.

144 Iisa: And actually when we were living in [REDACTED] ((a Mediterranean country)) there was a girl and we called her Big Iisa ((laughs)) and I was like Little Iisa and she was big. // Ja siis silloin ku me asuttiin [REDACTED] ((eräässä Välimeren maassa)) niin siellä oli yks Iisa ja me sitä sanottiin iso-Iisaksi ((naurahdus)) mä olin niinku pikku-Iisa ja se oli iso.

As can be seen above, significance to one's given name was also constructed through mentions of talk at home and previous own interest. The participants who assigned significance to their given name had been reading their baby books, discussed their name giving with parents and searched for their name online already before participating in this study. Some of the participants were not only constructing significance or insignificance to their name in their narratives, however, and this inconsistency will be covered next.

3.1.2 Inconsistent significance assigned to a given name

A few participants were constructing the inconsistent significance of their given names throughout the data. Lenni stated explicitly many times that he has

nothing to say about his name and replies to one of the last questions, how has it now felt to think your name a bit more as it follows:

122 Lenni: Well it's been a bit hard to think something that you've not thought much even it's in a way a big thing. But it's a bit hard to think for some reason at least for me. Because I don't have many thoughts about it, I'm Lenni and that's it. // Noo se on tuota ollu ehkä vaikeeta tuota mieltä sellasta asiaa mitä ei oo paljon miettinyt vaikka onkin niinku iso juttu tavallaan. Mutta se on niinku aika vaikeeta mieltä jostain syystä ainaki mulle. Koska ei tuu paljoa ajatuksia siitä ku mä oon Lenni ja thats it.

By this point, Lenni had been discussing his name for almost two minutes longer than anyone else interviewed, even though he had not participated in the two first parts of the data generation (mind map and nickname assignment). Lenni states that he is Lenni and that is all he has to say about it. However, his choice of words – I am – illustrates how strongly he identifies with his name. In contrast, Santtu considered his given name merely as a label. He used almost the same choice of words, but instead of “I am” he used “I'm called” in his interview: “I'm called Santtu and that's that. // Santuks sanotaan ja sillä sipuli.” What is striking about the excerpts is the difference of the predicate, as Hagström (2006) suggests others are their names, whereas others are just called by their name.

Lenni said in his interview that he had thought about the difficulty of his name before participating in this study. Lenni had experienced that people often confuse his name to be Leevi. He illustrated this in his comic strip and when explaining his comic strip in the interview, Lenni used an interesting word choice: “- - and then I have bumped into a problem that someone calls me Leevi. So then I've usually just it's still Lenni and so. // Ja sitten mä jospäs oon törmänny tällaiseen ongelmaan et joku sanoo mua Leeviks. Niin sit mä oon yleensä vaan ollu et se on edelleen Lenni ja niin.” When asked how it feels to be confused with Leevi, and he replied that that it does not bother him, he actually just laughs at it. After a few lines, when asked why he thinks he is often called Leevi, he says it due to the popularity that Leevi is a more popular name than Lenni. Lenni wanted to give an impression that it does not bother him personally, even though he uses the word problem and later on in the interview he returned

to the topic. He explained that he has not been thinking much of his name other than occasionally whether his name is too difficult.

120 Lenni: Is it too difficult name but it isn't it can't be or I hope it can't be. Because when many have called me Leevi I have thought that is this a bit too difficult name. But actually I haven't thought it that much. // Onks se liian vaikea nimi et ei oo ei voi olla tai toivon et ei voi olla. Koska sillo just ku moni sano mua Leeviksi niin mä mietin että onks tää vähän liian vaikee nimi. Mutta en mää sen enempää oikeestaan sitä miettinyt.

The repetitions of the phrase “too difficult” along with the negative clauses give the impression that in fact he has been thinking of his name and its difficulty, even though he wants to understate the amount and extent of his thoughts in the end of the line. In addition, other participants (Iisa, Ellen, Melissa, Minja, and Roopert) mentioned experiences, in which their name had been mispronounced or confused with another name. Participants brought up these incidents in various parts of data generation, because the incidents had either bothered the participants or provoked thoughts on the popularity of their name. In the following, Ellen mentions how the mispronunciation of her name bothers her:

44 Ellen: And then again, I dunno where this came to my mind but some people call me Ellen_i and it bothers me really much. // Sit se taas mä en nyt tiä tää tuli jostain mieleen mut jotku sanoo mua Ellen_iksi ja se häiritsee mua tosi paljon.

45 Interviewer: That they say the i in there. // Et ne sanoo vielä iin sinne.

46 Ellen: Yeah. // Niin.

47 Interviewer: Elleni okay. Do you correct them that no it is Ellen? // Elleni okei. Korjaaksie sitte et ei se on Ellen?

48 Ellen: Yes. // Joo.

Name-calling can also relate to teasing. Lenni was the only participant, who mentioned teasing. In the dream name assignment, he writes:

My life has gone well I haven't broken any bones or get cancer (yet... :/) I've not been called or bullied because of my name. i don't recall incidents when my name had bothered me. // Minun elämäni on mennyt hyvin en ole murtanut luuta tai saanut syöpää (vielä... :/) nimeni perusteella minua ei ole haukuttu tai kiusattu. en muista tilanteita milloin nimeni olisi häirinnyt.

In his interview, Lenni acknowledged that he might be different if he had been teased because of his name but fortunately he is not, as Lenni put it. It is

noteworthy that no other participants mentioned anything in relation to teasing in the data in contrast to other studies in which names have been found crucial in social relations of children (see e.g. Crozier & Dimmock, 1999; McDavid & Harari, 1966).

Not many of the participants had a special story connected to their name giving, besides Lenni and Santtu. Interestingly, Lenni had not known before his parents' interview that he had been named after the famous Finnish pianist Lenni-Kalle Taipale. It seems that the origins of his name giving does not interest Lenni, because he admits that he has no idea, who Lenni-Kalle Taipale is. Santtu, in turn, was named after the main character of his father's favorite movie, but Santtu does not know what movie it is. This implies that their name giving has not been discussed at home even though it seems to have been significant to their parents at the time. This is in contrast to the participants who considered their name significant but in line with other participants who were constructing insignificance to their given name in the data. The findings of construction of insignificance in the data will be presented next.

3.1.3 Insignificance assigned to a given name

Just over half of the participants were constructing the insignificance of their given names. In the interview, the participants were asked has their given name affected their past or do they believe it will affect their future. Only a few believed that their name had had any significance to their past or future. In the following excerpt, Elmeri explains how he does not think or know whether his given name has affected his life:

105 Interviewer: How do you find it what kind of significance your name has on your future whether it be Elmeri or Onni? // Mitä sie koet et minkäläinen merkitys sun nimellä on sun tulevaisuuteen oli se sitten Elmeri tai Onni?

106 Elmeri: I don't think it matters at all that it doesn't probably affect the future at all. // Emmä usko et sillä kauheasti merkitystä on et se ei vaikuta varmaan siihen tulevaisuuteen kauhiasti.

107 Interviewer: Okay you have yourself a bigger role in it than the name. // Okei sulla on itellä suurempi rooli siinä kuin sillä nimellä.

108 Elmeri: Mmm.

- 109 Interviewer: Yeah what about past? Has it affected somehow in what you have become? // Joo entä menneisyyteen? Onko se vaikuttanut jollakin tavalla siihen millainen susta on tullu?
- 110 Elmeri: I don't think so or at least I don't know it'd have. // Emmä usko tai en mä ainakaan tiä et ois.
- 111 Interviewer: What kind of part do you think your name is? So what kind of a part it is of you? // Millasen osana sinä pidät sun omaa nimeä? Et minkälainen osa se on sua?
- 112 Elmeri: Well I can't really say that. // Noo mä en oikein osaa sanoa että.
- 113 Interviewer: Is it significant? // Onko se merkityksellinen?
- 114 Elmeri: Well I dunno like that what your name is so I don't think it affects the life. // Noo en mä tiä silleen niinku siihen että mikä nimi on niin en mä usko et se siihen elämään kauheasti vaikuttaa.
- 115 Interviewer: Yes. // Joo.

Elmeri stated that his given name had not probably had any significance on his course of life and doubts that it would in the future. Moreover, the participants constructing insignificance did not believe that the meaning of their name had significance. In following excerpt, Tuomas discusses the meaning of his name:

- 31 Interviewer: What do you think of that? There's about the meaning that it comes from the name Thoma which means a twin. // Mitä mieltä oot tosta? Ku tossa on tosta merkityksestä et se tulee tollasesta Thomaa nimestä joka merkitsee kaksosta.
- 32 Tuomas: Well I don't have any ideas about that. // No ei mulla siitä ainakaan tuu mitään sellasia ajatuksia.
- 33 Interviewer: But is it nice that your name has a meaning? // No onko se kiva kuulla et sun nimi merkitsee jotain?
- 34 Tuomas: Well yes. // No joo.
- 35 Interviewer: But that it means a twin has nothing? // Mutta sillä et se merkitsee kaksosta ni ei oo niin?
- 36 Tuomas: Well it has nothing to me at least. // No ei siinä mitään väliä oo mulle ainakaan.
- 37 Interviewer: Okay so it could mean whatever. // Okei vois merkitä ihan sama mitä.
- 38 Tuomas: Mmmm.

It seems that Tuomas was not interest in the meaning of his name and the meaning whatever it would be did not have any significance to him. This is

consistent with the majority of the participants; few had been previously aware of the meaning of their name and they even questioned whether their name actually meant something.

Moreover, the insignificance of a given name was constructed in various ways in response to the question of changing one's given name. The only participant to perceive name changing as an option was Sanni, whereas the others were strongly against it. However, Sanni does not see the need to change her given name but she could change it in principle. By contrast, interviewees were also asked about their thoughts on their surname and changing it. Most of the participants were more willing to consider changing their surname, but some felt strongly against it too. In the following extract, Sanni describes the possibility to change her given name, but says that she does not want to see the trouble and does not see the need to. Additionally, she explains that she would not change her surname suddenly but only if she would marry or something like that. However, it is noticeable that her attitude differed between changing her given name and surname.

93 Interviewer: Well can you ever think of changing your name? // No
voisitko sie ikinä kuvitella vaihtavas sun nimeä?

94 Sanni: Well well in principle yes but I don't in a way in principle would want go to the trouble to do it or so. Cause I have a good name like I'm not against it. So that I'd not necessarily want to go the trouble to do it. // No no periaatteessa joo mut en mä silleen niinku periaatteessa jaksais käyttää siihen vaivaa tai silleen. Ku mulla silleen hyvä nimi et emmä oo silleen mitenkään sitä vastaan. Niin sit emmä jaksais käyttää silleen vaivaa välttämättä siihen.

95 Interviewer: You don't think it's necessary? // Sie et nää et sille ois tarvetta?

96 Sanni: Yeah. // Niin.

97 Interviewer: Okay if you think of your surname can you imagine changing it? // Joo jos mietit sukunimeä niin voisitko kuvitella vaihtavas sitä?

98 Sanni: Well I dunno if I get like married or something I can then but I'd not just suddenly ((snaps fingers)) change it. There's nothing in the way. // Noo en en noo emmä nyt tiä jos menee tyyliin naimisiin tai jotain tällaista niin kyllä mä silleen sitten voisin. Mut emmä nyt silleen vaan tälleen yhtäkkiä vain

nyt ((napsauttaa sormia)) näin sitä. Et ei siinä ole silleen mitään.

99 Interviewer: Without a reason you wouldn't change it? // Ilman syytä et vaihtais?

100 Sanni: Yes. // Niin.

In the line 94, Sanni repeats “in principle” when talking about changing her given name. She is probably referring to a significant event that she would require to change her name which is in accordance with the conclusions of Emmelhainz’s (2013) article. In the line 98, Sanni is able to give an example, a marriage, when she would change her surname due to a change in social status.

As a conclusion, both significance and insignificance were constructed with regard to given names in the data. It is remarkable that only a minority (5) of the participants chose a new name in the dream name assignment; thinking oneself with a different name felt strange to participants, since they were satisfied with their given name and would not like to change it. A dream name did not seem to provide the intended opportunity to construct identity creatively in third space for the participants, which indicates either that name is such a significant part of identity and identification, and therefore is not open for contest and identity negotiation, or the idea of identity negotiation is bizarre for these aged children such as the participants. Besides the given name, participants were assigning significance to their nicknames in the data. Nicknames are the focus of the next section.

3.2 Nicknames

During the data generation, it became evident that nicknames were significant to the participants. Aleks, Patrik, Richard, Roopert, and Sofia were regularly called by their nickname in the classroom interaction according to my field notes and their narratives. In the following, I will present the findings on how the pupils were constructing the significance of their nickname.

Patrik, Richard, and Roopert considered their nickname more or equally significant as their given name. According to Patrik, everyone (family, friends,

and his team) calls him Patu. He preferred Patu to his given name and chose it in the dream name assignment, since it is easy and short. Richard explains to be addressed as Rikke since his given name is too long. Even though Richard strongly identifies with his nickname, he would not introduce himself as Rikke. It is considered easier to address one's interlocutor by a nickname in every day speech; however, nicknames are often used to highlight the unofficial relationship of the user of the name and the name bearer (Ainiala et al., 2012). In contrast to all the other interviewees, Roopert was the only one, who would introduce himself with his nickname, because it is used frequently as he explains in the excerpt:

49 Interviewer: What about if you meet a new person and tell your name what will you then say? // Entä jos sie tapaat uudet henkilön ja kerrot oman nimes niin mitä sie silloin sanot?

50 Roopert: Roope.

51 Interviewer: Okay then. // Okei eli.

53 Roopert: Cause I used it that much. // Ku mä käytän sitä niin paljon.

54 Interviewer: Alright so it is almost like. // Joo et se on melkein niinku.

55 Roopert: Yeah. // Joo.

56 Interviewer: As common as Roopert. // Ainaki yhtä yleinen kuin Roopert.

57 Roopert: Yeah. // Joo.

Interestingly, it is apparent that Roopert is mostly addressed as Roope and he strongly identifies with Roope as noted above. Despite this, he simultaneously wanted to keep the Roopert name in the dream name assignment and emphasized the significance of his given name as discussed in section 3.1.1. This is partly in accordance with Erwin's (2006, p. 512) study, which states that people with unusual, like Roopert, or difficult-to-pronounce names, such as Patrik and Richard in my data, are more likely to use a nickname.

For other interviewees with a nickname, I asked them (except Ellen, Elmeri, and Lenni, as they explained in the interview to be mostly addressed by their given name), how they would feel if I called them by their nickname. Roopert, Melissa, Richard, and Sofia replied to feel normal and it would nothing out of ordinary. However, Anni, Iisa, and Sanni thought that it would be weird, since

only their parents or closest friends call them by their nickname. These participants considered their nicknames more private and connected to themselves on a personal level and therefore, strangers or acquaintances like me could not use them. Most of the participants mentioned nicknames stated in the data were pet names used by parents at home and they were not in public use. According to Ainiala et al. (2012), these kinds of nicknames are a question of play with names and expressing affection for the bearer. Moreover, it is typical for school-aged children to have several different nicknames used in different contexts and they are considered as a part of the youthful trends (Ainiala et al., 2012).

If we now turn to participants, who did not have any nicknames: Eetu, Joonas, Santtu, and Tuomas. Eetu and Joonas explained this with the ease and shortness of their given name. Santtu explained that one cannot form a nickname out of Santtu, since the nickname cannot be Santeri. Santtu is a name variant of Santeri. He understood that nicknames are name variants of given names. In turn for Anni, it was important not to have name variants and therefore, not to get a nickname. This had been important to Anni's parents when choosing her name and it was clearly reflecting on Anni and her opinions, since one of the reasons to choose her dream name No(o)ra (she uses both spellings) was that the name lacks of name variants.

Tuomas told that he had been thinking of potential nicknames for himself earlier, but he had decided that one cannot form any, since his name is so difficult to conjugate. Additionally, other participants had been considering potential nicknames earlier. In the following, Sanni explains what kind of things she had been thinking relating to her name before participating in the study:

106 Sanni: Well I guess I've been thinking of something like I've often thought what kind of nicknames I could have. Already before that Sauvo I often thought it would be nice to have a nickname or so. But otherwise I've not really thought about it. And I have searched the name Sanni from Wikipedia and so that I have just looked into Susanna and those. // Noo mä oon miettinyt varmaankin joitain öö mä oon miettinyt useasti että minkäköhänlaisia lempinimiä mulle vois tulla. Jo ennen tuota Sauvookin ajattelin et ois kiva jos ois joku lempinimi tai silleen. Mut sit emmää oikeestaan muuten. Ja oon mä kattonut

Sanni nimen sieltä Wikipediasta ja silleen et mä oon just katsonut sen Susannan ja nää.

Sanni explains that she has been thinking on potential nicknames before she had one since she wanted to have a nickname, which reflects the significance of nicknames to her. Sanni shared in the interview that she uses her nickname as a username in social media applications.

Similarly, nicknames were significant to Elmeri because of games. He mentioned that he has trouble generating game names in the comic strip, and reasons this with lack of nicknames in the interview:

72 Elmeri: It is true that it is a bit difficult to generate game names but. // Se on kyllä totta että on vähä vaikea keksiä pelinimiä mutta.

73 Interviewer: What do you think affects it? // Mistä sie luulet et se johtuu?

74 Elmeri: I can't say that. You don't have a cause you don't have an actual anything those nicknames aren't much and there you could generate a game name then I could. But you cannot therefore come up anything but. // Emmä oikein osaa sanoa sitä. Ei oo ku siitä ei oo sellasta varsinaista ei oo mitään sellasta niitä lempinimiä ei oo paljon ja siitä pystyis muovaan sitä pelinimnee niin kyllä mä sitte. Että ei siitä sitten oikeen sen takia keksi mutta.

75 Interviewer: Mmmm.

76 Elmeri: But it does not matter in principle. // Mut ei se haittaa periaatteessa.

Elmeri uses altogether six negative phrases in the line 74 to explain the difficulty of generating game names. However, he concludes that the lack of a nickname does not bother him in principle, which is an interesting word choice. It can mean either that the lack of nickname does not bother him or the trouble generating game names does not bother. Regardless, nicknames seem to be significant for Elmeri because of gaming and accordingly he chose his dream name to be able to generate game names better. Lenni mentioned similarly game names in relations to his nickname. However, he explained that his cousin calls him Lenno because of his game name Lennoskar, which is a combination of his given and

middle name. These boys connect their nicknames with game names. Tuomas, in turn, told use his name variant Thomas, sometimes as a game name.

It was indicated that nicknames are significant besides the common everyday interaction in virtual reality. Nicknames seem to provide an important platform for username generation in social media and games, and this is in accordance with the presentation of Rubtcova and Pavenkov (2017), in which they had found that 20 percentage of online game nicknames i.e., game names contain names and surnames. By contrast, in a study of IRC gallery nicknames, only seven percentage of the participants used their name as a username (Bechar-Israeli, 1995). Next, the results considering how identity is constructed through given names will be presented.

3.3 Identity construction

The participants discussed appearance, personality, interests, family, and ethnicity connected to their given name in their narratives. Therefore, identity was identified as being constructed while discussing given names in three different facets of this study: personal characteristics, family, and ethnicity. In the following, the results considering these three facets are presented.

3.3.1 Personal characteristics

Many participants had some difficulties describing themselves indexing that the identities of the participants are in process of formation i.e., under construction, became evident from the usage of the clause: “when I was little // olin piienenä”, of which five out 18 participants used in the dream name assignment. Additionally, Eetu described himself “as a baby”, Sanni “as under school aged”, and Lenni wrote what has not happen “so far” in his life, which includes eight participants. A few of the participants compared this to their current state, whereas others did not. These descriptions of self might be attempts to weave past and present into a more coherent whole or on the other hand, incapability of self-reflection at the moment or in future in the more future-orientated dream name assignment. However, the participants also wrote about their dreams, such

as studies, careers, families, pets, and travelling. Additionally, they identified themselves with things like age, school, hobbies, family members, and favorite colors. This demonstrates the cognitive developmental stage of the participants; they still define themselves mainly with concrete things (Nurmi et al., 2015).

The participants did not integrate other people with the same name in their construction of self in the data. They had difficulty to describe their namesakes, when asked what kind of person they expected to meet if they only knew the person is their namesake. The majority of the interviewees' instant reply was they do not know and that the question was challenging to answer.

Interestingly, Lisa mentioned the gender of her namesake. Here should be noted that the use of pronouns does not index gender in the Finnish language. Others may have thought it to be obvious and not worth mentioning, since also Lisa's reply: "I dunno (.) a woman ((giggles))" can be interpreted as cheeky because of the giggling. Otherwise, gender or construction of gender identity did not develop in the narratives.

Sanni, Richard, and Lenni were able to expect something of their namesake's character, and these expectations reflected themselves. Richard described his namesake to be wild and athletic. Similarly, Sanni described her namesake to be athletic, to have hobbies and long hair, to be nice and positive, and caring of friends. Lenni thought to meet "someone quite talkative for some reason" but could not think of anything else to say. When interviewees were directly asked to describe their namesakes, their replies were strongly connected to themselves as illustrated in the excerpt of Sofia:

07 Interviewer: Well if you needed to describe how Sofias are in general what would you say? // Tuota jos sun pitäis kuvailla et tuota millaisia ihmisiä Sofiat yleensä on niin mitä sanoisit?

08 Sofia: They are I guess quite crazy all. // Ne on varmaan aika sekoja kaikki.

09 Interviewer: Alright ((laughs)). Can you explain what you mean by that? // Aijaa ((nauraa)). Osaatko vähän vielä kertoa et mitä sie sillä meinaat?

10 Sofia: Well at least I laugh really much. // No ainakin mä nauran tosi paljon.

11 Interviewer: Yeah. // Joo.

12 Sofia: And so. // Ja niin.

Sofia thought all Sofias are crazy because she laughs so much. Apart from Anni and Ellen, given name and personal characteristics seemed irrelevant to most participants.

Anni was the only participant, who thought that her name had affected her past. Anni explains in the following extract that she is lively, since all Annis are expected to be hoots:

79 Interviewer: Well what do you think how has your name affected your past in what you have now become? // No entä miten susta sun nimi on vaikuttanut sun menneisyyteen siihen millainen susta on tullut nyt?

80 Anni: I dunno really cause I feel that somehow in a way at least it affects. I've been well really lively ((contentedly laughs)). For example smaller or like I dunno but Annis are considered like really a sort of hoots. I dunno really why but anyway I've been really lively as smaller and if I'd been let's say Noora I feel like I'd have been a bit more of that I only do what I must do. // Emmä tiiä oikein ku musta tuntuu et se jotenkin sillai ainakin vaikuttaa et mä niinku oon ollu tosi aa no reipas ((myhäilevä naurahdus)). Esim pienempänä tai niinku emmä tiedä mut Anneja pidetään niinku tosi sellasina niinku ilopir-ilopillereinä. Mä en oikein tiedä mistä se johtuu mutta kuitenkin mä oon ollu reipas pienempänä ja jos mä oisin esim ollu vaikka nyt Noora musta tuntuu et mä oisin ollu vähän semmonen et mä teen vaan kaiken mitä on pakko tehdä.

In the dream name assignment, Anni wrote:

If I was Nora, I would not be terribly different. I'd be semi-quiet. I'd exercise a lot and I'd spend my past with my friends just like now. I'd be calm and would not tell my things to anyone else than people I know and my friends. // Jos olisin Nora en olisi hirveästi erillainen. Olisin semi hiljainen. Urheilisin paljon ja olisin kavereiden kanssa vapaa-ajalla niin kuin nykyäänkin. Olisin rauhallinen enkä kertoisi asioitani kun vai tutuille ja kavereille.

However, in the interview, Anni explained that she would differ a bit from No(o)ras, since they are quite quiet. This continued with a question of does she want to be quieter, and Anni replied that maybe a little since she blathers a lot and sometimes she says something that she should not have.

Similarly, Ellen connected personal characteristics to her given name. Ellen described her given name as a bit selfish in the dream name assignment. When

exploring this in the interview, she explained the name to bring to mind a selfish person even though she did not consider herself selfish.

81 Interviewer: Do you know why you feel [like // Tiiätkö miksihän sulla tulee semmonen olo [et sie

82 Ellen: I don't] really have any clue. I just or actually it might be due to thing that once I wondered to a to just like vauva.fi ((when starting the mind maps we discussed that this web forum is not a good source since anyone can write down their own opinions that cannot be considered "as facts")) and then well there was discussion on names and I don't think that it's the reason. But there was just discussion that it is a little selfish and then I think of that (.) well I dunno. //Ei mulla] oikeastaan oo mitään hajua. Mulla vaan tulee tai siis se saattaa johtua siitä että joskus mä saatoin eksyä sellaselle just sellaselle vauva.fi ((ajatuskarttaa tehdessä puhuttiin ettei hyvä lähde, koska kuka tahansa voi mennä kirjoittaa sinne mielipiteitään, joita ei voida pitää "tosina")) ja sitte tota siellä puhuttiin näistä nimistä ja emmä usko et se johtuu siitä. Mut sit siellä just puhuttiin siitä että se on vähän itsekäs ja sit mulla tulee just siitä että (.) emmä oikeestaan tiä.

83 Interviewer: You don't know any Ellen that would be selfish or such? // Mut et sie et tunne ketään Elleniä joka ois itsekäs tai semmosta?

84 Ellen: Well not really. // Noo en oikeestaan.

85 Interviewer: Yeah you don't in a way feel that you'd be selfish even if you have a sort of an image of it? //Joo tuota eli sie et tavallaan koe et sie kuitenkin oo itsekäs vaikka sulla tulee vähän sellanen mielikuva siitä?

86 Ellen: Yeah I mean no. // Juu siis en.

In the line 82, Ellen hovers between truth and untruth: what she had read in the web forum but simultaneously stating that she does not believe in it or maybe it has affected her thoughts. Especially, the silence and the last clause "well I dunno" leaves an impression that the reading of the web forum were indeed hurtful. This extract of Ellen's interview suggests how associations are constructed and how vulnerable children are to influences. Even if Ellen was aware of her name stereotype, it had not affected her self-image. The results of the significance of family in identity construction will be presented next.

3.3.2 Family

The name giving of parents was an important theme to construct the significance of a given name; family was also otherwise central in the narratives. Alekski first brought up family when the participants received the instructions on how to interview their parents on their name giving. Beforehand, it was checked if the guardians of the pupils can be referred as parents, and the teacher assured that there were no foster children or anything as such in his class. Therefore, it became as a surprise that Alekski told that he could not conduct the interview, since his late father could not be interviewed. This did not remain the last time Alekski mentioned his father. In Alekski's comic strip, his father was in the main role. Alekski wanted to share the plot when handing in the comic strip, since he had not had the chance do it the equivalent time as other participants due to an episode during the recess and he did not want to continue at home. Unfortunately, the topic could not be further elaborated, since Alekski had not given consent for the interview. Nevertheless, Alekski made it evident that he connected his father to his name giving and thus to him during the data generation.

Similarly, one third of the participants included their parents in the comic strips. The comic strips concerned participants' name giving either the process of thinking of a name or the name giving ceremony. The participants had just handed in the parents' name-giving interviews, which may explain why the subject was topical. Moreover, Sanni reasoned her choice to draw the name giving with the ease to draw in the interview:

55 Interviewer: Why did you choose to do this comic strip [this? //minkä takia sie valitsit tähän sarjakuvaan [tän?

56 Sanni: Well I] dunno cause I first thought terribly what I could do and then mum just was like do it from that. It is really easy just like that and that. And she like came up with the idea and I just did it like that. // No emmä] tiä ku mää eka mietin sikana et minkä mä voisin tehdä. Ja sitte äiti oli vaan silleen et tee vaikka tosta et se on ihan helppo et tolleen ja tolleen. Ja sit se vähän niinku keksi ton aiheen ja sit mä vaan tein sen tolleen.

57 Interviewer: Is this somehow a significant event to you? // Onko tää sulle jotenkin merkityksellinen tilanne?

58 Sanni: Well not really but I couldn't think of anything else. //Noo ei se oikeestaan silleen mut ku mä en silleen keksiny tohon mitään.

Sanni's mother had advised her to choose name giving because it would be easy to draw, but Sanni did not consider it as a significant event. It might be that name giving was one of the only events connected to a given name and not necessarily significant for identity construction.

However, many participants also highlighted that the parents have chosen and given the specific name for them in the dream name assignment. Moreover, Richard when describing himself in the dream name assignment, he described his family as well. As noted earlier, previous discussions at home regarding name giving were considered essential for constructing significance of a given name. Consequently, it seems parents still have a great influence on preteens such as the participants of this study. Next, we will extend our view from individual and family to the ethnicity.

3.3.3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity was visible in a few narratives of the participants. Most given names of the participants represented the majority ethnic group in Finland, which Anni did not like. As mentioned earlier, Anni did not like the popularity of her given name; moreover, she disliked the Finnishness of her name. Anni underlined repeatedly how Finnish her name is and how she would like to have some "foreignism//ulkomaalaisuus" in her name. It is interesting that she uses the word foreign and not for instance international, which is provided in the interviewer's lines (see lines 55 and 61 in the extract below).

It is apparent that Anni identified herself to be a global citizen rather than just a Finn and wants to create a more hybrid identity. Similar to Anni, Iisa has dreams of living abroad, but she did not expect her name to cause any difficulties, which is in contrast to Anni. Anni explained that as she travelled quite a lot with her family and thinks that abroad her name is pronounced strangely that would not happen in her opinion if she had more of a foreign name. Therefore, she had

chosen a more foreign name in the dream name assignment. Below is an excerpt of Anni's interview:

- 55 Interviewer: In the dream name assignment you talk about internationality there. // Mutta tässä unelmien nimi jutussa sie olit puhunut siitä kansainvälisyydestä tossa.
- 56 Anni: Yeah. // Ymmm.
- 57 Interviewer: Would you like to tell me how you ended up with the Nora name? // Haluaisitko kertoa miten sie päädyit tuohon Nora nimeen?
- 58 Anni: Well, my friend's name is Noora so I think it's a really nice name. And then Noora is really beautiful and nice and talented in general and such. Noora is like Nora and that is like foreign or such. And we like travel quite a lot and no one would wonder if for example someone like called like Nora you understand that if someone else calls. But when someone foreign calls me they will say weirdly for example my name. // No mun kaverin nimi on Noora niin sit musta se on tosi kiva nimi. Ja sit se Noorakin on tosi kaunis ja öö mukava ja tällai ja se on tosi taitava niinku yleisesti ja sitte niinku. Öö tota niinku Noora niinku se on sillai se sit niinku Nora niin se on sit niinku ulkomaalainen tai semmonen niinku niin sitte siitä. Öö tota tai niinku me matkustellaan aika paljon. Niin sitte ku öö ei ihmettelis jos vaikka jotkut kutsuis sillai vähän niinku sillai niinku Nora niin sit sen niinku ymmärtää jos joku toinenkin kutsuu. Mut sit jos joku ulkomaalainen niin jos joku kutsuu niin ne kutsuu sillai tosi oudosti esim mun nimen.
- 59 Interviewer: So the name Nora would be easier someone foreign to say? // Mut Nora nimi ois helpompi jonku ulkomaalaisen sanoa?
- 60 Anni: Yes. // Joo.
- 61 Interviewer: Do you dream that in the future or then later you would go abroad and benefit from having an international name? // Haaveiletko sie et tulevaisuudessa tai sit myöhemmin lähtisit ulkomaille et siitä ois hyötyä et ois kansainvälinen nimi?
- 62 Anni: Yes I guess. // Joo varmaan.

Later on in Anni's interview, the topic of her international dreams is revisited and she suggests that she could be proud of her Finnish name abroad. Anni explains: "Well someone might think my name is something really different since there are not many Annis abroad. // Niin se saattaa pitää mun nimeä tosi

sellasena erilaisena koska ulkomailla ei ole kauheasti Anneja.” Clearly, Anni has a need to be different – special.

Similar to Anni, Richard connects his own ethnicity to his given name in his speech about popularity of the name. It was unexpected of Richard to answer to know many namesakes, since Richard can be regarded as a rare name in Finland. Around the time Richard was born i.e., between 2000 and 2009, only 450 babies were named as Richard (Population Registration Centre, 2018) while during the period each year around 60 000 babies were born in Finland (Official Statistics of Finland, 2012). Therefore, Richard was asked to elaborate, in which scale he thinks his name is popular. He replies that in his circle of acquaintances, in which he refers to his ethnic minority, Finnish Romani. Richard’s full name is recognizably a Romani name in Finland. Richard returns to the popularity of his name when explaining why he likes his name, which makes it evident he is proud of his name and heritage.

Additionally, Melissa had mixed foreign heritage. She did not mention her ethnicity or anything relating to ethnicity during the interview and was unsure, did her name have any impact on her life. Melissa does not represent a traditional Finnish name; however, internationality or foreign origin were not mentioned as reasons to choose the name in the parents’ interview: the wish of the both parents was stated as a reason. Melissa clarified further in the interview that her name was decided in advance and her mother thought the name was fine. However, the only thing she was sure that she did not want change her name – any part of it. Before the actual interview began, she mentioned to have her distinct surname from her father, which makes it evident that her heritage is significant to her even though she does not associate her heritage with her given name.

In summary, the participants varied greatly on how they constructed their identity when discussing their name. Some participants had strong connections of their given name to personal characteristics, family, and ethnicity, whereas others did not. These results seemed to suggest that if participants did not construct significance to their given name they rarely constructed their identity through their given name. Next, the results presented in this chapter will be discussed.

4 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how sixth graders construct significance to their given name and their identities while exploring their names. According to the results of this study, the participants were constructing both the significance and insignificance of their given name in their narratives; however, some participants focused more on the significance or insignificance whereas other participants were inconsistent throughout the data. The results of this study seem to be in accord with those of Brennen (2000) and Hagström (2006), since for some people a given name was an important identity construction tool while for others it was merely a label. In the following, I am going to discuss the findings and possible limitations of this study and concurrently give suggestions for future research.

The participants' prior discussions at home of their name giving seemed to have constructed the significance of their given name, and the importance of family was highlighted in the identity construction of the participants in this study. Previously, it has been established that a name is a foundation and connection that signifies the relationships with family, culture, and identity (Kohli & Solorzano, 2012). Furthermore, it is believed that name giving reflects the worldview and values of the parents (e.g. Ainiala et al., 2012; Edwards & Cabellero, 2008; Urbatsch, 2014), which further supports the importance of discussing name giving at homes and exploration of family naming traditions at schools, which is also encouraged by Peterson et al. (2015). This study provided the whole class with an opportunity to discuss their given name at home and school and according to the results of this study, family was seen as important for the participants' identity construction.

Earlier studies have found names to influence facial appearance, impression formation, and lifetime outcomes, such as employment and labor earnings (e.g. Aura & Hess, 2010; Bursell, 2012; Erwin, 2006; Kim, 2007; Khosravi, 2012; Lahamet et al., 2012; Lee, 2015; Mehrabian & Piercy, 1993; Silberzahn & Uhlmann, 2013; Zwebner et al., 2017). However, the majority of the interviewees of this

study did not believe their given name would have impact on their future and only few thought it had affected their past. The reason for this might be that the participants have not faced prejudice or discrimination because of their name or its absence in Finnish culture. Possibly, the result relates to the young age of the participants and their cognitive developmental stage (Nurmi et al., 2015).

Moreover, given names were not seen as significant for the construction of gender identity in this study, which might be partly explained with the relatively young age of the participants and irrelevancy of the negotiation of gender identity in their lives. However, it must be noted that the construction of significance or insignificance inevitably focused more on some of the participants than others due to the differences in the amount of the data and the participants' capability and willingness to share their thoughts during data generation.

The participants found it significant that their given name is pronounced and recalled correctly, which supports the findings of Kohli and Solorzano (2012), who believe that the identity of a child is negated if the name of the child is mispronounced or even changed. Likewise, the participants considered the rareness of their given name significant. The data of this small-scale study suggests that the correct use of child's name can support the development of positive identity and sense of self.

Nicknames were highlighted in the data and found significant for the participants in this study, and this result is in line with previous literature (see e.g. Ainiala et al., 2012; Crozier and Dimmock, 1999; Lytra, 2003). Notably, none of the participants of this study mentioned unkind nicknames or to have experienced name-calling as observed in other studies (e.g. Crozier & Dimmock, 1999; McDavid & Harari, 1966). A possible explanation for this might be that name-calling was not addressed during data generation and the participants, besides Lenni, did not connect it to the research topic or equally, it is possible that the participants have not experienced name-calling or they were not aware of their behind-the-back names.

Nicknames were found particularly significant in generating usernames for games and social media for the participants. The participants had agency in the data generation, which enabled relevant themes for them to develop, such as

game names. Therefore, a closer look at game names and usernames is suggested since they might provide an engaging and authentic method for adolescents to share their identity construction in virtual reality for future studies.

The participants found it challenging to describe self and their namesakes in their narratives. Similarly, Hart and Fegley (1997) have noticed the difficulty in responding self-definition questions with Icelandic preadolescence, which was in contrast to children in the United States. They explain that self-identification characteristics are largely implicit and peripheral in the lives of Icelandic preadolescents because affirming, contesting, and defending an internal and private self-constructed self-image may be less necessary in homogenous countries such as Iceland (Hart & Fegley, 1997). Generally, Finland is largely comparable to Iceland and therefore, this could also explain the difficulty the participants experienced in this study.

Interestingly, only a minority of the participants of this study created a dream name for themselves; therefore, the notion of imagined identities did not bestow agency for the majority of the participants to construct their identities in third space as intended. This result might relate to the implicit significance of a given name for the majority of the participants and therefore, a given name was not open for contest and identity negotiation. Other possible explanations are that thinking oneself with a different name might feel bizarre for the participants, they found the research topic irrelevant, or the idea of creating a new name was seen requiring too much effort and as homework. Granted, the participants had a couple of days of time to come up with a dream name.

Conversely, Anni wanted to change her name to reflect her global citizenship in contrast to Finnish, and she chose a name to index her hybrid identity. This is inconsistent with the results of e.g. Kim (2007), who suggests that name-changing practices reflect the sense of ethnic identity. Similarly, Richard connected his name to his ethnic identity in his narratives; even if he did not construct significance to his given name, he was constructing his ethnicity when discussing his name. Other participants did not mention their ethnicity in their narratives of their given name.

However, it should be noted that the majority of participants and correspondingly their given names represented the majority ethnic group of Finland and therefore, the negotiation of ethnic identity might not seem relevant to the participants. Future research should be undertaken to investigate the significance of given names for plurilingual individuals and their identity construction since the findings of this study suggest, similar to other studies (Kim & Lee, 2011; Peterson et al., 2015), that the exploration of given names supports the construction of ethnic and cultural identity. Supporting the pupils' in building their cultural identity and reinforcing of their positive identity are also regarded as the missions of the basic education in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education in Finland (NAE, 2014). Similarly, this study had the same aim. The research design of this study provides an approach to discuss identity at schools, and I believe given names provide an equal stance to explore cultural identity for all pupils.

The participants of this study were 11-13-year-old sixth graders. To develop full picture of identity exploration through given names, additional studies will be needed to investigate the significance of given names with people of different age and diverse backgrounds (e.g. social and linguistic backgrounds). Since study involved children, I aimed to apply child-centered methods in the data generation; yet, it is worth considering did the research design create meaningful participation and data and can the research instruments be regarded as child-centered. Similar to other research with children, the dilemma was faced that children are not used to expressing their views in an adult-dominated society and answered occasionally what they thought I wanted to hear (see Punch, 2002). This relates to the challenge of studying children in a school context, creating a research space, and gaining the confidence of the teacher (Mazzoni & Harcourt, 2012). Fortunately, the collaboration teacher welcomed me, contributed with adequate amount of time for data generation and thus helped me to create the necessary research space.

It can be argued that the research instruments included some closed questions, which might have influenced the results. However, the use of closed questions is occasionally reasonable as they were followed by open-ended

prompt and put less weight on the verbal ability of the child (Wilson & Powell, 2001). The structure of the questions was acknowledged during the analysis of the data. Relatedly, it was noticed during the analysis that I could have addressed in greater detail some of the topics the interviewees mentioned but this was not realized at the time of the interview. Additionally, the emphasis of family in the results must be interpreted with caution. The interview of parents may have enhanced the significance of parents in the data.

It is important to bear in mind that discourse analysis is itself an interpretation of an interpretation and thus always dependent on the analyzer (Gee, 2010). In the same way, the idea of reliability is nonsensical in discourse analysis (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). In discourse analysis, the focus is on language and how it constructs the social reality. Therefore, the data in this study was generated and interpreted in Finnish and only translated into English when presenting the results. It was challenging to maintain the nuances of the original narratives when translating them into English and consequently the original excerpts are presented simultaneously.

Taken together, the results of this thesis suggest that the significance of names varies between individuals, and some perceive their given name more important for their identity construction than others. The results highlighted the importance of correct pronunciation of name, parents' role in name giving, and prior discussions at home in constructing the significance of given names. Additionally, nicknames were found significant to the participants of this study. A given name was found to be non-negotiable part of identity for many, but for some a dream name allowed them to construct their identity partly in a third space. More studies are needed to explore the connection of name and identity and the adequacy of researching identity construction through given names especially in multilingual settings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Consent

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

OPETTAJANKOULUTUSLAITOS

TUTKIMUSLUPA

ARVOISA HUOLTAJA

Olen Aino Niukkala, 5. vuosikurssin luokanopettajaopiskelija Jyväskylän yliopistosta ja olen valmistelemassa pro gradu -tutkielmaani. Tutkielmani käsittelee etunimien vaikutusta lapsen identiteetin rakentumiseen, mikä on varsin vähän tutkimushuomiota saanut aihe Suomessa. Tutkielmani ohjaajana toimii professori Mirja Tarnanen Jyväskylän yliopistosta (mirja.tarnanen@jyu.fi).

Tutkimukseni toteuttamiseksi kerään aineistoa lapsenne luokalta syys-lokakuussa 2017. Tutkimuksen aikana lapsenne valmistaa ohjauksessani omasta etunimestään portfolion osana tavallista koulutyötään, minkä jälkeen haastattelen muutamaa luokan oppilasta heidän suhteestaan nimeensä. Niin oppilaalta kuin hänen huoltajaltaan pyydetään kirjallinen suostumus tutkimukseen osallistumiseen. Jokainen oppilas toteuttaa portfolion, mutta vain suostumuksen antaneiden oppilaiden työt taltioidaan ja käytetään tutkimuksessa. Lisäksi haastatteluun suostuneiden joukosta valitaan muutama oppilas teemahaastatteluun, joka nauhoitetaan.

Tutkimusta varten kerätty aineisto käsitellään niin, että osallistujien henkilöllisyys ei paljastu. Tutkimuksen luonteesta johtuen osallistujien etunimiä hyödynnetään tutkimuksessa, mutta heihin viitataan keskisuuren suomalaisen kaupungin koulun kuudennen luokan oppilaina, jolloin osallistujien anonymiteetti säilyy. Aineistoa säilytetään Jyväskylän yliopistossa, tutkijan taholla ja se tuhoetaan tutkimuksen päätyttyä. Alkuperäinen portfolio jää tutkimuksen päätyttyä oppilaalle itselleen eikä sitä hyödynnetä oppilaan arvioinnissa.

Pyydän palauttamaan allekirjoitetun tutkimusluvan mahdollisimman pian tai torstaihin 14.9.2017 mennessä lapsenne luokanopettajalle [REDACTED]. Tutkimuslupapyyntö on lähetetty teille myös Wilma-viestinä, josta löydätte yllä olevat tiedot myös myöhemmin.

Annan mielelläni lisätietoa tutkimuksesta.

Ystävällisin terveisin

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050 33 714 66

Palauta tämä sivu:

TUTKIMUSLUPA
IDENTITY EXPLORATION THROUGH PERSONAL NAMES

ANNAN SUOSTUMUKSENI LAPSENI

PORTFOLION JA/TAI
HAASTATTELUN (X TARKOITTAÄ SUOSTUMUSTA)

TALLENTAMISEKSI JA TALLENTEIDEN KÄYTTÖÖN TUTKIMUSTARKOITUKSESSA.

Aika ja paikka

Allekirjoitus

nimenselvennys

(huoltaja)

Allekirjoitus

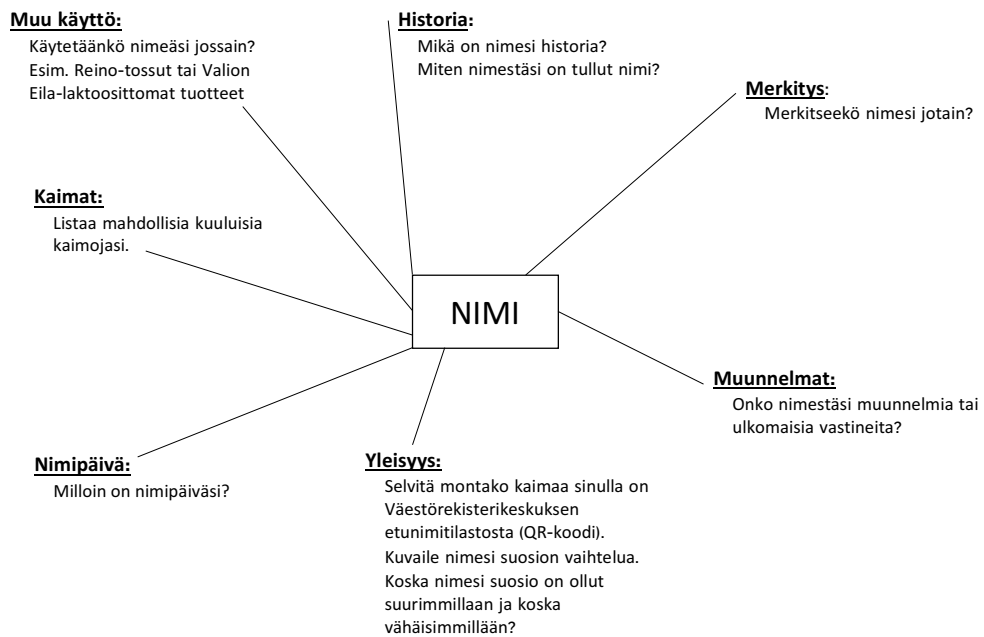
nimenselvennys

(oppilas)

Palautustiedot

Allekirjoitettu tutkimuslupa tulee palauttaa **torstaihin 14.9.2017** mennessä lapsenne luokanopettajalle XXXXXXXXXX.

Appendix 2. Mind map



Appendix 4. Parents' interview

Haastattelu

Selvitä miksi olet saanut juuri sen nimen, joka sinulla on. Haastattele vanhempiasi ja kirjoita heidän nimenvallinnastaan. Käytä alla olevia kysymyksiä apunasi.

- Oliko nimesi valinta vanhemmillesi helppo?
- Liittykö nimeesi kenties sukuperinteitä tai jokin muu tarina?
- Entä kuinka nimesi valintaan suhtauduttiin lähipiirissänne?

Appendix 5. Comic strip

MINÄ JA OMA NIMI -SARJAKUVA

Nyt kun olet tutustunut omaan nimeesi: sen taustaan, yleisyyteen ja valintaan, ja siihen, miten sarjakuvia tehdään.

Piirrä sarjakuva, jossa kuvaat suhdetta omaan nimeesi. Seuraavista kysymyksistä voi olla apua sarjakuvan suunnittelussa:

- Mitä mieltä olet nimestäsi? Pidätkö siitä?
- Sopiiko nimesi mielestäsi sinulle?
- Miten muut suhtautuvat nimeesi?

Tunteita? Ajatuksia?
Reaktioita? Mielenpitoita?
Tilanteita?

Tarkoituksena on siis piirtää sarjakuvaan jotain **toimintaa** liittyen nimeesi.

Vaatimuksena väh. **3 ruutua!**

Perusruudun koko väh. 6cm x 6cm.

Suunnittele sarjakuvasi sisältö ensin suunnittelupaperille ja vasta sen jälkeen toteuta sarjakuvasi.

Appendix 6. Dream name

UNELMIEN NIMI

1. Kerro minkä nimen valitsit ja **perustele**, miksi päädyit juuri kyseiseen nimeen.

Valitsin nimen _____, koska ...

2. Tarina

Kirjoita tarina millainen olisit, jos olisit saanut nimenantopöytäkirjasi valitsemasi nimen. Kuvaile häntä mahdollisimman tarkkaan, kerro hänen elämästään ja tulevaisuudestaan sekä siitä, miten hän (mahdollisesti) eroaa sinusta.

Appendix 7. Interview template

HAASTATTELU

Aluksi

Pöydällä on nauhuri ja portfolion osat esillä.

- Mun kysymykset liittyy sun nimeen ja näihin töihin mitä ollaan tehty. Voi tuntua hassulta toistaa jotain, kun tiedät, että se lukee jo noissa sun töissä. Musta sie olet kirjoittanut tänne todella mielenkiintoisia juttuja ja haluaisin kuulla niistä lisää. Nyt haluaisin, että kertoisit niistä uudelleen omin sanoin ja mulla ois mahdollisuus kysyä tarkentavia kysymyksiä. Niin voin olla varma, että ymmärrän sua ja sitä mitä olet tarkoittanut. Voi olla, että susta tuntuu, että kyselen samaa asiaa monta kertaa, sitä ei kannata ihmetellä.
- Nauhoitan tän keskustelun ton nauhurin lisäksi myös padilla ihan varmuuden vuoksi, jos en vaikka osaiskaan käyttää tota. Saatan tehdä vähän myös muistiinpanoja, jotta pysyn kartalla mitä oon kysynyt ja mitä en.
- Voit keskeyttää haastattelun milloin tahansa tai jos et halua vastata johonkin kysymykseen senkin voi sanoa ja sit mennään seuraavaan. Ja jos ymmärrä jotain keskeytä ja kysy ihan rohkeasti.
- Tärkeää on kuitenkin muistaa, että mitään oikeita tai väriä kysymyksiä ei ole, oon kiinnostunut kuulemaan sun ajatuksia.
- Oisko sulla nyt jotain kysyttävää?

Haastattelu

Otetaan alkuun **vähän lämmittelykysymyksiä**:

Mikä on sun lempieläin? Minkä takia?

Missä kuussa sie oot syntynyt?

Eli oot ... vuotta?

Voisitko kertoa sun taustasta vähän. Huomaan, että sulla on vähän ulkomaalaistaustainen sukunimi.

Sun nimi on ... Tunnetko muita ...?

Miltä tuntuu jos on muita saman nimisiä/ei ole?

Millaisia ihmisiä ...t ovat?

Sovitko sä tohon kuvaukseen?

Millaisia ajatuksia sulle herää nyt kun katsot sun ajatuskarttaa?

Löytykö tietoa helposti?

Opitko jotain uutta?

Mitä sie ajattelet siitä, että sun nimi tarkoittaa ...?

Kerro sun lempinimistä.

Mitä sä tykkäät niistä verrattuna sun omaan nimeen?

Voisinko mie kutsua su asun lempinimellä?

Miltä se tuntuisi?

Eli millaisissa tilanteissa susta lempinimeä voi käyttää ja millaisissa tilanteissa pitäisi käyttää oikeaa nimeä?

Entä jos esittelet itsesi uudelle henkilölle, mitä nimeä käytät silloin?

Mulla kiinnostaisi kuulla sun vanhempien nimenvälinnasta sulle. Kerrotko siitä?

Oliko tää tarina tuttu sulle jo ennen sitä sun tekemää haastattelua?

Millaista oli kuulla sun vanhemmilta sun nimen valinnasta?

Onko sillä merkitystä että olet saanut nimen ... mukaan/perusteella?

Kertoisitko mitä tässä sun tekemässä sarjakuvassa tapahtuu?

Mitä sä halusit kuvastaa ...?

Millaista sitä oli tehdä?

Tässä Unelmien nimi –tarinassa sie kirjoitit haluavasi olla ...

Miten päädyit [unelmien nimeen]? TAI Minkä takia halusit pitää sun oman nimen?

[unelmien nimi], on siis ...mpi? Vai mitä tarkoitat?

Tunnetko ketään, jolla ois [unelmien nimi]? Millainen ihminen hän on?

Jos sulla ois tää nimi, millainen ihminen sä olisit?

Voisitko sä kuvitella olevasi sellainen [edellisen kuvauksen mukainen]? ... Minkä vuoksi?

Millainen merkitys sun nimellä on sun tulevaisuuteen? Vaikuttaako se siihen jollain tavalla? Entä menneisyyteen?

Millainen osa sun oma nimi on sua?

Voisitko kuvitella ikinä vaihtavasi sun nimeä?

No jos mietit sun sukunimeä, mitä ajattelet siitä?

Voisitko kuvitella vaihtavasi sitä?

Olitko miettinyt tällaisia asioita/omaa nimeäsi ennen tätä mun tutkimusta?

Onko teillä ennen tätä ollut kotona puhetta esimerkiksi sun nimenvälinnasta?

Miltä on tuntunut kuulla siitä?

Oisiko vielä jotain mitä itse haluaisit sanoa tai lisätä?

Appendix 8. Transcription symbols

Litterointimerkit // Transcription symbols

-	kesken jäänyt sana // a truncated/cut-off word
(.)	alle sekunnin mittainen tauko // a pause duration less than one second
(2)	tautot, joiden kestot sekunteina // a pause duration in seconds
<u>äänekäs</u>	kova ääni tai painotus // a louder sound or stress
°hiljaa°	hiljaisella äänellä sanottu kohta // a quieter sound
<>	äänteen venytys // a slow speech sound
()	tyhjät sulut tarkoittavat purkamatta jätettyä, epäselvää kohtaa // transcribed words are uncertain
(())	analysoijan huomioita // the analyst's comment
[päällekkäispuhunta alkukohta // overlap starts
]	päällekkäispuhunta loppukohta // overlap ends