

**“RIP ENGLISH!” Language ideological debate in a comment field of a
Finnish entertainment site**

Master's thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia kieli-ideologioita ja ideologisia mielipiteitä ei-standardinmukaista englantia kohtaan esiintyy suomalaisten hyödyntämässä sosiaalisessa mediassa, miten näitä ideologioita perustellaan ja miten niistä väitellään dialogisessa kontekstissa. Vaikka englanti on maailmanlaajuinen lingua franca, Suomessa englannista ja sen asemasta on monenlaisia mielipiteitä. Sosiaalisen median ansiosta mielipiteiden esittäminen laajalle yleisölle lyhyessä ajassa on helpompaa kuin koskaan aiemmin. Tämä ja monien Internet-alustojen tarjoama vaihtoehto pysyä nimettömänä tekee sosiaalisesta mediasta kiinnostavan kohteen ideologisen väittelyn tutkimukselle.</p> <p>Tutkielma on tapaustutkimus yhdestä Feissarimokat- huumorisivuston ”osataan enkkuu” -otsikon alla olevasta julkaisusta ja sen kommenttikentästä. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan, millaisia kieli-ideologioita kommenttikentässä voidaan havaita, miten ideologisia kannanottoja esitetään ja miten alkuperäisen julkaisun ei-standardinmukaista englantia ja alkuperäistä julkaisijaa pilkataan ja toisaalta puolustetaan.</p> <p>Analyyssissä käytetään Internet-etnografiaa, laadullista sisällönanalyysia, temaattista analyysia sekä entekstualisaation ja parodisen imitoinnin tutkimusta.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset kertovat, että kommentoijilla on monenlaisia mielipiteitä englannin kieltä ja ei-standardinmukaista englantia kohtaan. Näiden mielipiteiden esittäminen ja niistä väittelemine viestii erilaisista kieli-ideologioita englannista, englannin asemasta, englannin käytöstä ja sen käyttäjistä sekä vieraiden kielten opetuksesta Suomessa. Kommentoijilla on myöskin erinäisiä tapoja ja artikuloinnin keinoja esittää ideologisia kannanottoja aina humoristisesta pilkkaamisesta faktapohjaiseen argumentointiin.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The present study aims to illuminate the language ideologies and language ideological stances occurring in Finnish social media contexts. The main objective of this study is to examine the language ideological debate in a dialogical platform and showcase how the participants orient to ideologies about the use of English and its non-standard variations by articulating their views. This objective is pursued with the help of a case study of a specific post written in non-standard English and its commentary on a Finnish entertainment site called *Feissarimokat* (Eng. “Facebook fails”). Fields of study relevant to this current study are social media studies, language ideological studies, online ethnography, qualitative content analysis, and thematic analysis.

As English is an international lingua franca, it is used in many contexts and platforms also in Finland. For example, English is widely used in social media even if the contexts were mostly Finnish. The use of English in these situations, however, triggers a wide variety of opinions and heated discussions among the social media users. In other words, the use of English, especially the varieties of English that are not seen as traditionally standard or correct, receives serious critique among some users. In addition, many views on English itself, as well as the users of English, are presented in social media. Moreover, social media has made it considerably easier to express various opinions and argue for and against them. Depending on the platform, this can often be done completely anonymously. For these reasons, the analysis of online social media data can reveal diverse ideological stances, as well as different ways of expressing them. An analysis like this is in the focus of my research: in it, I am going to study the “*osataan enkkuu*” (Eng. “we can English”) comment section of a Finnish Facebook post compilation site *Feissarimokat*. In many of the comments, the language of the post is critiqued, and the person behind the original post is mocked and ridiculed. However, as I will also show, some commenters also defend the original posts and generally encourage the use of English by Finns on social media.

By studying the articulation of ideological stances and various views related to various topics occurring in the debate, as well as the debate itself, we can gather the different language ideologies the debate participants orient to, and examine the processes related to language

ideology formation. Furthermore, I hope to show how language ideologies are debated not only in more “sophisticated” cultural, political, and educational contexts but also in entertainment sites such as *Feissarimokat*. Moreover, I assume that these ideologies are debated in various ways and using a wide range of resources; remembering that *Feissarimokat* is an entertainment site, humoristic resources are expected to be drawn on in the comments.

Even though *Feissarimokat* is an entertainment site and the opinions in the comments are expressed according to that, in other words, they can be purposefully overly provocative and exaggerating, I still argue that they reflect authentic views the debate participants have about English. These ideologies may have roots in, for example, the commenters’ background in their received language education in the Finnish school system. That is to say, the participants may base their ideological stances on normativity and value grammatical correctness, or, they can have modern views on multilingualism and communicative second language learning. Therefore, in order to develop second language education and language policies in Finland, it is important to be aware of these existing ideologies that may be left hidden in other, less mundane contexts.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I will present the theoretical framework for my study. First, I will discuss the status of English in Finland, and focus especially on how English is viewed in Finland. This I do to clarify the context of my study more specifically: a good understanding of the historical, social, and societal background of English in Finland will help me to be comprehend the present data more profoundly from the Finnish perspective. By exploring previous language ideological research on Finnish contexts, I will be able to set my study in a specific framework and find out whether my research will lead to similar findings. In other words, the previous research will be referred to in the analysis and discussion sections of my thesis.

I will also clarify the key concepts relating to language ideological research and, based on the previous arguments by scholars in this field, I will emphasize the significance of language ideological study. Next, previous research on language ideologies in both social and traditional media contexts, and especially studies focusing on language ideological debates, will be presented before proceeding to the methodological framework. Lastly, previous research on Facebook and tools of communicating in social media will be discussed.

2.1 English in Finland

Leppänen et al. (2011) studied the overall status of English in Finland. They illuminate the historical development of English in Finland: the language has grown in significance in the country from 1920's onward and is viewed as a lingua franca (ibid. 2011: 15). However, they also argue that regardless of Finland being a bilingual country (Finnish and Swedish both being official languages) with several minority languages, the history of independent Finland has been rather monolingual in Finnish (ibid. 2011: 17). In other words, one has coped in Finland by speaking only Finnish. However, as Finnish and Swedish have a relatively small number of speakers, it is important for Finns to study other languages, especially English, so we can cope in the continuously internationalizing world. At the moment, English is studied in school by almost every Finn. Along with education, English has a stable role in Finland's media, business, and even politics. Leppänen et al. (2011) conclude that the general attitude towards the use of English in Finland is positive, and English is widely heard, seen, and even used by Finns in various contexts.

However, the use of English varies depending on the situation: Finnish people seem to write in English relatively little but most of the writing, however, takes place on the internet (Leppänen et al. 2011: 111). This is an interesting observation regarding my topic and data, as I will study written English on a Finnish online platform; I wonder if the data will reflect this statistical fact. For example, code-switching between Finnish and English is regarded as a natural part of a conversation (ibid. 2011:130). Finnish people also regard English as an important tool of communication, especially for young people (ibid. 2011: 80). Interestingly, however, mixing English and Finnish was rarer in writing (ibid. 2011: 133). Furthermore, according to Leppänen et al., (2011: 120) it is important for Finnish people to seem fluent while using English.

Attitudes to non-standard English were not revealed in the questionnaire report, but British and American English were considered the most likeable forms of spoken English (Leppänen et al 2011: 71). Therefore, it could be argued that the traditional “inner circle Englishes” (Kachru 1985) are still viewed as ideal and desirable varieties. In addition, the English spoken by Finnish people is regarded as the second most unpleasant form of spoken English (Leppänen et al 2011: 70). Also, even though the attitudes towards the use of uncertain and stammering English by a Finn are mostly sympathetic and encouraging, many people consider this kind of English amusing and some feel a shared sense of shame for the Finnish people (ibid. 2011: 76). The feeling of pride for the Finnish speakers of English, on the other hand, grows as the speakers are more fluent in English (ibid. 2011: 76-79). Therefore, even though English is seen as a natural part of Finnish society, it seems to be rather important to reach a certain level of fluency before the use of English can be considered natural and without feelings of shame and embarrassment.

However, the use of English in Finnish contexts has also given rise to criticism. In their research on language ideological debates in the Finnish press, Leppänen and Pahta (2012) show that the English used in Finland faces different kinds of negative attitudes. English is even seen as the enemy that undermines Finnish language, and the use of English is considered unpatriotic (2012: 149). Specifically, the variety of English used by Finns is ridiculed; it is not even seen as ‘proper’ English (2012: 152). Some comments even go on to saying that the English is only allowed for those that are educated and have higher social status (2012: 153). Most often, however, English is seen as a threat to both Finnish language and culture; it is seen as a tool of spreading the depraving, commercialised Anglo-American culture.

Nevertheless, the use of non-standard English spoken by Finns is sometimes defended. In Leppänen's article (2017), a university professor Anne Pitkänen-Huhta emphasizes that there is no such thing as the right way of using English, as it is an international lingua franca and no longer bound to inner-circle countries. Instead of criticism and language policing, people should be encouraged to use English. Pitkänen-Huhta argues that the only way to learn foreign languages is to use them and practice them; making mistakes should not be seen as dangerous as long as the communication works.

In my study, I anticipate the data to reveal similar phenomena and attitudes towards English in a Finnish context as suggested by Leppänen et al (2011) and Leppänen and Pahta (2012). As mentioned above, using written English is not very common among Finnish people; and it seems that the present data enforce this view: the comments on *osataan enkkuu* site put forward that English on that platform seems out of place. I also expect to find comments expressing various, both negative and positive, views towards non-standard English and English in general; my hypothesis is that regardless of the overall positive attitude towards English, the non-standard variety of *osataan enkkuu* posts is, for the most part, found humorous and embarrassing. Furthermore, the more negative opinions on English are expected to be seen in many of the comments, such as seeing English as a threat and a promoter of the "corrupted Anglo-American culture." Yet, I also hope to discover defensive and encouraging comments; as Pitkänen-Huhta argues, taking a role of a language police in order to demean one another is not beneficial (Leppänen 2017).

2.2 Language ideologies

Attitudes and ideologies towards English in a Finnish context were discussed in the section above. However, ideologies on English have been studied in other countries as well. In his overview on previous studies concerning the language ideological issues in English language education from a global perspective, Mirhosseini (2018) showcases that despite its position as a lingua franca, English is viewed and taught from very different ideological viewpoints around the world. For example, English and English language education is considered imperialistic and a tool for spreading neoliberalism in Europe (Mirhosseini 2018: 27). Therefore, similar views about English language being the symbol of the spreading Anglo-American culture as found in Leppänen and Pahta (2012) can be traced in Europe overall. On the other hand, in areas with a

long history of British colonialism, such as Africa, English and English language education are still considered to carry an ideology of colonialism.

However, the colonial attributes linked to English, according to Bhattacharya (2017), are strong in India, too. English is one of the official languages in India; however, the ideological positions vary greatly. Even though the official Curricular Framework describes English as a means to higher education and a symbol of civilization, as well as being unrelated to India's colonial past, it is still strongly linked to colonialism and British as oppressors in Indians' minds. (Bhattacharya, 2017: 2-3). From Bhattacharya's ethnographic research it was concluded that multilingual children of New Delhi suburbs regarded English a language of the enemy (2017: 12). English language was linked to the British colonizers, and the research participants claimed that every Indian hated the British (2017: 13). Moreover, the only reasons for learning English, according to the research participants, were military ones (14). Bhattacharya also concludes that the official policy of India's language education represents only the upper class beliefs of about English and erases the underlying ideologies that Indians have about English (2017: 17).

Mirhosseini (2018: 24) also argues that the English language education is anglo-centric, and that the native variations of English are ideologized as superior especially in East and South East Asia, even though it is viewed as a tool for globalization and internationalization. This can be apprehended in Wei's study on the ideologies towards English among Chinese university studies. Wei (2016: 106) discovered that Chinese students regard native-like English as the best form of English. Even though global English was seen as a natural trend (2016: 108), the target of learning English was to communicate with native speakers, not with other non-native speakers. In addition, the Chinese students considered themselves learners of English and not active users (2016: 110). Therefore, they orient to English from a very monolingual perspective.

I have now discussed how English is viewed ideologically both in Finland and in global settings and showcased that English is viewed in a variety of ways worldwide, and sometimes even within the same country. Even though English is mostly viewed positively in Finland, there is ideological variation to be traced in people's minds, and these trends can be seen in global settings, too. In the following sections, I will introduce the concept of language ideology as well as discuss previous language ideological research more in detail. As I will use social media material as the data of my analysis, most of the previous studies discussed here focus on language ideologies presented in media, especially social media platforms and online contexts.

2.2.1 Key concepts in the study of language ideologies

The key concepts in my research are *language ideology* and *language ideological debate*. Silverstein (1979: 173) argues that language ideologies are “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use.” Woolard (1994) takes this definition further and argues that language ideologies do not usually reflect views solely about languages; linguistic ideology contains opinions on, among others, speakers of languages and registers, or the cultures linked to that language. For example, Irvine and Gal (1995: 982) explain how Western Europeans could not link Macedonian languages (Greek, Bulgarian, Rumanian, etc.) to specific ethnicities or social groups; thus, the multilingual Macedonians were considered fickle and untrustworthy. Vessey (2013: 673), on the other hand, showed how French was linked to “whiny Quebec people” in Canadian media commentaries. Furthermore, a clear distinction between the French Canada and the English-speaking Canada was made.

However, the distinction between a language ideology and a language attitude is not always clear. In his introduction to defining language ideology and language attitude, Kroskrity (2016) explains that, even though both language attitudes and ideologies are linked to people’s feelings and beliefs about language and language use, they are different in terms of history and methodology. The study of language attitudes usually involves quantitative methods, as the purpose is often to measure different speakers’ reactions to languages and language use as objectively as possible. The study of language attitudes consists of more direct questions from people on their perhaps more conscious views about language (Kroskrity 2016). Language ideologies, on the other hand, are usually studied with ethnography, conversation analysis or discourse analysis. Moreover, the study of language ideologies aims to reveal something from the relationship between people’s opinions about language and socio-cultural, historical, and economic factors (Kroskrity 2016). Blommaert (1999) states that language ideologies are historically and socioculturally formed, and thus reflect the social and political environments surrounding the language. He also argues (1999: 10) that debates are good targets for language ideological study, as they contain metadiscourses, as well as shape and produce language ideologies themselves. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994: 72) state that the study of language ideologies is crucial as it provides a link between linguistics and sociology, and that this study deepens the understanding of linguistic behaviour.

Irvine and Gal (1995), on the other hand, argue that even the academic field of linguistics is highly ideologized; languages are to this day studied as separate entities and not in their social context. They present three semiotic processes in such ideology forming: *iconicity*, *recursiveness* (also: *fractal recursivity*) and *erasure* (1995: 972). Iconicity refers to the process in which linguistic features become iconic for a specific social group; for example, features typical for the language used online are often viewed representing young people. Recursiveness, on the other hand, “involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (1995: 974). In practice, fractal recursivity often includes the process of thinking that linguistic features are a proof of something else, say, a person’s presumed personal traits. For example, using internet slang, which often includes pejorative terms of different social groups, can be linked to discriminating social attitudes. Lastly, erasure is the process of an ideology simplifying linguistic practices, deleting some activities or people in the social phenomena.

Lippi-Green (2012) discusses the process of idealizing languages and argues that all people are exposed to standard language ideology. The term standard language ideology (SLI) is defined as following:

“a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from of the spoken language of the upper middle class.” (Lippi-Green 2012: 67)

In other words, Lippi-Green (2012: 67) argues that idealizing the standard language by the upper classes and calling other forms and varieties of language non-standard is discriminating and leads to misrepresentation of non-dominant groups. In a similar way to Blommaert (1999), Lippi-Green (2012: 73) argues that language ideologies are socially constructed, and that all people are exposed to the standard language ideology through surrounding institutions, such as the education system, and media. Furthermore, Lippi-Green regards ideology “as the bridge or filter between language change and social structures” (2012: 71).

In addition to the concepts standard and non-standard being discriminating and idealized, Lippi-Green argues (2012: 61-62) that they are, in fact, inaccurate, as there are no homogenous forms or universal agreement of standard language and non-standard language. However, they are strongly implanted even in sociolinguistic theory and used by sociolinguists, regardless of the fact that sociolinguists recognize their inaccuracy. The same error will be made in the present

study, too. However, Finnish people, too, are exposed to the standard language ideology and linguistic varieties that are mostly considered standard English through the Western media. Therefore, the division between standard or good English and non-standard or bad English is made in many cases in the data of this study. For this reason, in addition to their prominence in sociolinguistic research, the concepts standard and non-standard are important in terms of my research.

Likewise to Irvine and Gal (1995), Lippi-Green (2012: 70) provides her own model for language ideology formation. To be more precise, Lippi-Green describes the ideological process of language subordination, in other words, how some languages, varieties or registers become inferior compared to the standard. With the help of exemplary clauses, Lippi-Green unravels the elements of this process, which are mystification of language, claiming authority, generating misinformation, trivializing targeted languages, setting conformers as positive examples, marginalizing non-conformers, making explicit promises about the results of standard language use, and making threats of using non-standard language. For example, language mystification, creating an image implying that standard language needs to be closely studied and examined before understanding it, puts the standard language on a pedestal. Then again, trivializing targeted, other than standard forms downgrades the other varieties even further. These processes will be discussed in more detail in the analytical section of this study.

Agha (2003) discusses the evolution of registers or varieties becoming recognizably standard or non-standard. The process of enregisterment defined by Agha (2003) is closely connected to language ideology. Agha defines this concept as “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (2003: 231). In addition, enregisterment illuminates different norms and conventions of language use; thus, we can see what kind of normativity forms and reforms language use. In his study, Agha uses Received Pronunciation, the now highly esteemed form of spoken British English, as an example of enregistered repertoire (2003: 231). In doing so, he discussed the social, ideological, and historical processes of how Received Pronunciation, also called “standard” or “proper” English, became a widely accepted and valued accent. Interestingly, however, only a fraction of British people actually speak with an accent identified as Received Pronunciation (2003: 234); yet, because of its status as a standard form, it is heard and encountered by practically all Brits. Agha also argues (2003: 236) that the term Received Pronunciation reflects the ideal that this form is passed on and learned in a “higher” manner than accents linked to geographical locations. Therefore, the process of Received Pronunciation

can be argued to be ideologically constructed rather than reflecting any actual general standard of British English. Moreover, if enregisterment is constructed by the processes in which a type of linguistic repertoire becomes an accepted register, it can be argued that the same process is seen in the way some forms become unacceptable. In other words, regarding one form of language as non-standard can be alleged to be behind a social and historical process, similarly to the formation of the standard form.

Closely linked to the process enregisterment is the concept of *normativity*. According to Agha (2007: 126), linguistic norms are built on three levels of normativity: these are the norm of behaviour, the normalized model of behaviour, and the normative standard. The first level, the norm of behaviour, refers to statistical norms and frequencies; in other words, it describes what people really say (patterns, phrases). These patterns are not reflected as a norm by the people who use them, however. This leads to the second level, the normalized model of behaviour. This model defines a norm for a certain group of people; in other words, this model of behaviour is seen as normal by at least some actors. However, not all group members need to consider the model as norm; the recognition depends on the social context. In the third level of normativity, the normative standard, the model has reached a level where the patterns are standardized in addition to being normalized, by peers (Agha, 2007: 126). Stæhr (2014: 42) argues that while the normative centers can vary for different groups of people in different social situations, the normative standard(s) still constitute a vital element in society. For example, standardization is often required in official state- or institutional language policy.

Language use is often evaluated through these levels of normativity. These metapragmatic activities linked to evaluating one's own as well as others' language use, is defined as *reflexivity*. Stæhr (2014: 94) argues that reflexivity is central in social media interaction; for example, posting social media updates forces people to reflect their actions and writing, as well as invites other people to give feedback to these media productions. Not only direct feedback or self-reflection is defined as reflexivity; using stylized (exaggerated, even parodied) language requires reflexivity (Stæhr 2014: 94, 113). I will discuss reflexivity further in the next section. However, it is interesting how even the humouristic comments in the data of the current study can be studied from this point of view; the mocking and parodying comments can reflect something about the commenters' language ideologies.

Language policing is also a key concept related to language ideologies and language ideological debates. Blommaert (2009: 203) defines the term as the "production of 'order' - normatively

organized and policed conduct - which is infinitely detailed and regulated by variety of actors.” In other words, this involves that language use is regulated, and the ownership of the language is taken by both established structures as well as individuals and social groups. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994: 64) argue that this kind of moralization of language, critiquing the non-standard and regulating the standard, originates from the ideologically coloured view on the purity and truthfulness of one’s own language. They also state that “[p]urist doctrines of linguistic correctness close off non-native sources of innovation, but usually selectively, targeting only languages construed as threats.” (ibid. 1994: 64)

A related term to language policing is *prescriptivism*. Beal (2010) argues that prescriptivism, a linguistic theory used by the 18th century grammarians, is influential even today. Beal (2010:58) argues that the 18th century grammarians focused more on creating grammatical rules and correcting errors in the language than genuinely describing linguistic phenomena. While prescriptivism is no longer popular among linguists (Beal, 2010: 63), intolerance towards linguistic variation and correcting presumed errors by referring to grammatical rules rather than actual linguistic facts is gaining popularity among non-linguists. Beal (2010: 61) also states that, due to modern media and the easiness of projecting one’s opinion, the criticism towards linguistic variation is more direct and aggressive.

As I will study the range of different language ideologies expressed in a dialogical context, it is important to discuss the relationship between a language ideology and an ideological stance. Haddington (2006: 73), states that stance, which he defines as speaker attitude, position or standpoint, can be studied from two perspectives. Stance can be considered both an act where an individual expresses their personal and subjective view on the matter being discussed, as well an intersubjective activity of stance taking where stances are shaped in interaction and influenced by previous utterances in the dialogic context. Nevertheless, Haddington (2006: 73) argues that stance, through linguistic features, always indicates beliefs, values and ideologies. Du Bois (2007: 139) argues that, even though taking a stance is an extremely powerful linguistic and social move, defining stance is difficult and complex. However, Du Bois (2007: 163) states that:

Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field.

In other words, the stance a language user takes determines their position, alignment and evaluation of the object of discussion in a dialogic context. Therefore, stance taking is evident in the language ideological debate and expression of language ideologies in the data, as it is the act through which the commenters' beliefs, opinions and ideologies can be determined. Tagg et al (2017: 43), reaffirm this and state that ideological beliefs are expressed in taking a stance. Moreover, Tagg et al (2017) argue that the reason why conflict arises in social media dialogue is due to the online conversation participants taking a stance and thus positioning themselves in relation to the dialogical context. Conclusively, stance is action the debate participants make while positioning themselves in the debate, and this positioning and expressing opinions may go according to a fixed language ideology. In short, as I will be studying the different ideological stances that the commenters take in the dialogic context of the comment field, I will define these stances by examining what exactly is being said, and what kind of ideological framework can be interpreted in these stances.

2.2.2 Language ideologies and language ideological debates on print media and television

Even though the present study will use online and social media materials as its data, it is useful to explore previous research in other forms of media discourse as well. Especially print media has often served as a platform for language ideological debates both before and during the social media revolution, as it provides a tool for expressing opinions to both journalists (articles, essays, columns, and causeries) and newspaper readers (opinion pieces, letters to the editors, SMS columns). Nowadays, of course, print media is not separate from online social media; most newspapers have social media channels. Thus, print media items often serve as a public platform for social media debates. This, naturally, is the case with other forms of media, as media can be seen as a continuum; one media item can be further discussed on several platforms. Therefore, in addition to debates on print media, I will discuss studies on language ideologies represented in television programs and the language ideological debates these programs raised.

In his study of controversies caused by linguistic choices in popular culture, focusing mainly on television and radio programmes throughout the 20th and 21st century, Trotta (2009) argues that studying controversies and “moral panic” caused by linguistic choices made in the popular media is important, as they reveal the underlying language ideologies of the public and

showcase how common “folk linguistics” and language policing conducted by non-linguists is. He (2009: 47) also states that non-standard linguistic choices made in popular culture and media are seen not only as threats to language but also as symbols of demoralization and decline of civilized society. Furthermore, while admitting that the standard language ideology is socially constructed, he has quite a different take than, for example, Lippi-Green (2012) on the role of popular media as the spreader of standard language ideology, or as an authority for good language use. Trotta (2009: 47) argues that popular media is considered “low” culture and, therefore, the linguistic choices in popular culture face critique for being non-standard and grammatically inaccurate. By various examples, such as the outcry caused by split infinitive of Captain Kirk in Star Trek, Trotta (2009: 49) shows how the critique of the media consumers is often not based on linguistic facts but rather inaccurate grammar rules learnt in institutions. Unlike most sociolinguists, non-linguists in these kinds of debates have extremely strong opinions on what is good language use and what is not.

An interesting example of the study of print media is Milani’s investigation (2010) of the debate over “rinkebysvenska” (‘immigrant Swedish’) caused by an opinion piece published in a Swedish newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, written by a literature professor called Ebba Witt-Brattström. This piece raised a heated discussion and a separate space for counter-argumentative pieces was created in *Dagens Nyheter*. In her piece, Witt-Brattström argues against bilingual education for pupils with immigrant background and states that these pupils should be taught more Swedish (Milani 2010: 122-125). Milani argues that the critique against providing bilingual education is highly ideological and that Swedish used by immigrants is iconicized as one homogenic type of Swedish (2010: 124). Furthermore, their “blattsvenska” or “rinkebysvenska” is claimed to be sexist language use mainly because of one commonly used word: *guss* (a young woman, girl) (2010: 127). In her critique against “rinkebysvenska,” Witt-Brattström stated that *guss* is demeaning for women, as the word is seen as highly sexual and condescending (e.g. *chick, babe*). In reality, no such meanings are linked to the original meaning of the word. Nevertheless, “rinkebysvenska” is iconized as the language of “young and sexist non-Swedish men” (ibid. 2010: 129). However, these views also raised counter-arguments; many considered rinkebysvenska natural language use in the modern and multicultural Sweden (ibid. 2010: 127-129). Milani’s article shows how very different language ideologies can be debated over. Despite the fact that the data and context of Milani’s study is quite different to the current research, similar phenomena of language ideologizing and over-simplifying of linguistic processes is expected to be found in my data.

Another example of the study on print media is Blackledge's work (2002) on the continuing and multifaceted nature of media as a forum for language ideologies on the Welsh language. In fact, Blackledge used both a television programme presented in BBC 2, and an article written as a semi-parodic counter-argument for *The Independent* as data. A television presenter Anne Robinson expressed controversial views on Welsh people and the Welsh language in a programme called *Room 101*. Her utterances, consequently, were remarked in several British newspapers (2002: 209). The statements made by Robinson (Blackledge 2002: 206-208) reflected ideologies on national monolingualism and presented Welsh as foreign and even threatening. These statements, in turn, triggered further commentary in newspapers. One of these was an article in *The Independent* that discussed Wales, the Welsh language, and Welsh language from a wide range of perspectives and reflected multiple voices in the discourse (2002: 210). Blackledge (2002: 220) argues that this article (*Who can see a chicken and think 'dofednod'?*) both reinforced Robinson's arguments, as well as challenged them by using irony, mocking both the Welsh and Anne Robinson. Blackledge shows that language ideologies are rarely straightforward, and that many opinions can be argued with a variety of linguistic tools.

For the present purposes, Vessey's study (2013) is particularly interesting in that it focused both on print media and online data. In her research on language ideological debate over the opening ceremony of Vancouver Olympics, she examined both newspaper articles about the language policy of the Olympics, as well as social media comments and reactions to these articles, in order to look at the debate within a larger, more diverse context (2013: 663). The amount of French language in the Olympics was debated in the print media but the opinion pieces and articles raised further and, arguably, more heated controversy in social media. For example, the French articles stated that there was not enough French used in the ceremony. This reaction, in consequence, was both agreed with as well as belittled in the English articles (2013: 667). Much like in other language ideological debates in Canadian contexts (Vessey, 2016), the French-speaking Canadians were criticized for "complaining and whining" especially in the social media data (2013:673), and many comments emphasize the division between the French-speaking Quebec and, not just the English-speaking Canada, but "the rest of Canada" (2013: 672). Therefore, while Canada is officially bilingual, the two languages are not viewed to connect the people and the country. Quebec and its people are considered wholly French and the rest of Canada wholly English. Ironically, however, the English comments were often more emotionally-loaded than the French ones (2013: 677), even though the French-speaking population were mocked for their complaining. In sum, these articles and the online debate

surrounding them shows that the language ideologies embedded in people's minds are different to the official statements of administration.

Bencomo (2013) studied the linguistic representation in a Catalan TV sitcom called *Dues Dones Divines*. Even though the focus of Bencomo's study is not on language ideologies or language ideological debate per se, the findings are interesting and surprisingly relevant concerning my analysis. Bencomo (2013: 13-14) shows how the characters are built and stereotyped through language; the standard, 'normal' Catalan spoken by the main character of the show, Mimí, reflects her down-to-earth character, whereas other languages and varieties spoken by the minor characters of the program are linked to more absurd personality traits; for example, Piluca, a Castilian-Spanish speaking character, is represented as naïve and superficial (2013: 22). Moreover, the Australian character Andrew, speaks extremely simplified Catalan, and is thus represented as intellectually child-like, and is rather shamelessly sexualized by the female characters (2013: 28). The three linguistic processes by Irvine and Gal, iconization, recursiveness and erasure, are clearly showed in Bencomo's analysis. In addition, Bencomo also examined the audience response to the program; characters were seen as artificial and many viewers thought that the show simplified the linguistic situation in Catalonia (2013: 54-55). Therefore, Bencomo showed how people have more varied and versatile language ideologies and that even though non-standard varieties are often parodied and mocked, the more complex linguistic processes are taken into consideration by media consumers.

2.2.3 Language ideologies and language ideological debates in online contexts

In this section, previous studies on language ideologies especially in online and new media contexts will be discussed. In doing this, I will also discuss the prominence of social media in language ideological research further. For example, Blommaert (2009: 206) argues that existing language ideologies are both challenged and affirmed on Internet platforms, depending on the platform and context. Considering the study of language ideological debates online, or in fact all forms of online communication, the rise of Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2007) is essential. Web 2.0 refers to the second coming of World Wide Web, a process in which the online world evolved from a consumable, non-participatory element into a highly participatory and communicative platform. Participation is key in the concept of Web 2.0: furthermore, as O'Reilly points out (2007: 235), users bring value to the Internet platforms. User-generated content is now a mundane phenomenon (2007: 237). The roles of the content creator and audience are not as

clear-cut as they used to be, and the content keeps reforming itself in the communicative and participatory context. Web 2.0 is a platform which anyone with access to modern technology can not only consume but create and recreate. In this new context, the platforms are extensively used for communication; therefore, also for expressing one's opinion and debating over a various field of different topics.

In her master's thesis, Virén (2016) studied the opinions, reactions, and attitudes towards the 'bad English' texts in expressed 'Your Grammar Sucks,' a YouTube series discussing extracts of non-standard English found in online contexts. Moreover, Virén studied the comments to these videos. Virén (2016: 64) illustrates that the videos themselves evaluate the non-standard English extracts ideologically, as the extracts are the non-standard English is compared to, for example, idiotism and illiteracy. Similar patterns continue to be discovered in the comments, too. Virén shows that the comments reflect very different kinds of views on non-standard English. A small percentage of the comments (2016: 80) are abusive and of violent nature. Even though these kinds of comments are relatively rare, other types of comments, for example educating (2016: 80) and mocking (2016: 85-89) comments have aggressive undertones. One could argue that the context is suitable for these kinds of comments, as the title 'Your Grammar Sucks' suggests that the video makers focus on mocking non-standard English, especially grammatically incorrect language. However, some comments also defend the original texts addressed in the videos (2016: 83-84) and the original posters are often sympathized with.

Not only does Virén's thesis reveal the different, mostly negative views from frustration to belittling, towards non-standard English but also the different ways the examples in non-standard English are criticized. She describes how the extracts are mocked in several ways, thus creating humour (2016: 55). For example, the extracts are entextualized by the video makers, in other words taken from their original context and used in a new setting (2016: 55) and evaluated by using exaggerated, pejorative language (2016: 63). Virén's thesis topic and even the data is, therefore, very close to the present study. However, the comments of 'Your Grammar Sucks' are in English, and the commenters are often, at least presumably, native speakers of English. As YouTube is a social medium consumed worldwide, it could be argued that English is used for lingua franca and is not necessarily a majority's native language. However, if not wholly from an EFL perspective, the context in Virén's study is at least very multicultural. *Feissarimokat*, on the other hand, is a Finnish site and most of the comments are in Finnish, presumably written by native users of Finnish. However, Virén's thesis describes both different views on non-standard English and the tools of humour they utilize in their

critique, it provides useful insight not only to the theoretical framework but also for the methodological framework of the present study. I will discuss Virén's tools of analysis in more detail in the next section.

Androutsopoulos (2009: 195) states that, in his online and offline media data discussing ethnolectal German and consisting of both newspapers, magazines, and websites, German ethnolects, varieties of language spoken by people with an ethnic background, are viewed as a "spreading virus or an alien force, while German is placed as a victim in need of protection." Even though the data in Androutsopoulos' study is mostly in German and not in English, the hypotheses I have made are similar to Androutsopoulos' findings. He argues that the three processes of language ideology, defined by Irvine and Gal (1995), can be identified in the data. What is interesting to the current study is that these ethnolects are usually coloured with elements from English and other languages. Androutsopoulos (2009: 197-198) also argues that theories of multilingualism or any kind of linguistic variability are not considered in the comments on ethnolects, and ethnolects are seen only as "bad" German (2009: 197-198).

Kytölä (2008, 2012) shows that negative attitudes towards English appear also in Finnish online communities. In a Finnish football discussion forum, *Futisforum*, people behind the nicknames *altan* and *Anfield_mate* are being mocked for their English; *altan* because his English is considered "bad" and *Anfield_mate* because his English is viewed as inauthentic and out of place (Kytölä 2012: 231). *altan* is a *Futisforum* user of Turkish background who did not speak Finnish, and thus used English on the site. *Anfield_mate*, on the other hand, used non-standard, probably Liverpool-based English as a stylistic feature in his comments. In *altan*'s case, Kytölä suggests that the reasons behind mocking can be the mocking can possibly be traced to the fact that Finnish language education has focused on grammatical correctness rather than communicativity (2008: 261). Also shown in Virén's study (2016), Kytölä's study demonstrates how imitation is used as a tool of mocking in online contexts; *altan* and *Anfield_mate* are also being ridiculed by imitating typical aspects in their posts (Kytölä, 2012: 253).

Kytölä and Westinen (2015) show how users of social media evaluate the use of English based on a certain level of authenticity and social norms used in online contexts. In their study on Mikael Forssell's Twitter feed and the comments relating to it on *Futisforum*, they (2015:13) show that the use of English, especially of non-standard vernacular English, is sometimes viewed as inauthentic by Forssell's Twitter followers and, therefore, posters using it are viewed as "fake." Even though the commenters admit that Forssell's use of 'gangsta' English is actually

stylistically close to “real” gangsta English (2015: 15), it still faces criticism; the use of English is seen through ownership, gatekeeping, restricting, and policing. Kytölä and Westinen (2015: 17) conclude that these comments reflect monolingual ideologies, and that, regardless of high level of language skills, the commenters think some contexts are not suitable for English or non-standard English. Therefore, non-standard English is not criticized only for being “bad” language, but also for being inauthentic and unsuitable in specific contexts.

Interestingly, the views of Finnish people about non-standard English have been studied in the context of Facebook specifically. Valppu (2013) studied Finnish students’ use of and attitudes towards English on Facebook. It is vital to consider language ideologies specific to Facebook, as the original posts in *Feissarimokat* are written on Facebook; arguably, many comments on *Feissarimokat* also reflect the ideologies on the use of English on Facebook. The results of Valppu’s study may reflect the reasons behind the negative comments on *osataan enkkuu* posts. Even though English is considered natural and is strongly present on the interviewees’ Facebook (Valppu, 2013: 48-50), the use of English there was not always seen as positive. The use of English was sometimes considered as “showing off” (2013: 55), and Facebook was not considered the best platform to practice English. Grammatical correctness was also important for many interviewees and the attitudes towards “bad” English were negative (2013: 63). Valppu’s thesis close to mine in terms of topic. However, the data and the method of study will be different; I will not focus on attitudes towards English on Facebook in general but on the debate on the comments. In addition, Valppu’s methods were mainly quantitative, as she conducted a questionnaire, whereas my study will be a qualitative analysis of the comments themselves.

Non-standard English used online, with elements such as abbreviations, emoticons, onomatopoeic writing, and ‘grammatical incorrectness’ (‘netspeak, Crystal, 2001), is often linked to youth culture, and is criticized by older people. However, in her study of teenage personal blogs, Bogetić (2016) showed that teenagers are often aware of the non-standard nature of online language, and even have extremely negative views towards the use and users of non-standard English. According to Bogetić, teenagers have strong opinions on ‘proper English’, and consider non-standard English idiotic as well as frustrating (2016: 257). Bogetić (2016: 258) argues that the three semiotic processes by Irvine and Gal (1995) can be identified in the bloggers’ metalinguistic comments; the non-standard English is linked to stupidity and the processes of using non-standard English is not taken into consideration. This critique is also challenged on the site; some bloggers defend their choice of using non-standard English. For

example, non-standard English can represent belonging to a certain subculture and thus strengthen one's identity (Bogetić, 2016: 261). Teenagers in Bogetić's study refer to English as their native language, and thus critique towards non-standard English is not linked to poor second language learning skills as is often the case in this current study. However, I argue that the processes of this linguistic judging are similar, as bad grammar and incorrect spelling is the main target of critique in both contexts.

Also Vessey (2016) has studied language ideologies in social media and their effects on language policy in officially bi-lingual Canada. She argues that the Quebec 'Pastagate' (the social media outrage which rose from forbidding any non-French words in an Italian restaurant in Quebec) in 2013 turned negative light on Quebec's French-only language policy. However, Vessey (2016: 20) concludes that often the posts written in English misunderstood the original context of Pastagate; thus, the issue was mostly viewed and perhaps wrongly criticized from a very Anglo-centric perspective, seeing the French-only policy as ridiculous and discriminating. On the other hand, the French posts were concerned on the protection of the French language in Canada (2016: 20). The language-ideological debate in Vessey's study takes a rather grand leap from a language policy case of a single restaurant to a heated debate of the linguistic situation in the whole country.

In their study on ideologies and use of Facebook, Tagg et al. (2017) discussed the relationship between language ideologies and semantic media ideologies. They conclude (2017: 7) that, as people use social media in different individual ways, people also have different views and ideologies about what is proper behavior in social media. As language ideologies, media ideologies are constructed socially by the users of social media and these ideologies are negotiated in different ways (Tagg et al. 2017: 11). Moreover, users of Facebook position themselves according to the existing norms of social media; even though social media can be considered ego-centric, the users are extremely aware of the unwritten social rules and want to align with them, or occasionally even disidentify from them (2017: 38). The relationship to these norms can be seen in the data of the current study, as the study participants, aka commenters criticize not only the non-standard English in the original Facebook posts but argue that Facebook is not a proper platform to use non-standard English. I will discuss Tagg et al study (2017), especially their notions on taking offense in social media and typical language use in Facebook, further in the next section.

Tagg et al (2017) is relevant to the present study also in terms of the concept of taking an ideological stance in social media. To be more specific, they focus on taking offence in social media platforms. The notion of stance proves relevant again, as they argue that taking offence is a form of stancetaking since it is “a way of expressing oneself and positioning oneself in relation to others and the way they are positioning themselves. (Tagg et al, 2017: 44). Tagg et al (2017: 46) also argue that due to, for instance, the possibility to remain anonymous in social media and online settings, deliberate offending and provoking as well as strongly reacting to offensive behaviour, has become increasingly common. Moreover, they state that often the expressed views and opinions are not the primary reason for online conflict but the provocative way these views are expressed (2017: 47). Interestingly, however, Tagg et al (2017) conclude that people in general aim to avoid conflict while posting on and communicating in Facebook; however, the fact that conflicts arise and that users still offend and get offend implies that people have differing ideas on what is offensive and what is not. Nevertheless, in some platforms conflict is the ideal state, and expressing one’s opinion while provoking can be more important than trying to solve the conflict.

I have now discussed the key terms in the field of language ideologies and illuminated the previous language ideological research in both traditional and social media. As these studies showcase how various ideologies are expressed and debated over in different contexts, they will serve as the framework for the analytical section of the present study, when I discuss the different language ideologies in the context of *Feissarimokat*. Despite the modern sociolinguistics emphasizing communicative aspects in language use and language education, many of the studies presented above demonstrate how language and language use in various settings is still, in many occasions, reflected from the perspectives of standard language ideology and linguistic prescriptivism. However, especially non-standard varieties of English are also viewed as a tool of expressing one’s identity in online contexts. Therefore, non-standard writing in social media is, perhaps surprisingly, often a conscious choice involving a great deal of reflexivity. These phenomena are expected to be found in the data of the present study.

2.3 Parody, entextualization, and narratives on social media

I have now given an overview of the previous studies about language ideologies and language ideological debates in online contexts. While some of these can be considered heated political debates, such in Vessey (2016), many of the examples above (e.g. Kytölä 2013, Virén 2016)

demonstrate how language ideologies are expressed through humour. Since *Feissarimokat* is an entertainment site built on humoristic Facebook posts, it could be hypothesized that it is usual for the commenters to utilize similar tools of humour in expressing their language ideological stances. Moreover, I presume that many commenters reflect their personal experiences in their stances. Thus, in order to analyse and understand the ways in which the *osataan enkkuu* posts are mocked, I will discuss studies that examine the role of parody and narratives in social media commentary. For example, parody through imitation is a common phenomenon in social media interaction; it is also a tool of identification and disidentification (Stæhr 2014: 101). As Stæhr (2014: 110, 116) found in his study, social media users, especially teenagers, imitate different registers of speech and create parodies of different dialects, slangs, registers, and of the people using them. In this way, they both show their expertise in the register in question as well as (dis)identify themselves in regards to the target of parody.

In order to analyse also the comments utilizing tools to create humour, for example parodying non-standard English through imitation, it is important to define parody as a tool of creating humour. Dentith (2000: 9) argues that “parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice.” Imitation is, therefore, one of the key elements of parody. Parodic imitation can include direct repetition of another’s words; however, even in repetition, parodic imitation takes the discourse out of its original context and recontextualizes it. What makes parodic imitation different from imitation occurring in other forms of discourse is, according to Dentith (2000: 5), the conscious process in which the elements of the original discourse are taken and remade as one’s own in a way that aims to create humour. As *Feissarimokat* is a humour site and the commenters, presumably, utilize tools to create humour, the concept of parodic imitation is important.

Stæhr (2015) studied parody as a tool of (dis)identification further in his later article and showed how teenagers in Copenhagen used features linked to spoken language practices in written Facebook interaction. Stæhr argues that teenagers are aware of the registers and linguistic features they use (2015: 33-34); they also use them in different contexts and stylize their communication by using these. For example, Stæhr shows how teenagers from different ethnic backgrounds use features of tough and ethnic street language to play with the stereotype of ethnic youth (2015: 39). However the teenagers do not play with only their own linguistic background and ethnicity but also create parody with linguistic features they consider especially and stereotypically Danish (2015: 41).

Through this language play and use of different registers, the teenagers also reinterpret and challenge the linguistic stereotypes. Regarding the current study, this notion of language play and parody is interesting, as similar observations can be made in my data. The commenters of *Feissarimokat* posts parody the non-standard English in these posts by using similar, though exaggerated, non-standard features in their own writing, thus showing amusement and taking the stereotype of non-standard, Finnish-based English further. Of course, Stæhr's study illuminates the practices of the study of language on Facebook in general, showing that the linguistic choices on social media are highly stylized.

Also in his dissertation, Stæhr argues that linguistic parody other people, or even parodying one's own register, demands a high level of linguistic reflexivity (2014:176). Stæhr states (2014: 46) that some registers used by the teenagers are linked to age, ethnicity, and gender; the use of these registers is, furthermore, socially allowed to only certain people. However, breaking these unwritten rules of register can be considered parodic among the teenagers. In my study, I argue that the non-standard English in *osataan enkkuu* posts is linked to certain characteristics such as gender, age, and socio-economic background. Furthermore, these characteristics are used in the parodying comments; the commenters reflect the typicalities of *osataan enkkuu* posts in order to create humouristic and entertaining additions to the comment field.

Guo (2018) studied how social media users create catchphrases in social media platforms in China, and how these catchphrases are used in social media to create parody and political satire. Guo (2018: 1) enlightens how an utterance "My father is Li Gang," made by an intoxicated college student guilty of causing injury and manslaughter while driving, became a known catchphrase in Chinese social media. This utterance was meant to be threatening and awe-inspiring; instead, social media users made it a symbol of social injustice and avoidance of responsibilities. Guo (2018: 9) also suggests that parodic Internet catchphrases in general are utilized to label and stigmatize people. Furthermore, Guo (2018: 13) argued that parodic and mocking catchphrases "empty out" the meanings and the original context of the target of parody, making the parody version hollower. Therefore, it can be stated that the process of parodying contains elements of linguistic erasure (Irvine and Gal 1995).

Related to online articulation and creation of online content is a term called *entextualization*. Entextualization refers to the process in which elements from other texts are taken out of their contexts, decontextualized, and used to create new meanings in a new context, that is, they are

recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs 1990:73, Leppänen 2014: 6). In my analysis, I will study these processes and thus show how ideological stances towards Maria's English and the ideologies these stances are constructed via entextualization and how the commenters disidentify themselves from Maria through parodic imitation and mocking. Therefore, discourse material, be it Maria's posts or an Internet catchphrase, is being taken out of its original context – decontextualized – and then it is modified and put into a new context, in other words recontextualized.

In their research on entextualization and resemiotization in social media, Leppänen et al state that entextualization originates and from anthropology and discourse studies and was defined earlier by researchers in that field (2014: 5), such as Bauman and Briggs (1990) and Silverstein and Urban (1996). However, as social media material is the focus of my study, I will use the notions made by Leppänen et al. (2014). For example, Leppänen et al (2014: 24) examined how Finnish rappers took the hit song *Danza Kuduro* and rewrote it as a Finnish-language parody. While an existing product was turned into something quite different from its original context and meaning, the original song is still recognized as an inspiration and the core of the new song. Leppänen et al (2014: 32) show that entextualization is a widely used resource in online communication – therefore, the term will be discussed further in the methodological and analytical sections of the present study.

In their online articulation, commenters often use personal experience to convey their ideological stances. Personal stories and narratives are a common phenomenon in social media interaction. In his study on generic intertextuality and narratives in the LGBT community *It Gets Better* project, Jones (2015: 317) argues that personal stories are used in social media to create 'textual authority.' Jones also states that "[t]elling a personal story is always a political act, since it always involves a process of negotiation between the individual's understanding of his or her experience and the system of values, beliefs, and social relationships embodied in the narrative genres that his or her society makes available for articulating those experiences." (2015: 319). Georgakopoulou, on the other hand, argues that small stories told in social media involve narrative stancetaking (2014: 522). In other words, these stories and narrative stancetaking illuminates the participants' political views and ideological positioning. Georgakopoulou (2014: 520) also suggests that narratives used in social media bring microperspectives into larger-scale political debates. Therefore, even though often humorous and seemingly not serious, they reflect the views of "ordinary people."

In the present chapter, I have given an overview about the status of the English language and the various views Finnish people have towards it. Moreover, the key terminology and previous studies on language ideologies have been presented. Furthermore, the phenomena of taking an ideological stance and using tools such as parody and narratives in social media discourse have been discussed. Language ideologies and language ideological debates, both in general and about non-standard English have, as discussed in this chapter, been studied in great extent and ever-increasingly in the context of online and social media platforms. Interestingly, views on non-standard English and ways of mocking non-standard registers in Finnish social media context have also been examined. Nevertheless, by studying the comment field of one of the most popular entertainment sites in Finland, I hope to reveal a wide range of underlying language ideologies Finnish people have towards non-standard English.

3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I will first present the aims and introduce the specific research questions of the present study. As the aim is to study language ideologies and language ideological debate on *osataan enkkuu* posts' comments on *Feissarimokat* web site, I will describe the data in detail, as well as explain the data collection and selection. After this, the practical organization of the analysis and the presentation of the data examples will be described. Moreover, the ethical issues regarding the data collection will be considered. Lastly, the analytical approaches and research methods, such as online ethnography and qualitative content analysis, will be specified.

3.1 Aims and research questions

The aim of my thesis is to study the different language ideologies and the language ideological debate on *osataan enkkuu* -comments. As shown by their humoristic nature, the posts are published for entertainment but they also manage to raise quite heated debates over English in Finland, the use of English and the original posters as the users of English. The fact that the posts are under the headline *osataan enkkuu* already reflects an ideology of some kind; the ironic hashtag tells post readers that the English in these particular posts is either non-standard or seems out-of-place in some other way. Commenting on one's language skills on social media is not a new phenomenon in Finland, as many public figures face criticism on their English. However, *osataan enkkuu* creates a platform for commenting on average people's use of English. Even though these people are in no way public figures or representing Finland abroad, commenters still have the need to express their feelings of shared sense of shame and act as a language police.

In order to study the language ideological stances on *osataan enkkuu* comments and showcase the formation of these stances in a dialogic context, I aim to answer the following research questions in my study:

1. What kind of ideological stances about (non-standard) English, the use of English and users of English are expressed and debated over in the *osataan enkkuu* comments?
2. How are these articulated?

- a. How are the original posts and poster criticized?
- b. How are these defended?

I argue that answering these two research questions will reveal the different ideologies the commenters have on non-standard English. The ideologies will be realized through the ideological stances the debate participants take on different themes; therefore, the positioning of the commenters in relation to the specific debate topics will be studied. Moreover, the complexity of the ideological debate will be showcased, as well as the creative ways people articulate their stances in their arguments. In addition, the processes and tools of mocking and defending, such as entextualizing humouristic intertextual references and linguistic parodying, will be unveiled.

3.2 Data collection and selection

Feissarimokat has been a topic for academic research before. Pennanen (2013) studied the *Feissarimokat* posts and comments from the point of view of folklore and humor studies; the aim of her study was to find out how and why the *Feissarimokat* posts were defined as ‘failures’; in other words, what elements in those posts violated the norms and conventions of social media in a humouristic manner. Even though the topic and focus of my study is quite different from Pennanen’s, her thesis offers me valuable information on the study of *Feissarimokat* site as well as tools for considering the ethical problems in online research. For example, Pennanen (2013: 35) justified using *Feissarimokat* posts comments as data by stating that the comment field is not a traditional discussion forum which are more private in their nature than public comment fields. The idea *Feissarimokat* comments is to be visible and accessible for all site visitors. Therefore, she argues that the commenters want their comments to be public (2013: 35-36).

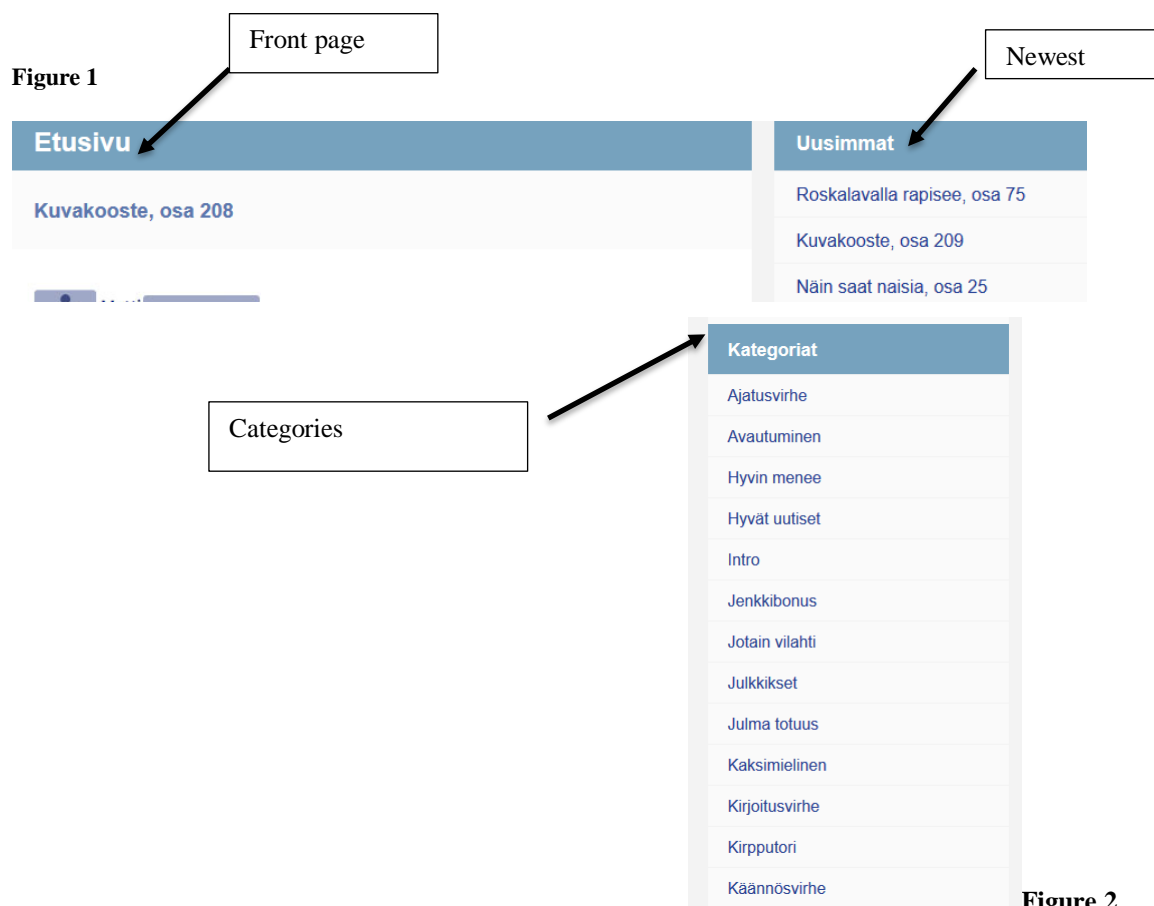
The *Feissarimokat* site administrators select the material that is published on the site, on the basis of real Facebook posts that the site users link to them. In addition to Facebook posts, humorous Facebook advertisements sometimes occur on the site. Because of this kind of early moderation, the site founders state that very few posts need to be deleted after publication. Originally, the administrators searched for these posts themselves, as was found out in a personal communication (2017); however, as the site popularity grew, the administrators started taking post suggestions from the site users. Similar sites exist outside of Finland as well. These

include American humour sites *Failbook* and *Lamebook* – these have no doubt inspired *Feissarimokat*, too.

Failbook is a sub-blog in a site called *FAIL* blog, which in turn runs under a Seattle-based humour site called *Cheezburger*, founded in 2007. *FAIL* blog gathers include a variety of entertaining and ‘embarrassing’ updates in social media and the internet in general. These updates usually break some norms of internet behaviour. *Failbook* focuses on publishing humorous Facebook posts (with personal information removed from them). *Lamebook*, on the other hand, is an independent site founded in 2009 in Austin. The content of *Lamebook* focuses on “funny and lame” Facebook posts, but other social media content is published on the site as well. Visually, *Lamebook* is closer to *Feissarimokat*, as *Lamebook* blurs the profile pictures and the family names of the original posters. The posts are published in a similar way in both sites: the site users suggest Facebook posts made by real people and the moderators of the site decide on the publication of each post.

Feissarimokat, in turn, was founded in 2010 by “a group of friends wondering if Finnish Facebook users would have enough content for a whole site.” (personal communication with anonymous *Feissarimokat* representative, 2017). The site is one of the most popular humour sites in Finland, and the site founders report that there were approximately 20 000 site visitors and over 100 000 page downloads during the first day of the site existence. The description on the site itself is as follows: “Facebook-mokat ja muut sosiaalisen median helmet.” (Eng. ‘Facebook fails and other gems of social media’). New posts are published weekly on the site. The site moderators blur the surnames in the original Facebook posts in order to prevent the recognition of the people behind the posts. Furthermore, rare first names are blurred or occasionally changed. Most of the site visitors just scroll through the posts, but the posts can be shared via social media: there are specific ‘share’ buttons for Facebook and Twitter. One can also comment on the posts. The site administrators have created 29 categories for these posts; they state that these categories describe the original post and explain the reason for them being ‘fails.’

The categories are on the front page of *Feissarimokat*, alongside with the most popular of the newest posts. The screenshots presented below illuminate the structure and visuals of the site.



The administrators created the different categories to help users to find content interesting for them; by clicking a certain category, users find all the posts under that theme. It must be mentioned that *osataan enkkuu* is not a category per se, but a hashtag or a headline of the posts that helps finding different kinds of posts in the search bar. In addition, the newest posts show in the upper right side of the page, as can be seen in the screenshot above, and the links are shown as these hashtags or headlines. In other words, each post has their own headline; some headline names occur only once, as similar posts have not yet occurred. *osataan enkkuu*, on the other hand, has occurred 19 times as a headline, and the latest post is called *osataan enkkuu, osa 19* (part 19). *osataan enkkuu* posts can be found in different main categories, such as *Käännösvirhe* ('translation error'). The category of each post depends on their content and theme. Nevertheless, the specific headlines usually describe the posts closer than the categories - the ironic headline *osataan enkkuu* describes the posts rather well, as the posts are either written in non-standard English or address failures in understanding English.

Commenting on *Feissarimokat* posts does not require registration in a sense of creating an account with username and password or logging in via Facebook account or other existing

social media accounts. Instead, commenting is conducted through a comment form on the bottom of the page: the comment form asks for commenter's name, email address and the comment itself. The commenters usually decide to remain anonymous and use a fake nickname on the comment form but some occasional "real" seeming names appear on the comment fields. Moreover, the email messages will not be published on the comments, and the site moderators delete comments containing personal information (e.g. email or pictures). Icons are added on the comments, but they are merely different-coloured squares. The comments are visible to all site visitors. The first comment shows first on the comment field, and the latest is on the bottom of the page. One can quote other comments within one's own reply: the quotation will thus appear on top of one's own comment. The comment form will appear also in the case of quoting. The 19 posts under *osataan enkkuu* headline all have their own comment fields. The number of comments on each post varies: *osataan enkkuu, osa 12* has the most comments (n=147) and *osataan enkkuu, osa 3* the fewest (n=26). Most of the posts, however, have 40-60 comments on their comment field. That the overall number of comments on this site is high shows for example in that the 19 posts from the years 2011 to 2018 include over a thousand comments.

As a close qualitative study was preferred in this study, the data selection needed narrowing. This was done by selecting a case study approach that focuses on the investigation of one specific post – originally two Facebook posts - by a person of a same alias. I shall refer to this post and the original poster by the fabricated name *Maria*. It must be noted, however, that there is no exact way of knowing that these posts are really written by the same person, as the site's objective is to keep the posts relatively anonymous. Nevertheless, as the two original updates are under the same *osataan enkkuu* post and the same nickname, I presume that the posts are written by one person. The case *Maria* includes 96 comments, quite a high number compared to most of the *osataan enkkuu* posts. In addition to the relatively high number of comments, there are other particularly interesting aspects in this case. The two posts by *Maria* represent typical content for the headline *osataan enkkuu* posts in that they involve a person with Finnish as their native language who writes in non-standard English. The comments are also, for the most part, quite similar to the other posts under the same headline.

Yet, typicality is not the main reason I selected this particular data. As the two posts are most likely written by the same person, many of the commenters attack the character of *Maria* in addition to merely amusingly remarking on the content of the posts. Taking into consideration that the context here is the comment field of an entertainment site, the debate is extraordinarily heated. Of course, there still are many humoristic comments expressing mostly amusement.

However, the comments also include criticism on *Maria*'s language skills, as well as mockery of her character. In addition, *Maria*'s posts lead to a discussion over language education, linguistic environment in Finland and the general attitudes towards foreign languages. Sub-debates on these and other language ideological topics can be discovered on this one comment field.

It must be mentioned, however, that the post was made a few years ago, and thus it could be regarded as old material in the context of online social media material. Nevertheless, I will argue that the data is not dated in terms of theme and issues that are being argued over. As can be noted in Leppänen (2017), language policing by is still an apparent phenomenon in Finnish social media and the possibly harmful nature of this activity is debated over this day. The general debate on the status of English and other languages in Finland, whether regarding language education or other perspectives, is still very much open. In addition, the comments show some ideologies regarding *Maria* as a user of English; not only is her English being mocked, but also her character, as well as the use of English in Finland in general. Thus, her particular way of using English is made iconic in the comments; her whole character is deemed stupid, snobby, cocky, and naive based largely on the two posts written by her. On the other hand, the comments that defend both *Maria* and her posts often see the more complex linguistic processes behind the posts. As already mentioned above, the comments on *Maria*'s post do not address only the posts themselves but refer to issues in second language education, Finnish culture, gender, age, etc. However, these issues are linked to the use of English in the site's context

3.2.1 Ethical issues of data collection

Regarding the data collection and processing, the ethical issues need to be discussed in the thesis. The original Facebook posts are suggested by the site users, and the administrators blur the family name and profile picture of the posts. However, some information on the posters, such as age, gender, and first name, are left in the *Feissarimokat* posts. The site administrators also state that some rarer first names are changed (2017, personal communication). It is unclear why some personal, though not a priori, information is not deleted or changed by the administrators; I would imagine, however, that information related to gender and age is left in the posts because they might add entertainment value to the post or be vital in the post's humoristic context.

One of Townsend and Wallace's areas of concern in social media research is determining whether the data is private or public (2016: 5). In the case of *Feissarimokat*, this is a challenging matter. The *Feissarimokat* post commenters have all agreed to their comments being public and visible for everyone. Townsend and Wallace, however, state that while the data is public, the social media users do not, in most cases, consider ending up as research participants, nor are they usually informed about this (2016: 5). Nevertheless, as Townsend and Wallace argue, users of social media have consented to the rules of the social media platform, therefore, they have agreed that their information can be accessed and used by third parties (2016: 5). The *Feissarimokat* comments are usually under nicknames, and they do not contain any personal information. Moreover, *Feissarimokat* is an open site and not a closed group and anyone can comment on the site without registration. In addition, by leaving comments, the commenters on *Feissarimokat* have agreed to the site's terms and conditions which state that the information given voluntarily to the site, for example, information in the comments, can be shared to site collaborators and researchers (*Feissarimokat*, 2018). As *Feissarimokat* is one of the most popular entertainment websites in Finland, the comments are, at least arguably, aimed at a large audience.

While the comments can be regarded as public data, the challenge arises from the original post made by *Maria*. The site administrators publish the site material by selecting the posts from user-sent screenshots (*Feissarimokat* 2018). The site administrators do not investigate the profile settings behind the original posts (personal communication with *Feissarimokat* administrators, 2018). Therefore, it is impossible to know whether the original posters agreed their Facebook posts being published on the site. Thus, as I do not know whether *Maria*'s original Facebook profile is public or private, I decided not to refer to my chosen case by *Maria*'s original name on the post, nor to reveal the specific *osataan enkkuu* post number. In other words, I have done everything possible in minimizing the *risk of harm* as well as ensuring the *anonymity* of *Maria* and the post commenters (Townsend and Wallace 2016: 5-8). I cannot say for sure whether tracking down the real person behind the post is possible or not; nevertheless, I do realize that the data examples shown in this current study make *Maria*'s case findable in *Feissarimokat* through search engine searches. That is nevertheless the case in most online research. However, I will do as much as possible to protect the real identity of the original poster. In addition to blurring *Maria*'s real name, I will blur the age shown on the post and hide the dates and times on the post; therefore, making it impossible to recognize the post from those

details. Furthermore, if some comments refer to Maria's real name and age, these details will be blurred in the data examples.

Finally, risk of harm has to be considered further in the data analysis. Markham and Buchanan state that internet research is a grey area in terms of ethical issues, as the concept of human subject is not easily defined in online contexts, and that the field is ever-changing (2012: 2). Even though there are no fixed rules, one must also consider national laws and make sure that the subjects of the study face as little harm as possible. However, the concept of 'harm' is contextual, so no universal rules can be applied (Markham and Buchanan, 2012: 4). The data of this current study can be considered sensitive, as the comments contain bullying and somewhat controversial political opinions. Therefore, even though the data is public, the risk of harm must be minimized. Ensuring the anonymity is the first step to prevent the identification of the research participants (Townsend and Wallace, 2016: 7). In addition to blurring the original nicknames and icons in the comments, I will decrease the risk of participant identification by hiding the specific dates and times in the comments. Moreover, references to specific age, gender, and location will not be shown in the data examples. The comments made by self-proclaimed underage site visitors will not be used as data examples. Lastly, the exact data source of the posts and comments will not be published in this current study. Leaving out the personal information, dates, etc. will function as paraphrasing of the comments.

As the commenters have not specifically agreed to the study, I considered commenting on the post comment field and asking whether the commenters would object using the comments as data. My original intention was to post a comment with my email address on it, so that the commenters could inform me via email about their agreement. Unfortunately, comments with email addresses are deleted from the comment field. Merely asking for replies in the comment field would probably have not reached the commenters, as the post was made a few years ago. Moreover, this kind of comment would probably have resulted in spamming and trolling, gaining little serious answers. Technically, the comments are under *Feissarimokat* copyright. The site administrators, fortunately, have given me their consent of using the posts and their comments as the data of this current study and (personal communication, 2017).

3.3 Tools of analysis

In this section, the analytical methods and tools of analysis will be presented. Even though the present study is primarily qualitative, some quantification of data will be used to show the trends and themes in the comments. The latent method of this study, online ethnography, will be discussed. As already mentioned, even though this current study is fundamentally qualitative, quantitative methods were also used. The recurring themes in the language ideological debate of the comment field will be shown as quantified proportions in relation to the whole number of the comments. Nevertheless, the tables are utilized only to make the analysis more systematic and organized, as well as showcase the occurring trends in the data. In order to answer the research questions and analyze the way language ideologies are articulated and debated over in action, the comments will be explored by using qualitative methods. To answer the research questions, which focus on language ideological stances, underlying language ideologies and their articulation, explicit and practical tools of analysis are needed in addition to the existing theory of online ethnography.

3.3.1 Online ethnography

Online ethnography is the underlying approach to language ideological research in this current study. Androutsopoulos (2006: 421) argues that, even though the tradition of considering the features of online communication its own genres and separate from other forms of discourse has previously been strong, the language use in computer-mediated communication should now be emphasized for its diversity. Moreover, the study of “internet language” and “netspeak” is shifting to examining the features of CMC as resources that users have and apply in different online contexts. Androutsopoulos also states (2006: 424) that ethnographic approach is an established part of online research. Moreover, in order to shift between the study of discourse and the study of the users, ethnography is ideal, as “it emphasizes the local and situated character of Internet practices” (2006: 424). Linguistic ethnography, more specifically, “is characterized by combining micro-analysis with considerations of locally prevalent ideologies and with larger scale social analysis.” (Staehr, 2014: 17).

Raymond (2015: 138) argues that Internet methods ease ethnographic research on language ideologies significantly, as field ethnography is usually very time-consuming. Even though Raymond suggests more of combining Internet methods with traditional fieldwork rather than

focusing solely on online ethnography, he also states that, as there is no interviewers or observers present, online methods can lead to more intimate and authentic answers from the study participants (2015: 142). Unfortunately, I do not have the opportunity to interview the debate participants, so combining traditional ethnographic tools is not possible in this current study. However, Raymond's statements are interesting to this current study; examining language ideological debates online brings new perspectives to the field of study. Furthermore, I will not study the relationship between on- and offline communication and their respective communities, so I argue that systematic observation of *Feissarimokat* is sufficient. Concerning that, Androutsopoulos (2006: 424) argues that this observation is one version of online ethnography; a researcher can decide whether they want to compliment their research with interviews or active participation in the online communities.

It can be argued the present study does not represent online ethnography as its fullest. I am not participating in the comment field myself, nor am I a part of any Internet forum community relating the present study. As mentioned above, I did not have the opportunity to interview the study participants, and as the case selected as the data of the study is a few years old, the development and evolution of the comment was not possible to analyze in real time. However, the data was closely observed and notes on the data were made throughout the process of writing this thesis, and during data collection and selection, the progression of *osataan enkkuu* posts was examined. Moreover, the site administrators were interviewed via email.

3.3.2 Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis

The aim of the first research question is to determine the different ideological stances occurring in the comments and illustrate the range of them. In doing this, I decided to apply qualitative content analysis. Titscher et al (2000: 55) state that content analysis was originally used mostly in quantitative research and it was applied to reveal only the quantifiable factors in texts. However, qualitative content analysis has since emerged and gained popularity in text analysis. Titscher et al (2000: 55) argue that content analysis is an umbrella term for all methods and strategies of text analysis that approach data from the perspective of categories. In content analysis, the components to be categorized are called *units of analysis* (Titscher et al, 2000: 58). These units are defined in every study specifically, depending on the aim of the research. In the present study, the comments function as units of analysis.

In their article discussing the challenges of qualitative content analysis, Graneheim et al (2017: 29) argue that qualitative content analysis “focuses on subject and context and emphasizes variation, e.g. similarities within and differences between parts of the text.” They also (2017: 30) give three methodological approaches to qualitative content analysis: inductive, deductive, and abductive. Of the three approaches it was decided that the inductive approach was best suited for the present study. The inductive approach, occasionally referred to as data-driven or text-driven approach, centres in discovering patterns, similarities and differences, in the data (Graneheim et al, 2017: 30). These patterns are showcased by dividing the data into categories or themes defined and interpreted by the researcher. Of course, this approach has its challenges. Graneheim et al (2017: 30) state that this approach can lead to overly generalizing the data and making surface-level interpretations. On the other hand, deductive, in other words approach driven by theoretical models and their categories, often leads to leftover data that cannot be included in any category (Graneheim et al, 30). For example, using the processes Lippi-Greens’s model of language subordination (2012: 70) in categorizing the comments was considered. However, this would leave out comments that do not show signs of subordination.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1277) describe inductive approach to qualitative content analysis as conventional qualitative content analysis. They, too, state that in conventional content analysis, theoretical and pre-set categories are avoided (2005: 1279) and the categories are derived from the phenomena occurring in the data. The data is approached by finding key concepts and patterns in the units of analysis and, from these concepts, the categories are formed in order to organize the units of analysis into logical clusters (2005: 1279). The categories are then carefully described and rationalized by referring to the data by explaining what is typical for the units of analysis in this category and showing this with data examples. In studies using conventional qualitative analysis, theories and previous research related to the study are then discussed more in detail in the discussion section (2005: 1279).

Similar approaches have been used in social media research before, and even in studies topically close to the present study. In her study on the comment section of *Your Grammar Sucks!* YouTube videos, Virén (2016: 35-36), while not specifically using qualitative content analysis but a method easily confused for qualitative content analysis called *grounded theory* (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1280), an approach where categories are created through three different stages of coding. Virén (2016: 36) created her categories through these stages of coding and regular comparison to other data and theoretical framework. As I will be conducting a case study on

one post and its comments, a selected data different from Virén's data conducting of multiple YouTube videos and their comments, I will not apply a similar method.

In the present study, however, I decided to produce my own categories by closely observing the comments while tracking trends and themes occurring in the comment field. As I am identifying recurring themes within the debate, I will discuss a method, also frequently used in qualitative research, called *thematic analysis*. Similarly to conventional and inductive qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis aims to find patterns, in this case themes, in the data (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79). Therefore, thematic analysis somewhat overlaps with other qualitative methods (Braun and Clarke 2006: 80). Similarly to qualitative content analysis, there is an inductive approach to thematic analysis, and these approaches are comparable, as in inductive thematic analysis, the themes are also derived from the data rather than already existing theory. Even though qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are remarkably close to each other, thematic analysis is addressed here for the following reason: in thematic analysis, the data can be analyzed at a latent level (Braun and Clarke 2006: 84). This is defined as identifying and discussing underlying ideas and indeed *ideologies* beyond the actual content and what is said at a surface level (2006: 84). Even though I will be discussing the content of the comments and articulation in the comments, I will also aim to identify the underlying language ideologies in the data. Therefore, latent thematic analysis will also be utilized.

Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are especially useful for the aims of this study, as they allow the illumination of occurring themes in the relatively high number of comments in my data; thus, showing a coherent picture of the occurring language ideological debate without having to show each individual comment. In conclusion, the comments will be categorized according to themes discovered in the data. The categories were identified by closely observing the comment field and analyzing the frequent patterns. The categories will be carefully explained and defined, and the typicalities of comments grouped into each category will be illustrated. The proportions of each category in relation to the total number of the comments will be presented in a table. To illustrate the language ideological debate and opposing stances, differing comments within each category will be shown as data examples in the form of screenshots. These data examples and their articulation will be analyzed in more detail.

3.3.3 Utilization of stance

In section 2.2.1, I discussed both the difference between a language ideology and ideological stance as well as how these to relate to each other. Ideological stance is proved through the participants' positioning in relation to the topic and other participants; while ideological stance is not the same thing as language ideology, the participants' stance on the debate can reflect some existing language ideology or have a role in language ideology formation in a social context. However, even though stance is a crucial term for this current study, no exact stance analysis will be conducted in my analysis. As showcased in Du Bois (2007), using stance analysis and its tools, such as the stance triangle, leads to particularly detailed analysis of word choice even in short pieces of dialogue. In the case of the data of the current study, consisting of 96 comments showing great variation in length and articulation, a detailed analysis of stance taking would not be beneficial. Therefore, ideological stance and positioning in the debate will be discussed in a more general level.

The comments will be categorized into different categories according to the themes of the debate. However, within these categories, I will analyze the comments from the perspective of their ideological stances in relation to the debate. In other words, I will aim to define the different, presumably opposing stances in each theme. This will be conducted by roughly dividing the comments into two opposing teams, representing a general stance and positioning to the debate theme. Moreover, the proportions of the opposing general stances (for example, comments expressing a negative stance towards Maria's English versus comments expressing a positive one) will be shown in relation to the total number of the comments in each category. After this, the comments will be analyzed in more detail, and the underlying language ideologies will be discussed.

3.3.4 Utilization of entextualization and parodic imitation

In my analysis, I will show how ideological stances towards Maria's English and the ideologies reflected in these stances are constructed via entextualization and how the commenters criticize *Maria* through parodic imitation and mocking. In practice, this will be done by tracing the comments that contain elements from other texts, describing what these elements are and defining their origin, and finally illustrating how this entextualization is used in the articulation of the language ideological stances. For example, if it was discovered while observing the data that a comment contained elements from other texts, the text in the comment was put through

a search engine and the original source of the entextualized material was discovered through that search. Then, the original source will be referred to and explained in the analysis. In the analysis, the original source will be compared to the entextualized product, in other words, the comment practicing entextualization. Lastly, the product will be evaluated from the perspective of the original text and context, and the new meanings of the entextualized product will be discussed in relation to the new context of the comment field.

Moreover, entextualization will be analysed from the perspective of parodic imitation. It must be noted that, in the present study, referring to parodic imitation of *Maria*'s register would be a process Dentith (2000: 7) defines as 'specific parody:' the commenters aim their parodic imitation specifically towards *Maria* and her English. Essentially, the comments containing elements of *Maria*'s posts will be identified. Then, these elements will be described and compared to the characteristics of the original posts. Next, through this comparison, I will aim to define what exactly is parodied in *Maria*'s writing and thus, what elements exactly in *Maria*'s English are criticized, what is found humorous and amusing, and what is been targeted at. Of course, the content of these parodying comments will be described and the ideological stances that the parodying comments argue, as well as the underlying language ideologies, will be discussed.

I have now discussed the analytical tools of this current study – online ethnography, qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, stance, and entxtualization. Moreover, I have described the data in detail, and the data collection and selection process has been illuminated. The ethical issues have also been addressed, and I have explained the ethical choices I have made in this current study. Furthermore, the practical illustration of the analysis has been discussed.

4 ANALYSIS

As the debate on language ideologies revolves around the specific *osataan enkkuu post*, case *Maria*, the original posts will be shown and discussed below. The two posts are made presumably by the same person; a young Finnish female. The first post written by *Maria* is partly in Finnish and partly in English. However, her writing in English does not follow the orthographic rules of standard English, and this is considered confusing by *Maria*'s Facebook friends. The second post is entirely in English; however, the spelling is again non-standard. In my analysis, I will present both the original posts by *Maria* as well as the comments in screenshots. As the comments are mostly in Finnish, rough translations of the comments are provided.

Below are the two posts, both in the same page of *osataan enkkuu*, made by *Maria*. Moreover, the dates and times of the original posts are made invisible. It must be noted that the comments on the pictures below are the comments written on Facebook regarding the original posts; in other words, they are made by *Maria*'s Facebook friends and not by comments on *Feissarimokat* site.

Case *Maria*, post 1



Maria (original post): I got a winning raffle ticket! im so lucy todey

Anna (comment): Who is Lucy Todey?

Maria: (reply): nobody :) It's English and means that I'm very lucky today (my transl.)

Case Maria, post 2



Maria (original post): i am not most beuty, but not I am most ucly :)

Niko (comment): "I'm not the most part beauty, but am not the most part ucly"

Maria (reply): ah sorry I'm shit at English

Niko (reply): Well do you have to write half of the posts in (bad) English?

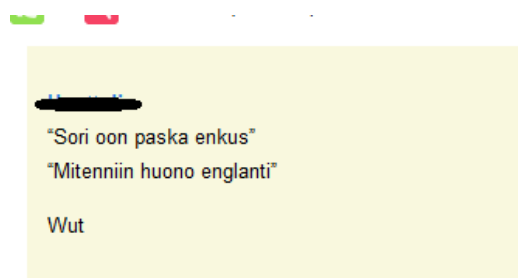
Maria (reply): yeah because everything sounds somehow much cooler in English than Finnish

Maria (reply): and what do you mean in bad English?? you are many worst
(my transl.)

The articulation of language ideologies can be seen already in the comments made by *Anna* and *Niko*, *Maria's* Facebook friends. *Maria's* use of English is indeed quite non-standard as she does not apply the standard English orthographical conventions. In other words, her writing contains spelling errors. Some other non-standard features are the non-traditional word order in "not I am most ucly" and the usage of word choices not exactly suitable for the phrase context, such as "most beuty" instead of 'the most beautiful' and "many worst" instead of 'the worst.' However, it can be argued that she still makes herself understood within the posts' context. Nevertheless, the posts are, at least presumably, purposefully misunderstood by others in order to illuminate the non-standard nature of *Maria's* writing in English. For example, *Niko* questions her need to write in English, especially when he considers *Maria's* English bad. Granted, *Maria* herself admits that she is not good at English; however, she explains why she chooses to use English instead of Finnish. Similar elements can be found also in the debate on the comment field. Moreover, the arguments made by both *Maria* and *Niko* are referred in the comments. They both take different stances on the matter, the use of English in Facebook posts, and position themselves in the conversation.

Before advancing to analyze the comments more carefully by dividing them into different categories, it is worthwhile to illustrate the structure and features of the comment field. The platform of *Feissarimokat* comment field does not enable direct replies to comments; one can only cite individual comments and thus ‘reply’ to them, as seen in the example below.

Example (1)



XDDDDD repssss !

In Example (1), the comment being cited is presented on a light, yellow background, whereas the comment citing is situated below on a white background. There are no comment threads per se and even the ‘cite’ feature is not very widely used. Therefore, categorizing the comments according to the debate themes and topics has to be conducted via other markers than specific comment threads. The commenters’ contribution to the topics debated must be gathered from the context. Fortunately, as I will showcase further in this section, there are some signs and references that showcase participation in the debate and particular topics within it.

Next, the comments regarding the two original posts made by Maria will be analyzed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the comments are divided into different categories according to the main themes of the language ideological debate occurring in the comment section. The ideological stances, in other words the commenters’ positioning in the particular themes of the debate, will be discussed in the analysis. The categories being debate themes, there are comments expressing opposing, or at least noticeably different stances in each category. Therefore, the debate topics will be first described in detail. Secondly, the opposing stances, in other words the “sides” of each debate theme will be defined, and the rough proportions of these ideological stances in the comments will be showcased. Lastly, examples of the typical comments will be provided and a close analysis of the ways in which they build their ideological stances, for example parodic imitation and entextualization, will be conducted.

Table 1 Categories according to the debate topics

1. Expressions of emotion	2. Evaluation of <i>Maria</i>'s English	3. Reasons for (<i>Maria</i>) not learning English	4. The status of English in Finland	5. Practicing and using English	Total number of comments
28 (29,2%)	23 (24,0%)	21 (21,9%)	16 (16,7%)	8 (8,3%)	96 (=100%)

The five categories defined in relation to the debate themes discovered in the case *Maria* comment section are presented in Table 1 above. The biggest theme in the comment section, taking 29,9% of all the comments, was expressing one's emotional reaction towards *Maria*'s non-standard English. In other words, expressions of anger, frustration, and amusement fall into this category. The second most common theme detected was evaluating *Maria*'s English with 23 comments. The comments in the third category, 21 in total, speculate the different reasons behind both *Maria*'s non-standard English and poor language learning in general. Fourth category, with 16 comments, includes comments arguing over the status of English in Finland. The comments in the fifth and the last and proportionally smallest category discuss the contexts and ways of practicing English, as well as other languages, and argue whether some ways of practice are more effective or acceptable than others. All these themes consist of different comments expressing different ideological stances. However, it can be argued that the stances divide into two opposing teams; by analyzing these, I will illustrate the not only the different ideological stances but also the language ideological debate in the comment section. I will now conduct a qualitative content analysis from the perspective of these categories and move on to closer examination of the ways the comments articulate each ideological stance. For example, the concepts of parodic imitation and entextualization will be discussed in analyzing the different ways the comments articulate their ideological stances.

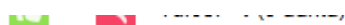
4.1 Expressions of emotion towards (*Maria*'s) non-standard English

The comments expressing an emotion of some sort towards *Maria*'s English, or non-standard English in general, build the largest category with 28 comments. It must be noted, that the comments divided into other categories can contain expressions of emotion too. However, the comments in this category include no further discussion on any other topics and are relatively

short, one sentence-long utterances. In other words, the emotional reaction to the original posts is all that these comments express. Even though these comments are comparatively short and simple on the surface-level, strong ideological stance towards non-standard English and *Maria*'s posts can still be traced in them. 15 of the 28 comments express strong and distinctly negative emotions, such as anger, aggression and frustration, towards the original posts. In Example (2), these emotions are apparent.

Example (2)

Commenter A



AARGH! EI VOI OLLA MAHDOLLISTA!

Lainaa

Eng. AARGH! IT CAN'T BE POSSIBLE! (my transl).

In Example (2), *Commenter A* expresses their disbelief and even denial towards the original posts by stating 'it can't be possible,' most likely referring to *Maria*'s original posts. In addition to disbelief, it can be argued that *Commenter A* expresses anger. The utterance "AARGH!," an exclamation usually showing strong frustration or aggression, implies that *Commenter A* reacts to *Maria* and her English strongly. Moreover, the use of only capital letters, as well as exclamation marks, emphasizes *Commenter A*'s emotional reaction. It can be gathered that the ideological stance to non-standard English is rather negative, as the comment is clearly aggressive due to the aforementioned elements. However, as argued above, the comments in this category do not contain any other information than emotional responses. Therefore, it is challenging to tell what exactly in *Maria*'s posts and her use of English raises this kind of reaction. It is probable, however, that *Commenter A* aims their disbelief and denial towards *Maria*'s non-standard English and the level of her English skills. Even though no clear evaluation can be traced from the comment, something in *Maria*'s case makes *Commenter A* distressed. It could be thus argued that *Commenter A* considers *Maria*'s English so bad or non-standard that it feels impossible. This notion is harsh towards *Maria* and reflects language policing and gatekeeping, as by implying that *Maria*'s English is so bad that it is not even possible, *Commenter A* expresses a need to restrict *Maria*'s language use.

Nevertheless, 13 comments out of 28 in this category expressed milder ideological stances and react less strongly towards Maria's posts. It cannot be said that these comments are exactly sympathetic towards Maria's posts; however, strong negative reactions or aggression cannot be detected in these comments. They mostly express amusement and contain ironic "positive" reactions towards Maria's posts and her English. In Example (3), *Commenter 2* also expresses disbelief towards Maria's English, specifically one feature of her posts.

Example (3)

Commenter B

Mitä se ees tarkoittaa tolla "you are many worst"?? :DDD

Lainaa

(Eng. What does she even mean by that "you are many worst?")

In Example (3), *Commenter B* express their amusement and puzzlement over a particular utterance, "many worst." in *Maria's* posts. This phrase is considered humorous by several commenters, as will be showcased further in the analysis. By asking what *Maria* even means by the phrase, *Commenter B* states that they do not comprehend *Maria's* writing. Moreover, the use of a smiley-face ":DDD," with several 'D's, common for social media interaction when something is viewed especially humorous, suggests that *Maria's* expression is so confusing that it is in itself funny. In sum, *Commenter B* questions the understandability of *Maria's* English and states that there is humour in this uncomprehensive nature. Even though similar puzzlement and disbelief can be traced in the comments expressing more negative and stronger reactions, they are different in their ways of expressing ideological stance. While quite clearly suggesting that *Maria's* English is bad, *Commenter B* is not aggressive towards *Maria's* character nor do they express anger or strong frustration. Rather, *Commenter B* implies that non-standard English is more amusing than anything else.

It must be noted, however, that humour can be traced in both comments that express strong negative emotions towards non-standard English and in the more neutral ones. Specifically, the processes of entextualization and parodic imitation were traced in the comments. These processes were discussed in the theoretical and methodological sections of the present study. These processes will be examined throughout the analysis – now, I will study how entextualization and parodic imitation are utilized in expressing an emotional reaction towards

non-standard English and, consequently, how do these processes build up the ideological stances towards *Maria* and non-standard English. The comment in Example (4) is one of the more aggressive ones.

Example (4)

Commenter C



shut up! Me not like read you write.

Lainaa

Commenter C is mimicking *Maria*'s English. Therefore, the processes of entextualization and parodic imitation are apparent. *Commenter C* takes elements of *Maria*'s English, such as using “not” in a non-standard manner, and recontextualizes it in their own production of non-standard English. However, there are no features in their post that are taken specifically from *Maria*'s posts. Again, “me” is used as a subject instead of ‘I,’ and verbs occur in their lemma form without ‘to’ in front of them. In standard English, the latter phrase of the comment would probably be ‘I do not like to read when you write’ or ‘I do not like to read your writing.’ Again, none of these kinds of elements can be seen in *Maria*'s posts. Even though the post aims to imitate *Maria*'s English, the features are non-standard in a different manner. Thus, the elements of *Maria*'s writing are emerged into a different form of non-standard English that, nevertheless, implies that *Maria*'s English is the target of parody. The elements used by *Commenter C* are easily recognized as non-standard; thus, the parody towards *Maria*'s ‘bad’ English is perhaps clearer. The use of imitation in the comment implies that non-standard English is perceived as humorous.

However, the strong emotional response and the negative view of *Maria* and her English is expressed directly regardless of the humorous nature of the comment. *Commenter C* directly addresses *Maria* when they tell her to “shut up” in the comment. In addition, by writing “Me do not like read you write” they also voice that do not enjoy reading *Maria*'s writing. By addressing *Maria* and telling her to keep quiet, *Commenter C* practices linguistic gatekeeping. *Commenter C* reasons this gatekeeping by saying that they do not like *Maria*'s English; in other words, *Maria* should not write simply because the commenter personally despises it. Even though parodic imitation can be viewed as a tool of evaluating *Maria*'s English as bad and non-standard, specific reasons for *Maria* to shut up are not given.

Furthermore, I suggest that, while directly addressing *Maria* and parodying her English by taking elements of it and modifying it, *Commenter C* purposefully simplifies their English. “Me not like read you write” is aimed at *Maria*; therefore, it can be argued that *Commenter C* uses non-standard English to her, hinting that she cannot understand more complex standard English. Moreover, *Commenter C* does not refer to *Maria*’s use of English specifically but to her writing in general. Therefore, the commenter tries to quite cruelly limit *Maria*’s right to use not only English but language altogether. Of course, exaggeration and aggressiveness are common stylistic tools in social media communication, and it is typical for internet trolls to make an effort to be as provocative as possible. Therefore, this kind of comments are not untypical.

Using exclamation mark and directly ordering *Maria* to shut up reflects a very negative stance towards *Maria* and her posts. *Commenter C* does not give any evaluation on the quality of their or *Maria*’s English; just that it is not pleasing. Furthermore, *Commenter C* is not comparing *Maria* to anyone better, or telling *Maria* how English should be used. Their kind of non-justifiable gatekeeping and language policing is arguably particularly harmful and demotivating to users of English. Instead of educating *Maria*, encouraging her to improve her English, or even explaining why her English is not fluent enough to be used in social media settings, *Commenter C* just tells her to shut up, questioning her right to practice English. On the other hand, any link to normativity or fixed standards of English are not given either. By stating that they do not enjoy *Maria*’s writing, *Commenter C* bases their ideology and gatekeeping purely on their own personal view. This is not atypical in the comment field context, as this pattern is also replicated in other similar comments made by the other commenters.

Maria’s own register is not the only one that the commenters utilize in their emotional expressions. The registers of fictional characters from popular culture, such as films, TV shows and Internet memes are also entextualized in the comments. This kind of entextualization of intertextual popular culture references can be traced in the comments in other categories as well, especially in the comments evaluating *Maria*’s English. However, Example (5) below exemplifies how a piece popular culture material is entextualized in a comment reacting emotionally to *Maria*’s posts.

Example (5)

Commenter D

██████████ pls

Wit bestest reagards, Dolan

Lainaa

In Example (5), *Commenter D* addresses *Maria* and signs their comment as a character called Dolan, also known as Uncle Dolan or Dolan Duck. Dolan, an MS Paint parody of the famous Disney character Donald Duck, appeared for the first time in a Finnish image board *Kuvalauta* in 2010 (Know Your Meme, 2018). Dolan became a popular character and has since appeared not only in web comics but also in YouTube series, thus turning into a meme of its own. Dolan is a perverted image of Donald Duck, and is usually presented as speaking in non-standard English; Dolan's speech is written in abbreviations, netslang and onomatopoeic writing. For example, Dolan says "pls" instead of "please" and "wat r u doin" instead of "What are you doing?" Moreover, Dolan often uses third person verb forms while speaking in the first person. Therefore, Dolan's English is quite non-standard but also quite typical for internet memes and netslang. By memes I mean a popular, wide-spread Internet phenomena created and reshaped by Internet users, usually portrayed in humorous images and text (Know Your Meme, 2018); interestingly, memes are entextualized in several comments criticizing *Maria*.

In Example (5), *Commenter D* uses Dolan's register, including non-standard spelling of "wit" and "bestest," to mock *Maria*. Dolan frequently uses "pls" as a marker for disapproval and contempt, often asking someone to stop their current behaviour. *Commenter D* adopts this marker and uses it to mock *Maria*. They thus argue that they find *Maria* and her English displeasing. Dolan is taken as an authority figure and his register is used to diminish *Maria*. Again, this implies that even Dolan with this very non-standard way of speaking has a right to comment on and restrict *Maria*'s use of English. *Commenter D* address *Maria* rather condescendingly and thus position themselves as a language police and gatekeeper. Moreover, by comparing *Maria* to Dolan, *Maria*'s English is also made as iconic as Dolan's, and the features in *Maria*'s English are considered to be typical for both her English and her character. Therefore, *Maria*'s English is only seen as a set of unusually written words and her English is made iconic through comparing it to the register of a fictional character.

I have now discussed the comments expressing short emotional responses to *Maria*'s posts. The ways in which these emotions are expressed and how they articulate ideological stances show diversity and creativity from the commenters. However, even though these comments form the

biggest group of all the comments, the ideological stances towards non-standard English do not vary excessively. We have seen that these emotional reactions vary from aggressive, direct reactions to milder responses expressing amusement and ironic utterances. Nevertheless, within these comments, in no case is Maria defended or encouraged. Nor are direct evaluations of her English given. The evaluations of Maria's English, in other words comments forming the second largest category, will be discussed next.

4.2 Evaluation of *Maria's* English

The second biggest theme detected the comment field consist of comments evaluating *Maria's* English with 23 instances. Again, there is overlap with the other four categories, as evaluation can be traced in the other comments and the comments falling into this category, in many occasions, contain emotional reactions to *Maria's* posts. Nevertheless, similarly to the main essence in the comments expressing emotional responses, the predominant content in these comments is the evaluation of *Maria's* English. The previous comments, however, usually reacted to *Maria's* posts in a more general level but these evaluative comments give estimations explicitly on *Maria's* English and her writing. For instance, features of *Maria's* English were directly evaluated and commented on several times. Also in this category, there are arguably two sides to the debate, as there are comments evaluating *Maria's* English particularly negatively and comments expressing sympathetic and more positive towards it. Nonetheless, the comments that express stronger, more negative evaluations towards *Maria's* English are in the majority with 19 comments of the total 23. The negative comments evaluate *Maria's* English as bad and non-standard in a variety of different ways but they all consider features of *Maria's* English unforgivable errors. Consequently, only four comments were forgiving in their evaluation. These four comments, while not praising *Maria's* English, evaluated *Maria's* English in distinctively lighter and more compassionate terms than the negative comments. In Example (6), the more aggressive and negative approach is apparent.

Example (6)

Commenter E

Englannin kielen raiskausta toi 'you are many worst'

[Lainaa](#)

(Eng. That ‘you are many worst’ is rape of the English language’ (my transl.))

In example (6), *Commenter E* states that *Maria*’s utterance “you are many worst” is raping the English language. In other words, it could be argued that *Commenter E* considers this fraction so bad that it is ruining English in general. It must be noted this particular utterance is arguably one of the most amusing fractions in *Maria*’s posts with the use “many,” which is an indicator of plurality, as a sign of the superlative form in front of “worst.” Therefore, the utterance is indubitably quite different from the grammatically correct and standard clause “you are the worst.” On the other hand, as only the use of “many” instead of “the” is making the phrase non-standard, the main idea can be gathered from *Maria*’s utterance; she is expressing her discontent towards *Niko*, the person commenting on her original post. Regardless of this, *Commenter E* compares *Maria*’s English to rape. Therefore, *Commenter E* does not acknowledge the communicative goal that the utterance arguably reaches but perhaps emphasizes the grammatical incorrectness in *Maria*’s writing.

Even though exaggerated and vulgar language can be regarded as a part of Internet slang and a rhetoric tool in online debates, it can also be argued that the comparison of non-standard English to sexual violence is particularly cruel and harmful. Using the word ‘rape’ while discussing language use has several different effects: firstly, the word ‘rape’ suggests that something extremely wrong has been done by using the utterance “you are many worst.” Even though *Commenter E* does not refer to *Maria* herself by giving this evaluation but states that the utterance itself is raping English, *Maria* is still responsible for writing the phrase. Secondly, *Commenter E* suggests that English as a whole is the victim of the crime that can be raped by individuals using English in an ‘incorrect’ manner. Similar stances can be found in Leppänen & Pahta (2012: 149), as they discussed how people consider some features, this case English elements used in Finnish, are seen as a threat to a whole language.

In a similar fashion as in the previous category, parodic imitation and entextualization of popular culture elements are common tools also within the comments in this category. For example, commenters parody *Maria*’s posts and then add evaluations of *Maria*’s English while using the same non-standard register. In Example (7), *Maria*’s English is evaluated in this way by recontextualizing the non-standard features into parodic imitation.

Example (7)

Commenter F



Me don't not speeak veri best englis, but it's more cool and bester than you english

In Example (7), *Commenter F* takes elements of *Maria's* English from their original context, that context being a Facebook post, and uses these elements in their humoristic reaction and ideological comment on *Maria's* English. *Commenter F* takes up characteristics of *Maria's* writing, for example how she writes "englis", instead of 'English,' and integrates it into their own non-standard English. Therefore, *Commenter F* decontextualizes the original text and recontextualizes it in their production of non-standard English. Interestingly, *Commenter F* adds other features of non-standard English themselves: elements such as "bester," "speeak," or the double negative "don't not" do not occur in *Maria's* posts. Still it is clear that *Maria* is the target of this parodic imitation. Moreover, in this parodic imitation, *Commenter F* exaggerates the grammatical errors in *Maria's* writing. For example, *Maria* does not use "me" instead of 'I' as a phrase subject at any point; yet, *Commenter F* does this in order to emphasize the non-standard English in the comment, thus comparing *Maria's* English to stylized 'Tarzan-English' – the kind of register in which personal pronouns are written in a non-conventional form and verbs are not inflected according to the English grammatical rules.

We can see that *Commenter F* evaluates *Maria's* post and therefore *Maria* herself: by parodying *Maria's* use of English, it is clear that *Commenter F* sees *Maria's* case as something to joke about. *Commenter F* states that, even though their English is not the best, it is still better than "yours," most likely referring to *Maria's* English. *Commenter F* thus states that they do not have much expertise in English; however, the expertise is good enough to evaluate *Maria's* English as worse than theirs. Even though *Commenter F's* stance towards *Maria's* English is not as cruel as in Example (6), *Maria's* English is still strongly undermined. Moreover, by stating this *Commenter F* justifies the process of language policing and gatekeeping; they are giving a permission to themselves to use English. Ironically, as mentioned above, *Commenter F* uses even more non-standard English than *Maria*; therefore, the justification for *Commenter F's* English is better than *Maria's* is visible only in the statement "more cool and bester than you english." *Commenter F* states that they have the right to evaluate *Maria's* English as worse than theirs; however, there is no proof of this. Therefore, it can be argued that *Commenter F's* goal is not to show their skills in English but, through parody, show that using non-standard English is far from being cool, but rather merely ridiculous and embarrassing.


By using parody as a stylistic method, *Commenter F* expresses an opinion about *Maria* and her use of non-standard English. Although their opinion is not overtly specific, we can see that their view on *Maria* and her English is not positive. The comment does not actually express expertise in English, as it states that the commenter's English is not the best. However, a derogatory stance towards *Maria* and her English, as well as language policing is still visible, as they probably compare *Maria's* English to their own. Moreover, it can be argued that via parodic imitation *Commenter F* implies that *Maria's* English is ridiculous and, because she is the target of this parody, she is thus ridiculous.

This language ideological view reflects the process of iconicity (Irvine and Gal, 1995), in other words, it iconizes *Maria's* character as ridiculous based on her English and the way *Commenter F* considers her English. By imitating this type of non-standard register, *Commenter F* is in fact showing that they are linguistically more capable than *Maria*; *Commenter F* is thus sharing also metalinguistic knowledge and views, much like participants in Bogetic's (2016) online ethnographic study, which concluded that participants of online communication are well aware of their language use and linguistic capabilities. In addition, *Commenter F's* parodic imitation showcases similar process that was discovered in Kytölä (2012: 253); in other words, imitation is used to mock and ridicule, as well as to emphasize the non-standard features in the original poster's writing.

As mentioned above, dividing the comments according to the themes of debate proved out to be challenging, as many comments contained elements from more than one category. However, in few occasions, defining any theme in the unit of analysis was demanding. In addition to problems in dividing Example (8) into a category, it was also complex and challenging to define the ways in which it expresses a particular ideological stance towards the use of non-standard English.

Example (8)

Commenter G


sorry i cat tell enithing pikos im pussy!

[Lainaa](#)

This comment, much like some of the aforementioned examples, is written in parodying non-standard English. However, defining the commenter's ideological stance from this parody is challenging. Again, characteristics of *Maria's* English, such as the onomatopoeic spelling of "enithing" and the use of "im" (pro: 'I'm,') are copies of *Maria's* own choices. Moreover, *Commenter G* omits the letter *n* in "cat" (supposedly 'can't'), somewhat copying the way *Maria* omitted 'a' in "beuty" (pro: 'beauty'). Similarly to previous examples, features of non-standard English not used by *Maria* herself are utilized. For example, the word "pikos" displays a way of writing 'because' based on the way it would be pronounced according to the Finnish phonology. Parodying *Maria's* English perhaps reflects similar, rather negative ideological stances as the previous commenters have expressed. Nevertheless, the evaluation of *Maria* and her use of English is not transparent. The comment does not contain any thematic content from *Maria's* posts, nor does it express specific views on *Maria's* English. Therefore, one could assume that *Commenter G* parodies *Maria* herself and tries to write in her voice. 'sorry i cat tell enithing' may imply that *Maria* cannot tell anything because she cannot speak English properly. Therefore, I decided analyze this comment as an evaluative one. Moreover, *Commenter D's* stance may thus reflect linguistic gatekeeping and language policing, as they could imply in their writing that *Maria* cannot speak at all.

However, *Commenter G* speaking in *Maria's* voice mocks her character more than her level of English skills. Their evaluation of *Maria's* personality shows in "pikos im pussy" (pro: 'because I'm a pussy'). That is to say that *Commenter G* considers *Maria* a pussy; in addition to being a derogatory term for female genitals, 'pussy' can refer to someone who is whiny, cowardly, and annoying (Urban Dictionary 2011). One could thus argue that, even though the comment does not reveal a clear language ideological stance, *Commenter G* regards *Maria's* posts, and her use of English as irritating by calling her a 'pussy.' Moreover, this can even argued to express a negative view of young females using social media; *Commenter G* compresses *Maria's* personality into being a pussy. Addressing her by using a derogatory term for female genitals does not give a positive view on young women and their femininity. Therefore, according to this interpretation, it can be argued that iconicity is occurring in *Commenter G's* ideological stance; by parodying *Maria's* English and calling her a pussy, *Commenter G* iconizes *Maria* into a stereotypical, whiny female.

In addition to parodic imitation of *Maria's* register, entextualization of popular culture material outside the *Feissarimokat* context is a popular tool in the evaluative comments. Popular culture

characters, phenomena, and iconic phrases known for their non-standard English are utilized in several comments. In fact, combining the 23 comments evaluating Maria's English and 28 comments expressing emotional reactions, 15 comments out of these 51 used popular culture material in their articulation.

Example (9)

Commenter H



Engelis lesson from master yoda yu shall teak!

Lainaa

In Example (6), *Commenter H* is referring to Master Yoda, a character in film franchise called *Star Wars* (1977-). Yoda's English in *Star Wars* films is highly iconic and distinguishable: for example, instead of using the word order according to English grammar (subject -> predicate -> object), Yoda places the object before the subject. *Commenter H* uses the same word order; they write the object "Engelis lesson" before the subject "yu." In other words, *Commenter H* evaluates *Maria's* English as so non-standard that they compare it to Yoda's register. Indeed, *Maria's* word order is from time to time untypical of English; for example, she writes "but not I am most uclly"- with the negative placed in before "I am," even though the grammatically correct way would be using it after the subject and be-verb. However, the word order is not identical with Yoda's object-before-subject version either; therefore, *Maria's* word order is not as consistently original as Yoda's register.

Nevertheless, as *Maria's* English is being compared to Yoda's iconized register, iconicity, one of the three semiotic processes defined by Irvine and Gal (1995), can be traced in *Commenter H's* comparison. Iconicity refers to the process in which certain linguistic features become typically related to certain kinds of people in people's minds; Yoda's word order has, over the years after 'The Empire Strikes Back' being released in 1980, become iconic for his character. By comparing Yoda to *Maria*, *Commenter H* suggests a similar process; they are stating that the features used by *Maria* are iconic, and that these features are specific for her character. However, whereas Yoda is an alien character, superhuman in his intelligence and strength, his register iconizes him in a different manner. Yoda's register is, arguably, an icon of his superhumanity – it is unlikely that *Commenter H* aims to do a similar comparison. However, I argue that *Maria's* style is treated as an icon for different features she is considered to possess,

such as silliness, stupidity, and inauthenticity. In a way, making a connection between *Maria* and a superhuman character such as Yoda emphasizes the difference between them; therefore, the iconicity of *Maria* as a silly, uneducated person is highlighted.

However, *Commenter H* is also parodying *Maria*'s register. The non-standard writing of "Engelis," "yu," or "teak" are not distinguishable features of Yoda's speech but rather they signal characteristics of *Maria*'s onomatopoeic writing. Therefore, *Commenter H* is also recontextualizing *Maria*'s writing, as well as Yoda's speech from *Star Wars*. This shows the overlap between comments using parodic imitation of *Maria*'s register and comments that use external intertextual references, as they can contain both tools of entextualization.

However, Yoda's English in *Star Wars* is not seen as non-standard because of its orthographical lapses but rather because of the word order of his utterances. *Maria*'s English, however, can be identified as non-standard mainly because of the errors in orthography. This leads us further in *Commenter H*'s evaluation of *Maria*'s English; they state that *Maria* should take English lessons from Master Yoda. Therefore, while comparing *Maria*'s use of language to Yoda's, *Commenter H* is in a way implying that even Yoda is more competent in English than *Maria* is. In other words, Yoda is seen to have more expertise and authority in English than *Maria*. *Commenter H* positions themselves similarly to the commenters in previous examples; they think that *Maria*'s English is bad and that it should be improved.

Even though comparison to Yoda occurs twice in the comment section, characters known for less positive attributes are used to evaluate *Maria*'s English more frequently. For example, Dolan Duck, a vulgar MS paint meme, was discussed in the previous section. Example (10), on the other hand, is a quotation by a character in the popular American TV show *The Simpsons*:

Example (10)

Commenter I

Me fail english? That's impossible!

Lainaa

This utterance is by Ralph Wiggum in an episode called *Lisa on Ice* (episode eight of season six, aired in 1994). Ralph is approximately eight years old and is frequently portrayed as a simple-minded, happily clueless, and irritating to others kind of character. In this particular

episode, he finds out that he is failing his English class and reacts with a phrase that ironically shows his lack of English skills; Ralph uses “me” instead of “I” and uses a wrong prefix in ‘impossible’. *Commenter I* therefore evaluates *Maria*’s English similar to Ralph Wiggum’s, and suggests that, like Ralph, *Maria* has failed in English as a school subject. Moreover, by using this utterance, *Commenter I* is comparing *Maria* and Ralph as characters; Ralph’s personality traits are linked to *Maria*. Ralph is clueless on his lack of English skills; *Commenter I* probably sees the same process in *Maria*’s ‘you are many worst’ -comment. *Commenter I* is thus mocking not only *Maria*’s non-standard English but her perceived disability to admit having problems in using English.

While showing some similarities in *Maria*’s and Ralph’s reactions towards their English, Example (10) is also mocking *Maria*. *Commenter I* is comparing *Maria* to a simple-minded child who often is an annoyance to other characters in *The Simpsons*. *Maria*’s non-standard English is thus explained through stupidity and child-like mindset; these characteristics are then linked to *Maria* as her personality traits. External reasons for *Maria*’s non-standard English, such as language education and school system in Finland, are not considered. Therefore, the process of iconicity by Irvine and Gal (1995) is, again, reflected here. Due to her non-standard English, *Maria*’s is linked to Ralph, a simple-minded and annoying character – therefore, *Maria* is also viewed as an icon of stupidity and annoyance.

I have discussed a few examples of entextualizing the register of fictional characters from popular culture in evaluative comments. However, in one interesting evaluative comment, a comparison to a real figure in Finland’s political history is made. The example below is a bastardization of ‘to thirty-two.’

Example (11)

Commenter J

tuu tööti tuu

[Lainaa](#)

This reference is probably not that explicit to many younger Finnish people. The comment is referring to Ahti Karjalainen, a Finnish minister of Foreign Affairs in the 1970’s, who was known for his strong Finnish accent and was blamed for having poor skills in English. In one of his trips to abroad Karjalainen allegedly ordered two cups of tea to the hotel room number

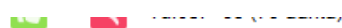
32 by saying ‘Tuu tii tutöötituu.’ (Lindfors, 2008). The comparison of *Maria* to Karjalainen is interesting, as the Finnish term ‘tankeroenglanti,’ meaning hesitant English spoken in a strong Finnish accent, was originally inspired by Karjalainen’s English. Therefore, *Commenter J* addresses the fact that non-standard English in Finnish contexts is not a new phenomenon. In addition, this comments also reflects the tradition of the Finnish people criticizing public comments for their poor English.

Commenter J thus evaluates *Maria*’s English as to some extent similar to Karjalainen’s public utterances in the 1970’s. In a way, as Karjalainen was one of the first Finnish public speakers in non-standard English, *Commenter J* is implying that *Maria* carries this tradition on. Nevertheless, *Commenter J* could be implying that the tradition of criticizing non-standard English is something typically Finnish. Alternatively, *Commenter J* is implying that *Maria*’s English is distinctively Finnish-based in its non-standard nature and comparing it to Karjalainen’s English shows that *Commenter J* finds this a negative phenomenon.

Lastly, the entextualization of Internet material in evaluative comments will be discussed. Example (12) serves as an example of how popular Internet phrases are used in discussion forums and comment fields.

Example (12)

Commenter K



RIP English!

[Lainaa](#)

“RIP English” is a term used in computer-mediated communication whenever someone finds participants’ English, particularly grammar and spelling, displeasing (Urban Dictionary, 2015). Moreover, this may imply that a discussion participant does not to speak with you any longer. ‘RIP English’ is often used to directly criticize people for their English but it is also used to provoke discussion participants and troll in comment threads. By using this phrase, *Commenter K* is evaluating *Maria*’s English disapprovingly. Furthermore, *Commenter K* uses a popular phrase among Internet trolls, thus conveying that they are aiming to offend *Maria* directly. Thus, ‘RIP English’ as a phrase, even without its link to netslang, articulates a negative stance on *Maria*’s English – it implies that the English language is so badly violated that it must be let ‘rest in peace.’ This notion is similar to the one seen in Example (6), as both comments imply

that *Maria*'s use of English has somehow ruined the whole language. The way in which *Commenter K* shows their ideological stance to *Maria*'s English suggests that they do not consider her posts English at all – thus showing rather aggressive language policing. *Commenter K* is not, however, referring to any specific aspect of *Maria*'s English that they find unpleasant, so this language policing has no rationalizations. Therefore, *Commenter K* builds their ideology via trolling.

As discussed above, only four comments expressed sympathetic and more forgiving evaluations of *Maria*'s English. It must be noted that even these four comments do not precisely state that *Maria*'s English is good. Rather, the way of articulation is kinder and the comments do not reflect strict language policing or gatekeeping. Moreover, the ideological stance towards non-standard English is more understanding and forgiving. For instance, the tone in Example (13) is quite light.

Example (13)

Commenter L

Eikös tuo ollu justinsa sitä kuuluisaa suomalaista ralli-enklantia? :3

Lainaa

(Eng. Wasn't that exactly representing the famous Finnish Rally-English? (my transl.))

In Example (13), *Commenter L* is wondering whether *Maria*'s posts are written in “famous rally English.” The term “rallienglanti”, which is somewhat similar to “tankeroenglanti,” is arguably familiar to Finnish people, as it refers to the non-standard English spoken by internationally successful Finnish rally and Formula 1 drivers (Kivistö 2016: 1). However, the term's meaning has expanded, and can now be used to describe all English spoken with a stereotypically Finnish pronunciation. Even though rally English is, in some occasions, considered comical and even embarrassing, it could be stated that Finnish people have developed a sense of pride for the rally English register because of its connection to triumphant Finnish motor sports athletes. Therefore, rally English has more positive connotations than, for example, tankeroenglanti. Even though rally English is usually used to refer to spoken English, *Commenter L* is suggesting that *Maria*'s posts are written in a stereotypically Finnish way rather than just in bad English. Moreover, the emoticon “:3” has a softening effect to the comment. It implies that *Commenter L*'s ideological stance towards *Maria*'s posts and non-standard English is forgiving, or at least, mild.

In this section, I discussed the comments evaluating *Maria's* English. We have seen that most of the ideological stances expressed in the comments falling into this category are harsh towards non-standard English and give negative evaluations of *Maria's* English, often using vulgar language and parody. Moreover, practices such as language policing and gatekeeping is conducted through the tools of parodic imitation and entextualization of popular culture material. Interestingly, authority over language is taken by these same tools. By imitating *Maria's* register, the commenters both evaluate *Maria's* language as extremely non-standard and show their metalinguistic awareness and capabilities in utilizing elements of *Maria's* English in their own comments.

Moreover, characters and phenomena from popular culture known for non-standard English are entextualized into authority figures “teaching” *Maria*, as in Yoda’s case, but also into metaphors for *Maria* herself, for example, by comparing *Maria* to Ralph Wiggum. As discussed above, the vast majority of the comments express a negative stance towards *Maria's* English. As there were no comments giving a positive evaluation of *Maria's* English, the debate under this thematic category is quite one-sided. The variation of ideological stances and opposing arguments are presumably more apparent in the next section, the comments discussing the reasons for *Maria's* English, and non-standard English in Finnish as well as global contexts will be analysed.

4.3 Reasons for (*Maria's*) non-standard English

In this section, I will analyse the comments arguing about various reasons for *Maria's* non-standard English. Moreover, the 21 comments in this category debate over the different reasons for learning and not learning English, as well as other languages in Finnish contexts. Again, these comments contain elements occurring in the comments in other categories, too. For example, the comments giving reasons for *Maria's* English express emotional reactions to her posts and evaluate her English. However, the discussion on the reasons behind non-standard English is characteristic for comments in this category. Interestingly, these comments reflect more diverse stances. Moreover, in relation to the language ideological debate, the comments in this category show disagreement and opposing stances more apparently than the comments in the above analysed categories. Even though the comments are arguably diverse in their articulation, the stances can be roughly divided into two opposing teams. Out of the 21 comments, 11 comments argue that stupidity and lack of intellectual abilities are the reasons

for *Maria*'s English, or non-standard English in general. These comments usually directly call *Maria* and others using non-standard English stupid and, while wondering the level of English skills, do not consider other possible reasons for not knowing English. However, the commenters argue that *Maria*'s English should be considerably better and support this stance by providing several arguments. Therefore, stupidity is argued as the only possible reason for non-standard English.

The other ten comments, on the other hand, reflect opposing views and argue several different causes for non-standard English and problems in foreign language learning. These reasons vary from learning difficulties to external reasons originating from, for example, foreign language education in Finland. Moreover, these ten comments, in many occasions, argue against the comments calling *Maria* stupid, and refer to the previous commenters directly. Calling *Maria* stupid based on her English is disapproved in these comments. Moreover, annoyance towards simplifying the process of language learning is clearly expressed, and the commenters often refer to their own experiences as foreign language learners, thus showing empathy towards *Maria*.

Example (14) is, in fact, one of the first comments appearing on the comment field. While the expression of emotion is apparent in this comment, the comment is still strongly providing their interpretation for *Maria*'s non-standard English, as well as expressing frustration and puzzlement for the level of English skills of "today's teens."

Example (14)

Commenter M

En voi käsittää mikä näitä nykyteinejä vaivaa, kyseinenkin sankari on todenköisesti suorittanut vähintään peruskoulun jossa opiskellaan englantia seitsemän (7) vuotta. Kuinka tyhmä ihmisen pitää olla, ettei ymmärrä paskan vertaa noinkin helposta kielestä? Ymmärtäisin jos kyseessä olisi vaikka heprea tai latina, mutta ENGLANTI pitäisi kyllä sujua seitsemän vuoden opiskelun jälkeen 'aavistuksen' paremmin. I so ankry.

(Eng. I can't understand what's wrong with today's teens, this hero here has probably gone through at least comprehensive school where you study English at least seven (7) years. How stupid does a person have to be in order to not understand shit about a language as easy as this? I would understand if it were Hebrew or Latin but ENGLISH should go 'slightly' more fluently after seven years of studying. I so ankry.)

In Example (14), *Commenter M* clearly expresses their confusion and frustration about *Maria*'s non-standard English by saying that they 'can't understand' the youth of today and, further in the comment, links this frustration on the lack of English skills of people who have presumably

studied it for several years. Furthermore, *Commenter M* thinks that *Maria*'s non-standard English is a sign of stupidity, as they consider English an easy language to learn. Therefore, metalinguistic awareness similar to what was found in Bogetic (2016) is shown on the comment; *Commenter M* evaluates English a simple language and thus people not able to use it according to standard stupid. Moreover, languages such as Hebrew and Latin are viewed as more complex, as *Commenter M* states that they would understand if better if those languages were in question; thus, some linguistic valuing is conducted. Furthermore, even though no direct addressing of *Maria* can be found in the comment, it can be argued that *Commenter M* evaluates *Maria*'s English skills as being close to none, as they probably refer to *Maria* by stating 'do not understand shit.' *Commenter M* thus, arguably, has a view of proper, standard English, most likely linked to normative standard (Agha, 2007: 126), for example Received Pronunciation. However, this standard is not clearly expressed.

It is evident that *Commenter M* evaluates *Maria*'s English as something negative and that they show an aggressive ideological stance towards non-standard English. Moreover, non-standard English is implied to be a problem among young people and not knowing English is connected to stupidity. In other words, according to *Commenter M*'s view, non-standard English is typical for young people and one has to have a low intellectual ability not to speak English according to standard set by *Commenter M*. What the exact standard is not spelt out in Example (14), but it is set as being 'slightly' better than *Maria*'s English.

Moreover, this ideological stance reflects the process of iconicity and erasure by Irvine and Gal (1995); by connecting *Maria*'s non-standard English to young and stupid people, they insinuate that non-standard English typical of those kinds of people. In addition, by talking about "today's youth" *Commenter M* is implying that they have witnessed other young people using non-standard English before. Erasure, on the other hand, can be tracked in evaluating English as easy; the complex phases and strategies in learning English as a second language are erased. Furthermore, by connecting the lack of English skills to stupidity erases other, more complicated reasons for not knowing how to use standard English, such as learning difficulties, especially those specifically related to language learning, or the level of second language education and teaching. Furthermore, *Commenter M* shames *Maria* for her non-standard English by giving reasons why her English should, in their opinion, be more fluent. Finally, as *Commenter M* states that English is easy, and that *Maria* does not know English at all, language

policing and setting oneself as linguistic authority, one of the language subordination processes by Lippi-Green (2012:70) is apparent in Example (14).

Even though there are many comments expressing a similar stance as *Commenter M*, several comments cite and refer to Example (14) and argue that it is unnecessarily aggressive and unsympathetic. Example (15) represents the other side of the debate and illuminates the reasons why some people are not fluent in English even after years of studying it in comprehensive school.

Example (15)

Commenter N

Niinno. Peruskoulun englannin pääsee valitettavasti 150% perseilemällä läpi niinkuin me kaikki tiedämme. Sama pätee ruotsiin. Kun kokeen pääsee läpi jollain 10 pisteellä sadasta, niin kyllä sieltä jokainen pääsi pois. Sitten haettiin ammattikouluun jossa se englanninkielen opiskelu oli sillä tasolla että jos oli kuunnellut edes vasemmalla sieraimella yläasteella sai 3 joka kokeesta. Uusia asioita ei enää tullut ja luotiin jokaiselle idiootille fiktiivinen käsitys että opiskelemalla sen 100 oman alan sanaa niin on pätevä puhumaan englantia.

Ei tällaiset tapaukset ole mitenkään harvinaisia. Kaveri kerran ihan tosissaan kertoi pari keskustelun aikana "watching cheesebörgur pliis" (saisinko juustohampurilaisen kiitos). Ikää silloin 17 tai 18.

(Eng. Well yeah. As we all know, the comprehensive school English can be passed by horsing around 150%. The same applies to Swedish. When one could pass an exam with like 10 points out of a hundred, everyone got out of there. Then one applied to vocational school where studying English was at that kind of level that if you had listened even with just the left nostril in lower secondary school, one got a 3 in every exam. New things never came up and every idiot was given the fictional idea that by studying 100 words related to one's own field makes one fluent in speaking English.

These cases are not that rare. A friend, in all seriousness, said during a discussion exercise "watching cheesebörgur pliis" (could I get a cheeseburger please). They were 17 or 18 years of age at that time. (my transl.)

While *Commenter N* does not try to convince that *Maria's* English is good or according to the standard, they propose possible reasons for the use of non-standard English among the Finnish youth. By stating that comprehensive school English can be passed by just 'horsing around,' *Commenter N* implies that the second language education system in Finland does not have high standards; or that, at least, it does not require any effort for getting a passing grade, nor does it encourage aiming for higher grades. Moreover, *Commenter N* argues that the level of language teaching is especially low in vocational school, and, therefore, this gives a false image of one's level of English skills. They also address *Commenter M's* confusion and disbelief over someone

not knowing English by pointing out that non-standard English is not, in fact, uncommon in Finland by giving an example from their own personal experiences.

Commenter N is not giving a positive image on young people learning English, either, as they link ‘horsing around’ to pupils in comprehensive school and imply that the passing grade from English is something many pupils settle for. Nevertheless, they do not connect the lack of English skills to stupidity or personality traits; rather, they blame the second language education system in Finland. *Commenter N* may be insinuating that the passing grade is given too easily in comprehensive school and even more so in vocational schools; therefore, many users of English do not have a realistic image on their level of fluency in English. In a similar way as commenters using personal stories in the individual comments, *Commenter N* claims textual authority by giving an example from their own life.

Nevertheless, even though *Commenter N* gives more thorough explanation on why non-standard English exists in Finland despite years of studying an “easy” language, they still associate non-standard English to not making any effort at school language lessons. This ideological stance links non-standard English to laziness. Furthermore, *Commenter N* connects language learning strongly to school settings and do not consider other means of second language learning and acquisition. *Commenter N* discusses English solely as a school subject and being good at English depends on one’s investment in the English subject. This notion, alongside to *Commenter M*’s original comment, is addressed in some of the further comments referring to Example (15), as can be seen in Example (16) below.

Example (16)

Commenter O

En voi käsittää mikä näitä nykyteinejä vaivaa, kyseinenkin sankari on todenköisesti suorittanut vähintään peruskoulun jossa opiskellaan englantia seitsemän (7) vuotta. Kuinka tyhmä ihmisen pitää olla, ettei ymmärrä paskan vertaa noinkin helposta kielestä? Ymmärtäisin jos kyseessä olisi vaikka heprea tai latina, mutta ENGLANTI pitäisi kyllä sujua seitsemän vuoden opiskelun jälkeen ‘aavistuksen’ paremmin. I so ankry.

Täytyy myöntää, että [REDACTED] on kyllä suurin osa enkun peruskäsitteistä karannut. Mutta silti mua otti sun kommentti aika hurjasti pattiin. Täällä nimittäin toinen, joka ei niin hyvin tota kieltä taida, vaikka oon kaikkeni yrittänyt tehdä sen eteen nää kuuluisat seitsemän vuotta. Kun se kieli vaan ei jää päähän, niin sitten se ei jää päähän. Joillakin vaan on huono kielipää ja sen eteen täytyy todella paljon työskennellä ja siltikään sillä ei kymppiä kohti liidellä.

(Eng. I have to admit that Maria has lost most of the basic terms in English. But nonetheless, I was pretty furiously annoyed about your comment. Here is in fact one more person who does not know that language very well, even

though I have tried everything to work on it during these famous seven years. When a language does not stick in one's head, it simply does not stick to one's head. Some people do not have the natural tendency to learn languages (lit. "kielipää" language head) and one has to work really hard and still one does not go towards the best grade.)

In Example (16), Example (14) by *Commenter M* is cited and thus, in a way, answered to. *Commenter O*, again, acknowledges that *Maria's* English is not according to the standard by stating that she is lost with even the basics. Nevertheless, they criticize *Commenter M's* notions on English as an easy language, and claims that one has to be stupid not to learn in after years of studying. However, *Commenter O* defends those who cannot learn foreign languages by explaining that they have worked hard to study English but still struggle with using it. Furthermore, they express personal annoyance at and offense towards *Commenter M's* utterances. *Commenter O* addresses this notion by claiming that language learning is connected to "kielipää" (lit. 'language head,' knack for languages) and implies that people either have it or not. Nevertheless, this reasoning is also explaining language learning with cognitive issues, rather than problems emerging from the surrounding environment. Language learning is seen as a special talent that only some people can have, and those people who cannot learn languages easily cannot do much to help it.

Even though *Commenter O* is more forgiving about non-standard English, their notions about language learning are not wholly unproblematic. They state that difficulties in language learning and second language acquisition do not originate from lack of wit and that some people have to work especially hard to learn English. Nevertheless, the argument of a natural tendency explaining the process of second language acquisition also reflects the harmful process of language policing and gatekeeping. This argument implies that it is technically impossible for people without this tendency to reach the same level of fluency as the people who have this skill, no matter how much they would invest in the process of learning a language. Stating that "when a language does not stick in one's head, it simply does not stick to one's head" is, moreover, a demotivating and overly simplifying argument for problems in second language acquisition. There is arguably comfort in that claim, as it suggests that there is nothing wrong in not learning languages and that it is alright for some people to struggle; however, connecting language learning to a talent mystifies and glorifies people who have this talent. In other words,

one of the processes of language subordination, mystification of language, (Lippi-Green 2012: 70) is apparent.

Example (17) below is fascinating, as sympathizes with *Maria* on one aspect of her English writing but nevertheless decides to call her stupid.

Example (17)

Commenter P

Hmm, itellä tulee monesti vahingossa kirjoitettua englanniks sillee niiku ne sanat lausutaan 😊
Mut tää nyt ilmeisesti on vaan typerä

Lainaa

(Eng. Hmm, I myself tend to write in English in a way like the words are pronounced :D But this one here is apparently just stupid.)

When *Commenter P* states that they themselves write English words according to their pronunciation rather than their orthography, they most likely refer to words such as “todey” in *Maria*’s posts. Therefore, as *Commenter P* admits making similar mistakes, they show empathy towards *Maria* in this notion. However, the next argument they present withdraws the previous notion, in a way. *Commenter P* states that *Maria* is presumably just stupid but argue that they themselves make normal, excusable mistakes. There is no evidence of *Commenter P*’s writing in English, so one cannot make any presumptions whether their English is, in fact, any better than *Maria*’s. Therefore, *Commenter P*’s stance towards *Maria*’s non-standard English reflects hypocrisy, as no clear distinction between *Maria*’s English and the commenter’s English is presented, and no clear reason for *Maria*’s stupidity is given. It is evident that while some sympathy is shown towards *Maria*, *Commenter P* does not want to identify with her, either.

As argued above, it is not evident why *Maria* is considered stupid but other errors in orthography are justified. It could be perhaps argued that *Commenter P* does not wish to distinguish oneself too much from other comments making fun of *Maria*. Moreover, by calling *Maria* ‘this one here,’ they weaken and belittle, almost dehumanize her. The contrast between the first sympathizing phrase and the second one calling *Maria* stupid is drastic. Even though *Commenter P* is not as aggressive and expressive in their emotions as *Commenter M*, they do

not provide any reasons why they consider *Maria* stupid either. Therefore, *Commenter P*'s claim for linguistic authority is not strong.

In this section, I have analysed the comments that provide different possible reasons for *Maria*'s non-standard English, and non-standard English in general. It can be argued that the comments in this category showed stronger elements of language ideological debate than in the comments in previous categories, as the comments reflected opposing stances and argued multiple different reasons for *Maria*'s non-standard English. Furthermore, these comments proceeded from discussing only *Maria*'s non-standard English to non-standard English in general, especially in Finnish contexts. Nevertheless, the language ideological debate in the comments has so far has focused on *Maria*'s case and non-standard English; language ideological stances on English in a more general level and the status of English have not been analysed yet. In the next section, the focus will be on comments discussing the status of English in Finland.

4.4 The status of English in Finland

Out of all the 96 comments, 16 comments focused on analysing the status of English in Finland. The comments explore English in different Finnish contexts. For example, the commenters debate whether English is a compulsory school subject or not, as well as the role of English as a lingua franca useful for work and travel. The division of the comments into opposing teams was, again, challenging regarding this category, seeing as the comments discuss the role of English in Finland from various perspectives. However, seven out of the 16 comments argued that English is not a compulsory school subject in Finland and thus knowing English is not and should not be part of general knowledge. Nine comments, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of English in Finland and discussed the role of English as an international lingua franca. It must be noted that not all of the comments defending English argue that English is compulsory in Finnish basic education. In fact, only one comment argues that English has to be studied by everyone in Finland; the rest recognize that while one can, in some occasions, choose to study some other language as A1 instead of English, the reality is that most pupils in Finnish comprehensive schools study English.

Interestingly, the comments that do not regard knowing English general knowledge often emphasize the importance and higher value of other languages. For example, especially the relevance of Finnish as a mother tongue is discussed quite extensively. Choosing to use English

instead of Finnish is, in some occasions, interpreted as not appreciating one's mother tongue. This belief is brought up in Example (18), which is also the first comment that triggers the extensive debate on the role of English in Finnish school system and education, and whether English is, in fact, a compulsory school subject in Finland.

Example (18)

Commenter Q



Samperin pövästit, Suomessa ei ole mitään pakkoenglantia peruskoulussa eli siitä pohjalta ihan turha ihmetellä jos joku ei sitä kieltä osaa. Ei se kuulu mihinkään yleissivistykseen ja tässä yhteiskunnassa kyllä pärjää ihan loistavasti ilman kielipäätäkin, ihmisillä on omat osaamisalueensa. Hemmettiäkö siitä vatvotte, suurin osa kun ei ymmärrä oman kielensä rikkauksia. Ja tuon rappeutuvan englanninkielisen yhteiskunnan ihannointi on suoraan sanottuna melko sairaalloista, herättää ja opetelkaa vaikka japania tai ranskaa...

[Lainaa](#)

(Eng. Damn morons, there is no compulsory English in comprehensive school in Finland, so on that basis it is pointless to wonder if someone does not know the language. It is not a part of any general knowledge and one can cope just terrific without having a talent in languages, people have their own fields of speciality. What the heck are you dwelling about, most of us do not understand the richness of their own language. And the admiration of the decaying English-speaking society is, to be honest, quite morbid, wake up and learn Japanese or French for example...)

By calling other users 'Damn morons,' *Commenter Q* is arguably addressing comments by previous discussants. Among them is Example (14) by *Commenter M* for instance. *Commenter Q* remarks that there is no way of knowing whether *Maria* has actually ever studied English at school, as English is not a compulsory subject. This is, in fact, correct, as it is compulsory to study at least one foreign language in Finland, but the language is not specified in legislation. Therefore, it is possible to study, for example, German, French, or Russian as an A1 language, depending of the language selection of the school. However, in practice, almost every Finn will have studied English at some point of their life (Leppänen et al. 2011: 21). However, *Commenter Q* draws on this fact that English not compulsory in their reasoning that some people do not know English up to the standard. Moreover, from this they proceed on to stating that English is not part of general knowledge and that one can cope well without knowing languages or having a talent in learning languages. What is more, knowing English is narrowed down to a 'field of speciality.'

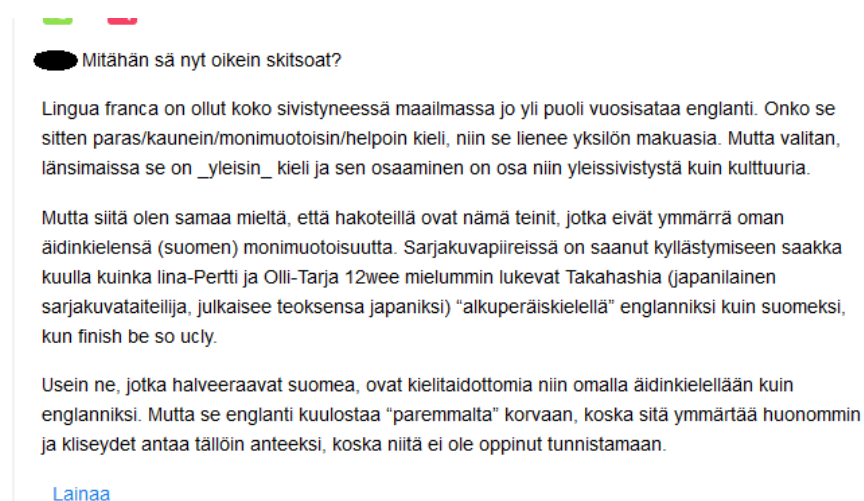
On the one hand, *Commenter Q* is defending *Maria* by criticizing other commenters for puzzling over her non-standard English. On the other hand, *Commenter Q's* arguments are, in relation to the debate as a whole, quite aggressive. Not regarding English as a part of general

knowledge implies a negative ideological stance on English; one could argue that *Commenter Q* does not, therefore, recognize English' status as a universal lingua franca. Moreover, they connect the English language to English-speaking, presumably inner circle countries, and state that their societies are 'decaying' and that these countries are needlessly glorified in Finland. Therefore, iconicity is visible in Example (18). Furthermore, they orient to similar ideologies towards English as was found in Leppänen and Pahta (2012: 149); that studying English takes away from knowing and respecting one's own mother tongue. In addition to preferring Finnish to English, *Commenter Q* seems to value other languages, such as Japanese and French, more than English. In other words, processes of language subordination can be traced in this comment, as languages such as Finnish, Japanese, and French are mystified, whereas English is trivialized (Lippi-Green, 2012: 70).

It is interesting that *Commenter Q* states that not knowing English is nothing to panic about, but simultaneously emphasizes knowing Finnish and other languages properly. Example (19) below is also interesting, as it discusses the role of English as a lingua franca and emphasizes its place in general knowledge. Therefore, the disagreement with *Commenter Q* is indubitable. Nevertheless, conformity with *Commenter Q*'s arguments about the importance of Finnish as a mother tongue is also apparent. Therefore, Example (19) is only partly opposing *Commenter Q*.

Example (19)

CommenterR



Mitähän sä nyt oikein skitsoat?

Lingua franca on ollut koko sivistyneessä maailmassa jo yli puoli vuosisataa englanti. Onko se sitten paras/kaunein/monimuotoisin/helpoin kieli, niin se lienee yksilön makuasia. Mutta valitan, länsimaissa se on _yleisin_ kieli ja sen osaaminen on osa niin yleissivistystä kuin kulttuuria.

Mutta siitä olen samaa mieltä, että hakoteillä ovat nämä teinit, jotka eivät ymmärrä oman äidinkieltänsä (suomen) monimuotoisuutta. Sarjakuvapiireissä on saanut kyllästymiseen saakka kuulla kuinka Iina-Pertti ja Olli-Tarja 12wee mielummin lukevat Takahashia (japanilainen sarjakuvataiteilija, julkaisee teoksensa japaniksi) "alkuperäiskielellä" englanniksi kuin suomeksi, kun finish be so ugly.

Usein ne, jotka halveeraavat suomea, ovat kielitaidottomia niin omalla äidinkielellään kuin englanniksi. Mutta se englanti kuulostaa "paremmalta" korvaan, koska sitä ymmärtää huomommin ja kliseydet antaa tällöin anteeksi, koska niitä ei ole oppinut tunnistamaan.

[Lainaa](#)

(Eng. Commenter T: What are you freaking out about?)

English has been the lingua franca in the whole civilized world for over half a century. Whether it is the best/most beautiful/most versatile language depends on each individual's taste. But I'm sorry, in Western countries it is _the most common_ language and knowing it is a part of both general knowledge and culture.

But I have to agree with you there that these teenagers who do not understand the versatility of their own language (Finnish) are lost. In comic book circles, one has heard to the point of getting sick how Iina-Pertti and Olli-Tarja rather read Takahashi (a Japanese comic book artist, publishes her work in Japanese) "in the original language" English rather than in Finnish because Finnish be so ugly.

Often those who demean Finnish lack language skills in both their own mother tongue as well as in English. But English sounds "better" to one's ear because one understands it less, and clichés are in these cases forgiven because one has not learnt to recognize them.)

Commenter R reacts to *Commenter Q*'s claims about English not being a part of general knowledge by stating that English is used as a lingua franca in the "civilized world." Moreover, they argue that English is the most common language in the Western countries and thus it is also a part of our culture. The status of English is presented as a universal fact, and *Commenter R* argues that personal opinions about English do not change this fact. Initially, one could conclude that this reasoning reflects a very neutral language ideological view about English and that *Commenter R*'s stance on the debate is that English is a natural part of Finnish society and culture. However, some arguably problematic notions can be tracked in Example (24). By connecting English to only the "civilized world" and "Western countries," *Commenter R* gives a rather narrow perspective about the status of English as a lingua franca worldwide; instead of addressing it as a global language, English is seen as a Western language. By this, *Commenter R* links the civilized world only to the Western countries and, therefore, implies that English is part of the culture in only these countries. In other words, gatekeeping is presented here on a more global level. Ironically, it could be argued that *Commenter R* is reflecting similar excessive admiration of the English-speaking societies as the kind *Commenter Q* was criticizing.

Yet, *Commenter R* agrees with *Commenter Q*'s concerns of young people not appreciating their own mother tongue, in this case Finnish. Again, overrating English is linked to young people, when *Commenter R* refers to 12-year-old comic book readers who decide to read Japanese comics in English instead of Finnish. *Commenter R* claims that this happens, because these teenagers think that English is 'the original language' of the comics and that they consider Finnish ugly. Other, arguably more common reasons for reading comic books in English, such as their better availability or the fans desire to practice English by reading, are not mentioned in *Commenter R*'s comment. Therefore, erasure of the different motivations to use English can be witnessed here. In addition, *Commenter R* suggests that those who do not appreciate Finnish

are not fluent in any language; they just prefer English because not knowing all the “clichés” in English makes it sound better and more exotic.

Commenter R's stance on using English instead of Finnish reflects an ideal of parallel monolingualism – seeing languages as individual entities to be used in specific times, spaces and contexts. On one hand, they seem to accept the status of English as lingua franca, though from a rather narrow perspective. On the other hand, they argue that for example reading comic books in English means that Finnish is not appreciated; even though *Commenter R* rationalizes this by saying that kids read comic books in English, because they think Finnish is ugly, it still implies that doing this kind of cultural activity in language other than Finnish decreases the appreciation and knowledge of Finnish. While it is plausible that not appreciating one's own native language can project problems in learning onto other languages, too, one can also argue that *Commenter R* gives little credit to young people practicing English.

Commenter R criticizes *Commenter Q* for questioning the usefulness of English and language skills in general; however, this is not the only notion by *Commenter Q* that faces negative feedback. In Example (20), the view that English is not a compulsory school subject is being disputed.

Example (20)

Commenter S

Samperin pölvästit, Suomessa ei ole mitään pakkoenglantia peruskoulussa eli siltä pohjalta ihan turha ihmetellä jos joku ei sitä kieltä osaa. Ei se kuulu mihinkään yleissivistykseen ja tässä yhteiskunnassa kyllä pärjää ihan loistavasti ilman kielipäätäkin, ihmisillä on omat osaamisalueensa.

Hemmettiäkö siitä vatvotte, suurin osa kun ei ymmärrä oman kielensä rikkauksia. Ja tuon rappeutuvan englanninkielisen yhteiskunnan ihannointi on suoraan sanottuna melko sairaalloista, herätkää ja opetelkaa vaikka japania tai ranskaa...

Ai miteniin ei ole Suomessa pakkoenglantia peruskoulussa? Missähän koulussa sinä olet ollut, varmaan elämän koulussa.

Kyllä noin paska englannin taito on Suomessa häpeä.

Ps. Jos joku idiootti uskaltaa huomauttaa mahdollisista virheistä viestissäni ja sanoa että ironia iski tms., niin työntäköön lapion takapuoleensa.

(Eng. Oh how come there's no compulsory English in comprehensive school in Finland? I wonder which school you went to, probably the school of life...

English skills that shitty are shameful in Finland.

Ps. If some idiot has the gut to point out about the possible mistakes in my message and say that I was attacked by irony, they can shove a shovel up their bottom.)

Commenter S questions *Commenter Q*'s arguments aggressively. For example, they suggest that *Commenter Q* has received their education from "elämän koulu" (Eng. "school of life," often written also as "elämäm_koulu" to emphasize the derogatory nature by grammatical errors). Even though many people without higher education use this term of themselves, it is often used to mock and degrade people who have not studied beyond the comprehensive school and are unemployed or work in lower income jobs. The people from "elämän koulu" are suggested to be not only uneducated but also uncultured, less civilized, narrow-minded and conservative. Moreover, the school of life is sometimes connected to multiple social problems, such as alcoholism and drug abuse. Therefore, *Commenter S* is acting offensively against *Commenter Q* and suggests that *Commenter Q* is uncivilized – which is in itself quite ironic, as English is not, theoretically, compulsory in Finnish schools.

One could argue that *Commenter S* links not learning English at school to a low level of education in general. Moreover, they state that English levels "that shitty" are something to be ashamed of in Finland. On the one hand, some appreciation of the general level of English in Finland can be traced here, as one could assume they imply that Finnish people aim high while learning English. Nonetheless, they clearly state that non-standard English is a remarkably negative phenomenon. Furthermore, *Commenter S* is addressing *Maria* by stating 'English skills that shitty' – therefore, *Maria*'s English is directly evaluated as 'shitty' and the processes of her learning or using English are not considered. The gatekeeping and language policing are especially strong in *Commenter S*'s argumentation, as they state that not only is *Maria*'s English bad but it is so bad that she should feel ashamed of it.

However, *Commenter Q* and *Maria* are not the only ones *Commenter S* is addressing aggressively. Their "Ps." part, the two lines in which they warn other commenters not to mention anything about possible errors in their own comment, adds to the hateful tone. Moreover, it suggests that language policing is not allowed from anybody else except from them; therefore, one could argue that *Commenter S*'s critique against *Commenter Q* and *Maria* is hypocritical. Furthermore, *Commenter S* addresses the other site users as "idiots" – this suggests that *Commenter S* puts themselves in a higher position of authority than the rest of the commenters. Alternatively, as they are writing in Finnish and the topic of the debate is non-standard English, *Commenter S* is saying that they do not wish to receive any critical remarks on their Finnish.


Within this debate about compulsory English, *Commenter S*'s comment is directly cited three times, and several other comments refer to it indirectly. While the original comment by *Commenter Q* still triggers most of the citations, this sub-debate solely focusing on compulsory English is interesting. The aggressive tone of their comment is on at least one occasion answered to in almost as offensive a manner, as can be seen in Example (21).

Example (21)

Commenter T



Ja taas väännetään samasta asiasta. "Kyllä meidän koulussa on pakkoenkku!!", "jaa no ei meillä vaan, teillä on joku ihme koulu!11!" Seuraavaksi tulee esiin varmaan amis vs. lukio, ja sitten naiset vs. miehet ja niin se jatkuu.

Ei se, että ei osaa englantia kunnolla, ole sen kummempaa kuin ettei osaa kunnolla ruotsia tai vaikka matematiikkaa. Kaikilla ei ole hyvä kielipää, huomaahan sen jo joidenkin ihmisten äidinkielen tasostakin. Toinen syy on motivaation puute peruskoulussa, ja myöhemässä elämässä asiasta piittaamattomuus. "En mä nyt enää rupee mitään opettelemaan." Jos tämä ihan oikeasti yllättää teidät, enpä haluaisi päästää teitä sieltä Jumalan seljän takaa tänne oikeaan maailmaan, missä on suurempiakin ongelmia kuin se, ettei joku  pikkuteini osaa englantia.

Lainaa

(Eng. And again the same thing is being mulled over about. "English IS compulsory in OUR school!!," "oh well we don't have it, your school is weird!11!" Vocational school vs. upper secondary school is probably brought up next, then women vs. men and so it goes on.

The fact that someone does not know English properly is no stranger than someone not knowing Swedish or mathematics, for example. Not everybody is talented in languages, one can tell it based on some people's level in their own mother tongue. Another reason for it is lack of motivation in comprehensive school, and later in life it is not caring about the matter. "I am not going to start learning anything now at this point." If this really surprises you, I would not want to let you from behind God's back here in the real world where there are bigger problems than the fact than some X-year-old little teen does not know English.)

Commenter T expresses their frustration about the compulsory English debate and implies that it leads to the insistence on the negative impact of other factors on the learning of English, such as education after comprehensive school, and gender. However, *Commenter T* also insinuates that this debate is, at least in their opinion, futile. They state that the main reasons for not learning English and other languages include the lack of talent and motivation, as well as of energy and interest to learn, especially after the school years. *Commenter T* presents this as natural and inevitable and as something not to be worried about. Furthermore, they argue that puzzling over not learning English, while referring to *Maria* as a "little teen," is petty from the other commenters, as they state that "there are bigger problems" in the real world.

Again, the knack for languages and talent to learn languages is brought up. Furthermore, languages are seen from the point of view of school subjects, as was witnessed before in the case of some of the previous examples. While this is plausibly a problematic perspective because it simplifies the cognitive and social processes of second and foreign language acquisition, *Commenter T* is still defending *Maria* to some extent, as they imply that it is not of great concern or anything to mock about if people do not know English. However, *Maria* is, again, seen as a ‘little teen’ – therefore, she is not being taken seriously by *Commenter T*, either. *Commenter T* also suggests that knowing English is not a particularly useful skill in later life. The phrase ‘I’m not going to start learning anything now at this point,’ and the remark that the ‘real world’ is not concerned with a young woman’s English skills shows *Commenter T*’s stance on the matter: that one can cope without English.

Nevertheless, as discussed above, nine out of 16 comments that suggest English as not especially useful in Finland and even in other contexts face critique. Similarly to Example (19), Example (22) discusses the role of English as a lingua franca. In Example (22), however, *Commenter U* argues against *Commenter T*’s notions of English not being useful.

Example (22)

Commenter U

Joo, eiköhän ilman englanninkielen taitoa pärjää, jos aikoo oikeasti elää koko elämänsä täällä takapajulassa, eikä aio koskaan edes matkustella, eikä aio tehdä työtä mikä vaatii englanninkielen taitoa (suurin osa töistä vaatii ainakin jonkuntasoista) Eikä mulla muuta.

(Eng. Yeah, I think one can cope without any skills in English if one really plans to stay here in the middle of nowhere for their whole life, and is never going to even travel, or have a job that requires no competence in English (most of the jobs require at least some level) And that’s all I have.)

Commenter U’s tone is quite ironic and sarcastic. They state that one copes without English if one plans to stay ‘here in the middle of nowhere’ – probably referring to the whole of Finland - and if one is not going to travel or work in a field requiring competence in English. *Commenter U* is implying that this scenario is unlikely in modern, globalizing Finland. ‘And that’s all I have.’ the comment concludes, in an ironic tone, as *Commenter U* had several arguments for the usefulness of English. “Eikä mulla muuta” (‘And that’s all I have.’) is usually a humble utterance implying that there is nothing more to say about the matter discussed, and that even the things said are not overly important. Furthermore, *Commenter U* is emphasizing that they are indeed being sarcastic by writing “most of the jobs require at least some level” in brackets to clarify their point. *Commenter U* is not only stating that English is a part of general

knowledge – they suggest that English is, in fact, a requirement in many aspects of even Finnish “middle of nowhere” life.

The debate about the status of English in Finnish contexts, varying from the role of English in foreign language education in Finland to English as a lingua franca needed in Finnish working and social life, was discussed in this section. The debate proved to be heated, as there are, for example, several opposing views on English as a compulsory subject alone. In other words, as discussed above, these comments move beyond discussing merely *Maria*'s posts and non-standard English to expressing ideological stances on the role of English in Finland, as well as English in relation to other languages, especially Finnish. While some of the comments showing sympathy towards *Maria*, they also belittle the importance of English in Finnish society. On the other hand, a few comments showing appreciation towards English as a lingua franca also view *Maria*'s English negatively. Therefore, the commenters' stances towards English are quite complex. In the last section of the analysis and as a final category, I will analyze the comments discussing the ways and contexts in which Finnish people should use and practice English.

4.5 Practicing and using English

In the final section of the analysis, I will discuss the comments examining practicing and using English. The comments in this category focus on the use of English by Finnish people, and exchange views on how Finnish people should practice English. In other words, the comments argue which contexts and in which ways are the most suitable for practicing English. Moreover, these comments discuss the different contexts Finnish people use English in, link practicing English into these contexts and finally argue which contexts are good for practicing and using English and other languages. Even though this category is the smallest in number with eight comments, we can see strong opposing views. Out of these eight comments, three comments argue that *Maria* is deliberately making herself look ridiculous by writing in English on social media, and thus revealing her lack of English skills. Furthermore, the suitable places for practicing English are limited, and one should not use English in public spaces if one's language skills are not satisfactory enough. However, five comments argue that any practice develops one's skills in communicating in a foreign language. These comments state that the best way to practice English is to use it and encourage, as well as defend *Maria*. Moreover, these five comments argue that the Finnish culture is particularly demotivating regarding foreign language

learning, and it leads to Finnish people being afraid to use language before they are certain of their language skills being close to perfect.

Interestingly, the three comments stating that English should not be practiced in public and in social media contexts usually argue directly against the comments encouraging Maria. Therefore, as they come in later in the comment field and the debate, I will analyze the comments encouraging and defending *Maria's* use of English first. Example (23) is one of the comments that defend Maria and emphasize the importance of using language to learn it. Even though Example (23) is referred to several times in other comments, *Commenter V* themselves start their argument by referring to one previous comment on the platform.

Example (23)

Commenter V

Nyt alan tajuta tatuointimokat paremmin. Jotkut ei vaan osaa mutta tekee silti. But hey, don't be a donor! You'll learn!

Näinhän se on – virheitä tekemällä oppii.

Tämä suomalaisugrilainen selkään puukotus minua vähän nyppii. heti ollaa polkemassa suohon, jos kaikki ei ole täydellistä heti alussa. Auttaisitte kaveria hädässä, ettekä vittuilis.

Ylellä pyöri taannoin dokkari, Kansankodin kuokkavieraat tjs. Eräs ruotsiin töiden perässä mennyt kitetty minusta aika hyvin Suomalaisuuden siirtolaisena ruotsissa. Hän totes jota kuinkin näin, "Kun Italialainen muuttaa Ruotsiin, ensimmäiset viikot se puhuu käsillään. Siten se puhuu käsillään ja molottaa jotain käsittämätöntä ja kolmen kuukauden kuluttua se puhuu sujuvaa ruotsia. Kun Suomalainen muuttaa Ruotsiin ja tietää ettei se osaa kunnolla sanoa jotain sanaa, se ei sitä sano. Ei varmasti sano, vaikka mikä olis. Suomalainen saattaa olla 40 vuotta Ruotsissa, eikä se oo koko aikana oppinut puhumaan Ruotsia."

Tätä kavereiden ja maanmiesten kommentointia yit lukiessa, ymmärtää miksi Suomalainen on hiljaa ummikkona 40 vuotta.

[Lainaa](#)

(Eng. Original comment: Now I'll start to get the tattoo fails better. Some people just do not know how but do it anyway. But hey Maria, don't be a donor! You'll learn!

Commenter U: That's how it is - one learns by making mistakes

This Finno-Ugric backstabbing is somewhat bugging me. immediately, you are discouraged if everything is not perfect already in the beginning. You should help a friend in need and not just slag them off.

Yle ran a documentary a while ago, 'The Gatecrashers of the People's Home.' One person who moved to Sweden for a job encapsulated what it is like to be a Finn in Sweden. He said it roughly like this, "When an Italian moves to Sweden, he talks with his hands for the first few weeks. Then he talks with his hands and babbles something incomprehensible, and after three months he speaks fluent Swedish. When a Finn moves to Sweden and knows that he can't say one word properly, he won't say it. Definitely won't say it, no matter what. A Finn may live 40 years in Sweden and not learn Swedish during the whole time."

When you read this commentary above made by friends and countrymen, you understand why a Finn is being silent and monolingual for 40 years.)

Commenter V is referring to the original comment saying “don’t be a donor! You’ll learn!” (note: Finnish language has the same word for a blood donor and for someone who gives up, in other words *Maria* is ironically urged to not give up). The original comment is not, for the most part, encouraging towards *Maria*, as it states that ‘some people just do not know how but do it anyway’ and compares *Maria*’s English to humorous tattoos containing non-standard English. However, even though it is most likely stated ironically, the original comment encourages *Maria* to continue learning English. *Commenter V* takes this specific remark and shows agreement by writing: ‘one learns by making mistakes.’ However, *Commenter V* suggests that this idea of learning by making mistakes is not approved in Finnish culture. Moreover, they link this ‘back-stabbing’ to the Finno-Ugric nature specifically, even though similar mockery against non-standard English occurs also on international platforms (e.g. Virén, 2016, Bogetic, 2016).

However, the comparison between Finnish people and representatives of other nationalities abroad, in this case Sweden, is interesting. By referring to an outside source, a documentary showed in Yle (The Finnish Broadcasting Company), *Commenter V* bases their views on a relatively reliable source. By retelling a story of an Italian and a Finn moving to Sweden and concluding that the Italian learns Swedish easily by first relying on gestures and their own native language. In contrast, a Finn does not follow the same method, as they are afraid of ridicule due to not saying one word perfectly. *Commenter V* claims that this behaviour has its roots in the Finnish culture and that this fear is embedded in us; everything that is not perfect is commented on negatively, and, thus, learners of a new language are discouraged already in the beginning. Interestingly, *Commenter V* does not express strong opinions on *Maria* or her English – they merely suggest that it is not yet perfect, but instead of making remarks of the mistakes and errors, the commenters should ‘help a friend in need’. However, even these small remarks reflect somewhat similar ideologies as suggested by Pitkänen-Huhta (Leppänen, 2017) of language policing being harmful and non-standard English being a natural part of language learning process.

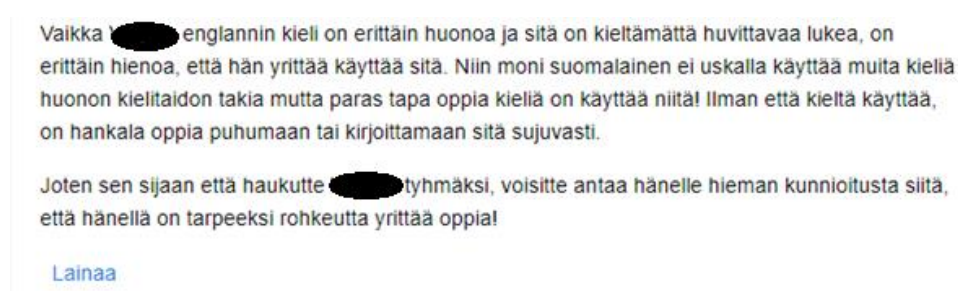
In addition to expressing their views on the Finnish cultural environment being discouraging for language learners, *Commenter V* directly criticizes other commenters. ‘You should help a friend in need and not just slag them off’ is a scolding remark towards the debate going on in the platform; in addition, it tries to appeal to the other commenters’ sense of solidarity and empathy. Yet, this idea of solidarity is also used ironically in the last statement made by *Commenter V*. By addressing the other commenters as ‘friends and countrymen’ while referring

to the previous, mocking comments, *Commenter V* shows that the sense of solidarity and encouraging atmosphere is truly lacking in the context of this comment field.

In Example (24), ideological stance on emphasizing the importance of using foreign languages in order to learn them properly is, again, apparent. Moreover, *Commenter W* makes a distinction between considering *Maria's* posts and her use of English amusing and discouraging *Maria* herself.

Example (24)

Commenter W



(Eng. Even though *Maria's* English is very bad and it is undoubtedly amusing to read it, it is amazing that she tries to use it. So many Finnish people do not have the courage to use other languages due to bad language skills but the best way to learn languages is to use them! Without using a language, it is difficult to learn how to speak or write it fluently.

So instead of calling *Maria* stupid, you could pay her a little respect for having enough courage to try to learn!)

Commenter V criticized other commenters for mocking and ridiculing *Maria*; the same phenomenon can be seen in Example (24). However, in addition to scolding the other commenters, *Commenter W* defends and appraises *Maria* for having the courage to use and practice English. Nevertheless, *Commenter W* considers *Maria's* English 'very bad' and amusing; therefore, while they express similar opinions on *Maria's* English as the mocking comments, *Commenter W* states that non-standard English alone does not justify linguistic gatekeeping. Moreover, they criticize other commenters for calling *Maria* stupid and suggest that instead of criticizing her, she should be respected for trying to learn. Therefore, even though *Commenter W* does not present any possible reasons for *Maria's* English, it can be argued that they do not link non-standard English to cognitive reasons such as a low level of intelligence.

Commenter W emphasizes the communicative aspect of language and language learning, as they state that 'the best way to learn languages is to use them.' Moreover, they argue that Finnish people especially are afraid to use languages because of bad language skills. This is an interesting notion, as Finnish people study, and have studied for a relatively long time in Finnish

history, several languages during their education. (Leppänen et al, 2011: 20). Therefore, it is possible that *Commenter W* does not refer to real bad language skills but to the perceived lack of linguistic competence and similar excessive self-criticism as argued in Example (23). It could be thus argued that *Commenter W* encourages people to use foreign languages, even when the speaker's proficiency is not perfect.

Commenter W's arguments for encouraging and respecting Maria are challenged in Example (25) below. The idea of practicing English by writing Facebook posts is criticized. Moreover, the use of English on Facebook at all is questioned.

Example (25)

Commenter Y



No eihän kaikkea kaikki voi osata, ei siinä mitään, mutta sitä en todellakaan ymmärrä miksi pitää kirjoittaa FB statusensa englanniksi jos ei englantia osaa. Tai ylipäätään englanniksi jos fb-kaverit ovat suomalaisia. Sitten jos on kovin kansainvälinen kaveripiiri niin sitten ymmärrän, tosin silloinkin suosittelisin kirjoittamaan molemmilla kielillä, niin nekin tajuaa, jotka ei sitä englantia niin hyvin osaa.

Ja tuskin sitä kieltä tosiaan oppii pelkillä fb-statusilla, että kielen oppiminen tuskin on syy tällaisiin statusiin. Ja sanoihan hän itsekin että kirjoittaa niin siksi koska se kuulostaa mukamas coolimalta. No ei kuulosta vaan nololta. Ja jos haluaa opiskella englantia niin opiskele, lue englanniksi, katso englanninkielisiä ohjelmia, pelaa englanninkielisiä pelejä jne.

Tosta tulee mieleen mun ex joka puhui julkisissa liikennevälineissä ruotsia. Aina ne samat lauseet (tais olla kyllä, ei, en tiedä ja jäädään tällä pysäkillä ruotsiks) ja mua nolotti. Tuli sellanen olo että se haluaa ihmisten luulevan itseään suomenruotsalaiseksi tai jotain ja itse väitti että muka puhuu sitä koska haluaa oppia. Toistamalla aina samoja lauseita? jooopa joo...

[Lainaa](#)

(Eng. Well one cannot know everything, there is nothing to it, but I just do not understand why one has to write one's FB status updates in English if one does not know it. Or in English in general if fb-friends are Finnish. If one has an international group of friends, I understand, although even then I would recommend writing in both languages so those who do not know English that well will get it, too.

And it is unlikely that one learns English from FB statuses only, so learning is probably not the reason behind these updates. And she said it herself that she writes like that because she thinks it sounds cooler to her. Well it does not sound cool, it sounds embarrassing. If you want to study English, study, read in English, watch programmes in English, play games in English and so on.

That reminds me of my ex who spoke Swedish on public transport. Always the same phrases (I think they were 'yes,' 'no,' 'I don't know' and 'let's hop off in this stop' in Swedish) and I was embarrassed. I felt like they wanted other people to think they were Fenno-Swede or something and they themselves claimed they spoke it because they wanted to learn. By repeating the same phrases? yeah right...)

Commenter Y argues that writing Facebook posts is not an effective tool for learning English. Moreover, *Commenter Y* questions using English in Facebook at a general level, too, if one has

only Finnish friends. Even if one has international friends, *Commenter Y* states that they would prefer writing both in English and Finnish, ‘so those who do not know English that well will get it too.’ Therefore, it can be argued that *Commenter Y* sees English as a means of communication only if the communication participants do not understand Finnish. Moreover, as they add that even in those kinds of situations Finnish should be used alongside, *Commenter Y* implies that using only English in social media is, to some extent, discriminating. This would insinuate that *Commenter Y*’s ideological stance reflects features of separate multilingualism, as they suggest there are specific platforms and situations for each language.

Implications for the right to use English only when a certain level of fluency is reached are visible in *Commenter Y*’s arguments. Unlike some other commenters, *Commenter Y* does not express frustration or disbelief towards *Maria*’s non-standard English per se, as they state that ‘one cannot know everything’ and suggest that this is only natural. However, they question the actual use of non-standard English; they state that English should be practiced by reading and listening before one can start to produce it. Advice on how to learn English effectively instead of writing on Facebook are given. *Commenter Y* does not, however, justify this knowledge by e.g. personal experience or any other sources. In addition to considering making Facebook posts in non-standard English a bad way to learn English, *Commenter Y* thinks it is ‘embarrassing’ and implies that *Maria*’s motivations to use English in her status updates are ridiculous. Comparable findings were discovered in Kytölä and Westinen (2015) study of non-standard vernacular English in Twitter; Finns using English in social media are occasionally considered inauthentic, fake, and annoying.

However, *Commenter Y* explains why they think using a language without actually knowing it is embarrassing by connecting *Maria* to their ex-partner who used only some phrases of Swedish despite not being a Fenno-Swede (a Swedish-speaking Finn). *Commenter Y* states that they felt embarrassed and questioned the use of a second language even then, as they write “I felt like they wanted other people to think they were Fenno-Swede or something and they themselves claimed they spoke it because they wanted to learn.” Again, they link using a language other than Finnish to “show off” behaviour and implies that people use languages in order to pretend to be something else than they actually are.

Commenter W is directly cited and criticized also in Example (26). Similarly to Example (25), Facebook is not considered a suitable context to practice foreign languages. Moreover, personal

experience on practicing and using English is given and based on that experience, more suitable means to practice one's language skills are suggested.

Example (26)

Commenter X

Anteeksi:

Vaikka [REDACTED] englannin kieli on erittäin huonoa ja sitä on kieltämättä huvittavaa lukea, on erittäin hienoa, että hän yrittää käyttää sitä. Niin moni suomalainen ei uskalla käyttää muita kieliä huonon kielitaidon takia mutta paras tapa oppia kieliä on käyttää niitä! Ilman että kieltä käyttää, on hankala oppia puhumaan tai kirjoittamaan sitä sujuvasti.

Joten sen sijaan että haukutte [REDACTED] tyhmäksi, voisitte antaa hänelle hieman kunnioitusta siitä, että hänellä on tarpeeksi rohkeutta yrittää oppia!

Voin kyllä kokemuksesta kertoa (takana 3.5v englanninkielisessä yhteisössä, saavuin ala-aste tason englannilla) että facebook päivitysten postaaminen ei auta englannin parantamisessa. Jos sitä oikeasti haluaisi saada paremmaksi, kannattaisi lukea muun muassa englanninkielisiä sanomalehtiä netistä. Mutta postausten julkaseminen kielellä jota ei osaa ei kerro mitä on kirjottanu väärin, joten sehän on sama ku yrittäis oppii piirtämään hienosti, muttei ikinä kysyis niiden ihmisten mielipidettä jotka taidon jo omaavat.

(Eng. I can tell from experience (gone through 3.5 years in an English-speaking community, I arrived with elementary school -level English) that posting Facebook updates does NOT help in improving English. If one really wants to improve one's English, one should read e.g. English newspapers online. But making posts in a language that one does not know does not give away what one has written wrong, so that is close to trying to learn to draw well without asking for opinion from people who already have that skill.).

Commenter X argues that using English in the context of posting on Facebook does not improve one's English. They state that it is impossible to improve in English by posting in English on social media if one does not receive, or even ask for, any feedback and thus know what one has written wrong. *Commenter X* give this statement and position themselves as an authority by telling that they themselves have developed from having poor skills in English by living in an English-speaking community; in other words, they claim that they have superior knowledge in how languages should be learned in a 'correct' way. They give reading newspapers in English as an example of improving English; that is to say, *Commenter X* shows a very different view of the language learning process than *Commenter W*. *Commenter X* suggests that before one can produce something in a foreign language, one must reach a certain level of fluency by practicing other skills, such as reading comprehension. Moreover, before and while using and producing English, one should ask for feedback from those proficient in English, as only then one can learn from one's mistakes.

While reading in English and receiving appropriate feedback on one's language skills indubitably are valid tools for enhancing second language learning, *Commenter X's* arguments show strict language policing and gatekeeping. They imply that the use of English, at least on Facebook, should not occur before reaching a certain level of fluency or before asking for feedback from those more skilful in English. Ironically, *Commenter X* does not consider the social and communicative aspect of Facebook; Maria receives feedback about her posts from her Facebook friends who, presumably, are more skilled in English. It seems, however, that this feedback should be asked for before posting anything. Nevertheless, considering Facebook an unsuitable means for using English could also be seen in in Valppu's study (2013): using English in Facebook is often seen as showing off and ungrammatical English as embarrassing. One could argue that *Commenter X* views *Maria's* English as a norm violation on Facebook; thus, their reaction goes in line with Tagg et al's (2017) findings on the context-dependency of Facebook. In other words, *Commenter X* presents their own views on the occasions in Facebook contexts English is allowed, even though no written rules of this actually exist.

In this final section of the analysis, I have examined comments discussing different ways of practicing and using English by Finnish people. While most of the comments in this section encourage using and practicing English regardless of the context and one's language skills, some comments limit the right to use English to specific contexts and means of practicing. In other words, one's English has to be good enough and the context has to be suitable before one can use English or other foreign languages. The ways of practicing English are limited to self-studying, such as reading and listening, whereas communicating is not encouraged. Especially social media and Facebook are considered unsuitable for practicing English and using non-standard English. Thus, linguistic gatekeeping is undisguised in these comments.

I have now discussed the *osataan enkkuu* comments and their language ideological stances from the perspective of five different thematic categories and the ways in which these stances are articulated. Furthermore, in these categories, the language ideological debate occurring in the comment field been considered. In other words, the comments in each thematic category reflected different, often opposing stances towards Maria, non-standard English and English in general. The debate aspect is not obvious in every category, as, for example, comments expressing merely emotional reactions without commenting on other aspect of Maria's posts rarely raised any heated opposing counter-comments. However, different ideological stances were detected in every thematic category.

As argued above, the ways in which language ideologies were articulated, as well as the ways of defending and criticizing Maria varied greatly. On one hand, *Maria*'s posts were criticized by utilizing, for example, parodic imitation and entextualization of popular culture material creatively. On the other hand, *Maria* was defended by referring to the importance of communicative aspects in foreign language learning, as well as belittling the value of knowing English in Finnish society.

The negative stances towards non-standard English can be roughly summed as follows: *Maria*'s English and non-standard English in general is viewed ridiculous, inauthentic, exceedingly unpleasant, and a sign of low intellectuality. There are also negative stances towards English in general. For example, English is viewed useless in Finnish contexts, and people who value English are blamed for overly glorifying Anglo-American culture. Interestingly, there are no comments expressing a truly positive stance towards non-standard English; instead, non-standard English is considered mildly humorous and different. However, the users of non-standard English are sympathized with, and various reasons for non-standard English and not learning foreign languages easily are given. Moreover, ideological stances about learning English and other foreign languages are expressed in the comments. Some comments argue that English is a simple language and thus non-standard English is unacceptable. An opposing stance to this is that English is, as well as any other language, challenging for those who do not have the "knack for languages."

The different ideological stances articulated in the context of the *osataan enkkuu* comment field have now been discussed. However, the findings of the study in relation to research aims, research questions, and previous research in more detail is yet to be discussed and evaluated. In addition, I will discuss the implications and applications of the study from the perspectives of contributing to the academic field, foreign language education and language policies, and issues in a broader communal as well as societal level. Moreover, the execution of the present study will be evaluated limitations of the study will be presented. Finally, possibilities for further research will be discussed and exemplified.

5 DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to conduct a case study and examine the different language ideologies and the language ideological debate in one of the Feissarimokat *osataan enkkuu* posts' comment field. This aim was crystallized in the following research questions:

1. What kind of ideological stances about (non-standard) English, the use of English and users of English are expressed and debated over in the *osataan enkkuu* comments?
2. How are these articulated?
 - a. How are the original posts and poster criticized?
 - b. How are these defended?

In order to answer the research questions, the following methods were used: online ethnography, qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, and the theories of entextualization and stance. Moreover, in examining how Maria's posts were criticized, entextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990, Leppänen et al 2014) and processes related to it, such as parodic imitation, were utilized in the analysis. The qualitative content analysis was conducted from a conventional (Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1277), also known as inductive approach (Graneheim et al. 2017: 30). Moreover, the comments were analyzed by using latent thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 84). In other words, the comments were divided into five categories, the themes of which rose from phenomena detected in the data.

As shown in detail in the analytical section of the present study, there are multiple language ideological stances in the comment field, addressing a variety of themes. Moreover, the ways in which the comment field participants express these stances are diverse and often creative. Even though occurring trends were detected in the comments, it can be argued that no ruling language ideology is possible to nominate in the context of this platform. This, as well as the other findings concerning the different language ideological stances and the language ideologies they reflect, will be unraveled and discussed in more detail with respect to my two research questions and in relation to previous research. Next, the implications and applications, both to academic research as well as to practitioners in education and broader community, of

the present study will be considered. Lastly, I will evaluate the conduction of the present study and discuss the possibilities for further research in this field.

5.1 Findings in relation to the research questions and previous research

As mentioned above, the comments were analyzed from the perspective of five different thematic categories; the themes of which rose from the trends discovered in the comment field. The comments were divided into comments that expressed emotional reactions, comments evaluating *Maria's* English, comments discussing reasons for *Maria's* non-standard English, comments discussing the status of English in Finland, and comments discussing different ways of practicing and using English. Within each category, it was evident that there are different stances in each theme of the comment field, and, thus, various sides to the occurring language ideological debate. Nevertheless, I will discuss the findings, in other words the different language ideological stances and their articulation. Moreover, the language ideologies the comments reflect will be analyzed, alongside with the different phenomena related to language ideology formation.

One of the most frequently expressed ideological stances in the comment field is that non-standard English, or at least *Maria's* English, is considered ridiculous. This is especially evident in the comments in the evaluative and emotional categories. This stance was articulated in various ways: for example, *Maria's* English is recontextualized by imitating it in a parodic way. What the parodic imitation does in practice is reshaping features of *Maria's* English into intentionally non-standard 'Tarzan-like' English by the commenters, implying that *Maria's* posts are ridiculous. This kind of parodic imitation simplifies *Maria's* writing and mocks her register. This formation of parodic imitation of a register is also evident in Stæhr (2014: 172) and demands, arguably, a high level of reflexivity. In other words, in comments including parodic imitation, the commenters indirectly evaluate *Maria's* linguistic ability and compare it to their own. In addition to the comments utilizing parodic imitation, views of *Maria's* English as ridiculous are also apparent in comments recontextualizing popular culture material in a parodic way. For example, this is the case in comments in which *Maria* and her English are compared to uses of non-standard English in popular culture. As the recontextualized non-standard English, for example Yoda's or Dolan Duck's register in these comments can already be considered iconic, *Maria's* non-standard English is also iconized. In addition to comparing *Maria's* English to non-standard English used by fictional characters, her English is also

compared to utterances made by real people and Internet catchphrases. While these comments are also mocking and, arguably, spiteful, they also showcase that non-standard English is not a new phenomenon nor specific for only *osataan enkkuu* context.

Comments considering *Maria* and her English ridiculous reflect several phenomena and processes in the language ideological theory. For example, the processes of erasure and iconicity by Irvine and Gal (1995) are evident especially in the parodying comments and comments that recontextualized popular culture material. In these ways of parody, *Maria*'s English is iconized. *Maria*'s English is considered ridiculous, so that she herself, together with her register are made an icon of ridiculousness and silliness. At the same time, the process of her learning English and her motivations to use English are erased. Therefore, non-standard English and the use of non-standard English, at least in *Maria*'s case, is not considered a complex process but simplified into a silly parody. Similar iconicity is also evident in the linguistic practices of characters in Bencomo's (2013: 28) data. For example, *Maria* is iconized to simple and child-like, similarly to the character of Andrew, who speaks simplified Catalan, and is thus represented as simple-minded.

Moreover, regarding Lippi-Green's (2012: 70) language subordination process elements, it could be argued that the comments see *Maria* as a not conforming to the standard language and thus marginalize her into a ridiculous character. Lastly, the parody of *Maria*'s English resonates with the case *altan* in Kytölä (2008: 266); even though there is no exact evidence of commenters creating a specific register out of *Maria*'s non-standard English nor is her English shaped into a long-running joke for the whole comment field community, it is apparent that some features are parodied uniformly by several commenters.

Also among the most debated stances in the comment field is stating that *Maria*'s non-standard English is due to her stupidity. This is, of course, the most evident in the comments discussing different reasons for *Maria*'s non-standard English. This is supported by arguments stating that, as a young woman, *Maria* must have studied English for several years. Moreover, *Maria*'s level of English is questioned and reacted to with disbelief. The commenters questioning *Maria*'s level of English skills and blaming the lack of intellectual skills for her non-standard English rationalize this by referring to *Maria*'s age and thus the supposed fact that she must have studied English for several years. Because of this, in addition to Finnish people being well exposed to English, the commenters, in a way, demand more fluent English from *Maria*. Nevertheless, these views are also challenged. For example, the fact that English is not a compulsory subject

in the Finnish education system is stated several times. Furthermore, reasons other than stupidity, such as the conventions in second language education in Finland, lack of motivation, and the lack of so called ‘knack for languages’ are given as counterarguments to the comments questioning *Maria*’s non-standard English. Nevertheless, these counterarguments are not wholly unproblematic either. For example, arguing that some people “knack for languages” mystifies (Lippi-Green 2012: 70) English alongside with other foreign languages. In a way, by arguing that not all have what it takes to learn languages is a form of linguistic gatekeeping, too.

Ideological stances on English and the use of English in general were discovered in the analysis. Some commenters view English as a school subject among others, and, as such, not a particularly useful subject in Finland. Moreover, various negative language ideological stances similar to the ones discovered by Leppänen and Pahta (2012) were apparent in the comments. For example, comments comparing the English language to deteriorating American culture reflected similar language ideologies as some of the newspaper opinion pieces Leppänen and Pahta studied (2012: 158). Valuing other languages, especially Finnish as a native language over English is evinced in the comments; similarly, the data in Leppänen and Pahta (2012: 158) showed stances that view English as a threat to European multilingualism. Moreover, using English in certain contexts is viewed inauthentic and embarrassing. At the same time, these remarks on English as useless are contrasted with stances stating that English is a global and universal lingua franca, and that it is unlikely that English will not be needed in the modern, globalizing Finland.

Ideological stances expressing processes such as language policing, linguistic gatekeeping, and prescriptivism are expressed especially in the evaluative comments and the comments arguing stupidity as the main reasons for *Maria*’s non-standard English. The comments practicing language policing (Blommaert, 2009: 203) and linguistic gatekeeping often base negative ideologies on non-standard English and the standard language ideology (Lippi-Green 2012: 10) on normativity (Agha, 2007). Moreover, some of the elements of Lippi-Green’s language subordination process (2012: 70), such as claiming authority over language and mystification of language. In other words, non-standard English is oriented to from the perspective of the conventions of standardized language. However, these conventions are not always made clear; many commenters place themselves as authorities and specify the norms of ‘proper’ English themselves – as well as conclude that *Maria*’s use of English is not on the appropriate level.

Moreover, similar elements of “moral panic” discovered in Trotta (2010: 50) due to perceived non-standard English can be discovered in the data, as some of the commenters argue that Maria’s English is bad without rationalizing their arguments with linguistic facts. Lastly, Beal’s arguments (2010: 63) of prescriptive practices and referring to grammatical rules rather than linguistic phenomena being popular among non-linguists is evident in the data.

Ideologies on the functions of language are also mobilized in the debate. Language is, in several comments, considered merely a school subject, and knowing languages is viewed a talent. On the other hand, comments emphasizing language as a tool of communication were also detected in the comment field. Related to this notion, the function of English as an international and universal tool of communication is argued in the comments. Nevertheless, some comments do not argue other functions for English than it being a part of general knowledge. Consequently, ideologies of language learning are also expressed, and many commenters argued that acquiring languages relates to some people’s ‘natural’ tendency to learn languages easily. Comments expressing this idea often question the usefulness of knowing English or other foreign languages. Therefore, language ideologies on a societal and political level are also discussed. For example, many comments reflect the participants’ ideals of monolingualism and / or parallel monolingualism in Finland; for example, the use of English is, to many commenters, acceptable only in specific contexts. *Maria*’s motivation to use English, because she likes its sound is condemned as show-off and inauthentic, and this behavior is, arguably unjustly, connected to all Finnish teenagers. Furthermore, ideologies on English as the language of the ‘Western civilized world’ are also mobilized in the debate.

Nevertheless, more positive ideologies of English, and in fact foreign and second languages in general, are also present in the commenters’ stances. Communicative values in second language learning and usage are emphasized and using and practicing English. Comments reflecting these values encourage to use English regardless of possibly making mistakes and thus defend *Maria*. Therefore, English is also viewed as a tool of communication; interestingly, these views are emphasized in the comments that regard English as an international lingua franca, as many state using it with “foreigners” rather than with just Anglo-American or other inner circle speakers of English. Not only is the use of English defended, but also the two original posts and *Maria*. Several commenters state that it is normal to never learn to use English fluently. However, these comments imply that *Maria*’s English is bad and that her English will never be any better.

Therefore, while giving an understandable reason for the non-standard English used in the posts, it is not particularly encouraging regarding language learning or language use.

Other reasons are, however, provided in comments defending *Maria*: for example, the Finnish school system is accused of giving an unrealistic picture of one's language skills. Nonetheless, despite her English being non-standard, some comments encourage *Maria* to use and practice English. This is done through criticizing the other commenters, and Finnish people in general, for being demotivating and discouraging, as well as through emphasizing the communicative aspects of language use and language learning. While no comments claiming the English in the two posts is good or according to the standard can be traced, the defending comments provided multiple reasons for it being non-standard, as well as reasons why it should not be mocked as extensively as in the comment field.

Similarities between previous research about language ideologies, especially in online contexts, was discovered in this study. Research on international digital media, too has come up with similar findings. For example, it has been shown by Virén (2016: 80) how comments mocking non-standard English online can be aggressive. Moreover, both Virén's thesis and the present study discovered that perspective practices and referring to the standard language ideology (Lippi-Green 2012: 10) are widely used in the online data. Nevertheless, Virén, also discovered that the people behind the original posts written in non-standard English are often defended and sympathized with (2016: 83). While not leading into a national debate, the data of this current study, on the other hand, shows how two rather mundane posts written in non-standard English raise a debate concerning for example language education in Finland. Moreover, the language ideological debate on the nature of different languages, their status, and their users was, at times, as heated, aggressive, and emotional as in Vessey's study about online debate on Vancouver Olympics (2013: 677).

Starting from research focusing on how English is viewed in Finland, Leppänen et al (2011: 120) discovered that it is important for Finnish people to seem fluent while using English. In addition, while no attitudes towards non-standard English were specifically discussed, English spoken with a Finnish accent or English containing elements from Finnish are considered the most displeasing forms of English (Leppänen et al 2011: 70). Emphasizing fluency is evident in the findings of the current study, too, as non-standard English is mocked and criticized on the basis of normativity. Moreover, *Maria*'s English is compared to Finnish-based English used by other people, such as other teenagers. Moreover, in their study of language ideologies about

English in the Finnish press, Leppänen and Pahta (2012: 149) discovered that using English is sometimes considered unpatriotic. A few comments in the data of this present study stated directly that idolizing English is a negative phenomenon and leads to Finns not appreciating Finnish. However, more modern views on language learning and use emphasizing communicational aspects and learning by using language are also evident in the comments, reflecting similar ideas on dangers of language policing as Anne Pitkänen-Huhta presents (Leppänen, 2017).

Other connections to previous language ideological research conducted on Finnish contexts, especially regarding social media, are also apparent. For example, Kytölä (2012: 231) examined how non-standard English is viewed negatively, and thus the registers are mocked and the users discriminated through parodic imitation. Moreover, Kytölä and Westinen (2015: 17) state that the use of English can be considered inauthentic and unsuitable in Finnish social media contexts and, consequently, faces criticism, language policing, and gatekeeping from Finnish participants. These findings are very similar to those in the present study. They are also similar to the “mock-altanese” used collaboratively to create humour in Futisforum (Kytölä, 2012). Moreover, views about English, especially non-standard English, being unsuitable while writing on Facebook, are used especially by the comments arguing against those who encourage *Maria* to use English.

Androutsopoulos (2009: 197-198) concludes that ethnolects of German and non-standard varieties of German are iconized and seen as “bad” language that has a negative influence on the standard form; therefore, the complex processes of linguistic variability are not appreciated. A somewhat similar phenomenon is showcased in Milani’s study (2010: 124), as immigrant Swedish was iconized as sexist language use and a typical register of young men of immigrant background. Even though the focus of the present study is on English, similar ideas can be discovered in the data, as *Maria*’s English is overly simplified by many of the commenters and her language use is viewed merely as bad English, which is again linked to young Finnish women on social media. However, Blackledge (2002: 210) argues that language ideologies and thus different languages can be discussed in multiple different ways, and that language ideology formation is, in fact, not a straightforward process. In my analysis, too, I have shown how people can express both positive and negative ideological stances on English and the use of English depending on the specific context.

Lastly, the findings of this current study regarding language on social media, the normativity of Facebook, and the suitability of Facebook for writing posts in English can be connected to previous research. Similarly to what was discovered in Tagg et al (2017), the commenters position themselves according to the unwritten, though existing, rules and conventions of Facebook and argue for their opinions based on these conventions. Most of the comments addressing Facebook conventions refer to the use of English on Facebook; these comments state that English, especially non-standard English, should be avoided in Facebook posts. These comments reflect similar attitudes discussed in Valppu (2013); in both studies, her and mine, the participants sometimes consider using English in Facebook showing off and view non-standard English negatively. Even though especially written English is widely used in online contexts (Leppänen et al 2011: 111), there seems to be no uniform view on how English should be utilized on Facebook and social media in general.

5.2 Implications and applications

As mentioned in previous sections, the aim of this study is to discuss and show the articulation and mobilization of language ideologies in social media contexts. Even though the study focuses on social media settings, it can be argued that the findings have several implications with respect to the language ideological situation in Finland. For example, many commenters in the *osataan enkkuu* comment field refer to their school experiences when expressing their ideological stances. Therefore, it can be argued that the educational system in Finland has an important role in how more general language ideologies are established and maintained in Finland. Moreover, the comments referring to the school system and language education address the normative, non-communicative aspects of language use. Thus, the comments reflect rather demotivating ideas of second language education and show that Finnish people have a specific and not always a positive image of second language education in Finland.

The comments referring to school experiences often consider English first and foremost a school subject, instead of a useful tool of communication, identity formation or a necessary asset in future life. Therefore, it can be argued that the Finnish school system, at least in the commenters' case, does not encourage using or finding signs of English outside the school contexts. Alternatively, the encouragement is not registered by the pupils. The fact that several people regard English just a school subject is, while arguably somewhat alarming, useful information for the developers of the national curricula, as well as language educators (e.g.

teachers, textbook creators). Regarding English irrelevant outside the school contexts arguably reflects the need to improve EFL teaching in Finland, as many do not perhaps see the practical applications for knowing English.

Moreover, the references to Finnish people and Finnish culture being demotivating for second language learning and practicing may have implications to the second language education in Finland. Several commenters state that, in the fear of being ridiculed, they feel uncomfortable in using English, and foreign languages in general, if they are not completely sure that the element used is correct. The number of comments mocking non-standard English and showing elements of language policing and linguistic gatekeeping arguably suggests that this fear is a real one. Commenters suggest that both language policing and fear of using languages publicly is due to Finnish culture or Finnish state of mind; however, ridiculing people for their use of language is something that could and should be addressed in second language teaching. Even though second language education is always developing, these kinds of comments practicing prescriptivism and reflecting the standard language ideology insinuate that grammatical correctness is valued more than communicativeness. Therefore, in the light of this current study, different methods or reconstructing English lessons would be beneficial to pupils and students of English.

Regarding the academic contributions of the present thesis, the study provides new perspective language ideological research in online contexts, as well new information on the existing ways Finnish people argue and articulate their language ideological views. Even though Leppänen et al (2011: 80, 130) concluded that Finnish people view English, for the most part, positively, it can be argued that the present study revealed some underlying negative language ideologies towards English, especially non-standard English. Similar studies on ideologies on non-standard English in Finnish contexts could be conducted in other platforms, too. For example, the processes of entextualization and parodic imitation could be studied further in future research on language ideological debates online, as analyzing them in the present data helped uncover the language ideological stances in the more humorous comments.

However, the main implication that the findings of this current study has is that English does not have a fixed status in people's minds. Of course, this implies that people have very different personal experiences about English and its use; however, regarding the objective status of English as a lingua franca, as well as the long history of English as a foreign language education in Finland, these notions are peculiar. Moreover, the reflections of parallel monolingualism,

and valuing some languages over others imply, arguably, harmful phenomena such as linguistic discrimination and toxic nationalism.

Lastly, the findings of the present study imply that mocking, discriminating, and offending people online is socially acceptable. It must be noted, however, that the anonymity of this comment field persuades the participants to express their opinions in whatever way possible; moreover, overly provocative and offensive language is a common phenomenon on internet platforms. As argued above, discrimination based on language and language skills in internet platforms is not a new or specific for only Finnish contexts. Nevertheless, it is a phenomenon that I argue should be addressed by language educators, language policy makers, and researchers.

5.3 Limitations of the current study and future research

The present study, as a case study focusing on limited set of data, describes only a fraction of the language ideological debate occurring in the context of *Feissarimokat* website alone. The latest *osataan enkkuu* post was published on the *Feissarimokat* site in late May 2018 (in other words, quite late in the process of conducting the present study) and this post already has 68 comments. Therefore, non-standard English continues to amuse and raise debate in the site. Moreover, this thesis utilizes a post dating back a few years – therefore, it is not able to provide a current perspective onto language ideologies articulated in Finnish online contexts.

There were also limitations regarding the analytic approach of the present study. Conducting a qualitative content analysis made possible to illuminate the different language ideological themes of the debate, and analyze the different ideological stances and their articulation within each category. Even though the five categories were created based on the themes discovered in the data, it was challenging to divide some comments into a specific category. Moreover, as discussed more in detail in the analysis, some comments discussed several themes; thus, there was some overlap in categorization. In addition, while the argumentative and dialogical aspect of the data was discussed even now, the qualitative content analysis did not explore the debate as a sequential process reformed by the commenters; in doing this, conversation analysis or sequential analysis could be applied. While studying parodic imitation and entextualization of popular culture material showed underlying language ideologies in the comments utilizing these

processes, other theories and terms related to online articulation and creating online material would be beneficial regarding this type of study.

Furthermore, it must be noted that *Feissarimokat* is an entertainment site. Therefore, trolling, provoking, and parodying is arguably more common in this context than in the case of more serious social media platforms. In addition, the anonymity of the site allows the commenters to post more radical and aggressive comments without having to fear being recognized. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative research on the articulation of ideological stances in other platforms where commenters would post with their real names. Moreover, the *osataan enkkuu* title and the context of *Feissarimokat* suggests that these posts are supposed to be seen as humorous, and thus ridicule arises naturally. Hence, debate over non-standard English in a different context would hypothetically reveal differing ways of articulating ideological stances.

It must be noted that the case examined in this present study focused on posts written by one person identified as a young Finnish female. Therefore, the comments addressed this fact to some extent in their articulation, however from different perspectives; some as an amusing, not to be taken seriously deviation to the general state of the youth's English skills in Finland and some as a sign of youth language use overall Finland. Moreover, the non-standard English was discussed and debated over from a distinctly Finnish perspective. Thus, future research on ideologies of Finnish people towards non-standard English produced by people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, would arguably reveal new information on linguistic gatekeeping, language policing and language shaming. As some commenters consider Maria's non-standard English unacceptable for a Finnish person, it would be interesting if the same notions apply to people of different backgrounds and, if not, what the underlying reasons for this are.

6 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the language ideological debate in *Feissarimokat*'s *osataan enkkuu* comment field is extensive, and the commenters argue their language ideological stances on various topics and themes. The posts written in non-standard English are subjected to language policing, gatekeeping, mockery, and aggressive commentary. Moreover, the non-standard English is widely parodied through entextualizing both the original posts and material from popular culture. Nevertheless, the original posts are also defended and the original poster is sympathized with. This shows in critique targeted towards the mocking comments, the commenters expressing that they are not fluent in English either, and in encouragement to use languages despite making mistakes.

As discussed above, this present study reveals only a small portion of the language ideological debate occurring in *Feissarimokat* and in social media in general. However, I believe that this case study illuminated the specific debate. Moreover, I believe that the focus of this study was suitable for its purpose of examining the language ideological debate in Finnish social media contexts. As the findings of this study resonate the ones in previous language ideological research, I argue that this study indicates some recurring ways in which language ideologies and ideological stances are articulated in Finnish social media. In addition, I believe that the present study reveals some of the underlying views that Finnish people hold towards non-standard English, English in Finland, and the users of English.

It must be noted that the status of English is not fixed in the Finnish society. Therefore, the ideologies on English may change over time and definitions of standard and non-standard language can alter. Furthermore, as language ideologies are socially formed sets of beliefs reflecting larger, societal level discourse, they reflect the cultural and societal values of the specific time and context. Therefore, future research is needed. Furthermore, as technology, and with it social media and computer-based communication is always developing, the platforms and pathways for expressing one's opinions reform alongside.

Of course, with the development of digital communication, the norms and conventions of social media reform accordingly. Thus, regarding future research, it is important to follow this development to receive the most recent information on language ideologies mobilized in online contexts. Lastly, this information, in other words existing language ideologies and the reasons behind those beliefs, needs to be utilized in language policy development and language

education, so that the harmful phenomena related to language ideology formation, such as language policing and gatekeeping, can be traced and minimized already in second language education.

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