# "IT IS A PART OF MY IDENTITY THAT I SEE MYSELF AS A LANGUAGE PERSON": LANGUAGE IDENTITIES OF STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

Identiteettien tutkiminen on ollut suosittua jo jonkin aikaa, ja niitä on tutkittu eri aloilla psykologiasta kielitieteeseen. Identiteetit eivät voi esiintyä ilman kieltä, ja tästä syystä tämä tutkielma yhdistää kielen ja identiteetin yhdeksi tutkimuksen kohteeksi: kieli-identiteetiksi. Suomessa kieli-identiteettejä on tärkeä tutkia monikielisyyden näkökulmasta, sillä Suomi on virallisesti kaksikielinen maa, ja jokaisen oppilaan tulee opiskella suomen kielen lisäksi toista kotimaista kieltä, ruotsia. Tämän lisäksi jokaisen lapsen tulee opetella vähintään yhtä vierasta kieltä perusopetuksen aikana. Suurin osa lapsista valitsee tai joutuu valitsemaan englannin. Kansallinen kyselytutkimus englannin kielestä Suomessa toteutettiin vuonna 2007 ja sen tulokset julkaistiin 2009 (Leppänen et. al, 2009). Tutkimuksen mukaan huomattavan suuri osa vastaajista koki itsensä yksikieliseksi Suomen monikielisyydestä huolimatta. Tutkimus nosti esiin kysymyksen suomalaisten mahdollisesta asenteenmuutoksesta tulevaisuudessa kaikkien sukupolvien opiskeltua englantia. Siispä kieli-identiteettien lisäksi tämä tutkimus pyrkii tarjoamaan lisää tietoa myös yksi-, kaksi- ja monikieliseksi identifioitumisen kysymykseen.

Tässä tutkimuksessa käsitellään suomalaisessa yliopistossa englantia pääaineenaan opiskelevien opiskelijoiden kieli-identiteettejä. Kieli-identiteetit määritellään oman itsen ja kielen välisenä suhteena, jonka keskiössä ovat pätevyys, periytyvyys ja kieleen liittyvät asenteet sekä tunteet. Kieli-identiteetit nähdään moninaisina, sirpaloituneina, kontekstisidonnaisina sekä alati muuttuvina.

Tämä tutkielma kartoittaa millaisia kieli-identiteettejä neljä englannin kieltä pääaineenaan opiskelevaa opiskelijaa rakentavat haastattelun aikana. Aineistoksi kerättiin lokakuussa 2021 neljä yksilöhaastattelua, joissa haastateltavilta kysyttiin muun muassa mitä kieliä he osasivat, millaisia tunteita he liittyvät kielten käyttämiseen ja kokevatko he itsensä yksi-, kaksi- vai monikieliseksi. Aineisto analysoitiin diskursiivisella menetelmällä etsien yhteisiä teemoja. Tulosten perusteella haastateltavilla on vahva kieli-identiteetti englannin kieleen liittyen pätevyyden näkökulmasta: opiskelijat näkivät oman kielitaitonsa vahvana ja jopa natiivi-tasoisena. Muiden kielten osalta kieli-identiteetteihin liittyi puutteellisen kielitaidon diskurssi, kun taas opiskelijoiden identifioitumista kaksi- tai monikielisiksi esti ahdas käsitys kaksikielisyydestä.

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# 1    INTRODUCTION

Identity has become a central concept nowadays. Identity cannot exist outside of language, which is why the present study combines identity with language. Rather than merely focusing on identity work through language, it focuses on language identities.

In Finland's context language identities need to be studied from the point of view of multilingualism: Finland is officially a bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish being the official national languages. In addition, each child is expected to learn English in primary education, and in 2021, 91% of first grade elementary school children chose to start English as their first foreign language, A1 language (Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto ry, 2022). Thus, English is present in Finnish peoples' lives from early on. English is additionally highly pervasive in the everyday lives of students, as video games, movies, and series in addition to different media such as Youtube-content are consumed in English in their leisure time. A large-scale national survey on Finns' uses of, attitudes to and perceptions of English was conducted in the 2000s (Leppänen et al. 2009). Already in 2009 when the results were published, the context of media arose as the medium through which English was visible as a part of daily life, and this can be expected to have become even greater part of people's lives. Even though the participants had studied several languages and Finland is officially a bilingual country as was mentioned before, the participants of the national survey identified in great numbers as monolingual. Leppänen et al (2009: 149) raise a question for further study whether Finnish people will start viewing themselves as bi- or multilingual or if they will see themselves as monolinguals. This serves as a basis for the present study, as it aims to answers the question of how Finnish students of English language define themselves by researching their language identities.

Additional basis for the present study is Henry and Goddard's (2015) call for more research on the themes of their study:

Given the continuing global expansion of English language media and discourse generally, and the increase in English-medium educational offerings in particular, there is a need for research that investigates the ways in which experiences from such environments—whether abroad or on home soil—impact on identities, the identity work that goes on in formal and informal settings in English-medium environments, and the types of identities students construct. In this regard research from different national settings with students enrolled on different English-medium programs would be extremely valuable. (pp. 270-271)

This call for more research serves as a justification for the present study, as it is concerned with the identity work of students of English, that considers experiences from informal and formal settings related to English language in addition to other languages.

I define language identities adapting Block's (2009: 40) view as the relationships between one's self and language. This relationship entails proficiency, attitudes and emotions about language and inheritance. Language identity is also seen to be non-essential and discursive, following Virkkula and Nikula's (2010) view.

The present study aims to research the language identities of students of English in a Finnish university as they are constructed in the context of interviews. These language identities are researched by exploring what the participants say about using and learning languages in addition to how they position themselves in relation to languages. Special interest is given to the language identities of English as the students and researcher are majoring in English, and the study builds on the call for further research stated in the national survey (Leppänen et al., 2009).

The present study is constructed as follows: In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework is established by exploring the previous research and by defining the key terms for the present study. Chapter 3 introduces the present study and the method for analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the data, and Chapter 5 concludes the study with discussion and conclusions.

# 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To connect the present study to the existing literature and research, previous research on topics of language identity, multilingualism, language ideologies, investment and imagined communities are presented below. Each subchapter starts with defining the key terms, after which the previous research is introduced.

## 2.1 Identity and language

Identity is a term that appears across several different areas of study and is thus defined in various ways. In the past, identity was seen as a fixed entity in a person, and identities were attributed as comprehensive categories to which people belonged regardless of their personal differences (Cabo & Rothman, 2012). This view of identity has been reconstructed to personal identities that are constantly in motion (Cabo & Rothman, 2012). In the field of second language acquisition, Norton (1997: 410) uses the term identity to "refer to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future." She also ties identity to desire: desire for connection to others, recognition, and safety (Norton, 1997: 410).
Blackledge and Pavlenko (2004: 14) present five characteristics of identities:

> (1) location within particular discourses and ideologies of language; (2) embeddedness within the relations of power; (3) multiplicity, fragmentation, and hybridity; (4) the imagined nature of 'new' identities; and (5) location within particular narratives.

These are key characteristics in the post-structuralist approach on identity. In this theory the power issues are heavily present, while also contextualising the identity work in the local. Blackledge and Pavlenko (2004: 21) continue by differentiating between imposed, assumed, and negotiable identities. Imposed identities are

identities that are not negotiable in one certain time and place, whereas assumed identities mean accepted identities that are not negotiated. Negotiable identities can be challenged by larger groups and by individuals.

Virkkula and Nikula (2010: 253) present two ways of understanding identity: essential and non-essential. In essentialist view identity is something fixed, connected to one's inner self and singular in nature. In non-essentialist view identity is "unfinished, fluid, fragmented, multiple, constantly changing and transforming, and constructed across times, places, positions, practices, and discourses" (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010: 253). They adopted the non-essentialist view for their study while also approaching the identity from discursive point of view, where identity is constructed in discourses in personal, interactional, and sociocultural-institutional level (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010: 253). Pavlenko (2006: 23) also aligns with the notion of multiple identities and contextualizes it with languages by stating: "languages learned earlier and later in life may differ in experienced emotionality, with differences contributing to the perception of different selves".

Bucholtz & Hall (2005) define identity as "the social positioning of self and other" (2005: 586), and present five principles that are crucial to studying identity: 1. Emergence principle, 2. Positionality principle, 3. Indexicality principle, 4. Relationality principle and lastly 5. Partialness principle. The emergence principle means that people do not have pre-existing and rigid identities in their mind that they act out through language. Rather, the identity is formed in social action through and with language in the moment. Positionality principle relates identity to both macro and local levels of identity categories. Indexicality principle is crucial to the present study, and it is defined as being concerned with how identity emerges in the moment:

> Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (p.593)

The relationality principle is concerned with how identity is constructed through relations such as similarity/difference and genuineness/artifice. These relations can overlap and Bucholtz and Hall stress that identities and their meanings are not formed in a vacuum but receive their meaning in relation to all the available identity positions and other people (2005: 598). Lastly, the partialness principle states that identity construction is never fully intentional or habitual or performed by merely the speaker. Rather, identity construction is a constant site of negotiation, and it shifts with the

moving interaction. (2005: 606). Of these principles, the emergence and indexicality principles are important for the present study and give part of the framework to how identity construction is defined. It is important to note that Bucholtz and Hall see identity as emerging through and with language, tying identity and language inseparably together.

Language identity is defined by Block (2009: 40) as "the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as language (e.g. English) a dialect (Geordie) or a sociolect (e.g. football-speak)." He cites Leung, Harris and Rampton's (1997, cited in Block, 2009: 40) three types of relationship called language expertise, language affiliation and language inheritance. Expertise refers to language proficiency and being accepted by other users of the language, while affiliation refers to one's own attitudes to and emotions about language (Block, 2009: 40). Lastly, inheritance refers to inheriting a language through being born into a family that speaks the language (Block, 2009: 40). Block uses the terms dialect and sociolect for all abovementioned types in addition to language, but the term language can be seen as also covering dialect and sociolect, which is why they are omitted here.

In the present study term *language identity* is adapted from Block's (2009: 40) view and defined as the relationship between one's sense of self and language. This relationship entails proficiency, attitudes and emotions about language and inheritance. *Language identity* is also seen to be 1. non-essential: fragmented, ever-changing, contextualized, multiple and unfinished, and 2. discursive, following Virkkula and Nikula's (2010) view.

### 2.1.1   Previous research on identity and language

Perhaps the most relevant study for the present one is Virkkula and Nikula's paper (2010) which presented their study on identity construction in English as a foreign language context by analyzing interviews with Finnish engineering students doing an internship in Germany. The theoretical background for their study was defined as a combination of poststructuralism, identity issues in EFL (English as a foreign language) settings and language learner's identity construction. The study employed a non-essentialist and discursive view on identity, according to which identity is seen as multifaceted, unfinished, and constantly changing while being constructed in discourses and contexts in personal, interactional, and larger societal levels. Along with identity, their other core concepts included discourse and subject positions. Discourse was defined as "a way of representing ideas and knowledge" and as understanding of the world and of oneself, which is manifested through language (Virkkula & Nikula,

2010: 253). Subject positions are made available in discourses as possibilities for one to define themselves as socially recognizable ways of being (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010: 253).

Empirically, their study focused on interviews of Finnish students before and after an internship in Germany for the purpose of finding out the effects of study abroad for the students' conception of themselves as foreign language users. Their findings indicate that educational discourses were prevalent in the students' interviews before the internship, and the students expressed a lack of skills in English while also presenting the native speaker as the norm and target. Moreover, the students constructed learner identities, not language user identities and took the subject positions of student and learner (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010: 258). Relating to this, the theme of "tendency to construct English as something outside everyday life" (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010: 261) emerged in the interviews before the internship of the students. After the internship there was a significant change in the way the students constructed their identities: at this point they by switched from language learners to language users. Having used English in a lingua franca context, the power of the native speaker norm had decreased in the way they talked about communicating in English with others. Thus, their focus had shifted more towards coping and using language in a meaningful way rather than correctly. Other exchange students who spoke English as a foreign language had also formed a new context for them to speak English in, and this new context helped the students in taking subject positions of language users. Virkkula and Nikula's (2010) study is particularly relevant for the present study as the participants were students and the focus of research was on the identity construction in English. Moreover, the present study shares the poststructuralist approach to identity.

Also focusing on the context of Finland, Palviainen and Bergroth (2018) studied how parents discursively construct and negotiate their own and other people's linguistic identities, and how larger ideological discourses and concepts circulate in their speech. Through three semi-structured interviews with the parents of three multilingual families, which were then analyzed using nexus analysis, it was found that even though the families and family members were multilingual, most of the parents identified themselves as monolinguals. The different languages the family members spoke had significant roles in their everyday lives, but bilingualism or multilingualism were seen as something gained at birth. Thus, the views of interviewees on bi- and multilingualism and language identities were revealed to be rather static. Ideologies held by individuals, such as mother tongue or bilingual, were mediated through language. The concept of language ideologies will be further inspected in chapter 2.1.3.

Moving on to the context of Sweden, where Henry and Goddard (2015) studied the reasons of students enrolling in an English-medium university program and whether identity issues were related to the reasons. Investigating interviews with 11 students using qualitative discourse analysis, it was shown that the students constructed hybrid identities where global identities of English speaker met with the local identities. These students saw themselves orienting between different cultures with ease and valued education in English as a doorway to a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Henry and Goddard (2015) contested the view of foreign language contexts offering only limited possibilities for target language identity work, as presented by Block (2007, cited in Henry & Goddard, 2015: 257). They additionally contest House's (2013) view of English as only a tool and a means of communication in addition to the presentation of English as "not for affective and emotional identification" (House, 2013: 3, as cited in in Henry & Goddard, 2015: 257). Henry and Goddard (2015) saw English-medium education as providing possibilities for identity work. The students had participated in global youth cultures mediated in English, which moved the context of English language away from classrooms into their daily lives, and further worked as a site of identity building. The similar language environments related to English in Finland and Sweden, where English is a salient part of entertainment, media and leisure activities make it possible to compare the results of the present study with Henry and Goddard's study.

In Canada, Lamoreux (2012) studied the way graduates of French first language school struggled to have their linguistic identities confirmed in the new academic settings of the university. After switching back and forth between English and French and managing their identities in the school context with ease during secondary school, the participants of the study were surprised by the difficulties in post-secondary education. The students were followed for 18 months in an ethnographic study via emails, electronic journals, and interviews after they enrolled into universities. The students faced situations in which their linguistic identities were questioned by their peers and teachers, which led many of them to change their identities. If the student saw their Francophone identity as part of their larger identity, they were better able to negotiate the monolingual attitudes from the environment. However, if the students had rather fixed and discrete identity as Francophone, which was actually preferred by the society of origin, their identity work and resistance was more difficult. Sometimes the students were not accepted among the Francophones in the university because they did not have a certain accent, or merely because they did not originate from traditional Francophone areas. The study appears to criticize the language preservation movements in Francophone areas, where rigid ideals of monolingualism in French are valued instead of hybrid language identities. Because these values will not hold when

one moves outside of the area, and they suffocate the community by not accepting change and disapproving of those pursuing further education in English. The most interesting takeaway from this study is that identity is challenged socially, and even in imagined communities there are those who claim ownership of the language and the community, effectively deciding who can belong.

## 2.2 Multilingualism

The concept of language identity needs to be linked to the term of multi- and bilingualism for this study as the participants are multilingual students. Multilingualism and bilingualism can in the strictest sense refer only to people born to parents who speak different languages so that there are multiple languages present at home from childhood onwards. Another popular belief is that one should have native proficiency in both or all of the languages in order to identify as bi- or multilingual.

Pavlenko's (2006: 2) definition of a multilingual is one who uses more than two languages in their daily lives, regardless of the levels of proficiency in the languages. Pavlenko's (2006) view is also rather strict as these more than two languages would need to be used in daily lives, and it leaves out those who use some of their languages only occasionally. What is good about Pavlenko's view is that it does not exclude languages based on the proficiency.

Cabo and Rothman (2012) define multilingualism as state of linguistic knowledge, contexts, or speakers of two or more languages. This definition includes bilingualism, as the term "multi is understood as "more than one" (Cabo & Rothman, 2012). In the rest of the encyclopaedia entry of "Multilingualism and Identity" by Cabo & Rothman (2012), the focus is mostly on minority and majority languages, ethnicity, and heritage languages. This definition seemed to leave out the definition of when this multilingualism can be achieved and to what extend the languages need to be present in one's life.

Marshall, Hayashi and Yeung (2012: 31) understood multilingualism as contextualised, "socially constructed through difference and inequality", and multilingual performances as hybrid rather than separate, rigid language systems.

In the present study, multilingual is defined after Pavlenko's (2006) view with some modifications as one who knows more than one language and uses these

languages to varying degrees in their lives regardless of the levels of proficiency in the languages.

### 2.2.1 Previous research on multilingualism

In the Canadian context, Marshall, Hayashi, and Yeung (2012) studied the way in which multilingual graduate students negotiate their multilingualism and multilingual literacies. The researchers were interested in the various ways that the students use their languages and literacies, in addition to the extent that these practices are affected by and affect the social and institutional discourses and identities. The findings indicate that in different contexts the negotiation process is different. In contexts where the students are expected to conform to the norms, such as in writing an essay, the students leave out their multilingualism and multiliteracies as they are not appreciated. However, the researchers noted that the students use their multilingualism and multiliteracies in the learning process for that context. In social networking sites, the students consciously use their language and literacy skills to negotiate their identities especially when conversing with people who speak the same languages. Depending on the context, the students were found to perform multilingualism through merge of languages and use of separate languages.

Alisaari et al. (2019) studied Finnish teachers' beliefs on multilingualism and teaching Finnish to multilingual learners through an online survey. The researchers found that teacher's had mainly positive beliefs about multilingualism, but the reality of teaching revealed that multilingual practices involving the learner's home language were not tolerated as widely. Multilingual ideologies were divided into three categories: advocacy, allowance, and denial. Advocacy for multilingualism inside the classroom was presented by quarter of the respondents. Allowance category consisted of teachers that let the students use their home language occasionally in the classroom, and included over third of the respondents. Those advocating and allowing use of home languages argued that it supports learning Finnish. Last category, denial, meant that the teachers wished to have a "Finnish only" policy in the classroom. This category consisted of over third of the respondents, and half of them argued their views by saying that it is the aim of school to teach Finnish. Teachers who had taught migrant students longer, and those who had received language awareness training were more likely to support multilingualism inside the classroom. The researchers found positive multilingual language ideologies and monolingual language ideologies from the responses. Language ideologies will be presented in the next subchapter.

## 2.3 Language ideologies

Lehto (2018: 54) defines language ideologies as the conscious or unconscious attitudes, opinions, beliefs and theories about languages and language users. According to Lehto (2018: 54), these ideologies are "moulded and reproduced through linguistic actions, and thus the ways of speaking construct an image of the language itself, the users of the language and the power struggles." Language ideologies can show what we value and what we loathe, who is a rightful speaker of a language and who can define who belongs to users of a language.

Language ideologies is a central term for the present study as they are intrinsically tied to language, are circulated from the wider discourses to everyday speech about language and thus can affect our language identities.

### 2.3.1 Studies on language ideologies

Language ideologies and multilingualism of Finnish people is researched in Lehto's study (2018) on the Japanese Finns' ways of talking about languages. In this study, Lehto analysed interviews through corpus assisted discourse analysis. She studied the emerging language ideologies in the data with the recognition of language identities as well. Language ideologies are circulated widely and affect the way people think and talk about languages and themselves as language users. Lehto's main findings were that Finnish was seen as the language of identity and as beautiful, important, and difficult to learn for outsiders. English was also seen as an important language for identity, though largely regarded as a tool. Japanese was related to language skills in the participants' speech.

Choi (2016) researched language ideologies relating to English language in a Korean university that adopted English as its official language. This change meant that all classes were supposed to be taught in English and all official documents used English. Choi was interested in the ways speakers responded to and experienced English as the official language. The results indicated that the language ideologies of the university mirror those of Korean society: only native English speakers are the "real" speakers and foreigners they wished to practise English with, in addition to limiting English to certain places and contexts. The discourse of "speaking English naturally" came up in the study, and there were two distinct responses to it. Some participants described that the change from Korean to English would be superficial, and not effective within their daily tasks, while some said that this would help them become

natural speakers of English. The discourse "speaking English naturally" meant that students and staff would be able to speak English comfortably, and to partake in the science and technology world that is widely in English.

## 2.4   Identity construction related to English language

Leppänen et al (2009) conducted a large-scale national survey on Finns' uses of, attitudes to, and perceptions of English in the 2000s. The data consisted of 1495 responses to the questionnaire, which looked at how Finns learn and use English, what they think about English, and where they see English in their daily lives. Results of the survey were that English is a salient part of everyday life in Finland. It is the language people are most likely to study and use. The respondents reported having relatively good language skills in English, and rather positive attitudes towards the language. English was not seen as a threat to Finnish language, but rather as a crucial skill in the globalizing world. The researchers conducting the survey found, that the younger respondents and those living in cities were more talented in English language, and also used the language more. They were also more prone to identifying as bi- and multi-linguals. Already in 2009 when the results were published, the context of media arose as the medium through which English was visible as a part of daily life. Mirroring these results against the ones from this study, it is clear that the importance of media as a site where English language is interacted with has only grown.

In the context of Hong Kong, Sung (2014) has published several articles about identity construction by students in relation to English (e.g. Sung, 2019; Sung, 2020). In her article, Sung (2014) studied the global and local identities of Hong Kong university students when communicating in ELF (English as a lingua franca) contexts. Her data were interviews with nine students regarding their ELF interactions and the identities in those interactions. Sung (2014) found that some of the students expressed overt local identities in ELF settings. These students saw their accent as an important identity marker for themselves and the other participants. At the same time, some of the students expressed overt global identities, wishing to be seen as members of ELF speakers first rather than Hong Kong citizens. A third group of students was identified as those expressing both global and local identities. These students often identified strongly with their ethnicity as Chinese, while at the same time expressing a global identity as ELF speakers and wanting to sound native-like. For these students, the two identities of global and local were seen as coexisting harmoniously. Sung (2014) discussed the last group of students as having a hybrid "glocal" identity, where local

and global meet. In conclusion, ELF communication was seen as providing language learners several identity options that they can explore and even combine.

Continuing in the context of Hong Kong, Besser and Chik (2014) studied the learner identities and narratives of 24 Hong Kong primary-school children, focusing on the resources that the children draw on in their identity work. The researchers found two distinct narratives: those of cosmopolitans and those of pragmatists, where minority of the students identified as cosmopolitans and majority as pragmatists. Cosmopolitans were defined according to Hannerz (2007: 70, as cited in Besser & Chik 2014: 303) as individuals who "display and openness towards divergent cultural experiences". These cosmopolitan students had two adjacent identities: L2 identity of English language and culture expert and L1 identity of Cantonese Chinese speaker (Besser & Chik 2014: 303). The cosmopolitan students moved comfortably between these two identities and formed relationships in both languages. In the children's identity work the resources that they used included their status as a student in a school that used English as the medium of instruction, and their participation in popular culture. Cosmopolitan students also reported having cosmopolitan role models from their peers and teachers. Their participation in popular culture, in turn, happened through literacy, SNS and video games. The second group was that of pragmatists (Besser & Chik 2014: 304), for whom English was a tool that needed to be learned for entry to schools and for future success. English was related to resources that the students did not have, the difficult exams to take to reach education taught in English, and a competence that the students had only a little of or none. English was not discussed from the point of view of leisure, rather the discussion was focused on education. The agency present in the interviews was based on the students' academic achievements.

## 2.5   Investment and imagined communities

In the field of second language acquisition, identity is also linked with investment and imagined communities. Norton (2006: 504) defines investment as the socially and historically constructed relationship that learners of a language have with the target language, and the often-contradictory reasons they have to learn and practice it. The learners reason that if they "invest" in a language by learning it, they will achieve symbolic and material resources, and thus increase the value of their cultural capital (Norton, 2006: 504). Imagined communities are the communities that the learner believes they are a part of, for example the community of Spanish speakers, but which are imaginary and not tangible or clearly defined. The learner sees that the community

offers possibilities for identity growth in the future, and these communities are the context for the learner's investment in the target language (Norton, 2006: 505).

Investment is an important term for the present study as all interviewees have experiences of studying several languages with varying motivations. Imagined communities were not covertly asked during the interview but were apparent in the results.

### 2.5.1 Previous studies in investment

Sung (2019) discusses the way different levels of investment in different contexts of target language affect learner identities on the basis of a qualitative case study of one student. The results showed that the student had little investment in the classroom, but active investment outside of the school context for example at workplace. These different levels of investment meant that the student negotiated different language identities for himself for different contexts. For example, at school his identity was related to lesser proficiency in English than his peers and to an obligation to speak English, in other words to a learner identity without agency. In the workplace positive experiences from serving customers in English gave the student agency and helped him negotiate an identity of a capable salesperson. After going to study abroad, he found the identity of the English user, thus showcasing that language identities are constantly changing.

Nasrollahi Shahri (2018) studied how learner identity and investment affect engagement in English language through two case studies of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners in Iran. The participants were observed, interviewed, and asked to comment their own speech in English to build understanding on the ways in which they saw themselves as speakers of English. The results showed that the learners had drastically different investments in English language, which was then visible in the way they used the language and spoke of their future. First student, Ali, used informal English and refused to speak other languages in the language institute. His investment in learning English from movies to sound "cool", "friendly", and "authentic" led him to use as much English as possible, which in turn gave him social capital among other learners. The second student, Navid, used formal and technical terms while speaking English to appear sophisticated. To him, English was the doorway to higher studies on engineering abroad. Navid's English language was academic, which further showcased his investment towards his future. Navid learned words from movies, like Ali, but Navid preferred learning uncommon expressions and academic vocabulary. These two participants had built ways to express their identity through English language, and their differing investments led them to engage with English differently.

## 2.6  SLA & EFL contexts

Identities in language learning have been studied in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and English as lingua franca (ELF), and the difference between them is in approaching the learner. Virkkula and Nikula (2010: 255) discuss the criticism on SLA by Firth and Wagner (1997), where they state that SLA focuses too much on the errors learners make and overemphasises the position of learner, instead of language user by raising the native speaker as the role model for language learners (Firth and Wagner, 1997 as cited in Virkkula & Nikula, 2010: 255). ELF, in turn, focuses on treating people as language users.

The context of learning English in school in Finland resembles the second language acquisition, as the native speaker bias is strong among Finns, as demonstrated by the results of the National survey on the English language in Finland (Leppänen et al., 2009). According to the survey Finns felt that English is a foreign language where native speaker is the ideal speaker that one strives for but cannot reach (Leppänen et al., 2009: 144). The context of English learning in Finland is that English is not taught as a second language, but rather as a foreign language, and in 2021 91% of pupils chose it as their first foreign language (Suomen kieltenopettajien liitto ry, 2022) Since 2020, teaching of first foreign language starts in the first grade, and teaching of second national language, Swedish, starts in the sixth grade.

The SLA and ELF contexts were included in the present study, as they encouraged me to research whether the students saw themselves as English learners or English language users, and what had caused the potential change in identification.
To conclude this section, in previous research language identities have been seen as multiple and varied, and second/foreign language learning can act as a site for new language identities. Language identities are also tied to imagined communities and within those communities the language identities and membership can be contested.

# 3   PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter the present study will be introduced. First, I will introduce the justification and the research question, after which I explore the selection and collection of data. Lastly, I present the method of analysis.

The aim of the present study was to research the ways in which students of English construct their own language identities during the interviews. These language identities are changing, multifaceted and highly contextual. The contextualism is important to remember, as the emerging language identities are not "truths" about the students. Rather, the aim is to uncover the language identities that are constructed in the moment. Based on the aim, I formed the following research question:

How do the students of English construct their language identities in the interviews?

## 3.1   Selection and collection of data

The general approach used in the investigation of student constructions of their language identity and multilingualism is sociolinguistics, as it studies the social aspects of human language. According to Norton and McKinney (2011: 82), qualitative approach to language identities is justifiable "since identity approach to SLA characterizes learner identity as multiple and changing, a quantitative research paradigm relying on static and measurable variables will generally not be appropriate." They continue by stating that in identity approach to second language acquisition there has been a strong methodological preference of narratives, as it highlights how the individual makes sense of their experiences (Norton and McKinney, 2011: 82-83). Through narratives people tell others who they are, but even more importantly, they tell themselves and they try to act as though they are who they say they are" (Holland,

Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998: 3, as cited in Sung, 2019: 192). Interviews along with collection of written narratives are two often used methods for collecting data in the area of language identity studies.

As I am interested in the way identities of English students are built in interaction, I chose interviews as the data in order to have interaction where the participants could tell me who they are, and what their own understanding of their experiences related to language identities and multilingualism is. Interviews also enable the interviewer to immediately respond to the interviewee's answers and ask further questions about intriguing issues. Thus, interviews were a justified method for the present study.

Interviews can be conducted as structured, semi-structured or thematic interviews, of which structured is the approach that gives the least freedom to the interviewees (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula, 2009: Tutkimushaastattelun lajit). I chose semi-structured interview as it gave me the possibility to review the same themes with all participants through pre-determined questions, while also having the option for further questions around a theme in case of intriguing answers. I was also able to go through the questions in a different order based on what was discussed last. The interview was piloted with one English alumni, and this piloting showcased that some interview questions needed to be reconstructed or dropped altogether. The interviews started with background questions, after which I explored the themes of role and contexts of different languages, describing own identity, and view of own language skills. Interview questionnaire can be seen in the appendix.

The participants for the study were students of English language at a Finnish university. These participants were invited as participants through the mailing list for English students. Altogether five participants volunteered to discuss their language identities, but due to one student only minoring in English language, four students of English major were selected for interviews. Students of English language were the target group following the suggestion by Henry and Goddard (2015: 270-271) who have called for more research on students in English-mediated environments, and the effects of those environments to their identities. After signing up as participants, they received and signed forms of consent which stated that they have understood the purpose of the study and consent to the interviews being recorded for the present study. The anonymity of participants is crucial, and thus the participants are pseudonymized.

The interviews were conducted in three days duration in October 2021. The language of interviews was Finnish for comfort and for the interviewees to be able to reply using their strongest language. Interviews were recorded on Zoom due to the

pandemic situation of Covid-19, and to the ease of recording the audio within the program. The interviews lasted between one and one and half hours each. Data consisted of video and audio, of which I transcribed the audio in a simple transcription style as it suited the aims and methods of the study. This meant that the transcription included what was said but not how it was said, such as tones of voices. Eventually, the parts that were quoted in Finnish were translated to English.

## 3.2   Method of analysis

In previous research identities have been analysed for example through narrative analysis (Ala-Anttila & Kuutti, 2018), and discourse analysis (Henry & Goddard, 2015; Virkkula & Nikula, 2010). Narrative analysis is heavily focused on finding and building the narrative from the data, looking at the content rather than form (Hyvärinen, 2010). The analysis would look at the roles the interviewee takes in their narrative, at the way the narrative has been constructed, what has been emphasized and which identities are suggested.

On the other hand, discourse analysis looks at what is said and how it is said in the context it is spoken (Nikander, 2014). Pietilä (2010) describes how it is important to view the information present in the interview as contextual and situation bound descriptions. He continues that "Interview does not directly reflect outside reality as an item that is objectively existing and free from language", rather both interviewer and interviewee jointly construct these descriptions (Pietilä 2010). I wanted to explore the different discourses that emerge from the interviews. As discourse analysis suited my needs in terms of constructing the interview and analysing the data, I chose it as the method of analysis. Additionally, discourse analysis is already more familiar to me as a researcher.

Finally, regarding the analysis of identity, it should be stated that the identities emerging in the interviews are only apparent in that way in that particular context., Virkkula and Nikula (2010: 258) stated that arguments on identity are "based on analysing and making sense of what the participants say about their use and learning of English, the ways in which they formulate their opinions, and how they position themselves in relation to English". This citation crystallizes the process of exploring the identities that are constructed in the interview. I am following this method with the only modification of shifting focus from mere English into languages in general.

During the analysis process I collected the responses to one document and categorized them by topics, based on relevance to the questions asked during the interview. Next, I analyzed the responses to look for common themes and patterns. These patterns also included discrepancies between different interviewees. These themes form the frame of the interview, as presented in the next chapter with the analysis.

# 4   FINDINGS

The findings of the study are reported in this chapter. I start the chapter by introducing interviewees in general and continue to introduce each interviewee along with the language contexts they described for each language that they know. Next, I present the different themes addressed in the interviews and discuss the identities presented through the emerging discourses.

## 4.1   Interviewees

Three of the interviewees – Vilma, Rosa, and Saaga – study in bachelor's and master's degree program for multidisciplinary language experts, and one interviewee, Joonas, studies in bachelor's and master's degree program in languages to become a subject teacher. All of them major in English in their respective degree programs, and some courses are joint between teacher and language expert students. Finnish is the mother tongue of all interviewees, and all of them have studied in Finland from elementary school to university.

### 4.1.1   Interviewee 1: Vilma

Vilma is a female student of language expert degree program in English. She has officially studied English as her major for two years, but during her previous studies she took the basic courses of English as her major, so all together she has studied English for four years at the university. Vilma is on the language expert line and has sustainable development as her minor. She had already thought about studying English after high school but ended up studying another profession. After working in this profession and coming to university to study environmental studies, she decided to pursue

her talent in English. This led her to majoring in English, and she hopes to work on the field of communications in an international organization after graduating.

Vilma knows six languages: Finnish, English, Swedish, Italian, French and Japanese. Her mother tongue is Finnish, she studies English as her major and Swedish she has studied the compulsory course and a preliminary course in the university in addition to the compulsory studies in junior high school and high school. She reports her Swedish level to be elementary to intermediate, with her understanding more than she is able to produce. Vilma has studied Italian in high school, French in junior high school and Japanese in the university for some courses. Vilma reports understanding some phrases and words from Italian, French and Japanese, so her language skills are elementary in those languages.

### 4.1.2 Interviewee 2: Rosa

Rosa is a female fifth year student of English, and she is studying to become a language specialist. She also studies business studies and psychology. This combination has led her to think about becoming a consultant in order to utilize all her studies. As to why she came to university to study English, Rosa reported being unsure of what to do in the future, but the language specialist line of English studies had ample room for other studies, so she could combine several interests under English major. Additionally, she had liked English in school and having spent a year in the USA the language was familiar to her, and thus she decided to take the entrance exam.

After high school Rosa took a gap year as she did not have clear picture of what to do for work. During this gap year she fulfilled her dream of moving to another country by going to USA to work as an au pair. During the year she took care of the family's children and took some courses at the nearby university. After the gap year she came back to Finland and applied for studying English at the university.

Rosa knows five languages: Finnish, English, Swedish, Russian, and Spanish. Finnish is her native tongue, and during her gap year in USA she got experience of communicating only in English. She reports having gone to Sweden for language courses and having had a good command of Swedish in high school. Her level of Russian is elementary, but she wishes to study it more to communicate with her boyfriend's family in Russia. She took some courses also on Spanish, but reports having decreasing language skills on it.

### 4.1.3   Interviewee 3: Joonas

Third interviewee, Joonas, is a male student of English major and he has been studying English at the university for four years. He is a teacher specialist/ teacher line student and has already studied another subject at the university of applied sciences before coming to university, so he is older than some of the other interviewed students. Joonas reported being interested in becoming an English teacher at the end of junior high school as he enjoyed being in school and English was easy, simple, and pleasant. He had wanted to apply for studying English at the university, but eventually ended up studying at the university of applied sciences. Some years later he was rethinking his career choice and applied for English studies at the university due to being interested in languages.

Joonas knows – to varying degrees – five languages: Finnish, English, Swedish, German, and Russian. Finnish is his mother tongue and English he mentions "goes almost as his second mother tongue". He understands slowly spoken Swedish and can read texts well in Swedish too but struggles with producing the language on his own. He studied Russian in high school and the university of applied sciences, and currently understands simple phrases and can pick up where words begin and end in speech even if he does not understand the meaning. In high school he also studied German and lately has rekindled his passion for the language. He reported intending to take the second elementary course on German offered at the university and possibly taking the exam that tests if participants' language skills are high enough to take the language as a minor.

What set Joonas apart from other interviewees was that on one hand he had a rather analytical approach to studying languages while on the other hand his profound interest in music was tightly bound to his identity along with language identity. Music was apparent in almost every answer in the interview.

### 4.1.4   Interviewee 4: Saaga

Interviewee number 4, Saaga, is a female language expert degree programme student, currently doing her masters in English. She had been studying English at the university for seven to eight years. Her reason for coming to study English at the university was that she did not have any clear career ideas and she had always been interested in languages, of which English was the easiest for her. Thus, she thought that going to university would give her time to figure out what she wanted to do as her occupation. Choosing between teacher line and language specialist line had been easy for Saaga as she described she had had nightmares of becoming a teacher during her time in

high school. Additionally, the interview for applying for the teacher line seemed frightening, so the language specialist line seemed right for her.

Saaga knows nine languages in varying degrees: Finnish, English, Japanese, German, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Russian and Swedish. Of these languages, Finnish is her native language, she masters in English and she had Swedish as her minor. Saaga reports understanding Swedish well enough to be able to read a master's thesis in Swedish in addition to having understood the courses taught in Swedish. But her language skills in producing Swedish are lower, especially as she felt that she did not have may opportunities to use the language outside of classroom. Saaga has studied basic studies on Japanese language at the university and also went to Japan for student exchange. Spanish and Mandarin are languages that she took some courses on at the university, while German and Russian were languages that she studied in high school. Korean was the only language of which she has not taken any courses on and has studied it with a Korean exchange student in a language exchange program offered by the university. She also studied some German and Japanese with native speakers through this language exchange program.

### 4.1.5 Language contexts of the interviewees

I collated the different contexts for each language that the interviewees use into a table, which is presented in Table 1 below. I will describe the contexts further under the figure.

Table 1          Contexts for different languages

| Name | Finnish contexts | English contexts | Swedish contexts | Other language contexts |
|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| **Vilma** | -family and friends<br>-official contexts such as bureaus<br>-tries to use Finnish first to foreigners<br>-minor studies<br>-thinking | -studies<br>-foreign friend<br>-friends<br>-movies and series<br>-internet<br>-thinking<br>-traveling | -traveling | -Japanese: jokingly phrases with friend, anime<br>-French: sings some classical songs, traveling<br>-Italian: sings classical songs |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rosa** | -family and Finnish friends<br>-everyday life situations<br>-minor and major studies<br>-work<br>-thinking | -studies<br>-Finnish friends<br>-foreign friends<br>-internet<br>-movies and series (also English subtitles)<br>-thinking<br>-traveling | -traveling<br>-customer service at work | -Russian: with partner's relatives, traveling<br>-Spanish: jokingly phrases with friend |
| **Joonas** | -family and Finnish friends<br>-everyday life situations<br>-official contexts such as bureaus<br>-language as art<br>-minor studies<br>-thinking | -studies<br>-consumed media: podcasts, lectures, video games, music, movies, series (also English subtitles)<br>-foreign friends<br>-internet<br>-thinking | -music | -German: music, studying<br>-Russian: through video gaming |
| **Saaga** | -family and Finnish friends<br>-minor studies<br>-everyday life<br>-tries to use Finnish first to foreigners<br>-thinking | -studies<br>-media: Youtube channels, news, movies, series (also English subtitles), video games, social media, music<br>-internet<br>-foreign friends<br>-reading<br>-thinking | -minor studies<br>-music<br>-media: TV-series | -Japanese: friends, anime, news, music, social media, thinking, traveling<br>-German: studies, music, traveling<br>-Russian: Studies, social media<br>-Spanish: studies, music, social media<br>-Mandarin Chinese: studies, social media<br>-Korean: studies, social media |

English is a salient part in the interviewees' lives and currently there are several contexts outside of their studies where they encounter and use English: consumed media, dreams, thoughts, traveling, working, and communicating with friends. The consumed media is varied from podcasts to movies to music. All interviewees reported either watching or having watched movies and series in English, and several also added that if there are subtitles, those subtitles are most often in English. Joonas stated

that the low quality of Finnish subtitles and different grammar and sentence formation of Finnish drive him to use English subtitles rather than Finnish ones. For Saaga, sub-titles in Finnish feel weird as she is so used to using English subtitles. All interviewees additionally reported using the internet in English because there is more content available. English was also present in all the interviewees' dreams and thoughts to varying degrees. They reported often thinking in English while writing essays or doing other study-related tasks in English. While traveling, the interviewees mentioned resorting to English if they did not know the local language enough or if they did not want to use the local language for varying reasons. Rosa reported having used English at her work as a tv-series translator from English to Finnish. English was also used by all interviewees to communicate with friends in Finland and abroad. All in all, English seems to be a utility language to the interviewees, and it is present in many areas of their everyday life.

For Swedish contexts, the interviewees listed mainly traveling and music. Saaga had studied Swedish as a minor subject and reported occasionally watching TV-series in Swedish to maintain her language skills in the language. Rosa had a work context for Swedish too, as she had encountered Swedish from Finnish-Swedish customers at the café where she worked. She reported having "*frozen*" at the sudden Swedish and replied in Finnish or in a mixture of Swedish and Finnish. The interviewees had the fewest contexts for Swedish out of all the languages that they knew.

For contexts of other languages, the interviewees varied in the scope and contents from each other. Vilma used Japanese phrases jokingly with her neighbor who had also studied Japanese, but aside from watching anime she did not have any other contexts for the language and revealed being frustrated that her language skills are diminishing. French and Italian are mainly present in Vilma's life now through classical singing and traveling. Rosa uses Russian with his partner's relatives and while traveling in Russia. For Spanish her only context has been using some phrases jokingly with a native friend. Joonas has two other languages besides Finnish, English and Swedish in his repertoire: Russian and German. He encounters Russian only while playing video games and German in music that he listens to and through studying the language in Duolingo application. Saaga has a wide repertoire of languages and several contexts for each language. Japanese is her most widely used foreign language outside of English, and she encounters the language in anime, Japanese news, music, traveling and in her social media. Saaga uses the language with some of her friends and reports also occasionally thinking in Japanese. She has also studied German and encounters the language while traveling and in music that she listens to. For Russian, Mandarin Chinese and Korean her contexts for the languages have been studying and

encountering the language in her social media. Spanish shares these contexts too, but she also listens to some Spanish music. Saaga has several languages appear in her social media, as she widely follows artists from other countries and keeps in touch with her friends from her student exchange.

## 4.2 Themes of the interview

### 4.2.1 Role of languages now and in the future

#### 4.2.1.1 Role of English

All interviewees mentioned studies while thinking about the role of English in their lives currently. English is used during lectures, and Vilma and Saaga try to speak English even if others speak Finnish. Saaga commented this by saying

> "it is a given that in English lectures English should be spoken".

Joonas uses what language others use and differs from Vilma and Saaga in that he does not try to speak English even if others speak Finnish. English is also used with teachers and professors both inside and outside the class. The interviewees commented how sometimes it is difficult to know if a lecturer from abroad speaks Finnish, so the students usually use only English with them. If the teacher starts talking to them in Finnish first, then they respond in Finnish, but otherwise communication happens in English. English is also used while sending emails to the teachers, and all the interviewees had been nervous about which language to use in emails to teachers. Rosa commented having sent emails both in Finnish and in English to the same teacher, depending on which language comes to her while writing the email.

Joonas had profound thoughts on the importance of English to him as English affects comprehensively his whole life:

> If I think about how I have quite a network on the internet and have spoken with many different foreigners so I should be quite a polyglot to ever have been able to talk with them without English. And the amount that I consume, though I've tried to get rid of entertainment-entertainment and replace it with those useful and interesting podcasts, I couldn't even have them if I didn't know English. And all scientific or philosophic thinking would be quite basic if I didn't have English, though German is pretty good for philosophy, but yeah. And then there's even that that in those contexts, yeah there are translations to Finnish and stuff, but so much meaning is lost in translation especially in philosophy.

To Joonas, English language is the site that allows him to construct his different identities and the bridge between his different worlds.

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In the future, the role of English was seen in the context of work. Rosa sees English as her work language most likely as she aims for consulting career in a multinational enterprise. She is pleased at the prospect of using English in her work so her language skills would not deteriorate. Rosa also has prospects of moving abroad at some point, which would possibly enhance her language skills.

Saaga would like to work with languages and texts, and if she decides to pursue becoming a translator, English would be important to her as a working language. She also dreams of living abroad at some point and considers English-speaking countries to be easy destinations but is open to any country. Joonas will be teaching English to children, so English will be a central part of his work.

Vilma differed somewhat from others in this issue as she described that she might not even use English that much in her work life, especially at the beginning. She would like to work in an international organization, which could mean having some contexts for English language at work.

### 4.2.1.2 Role of Finnish

Rosa and Joonas described the role of Finnish currently to be communication with family and friends, since not all of the family members know English. Vilma stated that she would be able to survive on using only English currently, and thus Finnish is not important to her right now. As for the future, Vilma described her future occupation to be in Finland, and thus the language of her work would be Finnish, which was seconded by Joonas.

### 4.2.1.3 Role of Swedish

The role of Swedish now and in the future was the least significant to the interviewees. For Rosa, she did not see any other use for Swedish other than traveling now and in the future, unless she were to make new friends who speak Swedish. She mentioned that it is easy to speak English in Sweden as people generally understand it well, and thus for her to use Swedish there requires extra effort.

### 4.2.1.4 Role of other languages

When thinking about the roles of her other languages, Vilma described Japanese as just a pleasant addition to her language repertoire, and she enjoys recognizing Japanese words while watching anime. However, she does not see Japanese as a necessary part of her life now or in the future. When she began her studies as an English major, she initially thought to study as much Japanese as possible to be able to work in Japanese. Unfortunately, the Japanese courses were rather demanding, and she reported

feeling that she wanted to focus on her major studies, not continuing the Japanese studies after three courses. The other languages she knows, French and Italian are mainly present in her life now and in the future through classical singing and traveling.

Rosa described needing Russian now for communicating with her partner's family and traveling in Russia. She described her experiences of how even though Russians know English especially in Moscow, if one can speak Russian with them, the service is better, and one can enter places where only English would not allow access. In the future, Rosa believed that she might use Russian at work also, if there are Russian clients, which is another reason for her to study the language further.

### 4.2.2 Languages attributed to different emotions

After presenting how the interviewees described the role of their languages now and in the future, I will present which languages were attributed to different emotions. During the interview I asked what languages they use when they are happy, angry, surprised, or sad, and collected the results to the Table 2 below.

Table 2            Languages attributed to different emotions.

| Name | Happiness | Anger | Surprise | Sadness |
|------|-----------|-------|----------|---------|
| **Vilma** | Finnish | Finnish, cursing in Finnish is stronger | Finnish | Finnish/English, sad music in English |
| **Rosa** | Finnish/English, English phrases while emphasizing positiveness | Finnish/English, little Russian to partner, cursing in Finnish is stronger | Finnish | Finnish, sad music in Finnish |
| **Joonas** | Finnish/English | Finnish, cursing dependent on language context | Finnish/English | Finnish, sad music in Finnish |
| **Saaga** | Finnish | English, cursing in English | Finnish/English | Finnish/English, sad music in English |

Many of the interviewees pointed out that cursing in Finnish feels stronger to them than cursing in English. Curiously the language of cursing was not consistent throughout all replies. Finnish was all in all attributed as the language of emotions and that was also visible in the answers the interviewees gave during the interview. Rosa explained that

> If I am angry in Finnish then I am more clearly angry, or if I were to reprimand someone in Finnish then it comes certainly from the heart.

Another point I would like to raise is that while being sad, half of the interviewees listened to sad music in English and half in Finnish. The interviewees explained that though they would be more akin to use Finnish while feeling different emotions, it is always related to the immediate context which language they end up using.

To sum up the role of languages in the interviewees' lives, English and Finnish were the most salient languages. They were used in studies, socializing, and traveling currently, and the future usages were related to working life. Swedish was not largely present in the interviewees' lives now or in the future, and other languages were either seen as pleasant additions to language skills or needed for traveling, socializing and possibly work. Only Finnish and English were mentioned as languages attributed to different emotions, with Finnish being the most used one.

### 4.2.3 Traveling and networking internationally & changes to views on language skills

The three language expert degree students had traveled widely, and Rosa and Saaga had experience of living abroad for a year. Exception for traveling was Joonas, who instead had networked internationally through video gaming and on the internet. Thus, all interviewees had experiences where they used different languages with people from different backgrounds. Often these interactions helped them see that their language skills are sufficient, but there were also cases where the interaction discouraged the interviewees from using e.g., Swedish with native speakers again. In these cases, they reported having lacking language skills and not being understood. These experiences are further described in this section.

Vilma described that during her travels, she has noticed that her English skills are rather good when comparing e.g., accents of foreigners. She had empowering experiences in taking care of surprising situations in English, which has led her to trust her own language skills more. Vilma had also experienced negative and positive changes to her perception of her Swedish language skills. These clashing experiences were related to traveling in Sweden and using Swedish, and the first one happened when she was younger. She tried to buy a ticket in Swedish but got misunderstood and received more tickets than were needed. This made her feel like no-one understands her Swedish and led her to use English while traveling in Sweden even nowadays. The second experience happened as an adult and was also related to buying tickets. This time she tried to buy metro tickets to go visit the botanical garden and had to speak Swedish since the ticket seller did not understand English. Vilma

explained for a long time where she tried to go, and eventually received a ticket from the seller. She was proud of being able to use the language skills she had and to be understood. It was a healing experience after the previous negative one. Negative experiences while using a foreign language can cause negative emotions towards using the language and discourage from trying again later.

For Rosa, her stay in the USA for one year after high school affected the way she uses English and Finnish. She reported having admired how the American people were positive and how natural it was to praise others. She applied this to her own language use and explained that this change led her to use more positive language in Finnish as well. Rosa reflected later on her own perspective of her language skills and acknowledged that she has strong skills in English language. She knows that she can survive in any situation with her English language skills and was open to move to abroad at some point. Rosa then added that she also has experiences where knowing only English is not enough, and thus she views her language skills as a whole as lacking. This theme of lacking language skills continued in the context of Russian language, as she mentioned needing to study some more Russian before she goes to Russia next time. Rosa returned to viewing the positive changes to her language skills by spending time abroad and talked about the time she took a language course in Sweden. Rosa explained that during the language course as a high school student, she was pleased with her own language skills and being able to converse with the locals in Swedish.

Saga had similar experiences about positive and negative changes to her perception of her own language skills. During her student exchange in Japan, Saaga found that her English skills were rather fluent when comparing to other exchange students. An American friend even stated that she was bilingual as her language skills were proficient. But there was also a negative change to how she viewed her language skills as she found out that the Japanese skills she had learned did not prepare her for spoken Japanese. Additionally, she stated that after noticing how some other exchange students had better language skills in Japanese, she viewed her language skills in Japanese as less proficient than she had previously.

Joonas had not traveled abroad as an adult but had instead networked widely with people from different countries through video gaming and online presence. Joonas further stated that he did not wish to live abroad unless he would have a wide support network already in place before moving.

To summarize, while traveling or staying abroad for longer periods, the students were able to measure their own language skills against other tourists and locals and

had valuable experiences of conversing with the locals in their language. These possibilities have helped them notice that their language skills either are sufficient or not. The female interviewees built global identities of cosmopolitans, as they had experiences in traveling and spending time abroad, which had also affected their language identities. Whereas Joonas built a glocal – global and local – identity, where he was widely networked on the Internet but preferred to stay in Finland.

### 4.2.4 Language skills

I asked the interviewees to define what good language skills mean and was surprised to find out that there are different metrics between the interviewees. Vilma defined good language skills as being able to communicate in the language and in addition to being able to ask questions one should also be able to understand the answers they receive. Rosa in turn described that good language skills mean to her that one is able to have basic conversations, follow the essence of a lecture in the language and is brave enough to use the other language. The vocabulary does not need to be extensive, but during traveling one can fare with their language skills and is able to ask for help. Rosa acknowledged a difference between good, excellent, and native-like language skills. She had a stricter and more detailed definition when compared to the others' definitions. Perhaps due to this stricter definition she did not identify as proficient in Swedish anymore even though she had studied the language extensively in high school and had spent time on language courses in Sweden.

Saaga seconded Rosa's views and added that being able to take care of personal matters in everyday life is a requirement for good language skills. Joonas proposed a different approach to good language skills, that it would be more important to learn to learn languages, which would be useful every time one learns a new language. I wonder if the reason interviewees reported having low skills in different languages was on one hand due to the strict definitions they have towards language skills, and on the other hand due to mirroring their language skills to English, which is at native-like level for each interviewee.

### 4.2.5 Perceptions of own language skills

The definitions to good language skills serve as a background to the attitudes the interviewees had of their own language skills, language use and contexts where they could fare with their language skills.

#### 4.2.5.1    English skills

To start off with the students' attitudes towards their English language skills, Vilma described knowing English at almost native-level, and was confident in being able to handle difficult situations. Vilma's language identity on English was built on the discourse of strong language skills, which was also apparent on how she mentioned that she sometimes must simplify her English to her friends for them to understand what she says. Vilma described herself as an English language user rather than English student due to the studies at the university being different from English language classes at high school. She acknowledged that she has learnt more skills in English but is unable to pinpoint what exactly those skills are. To Vilma, English language student identity was tied to the language classes that she took from elementary school until high school, and the contents of those classes. User identity meant that she had moved on from studying any specific skills to studying through English medium.

Rosa described herself as an English user and acknowledges that in the beginning of her studies she would have identified as English language student. As she is currently a double major student, and her focus is not only on English language in her studies, it has become clearer that English is more akin to a tool that she uses in different contexts. She does not identify as "English student", but rather introduces herself as "majoring in English". Rosa was confident of her own language skills in English:

> I feel that my English language skills are strong, I know that I can always fare with the language and no matter what sort of problem arises, I know that with my language skills I can survive and I don't need to worry about it.

Rosa's language identity in English is built on the discourse of strong language skills and confidence. Rosa had identified herself as English language student longer than Vilma and stated that the language student identity had transformed to that of majoring in English. This is understandable as all interviewees are technically English language students, and the identity work on user versus language student does not necessarily mean that she should pick one over other. Rosa's language user identity is nevertheless strong, as she uses English daily in different contexts.

Joonas stated that English is like his second mother tongue, and that he is almost completely able to use English in all the same contexts as Finnish. Joonas described his skills of English as spreading out further than in Finnish and that his competence in English is high. He later continued that he sees himself as English language user but adds that using a language also means continual learning. The language identity of Joonas in English centers around the ability to use the language and the various contexts that are available to him through language. The view of continual learning in

using languages also suggests a language teacher identity for Joonas, which he later expands on by mentioning competence in teaching situations as important to him when talking about his emotions regarding Finnish.

Saaga believed she could handle any everyday life situation in English and stated that only situations where special jargon is required would be difficult for her. Even in difficult situations she could ask for clarification and help, which is a sign of her fluency. Saaga's language identity in English is built on the discourse of strong language skills, but her identities are not as boldly stated as the other interviewees. She is the only one to mention a context in which she would not be able to perform as fluently as in other contexts.

### 4.2.5.2    Swedish skills

Swedish language skills on the other hand were described as the opposite of their English language skills, as all interviewees stated that they have poor language skills in Swedish. Vilma was proud of the skills that she has in Swedish and was recently surprised to find herself tutoring her partner in Swedish. Vilma mentioned probably learning more Swedish at some point in her life, because she would like to be able to speak the language. The notion of not having contexts where she could fare with her Swedish skills was shared by Joonas as well. Joonas reported having good skills in Swedish comprehension, but producing the language is difficult for him.

Rosa claimed that her Swedish skills are not good enough to work in Swedish, and that is the reason why she has not applied for some jobs where the working languages have been stated as Finnish and Swedish. Rosa stated that in high school she had a broad vocabulary in Swedish and she was happy about her language skills then, but due to not using the language for several years her skills have deteriorated. She stated that she could fare with her language skills during travelling, but any contexts where she would have to talk in depth about a topic would be over her language abilities currently, which Saaga seconded. Saaga also recalled how the transition from high school Swedish courses to university Swedish courses was difficult, as the expectations for language skills suddenly rose. She mentioned being unable to relate to the students majoring in Swedish and felt that she was only babbling nonsense during the shared courses.

For all the interviewees, language identities on Swedish were built on the lack of proficiency currently. This lack is seen by some as merely de facto, while to some it is a pity either as they previously had strong language skills in Swedish or as they felt that they got left out of some contexts based on their lacking language skills.

Additionally, Saaga differentiated herself from Swedish major students, and felt that she did not belong with them, which affected her language identity building in Swedish.

### 4.2.5.3    Other language skills

The interviewees described being interested in languages and shared their views on their language skills in other languages that they had learned. All of them shared the notion of either not being able to survive in any contexts using their other languages or surviving in traveling context alone. Vilma shared that she would have to rely on some English while abroad in Italy for example. Nevertheless, she admitted feeling safer by knowing at least a little of the language when traveling abroad.

Joonas reported that German pronunciation has always been easy to him, and that he likes German grammar. What separated Joonas from others in the context of language skills was that he explained that in general he is not interested in communicating in different languages. Rather, he is more interested in building the vocabulary and grammar so that he could use the language on his own rather than using it with someone. This differentiation from other language students was a great example of his identity work during the interview. Joonas actively built his own language identities and was not afraid to state his own opinions, implying that some of his opinions might be contested by others.

Saaga gave concrete examples of her language skills in Japanese during her exchange studies: towards the end of her student exchange, she was able to follow basic conversations, write essays with a dictionary and read simple texts. She had been able to learn enough Japanese to tell jokes, which made her happy. She was also able to change from informal to formal language when needed and explained how that is a necessary skill to be able to convey indirect information. These language skills had unfortunately deteriorated after returning to Finland and not using the language frequently. Saaga constructed her language identity of Japanese by stating her withering proficiency which was accentuated by her stating it is a pity. There was also a discourse of previous skills that indicated she had had a learner identity in Japanese. She had also attached the emotion of happiness to her gaining proficiency.

To sum up, all interviewees had language identities of having good language skills in English, which was apparent in the examples of being able to survive in any everyday life situations in English. Swedish on the other hand was a language that the interviewees were not passionate about, which reflected on their language skills. Interviewees constructed their language identities on the basis of lacking proficiency in

Swedish, thus rejecting ownership of the language. Additional cause for weaker abilities in the language was not having contexts where to encounter and use Swedish. Though the interviewees had learned several other languages, the language skills were currently elementary, and they were not confident in their abilities to survive using those languages alone.

### 4.2.6 Lacking language skills

One common theme between the interviews was the discourse of lacking language skills. This discourse was apparent in all languages, with Finnish and English being the least mentioned languages within this discourse. Finnish was mentioned only by Saaga when she discussed her plans of possibly becoming a translator and feeling the need to study more Finnish to be able to produce accurate translations. Lacking English skills were mentioned in Saaga's response to the question of how well she can fare with English language in different contexts and even then, her response centered around not knowing jargon from different fields. The other interviewees viewed their Finnish and English language skills as sufficient. But with all other languages mentioned in the interviews the discourse of lacking language skills was present. Some of the interviewees reported frustration at their lacking language skills, especially if they felt that the lack was their fault either by letting their skills deteriorate or by not investing enough in the learning.

Vilma commented on the difficulty of maintaining her Japanese language skills outside of classroom as

> It is a shame that I start to forget a language even though I have worked hard for it.

Several interviewees reported similarly that their Swedish language skills were deteriorating as there were no contexts around them where they could use the language. Interestingly, for Vilma and Joonas not having invested in learning Swedish in junior high school seemed to mean that the opportunity to learn Swedish had already passed. Though Vilma did comment later that she would like to learn Swedish at some point later in her life, it was presented as her wanting to study the language for enjoyment, not to gain necessary skills for employment.

### 4.2.7 Relationship to different languages

#### 4.2.7.1 English

In addition to asking about the interviewees' language skills, I asked them to describe their relationship to their respective languages and whether they attached any emotions to using those languages. The results showed that each interviewee approached

the languages and their language skills from different angles. English was generally seen as a practical skill that can be turned to a profession while also being a comfortable and easy language. Vilma explained that to her, English is a general language and "there are no strong ties to the language since there are so many people who can speak the language" (lines 146-148). Due to this, problems seem smaller if she writes about them in English. Vilma also mentioned having complicated relationship to English as knowing a lesser-known language – such as Hungarian or Japanese – could enhance her chances of getting employed, but at the same time she is glad of her good language skills in English as they have helped her during all her studies. Vilma reported sometimes taking it as granted that everyone in Finland knows English, and then being surprised when others struggle with the language.

Rosa approached English from the point of view of usefulness. Rosa mentioned English being a useful language in traveling, working, and studying, and because of this usefulness she also "has to like" the language. To her, English gives access to different contexts of which she mentioned movies and music. It would annoy her if she were unable to understand what is said in movies or the lyrics of music she hears in radio. Rosa commented that she likes using English, it is a natural language to speak for her, and her attitude towards English is positive. Saaga had a similar attitude to English, and she mentioned the plethora of mediums to use and consume the language. To her, English is the language of studies, work, and analytical thinking. She stated that English is present in her everyday life, and she is more comfortable with the academic conventions in English than in Finnish.

Joonas found English to be his favorite language to use, though he correctly pointed out that different languages are spoken in different contexts and choosing a favorite language also means choosing favorite context. Joonas commented being perplexed to find out students of English language did not speak only English with each other. It seemed like Joonas had been ready to conduct all aspects relating to studies and university life in English and was confident enough in his language skills to not be anxious about it.

For Joonas, using English meant changes in how he saw himself, constructing the linguistic identities of Finnish and English as somewhat separate. While using English language, Joonas reported feeling more like an extrovert rather than introvert. He explained how some linguistic mannerisms such as using words "like" or "man" in his speech makes him feel more social and outgoing. As Joonas views his life and languages in relation to music considerably, he had found that rapping along to English rap music and being able to keep up with the fast-paced rhythm made him feel

powerful. He was proud of being able to recite tongue twisters -type raps along with the music tracks.

### 4.2.7.2 Finnish

The relationship to Finnish language was most often described as close, and Finnish was appointed as the language of emotions. Saaga elaborated that it is easiest to describe her feelings and thoughts in Finnish. The language was additionally closely tied to what it means to be a Finn to Joonas and Vilma. Vilma also connected Finnish language to Finland as a country and stated being happy that her first language is not English, making it necessary for her to learn foreign languages.

Joonas pondered his emotions regarding Finnish language in teaching contexts as relating to competence and how he can use the language to teach more effectively. For his personal life, Joonas described immersing himself with Kalevala, poetry, lyrics, and philosophy in Finnish. Kalevala – the national epic of Finland – is important to him, and through it he appreciates Finnish as an art form or an artistic resource.

Rosa described her relationship with Finnish language to be close and continued that Finnish is the most important language for her. She stated being proud of Finnish language and enjoying knowing a language that not many others around her knew in the USA. Rosa highlighted that she likes using Finnish the most because it is her mother tongue, and she speaks it every day. The notion of teaching the language to her possible future children was obvious to her, even if she were to live abroad.

### 4.2.7.3 Swedish

Before moving on to the emotions regarding Swedish, the widely circulated discourse of pakkoruotsi (compulsory Swedish) needs to be explained. Pakkoruotsi translates to compulsory Swedish, but the term has the nuance of forcing. This term is commonly used in the discourses surrounding the learning of the second official language of Finland, especially while presenting differing opinions on the usefulness of Swedish.

Where emotions regarding Finnish were warm and natural, emotions regarding Swedish were conflicted to Vilma. She reasoned that it was a result of her not being good at Swedish in school due to not investing in the language learning. She had not invested in it because she did not see any use for the language in the future. Vilma described having later on seen that Swedish is often mentioned in job openings as a skill to be had for the candidate, and while applying for jobs she has wished she had better language skills in Swedish. Joonas shared Vilma's experience of not seeing any use for the language and stated having rebelled against learning Swedish during

junior high school, which then affected his language skills. Besides the annoyance of lacking language skills, for Vilma there was also the notion of empowerment. This was visible when Vilma described having been able to fare with her little language skills and in being able to tutor her partner in Swedish.

For Rosa, her relationship to Swedish is more neutral. Rosa had liked Swedish a lot in high school, and her language skills were better at that time as she studied the language frequently. She related to the discourse of pakkoruotsi (compulsory Swedish) as something others around her felt about Swedish, but for her learning a new language was fun. She was surprised to realize how large her vocabulary had been during high school. At the present Rosa described her relationship with Swedish to be neutral, and as she does not use Swedish in her life currently, it is

> just a random skill somewhere there

that she is not intending to study more of.
Saaga had studied Swedish as her minor subject at the university and had enjoyed Swedish during high school. After her minor studies, Saaga expressed having wanted to practice Swedish:

> I would like to practice but then it is that sort of thing where most people have the experience of pakkoruotsi and they do not want to and they cannot.

The discourse of pakkoruotsi (compulsory Swedish) was apparent around her in her experiences as well.

### 4.2.7.4    Other languages

Of other languages that the interviewees had studied, Vilma reported that as she has heard that learning French and Japanese is difficult, it would be great if she were able to speak those languages well. But for her it is enough that she was able to learn those languages and show herself that she can learn even difficult languages.

The most emotional relationship to a language was Rosa's description of attaching the emotion of annoyance to Russian.

> because my language skills are so bad in it, and because I know that it is kind of my own fault, that my language skills could be very good because if I wanted to, I could speak Russian at home with my partner, because he could speak Russian, but we just didn't start doing it, to train together and then my Russian skills have gotten worse and worse and worse. Because it is the only language that I could use to communicate with his aunt, so it kind of annoys me that I would like to be better at it and I know that well, I just haven't done the things I could have to improve my skills. Though I could always start over, that's

fine and then it'll come back to me again but it kind of annoys that I would like to know better but I can't.

Rosa did not speak of Russian solely in a negative light, as later while talking about her travels to Russia she talked enthusiastically about how much her understanding improved when there was no other option than to communicate in Russian. She also mentioned trying to use her Russian, which means that she takes an active role in her language learning. Rosa also sees Russian as a useful and beautiful language, so one could say her emotions towards the language are somewhat mixed.

German was another language that had strong emotions attached to it. Joonas and Saaga shared their experiences in using the language and having differing emotions about it. Joonas ended up becoming interested in German through lyrics in Rammstein's songs. These lyrics are pivotal to his emotions regarding German, as he described feeling powerful while singing along or reciting the lyrics in German. Joonas pondered whether it is about German language in general or if it is the empowerment of being able to speak German and how it is a language that not everyone can speak. Saaga had a traumatic experience regarding German, when she was a seasonal worker in Germany some years ago. During her time there the customers criticized her language skills in German, and she reported needing to prepare mentally if she ever were to go back again.

Continuing with Saaga, she talked about her student exchange in Japan and how learning the language made her rethink her identity as a woman. Saaga brought up her experiences during her student exchange in Japan regarding differences in hierarchy, society and gender that are more emphasized in Japanese language. In Japanese language these differences are visible through vocabulary and grammar in all contexts. Saaga described feeling that

> there is a certain frame or expectations on how I should be for example as a woman and how to act and it felt very distressing when being compared to Finnish where there is only one pronoun "hän"

(This "hän" pronoun is for the third person singular and is gender neutral.) Saaga continued that even though English language has the pronouns "he" and "she" for the third person singular, it did not seem to her to be as dividing as the Japanese language. She also described how women speak in a higher and softer intonation in Japanese, and how she also started using this intonation. During her exchange she was able to meet with people from various backgrounds and saw that there are different opinions on the issue of hierarchy and gender in different countries. Saaga reflected on this with her American exchange student friend, as they both felt that they were

not that feminine. They wondered why women cannot use the style of speaking that men use, which is "strong, almost macho", and received comments from Japanese students that they are thinking about this too much and no Japanese ponders about these that much. Accidentally using the pronouns that men use was also laughed at, though Saaga also reported having read in an article that women are starting to adopt the male neutral pronoun "boku". Saaga had clearly reflected in depth about the differences between how she comes across in Japanese and in Finnish. She had to negotiate between differentiation from others: "don't see myself as feminine", and sameness in order to fit in. She was also able to find something positive about this, that in Japanese there is room for playing around with words and pronouns when one is proficient in the language, and this showcases the speakers' nature of how they see themselves.

To summarize, emotions attached to English language were positive and English was described as natural. Using English gave Joonas new facets to his personality, indicating that this identity negotiation was positive, while using Japanese forced Saaga to re-evaluate her identity and values. She had to negotiate between differentiation and sameness as the language and society affected each other in Japan. Swedish was a language that the interviewees had a complicated or neutral relationship with, and the discourse of pakkoruotsi –compulsory Swedish – came up as well. German was a site of empowerment and trauma to interviewees, and Rosa conveyed her mixed emotions regarding Russian.

### 4.2.8   Views on accents

I asked during the interview how they would feel if they were speaking in English and a native speaker were to recognize that you are from Finland based on your talking. There were viewpoints on both ends of the spectrum: it does not bother to have a Finnish accent and it does bother to have a Finnish accent. One explanation given for not wishing to have a Finnish accent was the concern of if they have studied the language for so many years and still sounded Finnish, had they learnt enough? This indicates that the participation in the imagined community of English speakers can be dependent on the accent for the interviewee.

There were also some reports that before coming to university or at the beginning of their studies their accent bothered them more. Vilma described it as:

When I was younger I thought that good at English equals good British accent.

Native bias was strong in the data, and most often only British and American accents were mentioned, but Saaga also talked about the other Englishes such as

Australian English. She also mentioned having heard that there are more nonnative English speakers than native English speakers, expanding the imagined community of English speakers to further include also nonnative speakers.

Rosa and Vilma strove for a general and neutral accent, and Vilma admitted to wanting to differentiate from Finnish accent but also from strong native accents. Rosa admitted that her accent is rather American otherwise, but while reading academic texts she has a British accent, which was an interesting curiosity. This could be seen as relating to identity construction from the point of view of using linguistic systems that are ideologically associated with British people in this instance. Rosa continued that she strove to pronounce words correctly but is now less strict about the issue than at the beginning of her studies.

I then asked some of the interviewees if they worried sounding like they speak *Rally English* which stands for English spoken by Finnish pronunciation rules used categorically by Finnish rally drivers. To this Vilma answered that she has understood many of her friends are shying away from using English as they fear they speak *Rally English*. This demonstrates that *Rally English* can be seen as a language ideology in that speaking in a Finnish accent is attributed as being "worse" than having other accents.

### 4.2.9   Codeswitching and acting differently in different languages

The interviewees reported codeswitching between several languages of their language repertoire depending on the context. It is also noteworthy that no-one mentioned code-switching in a negative light. Most often the interviewees described inserting words and phrases from other languages to a conversation in a joking manner. Another reason to code-switch was to use terms and phrases for which there either is no equivalent in Finnish or the translation does not fully capture the essence of what is meant. As an example, Saaga mentioned some context-bound phrases in Japanese that are used when leaving and entering home or a shared location with friends, that she wishes to use occasionally because there are no equivalents in Finnish.

Interviewees were asked if they acted, spoke or thought differently in different languages, and everyone reported at least one difference. For Vilma, she stated that

> I speak much louder in English. - - perhaps because I somehow want to make sure to be understood and there would not be any problems that people could not hear what I say.

Rosa said that she speaks English at a higher tone. Of her vocabulary she stated that she had unconsciously learnt some habits from the youth around her in the USA, such as using the word "like" frequently, which annoyed her. Joonas stated that to him,

English is a more analytical language, and he is able to express himself in a more specific way in English. He also connected English to strategic thinking, since he plays video games competitively in English. Lastly, Saaga mentioned acting in a more feminine way in Japanese and being more social while speaking English. She described that in Finnish there are less awkward pauses even if the conversation quiets for a moment.

### 4.2.10 Describing their own language identity

When asked to describe their own language identity, Vilma and Rosa approached the issue by pondering if they were monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, whereas Saaga described herself as someone who has always wanted to study languages. Vilma described thinking about the different definitions for bilingual: bilingual since birth and bilingual through later language learning. She stated that she is monolingual if the definition is bilingualism since birth but would like to identify as bilingual if later language learning counts as she speaks English at almost native level.

Rosa described her conflicting thoughts about the topic. She saw herself as monolingual since she has only one mother tongue but also bilingual as she is able to use two languages in several contexts, including working in Finnish and English. She also sometimes thought herself to be multilingual because she knows from her studies that all languages one knows attribute to the language identity of a person, even if those skills are scarce in some languages. She reported sometimes having difficulties knowing which are her own thoughts and which are information she has learned, and thinks is something she should identify with. Curiously Rosa also described her language identity as flexible and changing, she knows it can change with time and with new environments. She gave an example of if she were to live in Austria for five years, she would want to learn to speak fluent German and thus would adapt it to be a part of her language identity.

Both Saaga and Joonas also reflected on monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism. Saaga had considered this issue while in Japan and described how her British friend encouraged her to identify as bilingual since her language skills were so high. Saaga recalled having thought that one needs to be born into bilingual family in order to be bilingual, and only recently she had changed her view on the issue. Saaga eventually identified as one- and half-lingual and was considering multilingualism, but she did not feel comfortable yet calling herself multilingual. Joonas acknowledged having the same rigid view on bilingualism that Saaga had pondered earlier, and thus identified as monolingual. Joonas also proposed the concept of "panlingual" where

all language resources are "clumped together" and one uses those resources differently in different contexts.

Joonas described his language identity with

> It is a part of my identity that I see myself as a language person or somehow I like languages and in some philosophical level I like to think through language a lot.

Language learning was important to Joonas, and he was elated and empowered to be able to learn more languages after depressive episodes. For Joonas, Finnish as his mother tongue is the deep, organic core of his language identity, and then English is the somewhat constructed identity on top of that. Part of his English learning has also been incidental learning through video games, and he has built part of his identity around video games. Joonas described that since he is able to think in English, he can in a way separate that part of his identity from others, but for the other languages that he knows, they are only part of him as a "language-person".

### 4.2.10.1    Summary

To summarize the main findings of the study, the interviewees built several different language identities for themselves in their different languages. English language identities were presented as natural and of relating to proficiency in the language. The interviewees were active agents in their language learning and presented confidence in their language skills. Their attitudes towards the languages were positive or neutral, and English was generally seen as the language of emotions and a tool. The interviewees attached the language to different emotions, and thus it was a salient part of their life in order to be attached to these basic emotions.

Swedish language identities ranged from mere lack of proficiency to empowerment in their ability to use what little they knew. The discourse of *pakkoruotsi* (compulsory Swedish) was prevalent in the data and presented a wider language ideology that had been circulated in discourse. For other languages that the interviewees knew, the language identities ranged from nonexistent to having had an effect on the learner's sense of self. Language identities were negotiated through the pull between differentiation and sameness in addition to discourse surrounding bi- and multilingualism.

# 5   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The language identities produced in the data were contextualized, multiple and changing (Virkkula & Nikula 2010). The students produced multilingual identities by reflecting on the languages they know but contested the view of multilingualism as something yet out of their reach. The strongest language identity present was that of English, based on the interviewees' own views of their strong language skills and content with their proficiency. English was an apparent part of their everyday lives and this saliency made English an important language to the interviewees. On the other hand, lacking language skills created the background for several language identities for the interviewees. These language identities were usually described as "having studied the language once but now my skills have gotten worse". Language identities were also the site of conflict and negotiation in case of Russian and Japanese. Language learning and language skills were often approached from the viewpoint of usefulness, while also contradicting this by stating that languages were merely studied and were not great part of the learners' identities. Sometimes the notion usefulness was enough incentive to learn a language and other times the interviewees learned languages based solely on their own interest.

The results of the present study are in line with Sung's (2019), as she found in her study that different investments produce different language identities in different contexts. For example, Joonas stated that he had studied German during junior high school but did not have strong identification to the language or the language learning. During his higher secondary education studies, he rekindled his interest in German through his own interest in the grammar in the context of a song and ended up learning the language again. This time his investment in the language strove him to study and he constructed an avid learner's language identity in the interview. Joonas also presented another finding that was in line with Sung's (2014), that of a glocal identity where global and local mixed with the internet serving as the global identity and

preferring to stay in Finland served as the local identity. The other interviewees constructed global identities (Sung, 2014; Henry & Goddard, 2015) through their wide experiences in traveling, and staying abroad in addition to global contexts for their languages present through hobbies, media, and social media.

During the analysis I mentioned the imagined community of the English speakers (Norton, 2006). The access to this community seemed to rely on not having an overt Finnish accent. There can also be found other imagined communities, especially ones for learners of all different languages mentioned in the data, but they were only implied by the interviewees as being out of their reach currently due to their lacking language skills.

Some prevalent language ideologies emerged in the interviews that are seen also on societal level, and in this way the study connects to Lehto (2018). The most prevalent language ideology was that of *pakkoruotsi,* compulsory Swedish. The interviewees described their experiences around this language ideology, and the language used had the nuance of youth being forced to learn Swedish even though there does not seem to be any use for it in their immediate lives. Additionally, there was the discourse and language ideology of strict definition of bilingualism, which was apparent in Parviainen and Bergroth's study (2018). This meant that in the data the interviewees shared widely that they had understood bilingualism means one is born to a family where two languages are used. Even though some even have experiences of staying in an English-speaking country for a year and managing to handle life in English there, it is difficult for the interviewees to identify as bilingual. These results on bilingualism were also shared by Leppänen et al. (2009) in their national survey on the English language in Finland. They found out that of their 1495 respondents, 84% described themselves as monolingual, 9% as bilingual and 7% as multilingual. The study observed that Finnish people are not describing themselves as multilingual and do not think that studying languages makes them multilingual. The study then referred to the traditional views on bi- and multilingualism where in order to be bi- or multilingual, one must have native-like language skills on the language. They propose that the answers to identifying as monolingual are tied to language ideologies, where monolingual identity could enhance the national identity of what it means to be Finnish (2009: 149). It could be one explanation for the participants of this study identifying as monolinguals even though they have wide enough language repertoires in English to view it as their second language.

The interviewees also shared the view of native speaker as norm and target for language learning, which was discussed by Virkkula and Nikula (2010). Virkkula and

Nikula's (2010) study also shares other findings with the present study. They found out in their research that the participants changed their perception of themselves as English users after going abroad to a student exchange, and similar discourses were revealed in the current study. Saaga expressed having realized that she has good language skills in English when she compared herself to other exchange students in Japan, excluding the native speakers. Additionally, she took pride in winning the native speakers of English in an English word game. It must be noted that there were also experiences where traveling or longer stays abroad worsened the interviewees' perception of their language skills. Saaga recollects having thought that she was good at Japanese before going to her student exchange in Japan but found out in the beginning that the Japanese studied from books here in Finland actually differed from the spoken language in Japan. Additionally, comparing herself to other exchange students who had studied the language longer made her re-evaluate the level of her language skills. Vilma had similar experiences while traveling in Sweden, where Swedish people could not understand her Swedish, which made her decide not to use the language in Sweden again

This study showcases that there are widely shared discourses on Swedish language as well as bilingualism that affect the interviewees language identities. I think that it is important to study nonnative speakers' language identities especially regarding English as they will be "experts" on English later, as they are working in communications or teaching English to children. If these students who are studying English in English do not see themselves as experts, it could have an effect on their professional identity. Becoming aware of the wider discourses apparent in one's life through their speech allows for the ability to reconsider if they want to continue taking part in the discourse. This in turn can help change these perhaps pejorative discourses, for example the discourse of *pakkoruotsi* (compulsory Swedish), by actively resisting them. This study can also shed some light on the phenomenon of mono-/bi-/multilingualism of English language students, which in turn could weigh in on what is taught about the phenomenon to language students in universities. If the students do not recognize themselves as bilinguals even after studying the language for over 10 years, and studying the language in English at the university, should bilingualism be discussed even further in education?

Implications for the participants are related to greater self-awareness in regard to their multilingualism and language identities. This study will also raise the researcher's self-knowledge about multilingualism and language identities. For scholars, this study will construct the collective knowledge about multilingual identities in the context of students in Finland. This study can also inspire further research into

language identities, perhaps in the context of students of other subjects. The issue of language identities could be interesting to research through group interviews as well.

Lastly, I would like to discuss the limitations of the study. It has to be stressed, that these depictions of the language identities of the students do not state any outside truths. The results are showcasing only what was apparent in that moment and place in time. Moreover, these results cannot be generalized to all students of English language in Finland, but it does serve as a window to some language ideologies that are present in multilingual university students' lives. This was my first time conducting interviews and as such found out that it is difficult to not ask leading questions. By the last interview I had an idea of how to word the questions naturally and not worry about following the frame of the interview.

I would like to end the thesis with a lovely quote from Rosa that I fully agree with:

> There are so many lovely languages in the world that I'd like to study and somehow just that you can enhance your language skills all the time and learn new things.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Tausta:**
- Mikä on sun nimi?
- Mitä pronomineja haluat, että käytän sinusta englanniksi?
- Montako vuotta oot opiskellu englantia yliopistolla?
- Oletko opelinjalla vai kieliasiantuntijalinjalla?
- Miksi tulit opiskelemaan englantia yliopistoon?
- Mitä kieliä ymmärrät, puhut tai kirjoitat?
- Mitä näistä kielistä tykkäät käyttää eniten ja miksi?
- Mitä kieltä käytät oikeasti eniten? Mitä toiseksi eniten? Ja mitä kolmanneksi eniten?
- Millaisissa tilanteissa ja ympäristöissä käytät englantia/suomea/muita kieliä?
  - Apukysymykset konteksteihin:
    - Mitä kieliä käytät vapaa-ajalla?
    - Mitä kieliä käytät yliopistolla?
    - Mitä ystävien kanssa? Entä perheen kanssa?
- Kun pohdit yliopistokontekstia, niin miten päätät mitä kieltä käytät:
  - a) muiden opiskelijoiden kanssa
  - b) opettajien ja luennoitsijoiden kanssa
    - b.1) luennon aikana
    - b.2) luentojen ulkopuolella, esim. sähköpostia kirjoittaessa
- Millä kielellä tai kielillä ajattelet?
- Mitä kieliä käytät tai esiintyy sun unissa?
- Millaisia tunteita eri kielten käyttäminen sussa aiheuttaa? Miltä susta tuntuu kun käytät kieltä X?
- Mitä kieliä useimmiten käytät kun olet iloinen/vihainen/säikähtänyt/surullinen?
- Onko sulla kokemuksia ulkomailla matkustamisesta tai asumisesta? Myös vaihto-opiskelu!
- Mitä kieliä oot käyttänyt ulkomailla?
- Miten nämä kokemukset on vaikuttanut sun käsitykseen sun kielitaidosta?
- Mihin tarvitset englantia/suomea/muu kieli nyt ja tulevaisuudessa?

**Identiteetti**
- Kuvaile sun suhdetta suomeen/englantiin/muihin kieliin

- Miten kuvailisit sun omaa kieli-identiteettiä?
- Näetkö itsesi englannin käyttäjänä vai opiskelijana?
- Näetkö itsesi yksikielisenä, kaksikielisenä vai monikielisenä? Miksi?
- Jos englannin natiivipuhuja kuulisi sinun puhettasi, ja tunnistaisi että olet Suomesta, miltä se tuntuisi?
- Onko sinulla jotain aksenttia, jota tavoittelet?

**Käsitys omasta kielitaidosta**
- Koetko, että toimit/ajattelet/puhut eri tavalla eri kielillä? Kerro miten?
- Ajattele millainen olet kun käytät englantia kavereiden kanssa, ja sitten millainen olet kun käytät englantia luennoilla. Onko näissä jokin ero?
- Miten pärjäät X kielen kanssa
  - vapaa-ajalla
  - luennoilla
  - töissä
  - virallisia asioita hoitaessa
- Mitä tarkottaa hyvä kielitaito?
  - (Onko sun oma käsitys kielitaidosta muuttunut jossain tilanteessa, ja miksi?)
- Kuka saa kutsua itseään englannin osaajaksi tai englannin puhujaksi?

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**Background**
- What is your name?
- What pronouns do you wish me to use in English?
- How many years have you studied English in the university?
- Are you on the teacher or language specialist track?
- Why did you come to study English at the university?
- Which languages do you understand, speak, or write?
- Which of these languages you like to use the most? Why?
- What language do you actually use the most? What second most? And the rest?
- What are the contexts where you use English/Finnish/other languages?
  - Helping questions for contexts:
    - What languages you use on your free time?
    - What languages you use at university?
    - What languages you use with your friends? What about your family?
- In the university context how do you choose between what language you use to communicate

- o a) with other students
- o b) with the teachers and lecturers
  - - b.1) during lecture
  - - b.2) outside of lecture e.g., writing an email?
- What language(s) do you use in your thoughts?
- What language(s) you dream in?
- What kinds of feelings does the use of different languages generate in you? How are you feeling when you are using language X?
- What language(s) you prefer to use when you are happy/angry/startled/sad?
- Do you have experiences of traveling or living abroad? Also student exchanges!
- What languages have you used abroad?
- How have the experiences shaped your perception of your language skills?
- What do you need English/Finnish/other language for now and in the future?

**Identity**
- Describe your relationship to Finnish/English/other languages.
- How would you describe your language identity?
- Do you see yourself as English language user or English learner?
- Do you see yourself as mono-/bi-/multilingual and why?
- If a native English speaker would hear your speech and recognized that you were from Finland, how would it make you feel?
- Is there some accent that you are striving for?

**Perception of own language skills**
- Do you think you act/think/speak differently in different languages? Please explain how.
- Think about what you are like when you use English with your friends and then what you are like when you use English during lectures. Is there a difference between them?
- How do you fare with language X?
  - o in your free time
  - o at lectures
  - o at work
  - o while taking care of official matters
- What do good language skills mean?
  - o (Has your own perception of language skills changed at some point and why?)
- Who can call themselves an English learner or an English speaker?