

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

*Möhnying* and other  
forms of code-switching  
in tabletop role-playing  
games

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A case study on a *Dungeons and Dragons*  
role-playing group

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## Abstract

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### Abstract:

This study focuses on code-switching in a *Dungeons and Dragons* tabletop role-playing group. The study focuses on the reasons for code-switching, how code-switching is used as a resource in tabletop role-playing games as well as the participants' perceived attitudes towards it. The position of English as a lingua franca has changed during past decades and the language has grown to be much more than a traditional lingua franca. In addition to being spoken between non-native speakers of English who do not share a language, it is also used in interactions between non-native speakers who share a native tongue. One of the contexts where this happens is tabletop role-playing games. The tabletop role-playing community has seen a large growth in members during recent years and the popularity of the hobby is continuously on the rise. The gaming community is widely international, and a lot of content is only available in English. This research discusses the code-switching habits of a six-person role-playing group where all the participants' native language is Finnish. The groups language of play is English.

This study is an ethnographic qualitative study that uses four different data collection methods: audio recordings, observation and fieldnotes, interviews and a questionnaire. The materials for the study are 10.5 hours of audio recordings (6.5h + 3.5h), fieldnotes, a four-question structured interview, and an online language background questionnaire. The audio data was analysed using applied conversation analysis and Goffman's participant framework while the interviews were analysed using applied thematic analysis. During the analysis of the audio the data was divided into four sub-sections: word searches, cultural references, asymmetry of knowledge, and out of game talk.

The findings show that code-switching was used in a multitude of situations and for a variety of reasons. The most prominent ones being word search and shifting the participant framework. In cases of word search, code-switching was utilised to sustain the flow of the narrative as well as to maintain immersion in the world of the game. In cases where code-switching was used to shift the participant framework, it broke the immersion and signalled that the conversation was no longer happening inside the game world. Code-switching and shifting the participant framework made the conversation move to the foreground and take over the existing mainline. In this context, code-switching was also used as a tool of authority. In addition, in the data code-switching was used as a tool of emphasis and creativity. Different cases of code-switching pointed towards English being the language of the world of fantasy while Finnish was the language of the outside world. It was also found that code-switching was always accompanied by a change in style, tempo or volume. To get more in-depth knowledge about the indexes of code-switching in the contexts of tabletop role-playing games, further study is needed.

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## 1 Introduction

The study of code-switching has long been dominated by studies on bilingual speakers and by comparison studies speaking about multilinguals are few. Furthermore, most of those studies concentrate on studying language learning and acquisition. English as a language is spoken now more than ever before. It is no longer only a language spoken by native speakers, spoken to native speakers or even spoken to people you do not share another language with. This study wants to take a closer look at multilinguals' use of English in an environment where all the speakers share a native language. How do the rules of language differ when speaking one language is not the must?

Instead of looking at the population on a wider scale, I wanted to take a closer look at a specific community and plan an ethnographic project around their use of English. Looking at literature, I realised that when studying communities, one should choose one that they have insider knowledge on as well as one that one can easily interact with often (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Levon, 2013, s. 199). About five years ago, I got introduced to a new hobby by a friend. A hobby that let me use the language I had just started studying the year prior. That hobby was tabletop role-playing games.

The popularity of tabletop role-playing games has been on the rise for years and the community has seen a massive growth in members and interest in the hobby. This was a community I felt like I knew well enough to study. I had played with most of the people in the group I ended up taking as my case study and felt confident that I could accurately analyse them.

The ever-growing popularity of all game related hobbies from computer games to board games calls for that community to be looked at. Many games and sources used while playing are either strictly in English or have been translated into a few languages with large audiences. Finnish is rarely one of these languages. Because of this, English is often a part of these hobbies. The rules and jargons make for a rich landscape of code-switching.

The data collection methods used in this study are audio recordings, observation with fieldnotes, interviews and a questionnaire. The audio recordings are the main data collection method while the observation with fieldnotes, interviews and the questionnaire take more of a

supporting role. The data will be analysed using applied conversation analysis as well as Goffman's participant framework (1974).

In this study, I will be studying the code-switching of a *Dungeons and Dragons* tabletop role-playing group. My research questions are as follows:

1. When does code-switching happen and what are the reasons for it?
2. How is code-switching used as a resource in the environment of tabletop role-play?
3. What are the participants perceived attitudes towards code-switching?

The outline of this study is the following. Chapter 2 will discuss the backgrounds of code-switching studies as well as gaming relates studies, including English as a lingua franca (2.1), the study of code-switching (2.3), the importance of intonation (2.4) and gaming related studies and theories (2.5). The chapter will also include some background of the game studied in this thesis *Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*.

Chapter 3 explains the methods used in this study. It talks about the study design of this thesis as well as the data analysis process and theories related to the methods. Furthermore, it introduces the participants and includes ethical considerations and the limitations of this study.

Chapter 4 discusses the data. The analysis chapter is divided into five sub-chapters of which each analyses the data from a different viewpoint. Sub-chapters 4.1-4.4 discuss recorded data while 4.5 discusses the interviews. Chapter 5 opens and discusses the data from the point of view of the research questions one question at a time.

## **2 Background**

### **2.1 English as a lingua franca**

A lingua franca is a language that speakers of different languages can use to communicate with each other (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Historically, lingua francas were used as a means of trade and diplomacy to usher understanding between people who otherwise would not understand each other (Durham, 2014, p. 3). In today's globalised world lingua francas still often serve the purposes of trade and diplomacy, but it has become more than that. Especially one language in particular, English, has grown into a real global lingua franca. In 2015,

English was the third biggest language when measured in native speakers. However, English was the predominant language spoken worldwide by other than native speakers. The number of non-native English speakers greatly outnumbers the number of native English speakers. (Baker, 2015, pp. 5-6) . According to Durham (2014), no other language has been spoken by such a large group in such a large variety of situations (Durham, 2014, p. 3).

It is evident that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century English is no longer being learnt only to communicate with native speakers but to also communicate with the rest of the world. It is widely used as a way of communication in areas of business, education, entertainment, medicine, and science making it a lingua franca. (Durham, 2014, p. 2) Globalisation has put English in a unique position as a lingua franca. The internet has enabled people to communicate effortlessly with a larger amount of people than what was previously possible. Furthermore, speaking English makes it possible to enjoy a wider range of entertainment. For the Finnish audience, one such piece of entertainment is the game *Dungeons and Dragons 5e* which is the game being played in the data of this study. Kääntä et al. (2008) point out that Finns are exposed to English in the form of entertainment as movies have been subtitled instead of dubbed since the 1960s (Kääntä, Leppänen, & Nikula, 2008, p. 20). In her article about code-switching as a contextualisation cue in the context of videogames, Piirainen-Marsh (2008) states that code-switching indicates a presence of English as well as signals its significance in the media-enriched lives of adolescents (Piirainen-Marsh, 2008, s. 163).

In the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of lingua franca, English as a lingua franca (ELF) as a phenomenon is often defined as English spoken between people who do not share a native language (Baker, 2015, p. 7). However, Baker (2015) mentions that many of the definitions of ELF are not strict and instead describes them as “fuzzy”. He states that ELF studies do include studies on communication in English by speakers of the same native language. (Baker, 2015, p. 8;193). Dalton-Puffer (2009) notes that situations where the speakers share a native language are not prototypical ELF study settings. However, because the use of English in these situations is most commonly ELF communication, there is no need to exclude them. (Dalton-Puffer, 2009, p. 211)

Given the considerable use of English by non-native speakers the ownership of the English language has been a topic of discussion for several decades (Baker, 2015, p. 6). On a global level the ownership refers to abiding to English speaking norms created by the English (Widdowson, 1994). However, on a local level in ELF contexts this can become a question of



perceived ownership and a contention of who knows the language best. For example, in the context of an English lesson generally the students feel that the English teacher has the authority to rule what is correct language use.

## **2.2 Code-switching**

### **2.2.1 Terminology**

The term code-switching is often used when talking about the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence (Gardner-Chloros, Code-switching, 2009, p. 4). However, researchers do not always agree on what exactly code-switching is or who exactly does it. Consequently, in many studies and sources, the exact definition can vary from all change of language or dialect in conversation to the change of language in the speech of bilinguals. Gardner-Chloros (2009) defines code-switching as several dialects or languages being used by bilinguals in the same conversation. Similarly, Bullock and Toribio (2009) introduce code-switching as a construct derived from bilingual behaviour. However, Gardner-Chloros (2009) broadens her definition by noting that code-switching does also largely affect everyone who is in contact with multiple dialects or languages (Gardner-Chloros, Code-switching, 2009, p. 4).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, different ways of speaking signal meanings and different ways of being that change the potential message of the words used (Eckert, Variation and the indexical field, 2008, p. 456). Bilinguals and people in plurilingual communities combine languages, language varieties and dialects in socially meaningful ways to communicate messages beyond the superficial meanings of words (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 98; Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 4). According to Bullock and Toribio (2009), monolinguals can do this by switching between registers, dialects, level of formality and intonations (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 98). Moreover, Bullock and Toribio (2009) present a term for these monolingual switches between registers; they call it shifting (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 2).

As a term, shifting very closely resembles the term of style-shifting. Style-shifting presents differences in aspects like formality and register (Hernández-Campoy, 2016). It is seen as the speaker's social response to different speech environments reflecting their awareness of their own surroundings and who is being spoken to (Hernández-Campoy, 2016, p. 33). Style is always entangled with ideology and every stylistic choice can be seen as an interpretation of the social environment (Eckert, 2008, p. 456). Like stylistic shifting, code-switching can be

seen as a purposeful choice (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009, p. 1). Even though multilingual speakers often claim that code-switching is unpremeditated behaviour, studies show that it is not a random phenomenon but instead has a meaning and function (Gumperz, 1971; Hoffman, 1991; Li, 1998, p. 156). Compared to code-switching, style-shifting more closely studies changes that happen within the bounds of one language such as stylistic variants, slangs, and jargons. Given the above, as terms code-switching, shifting, and style-shifting are sometimes used to describe similar cases of change.

Like Bullock and Toribio (2009), some researchers choose to treat code-switching differently depending on if it is done by monolinguals or bilinguals and between languages or contained inside one language. Some treat code-switching and code-mixing as two separate phenomena while others group all under the term code-switching. By some, code-switching and code-mixing are seen as sub-categories of each other. For instance, in Winford's (2020) article, code-mixing is treated as a sub-category of code-switching (Winford, 2020). What each term represents varies from article to article. Muysken (2000) refers to all cases of lexical items and grammatical features appearing in one sentence as code-mixing. He reserves the term code-switching for cases of rapid succession of several languages in a single speech event. (Muysken, 2000, p. 1).

This suggests that the term and function of code-switching is not as unproblematic as it might seem at first. It is not unambiguous and can mean different things depending on the context. Gardner-Chloros (2009) even declares that the word code-switching can mean whatever we want (Gardner-Chloros, Code-switching, 2009, p. 11). In the context of this thesis, the term code-switching encompasses all instances of mixing languages forgoing the term code-mixing.

### **2.2.2 Code-switching studies and theories**

As mentioned earlier, code-switching affects everyone who is in contact with multiple dialects or languages (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 7; Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 4). However, the reasons for the use of code-switching as well as its frequency differs between communities. In communities where most speakers are bilingual or multilingual, code-switching is the normal discourse mode and switching between languages is done frequently. In other communities, code-switching is used to convey special meanings in specific contexts. (Li, 2013, p. 366) However, it is most frequently used in informal in-group conversations

about mundane topics without the presence of outsiders (Muysken, 2011, p. 312). As code-switching is closely tied to both multilingualism and multilingual settings, the contexts and settings of code-switching are extremely varied (Muysken, 2011, p. 304).

According to Li (2013), people who are inexperienced with code-switching can see it as a sign of confusion or lack of mental control. This results in young children often being discouraged from code-switching even when their environments are rich with code-switching. (Li, 2013, p. 366) In addition, the general public commonly perceives code-switching as indicative of language degeneration (Bullock & Toribio, 2009). Furthermore, even distinguished scholars have argued that code-switching is simply a result of word search (Li, 2013, p. 366). However, research evidence shows that code-switching involves high levels of cognitive control (Li, 2013; van Hell & Witteman, 2009). Although code-switching is often perceived to require little to no cognitive effort, experimental studies show that both production and perception of language change comes with a measurable cost (van Hell & Witteman, 2009, p. 62). In addition, code-switching requires a good grammatical knowledge of the languages involved (Li, 2013, p. 366). Furthermore, code-switching is considered to be a conscious process meaning that it is a choice and not something involuntary (Gumperez, 1971; Hoffman, 1991; Li, 1998).

Heredia and Altarriba (2001) note that most models of code-switching assume that the bilingual's first language always has special status (Heredia & Altarriba, 2001, pp. 166-167). According to them it is often assumed that the lexicon of the first language is always accessed faster. However, in their data on the linguistic behaviour of Spanish-English bilinguals in Texas, there were more reports of English interference when speaking Spanish than of Spanish interference while speaking English. (Heredia & Altarriba, 2001, p. 165)

Instead of seeing code-switching as a signal of deficit, code-switching patterns can be used as a measure of their bilingual abilities (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 9). Studies have found a correlation between language proficiency and different types of code-switching. Poplack (1980) found that more balanced and proficient bilinguals used intra-sentential code-switching<sup>1</sup> whereas less proficient ones preferred to use tag switches and single-word

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<sup>1</sup> Poplack (1980) divides code-switching into three categories: extra-sentential, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential. Extra-sentential meaning the insertion of tag elements into an otherwise monolingual discussion. Inter-sentential meaning the switching between languages outside of sentence or clause. Intra-sentential meaning changes of language within a single utterance.

switches. She concluded that the more proficient a speaker is in both languages, the more they are able to code-switch within a sentence (Poplack, 1980, pp. 613-614).

One way of looking at code-switching is the Matrix Language Frame model (MLF) created by Myers-Scotton (1993). It has since been updated and refined on multiple occasions. The MLF has developed into a vast and multidimensional model, and this thesis will only explain the very basics of it. The model discusses the asymmetry of languages in intra-sentential code-switching. In the model, the languages used are named the matrix language (ML) and the embedded language (EL). ML is the dominant language that gives the abstract frame to the speech where EL is inserted (Myers-Scotton, *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Codeswitching*, 1993). To identify the ML a distinction must be made between system and content morphemes. System morphemes, such as inflections and function words, do not receive or assign thematic roles. They convey relations between content morphemes. Content morphemes, such as verbs, adjectives, nouns and some prepositions, convey pragmatic and semantic aspects. They also receive and assign thematic roles. System morphemes are important for the building of grammatical frames while content morphemes are crucial for conveying the message of the interaction. (Myers-Scotton, 1993)

The model presents that in the constituent structure the two languages, ML and EL, do not participate equally. Additionally, it states that not all morpheme types can equally be used from ML and EL. However, both languages are always activated when the speaker engages in code-switching but even then the ML is more intensely active. (Myers-Scotton, 2002). In bilingual conversation, content morphemes can be taken from both the EL and the ML but system morphemes can only be taken from the ML (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

One of the things I will be looking at in this thesis is what triggers code-switching. This can be studied from multiple points of view. One of them is to inspect if the code-switching in question is situational or metaphorical. Situational code-switching means that the shift has been triggered by something external, such as someone else introducing a new conversation topic or a new person enters the conversation. On the other hand, metaphorical switching refers to the speaker choosing to change the atmosphere themselves by switching language. (Gumperz, 2009)

Another focus of this study is what can be achieved by code-switching. Code-switching was found to be used to enrich speech as well as show social relationships and language

preferences, frame discourse, clarify difficulties, contrast personalisation and objectification, dramatise key words, convey cultural -expressive messages, lower language barriers, show membership, maintain appropriateness of context, and reiterate messages (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009, pp. 4-5). Additionally, Shin (2010) has found that code-switching is used to set constructs, reinforce different social hierarchies as well as maintain and reinforce language identities (Shin S.-Y. , 2010, pp. 110-111). Furthermore, code-switching is used to show membership (Poplack, 1980, p. 10). In his work, Gumperez (1982) emphasises its role in the realignment of speech roles, emphasis as well as elaboration (Gumperez J. J., 1982, p. 66). In his thesis about code-switching in a tabletop role-playing group, Suominen (2014) found that in most cases code-switching to English was used to contextualise and mark movement between different levels of play. Code-switching was also used to bring attention to factors like rules. (Suominen, 2014, pp. 58-59) As code-switching is used to accomplish these very specific communicative goals, it can be called a communicative resource (Shin S. J., 2005, p. 82).

### **2.3 Intonation**

This study analyses speech and as such it is important to look at different aspects of it. Words are not the only things indicating meaning in speech. For example, a certain tone of voice can indicate that the speaker actually means the opposite of what they are saying. A speaker can use differences in pitch and length of syllables as well as differences in volume to help direct the listener's attention. (Wharton, 2012, pp. 97-98)

Intonation can tell us a variety of things about the information in the sentence, for example if the information given is new or already known or if an element of the sentence is being focused on (Szczepek Reed, 2011, p. 30). Low falling intonation has been studied to often occur with completion on different levels of speech, like semantics, narrative, turns and syntax. According to Szczepek Reed (2011), it can be assumed that low falling intonation is used to signal that an aspect of talk is complete (Szczepek Reed, 2011, p. 49). Conversely, a high pitch can introduce a beginning (Szczepek Reed, 2011, p. 74). She also adds that when analysing intonation and pitch, it is important to take into account and get to know the context (Szczepek Reed, 2011).

## 2.4 Tabletop role-playing games

Gardner-Chloros (2009) points out that to properly understand the code-switching and language behaviour of a group, the researcher must have insider knowledge of the community and circumstances (Gardner-Chloros, Code-switching, 2009, pp. 3-4). Therefore, to validly analyse the language use of a tabletop role-playing group, we must first familiarise ourselves with the different aspects of role-playing games. The first part of this chapter discusses gaming as a setting for linguistic study as well as gives background for understanding game-centred studies. The second part discusses the game relevant to this study, *Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*.

### 2.4.1 Games as a setting for linguistic study

The linguistic study of gaming communities is still relatively young, and the most recent studies often focus on online gaming groups and communities. In the case of role-playing games, they have mostly focused on written online games and online video games instead of face-to-face tabletop games. With recent efforts to digitalise education, gaming has drawn the attention of many pedagogical scholars. As a result of educational interest in the field, many of the new articles discuss games through a pedagogical lens. First, this subchapter will examine different linguistic studies on gaming. Second, it will discuss the gaming community and third the storytelling nature of games.

There have been multiple studies on the effect of gaming on students' language skills. Piirainen-Marsh and Tainio (2009) studied the potential of learning from video games, using video recordings of two teenage boys playing the video game *Final Fantasy X* together. The focus of the study was the participants' repetitions of game characters' lines. They argue that by mimicking the video game characters' utterances as a part of the social gaming experience, the players were able to transfer the utterances into their vocabulary outside of games. (Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio, 2009)

In addition to studies on the effects of gaming on language acquisition, studies have explored the use of different kinds of games as teaching tools. A study by Gellard-Goad (2014) explored the use of table-top role-playing games as a way of teaching and learning advanced Latin grammar in university context. To this end, they designed a course that used different game mechanics as teaching and learning tools. The whole course was designed to be a *Dungeons and Dragons* type table-top role-playing game where instead of grades the students

gathered *experience points* for their characters. The course was divided into player groups where each player made themselves a character to play and develop during the course. A certain amount of *experience points* gave the character different boosts and *in-game* bonuses. During the course, the students unravelled the mystery in the story and fought enemies using Latin grammar tied to different actions and tools in the game. Gellard-Goad (2014) found that switching from grades to *experience points* decreased the student anxiety and grade-grubbing to close to nothing. The students were also observed to be braver in tackling hard grammatical problems. Other results from the study were that overall, the students showed vast improvement in their skills, there were fewer expressed sentiments of students being overwhelmed, the student engagement in the course was very high, and all the students achieved at a high level. According to Gellard-Goad (2014) the experiment was a massive success. (Gellar-Goad, 2014) In addition, studies show that playing games, especially role-playing games, correlates with higher English grades (Uuskoski, 2011, p. 56).

One of the points Gellard-Goad (2014) brought up in his study was that solving the challenges and tasks as a team also called an *adventuring party* produced a feeling of a supportive environment and camaraderie (Gellar-Goad, 2014). Generally, the sense of community is a big part of gaming. Even with single player games there are often active online communities discussing the game and sometimes real-life subjects like mental health and politics (Mäyrä, 2016, p. 7). The forms of gaming communities have changed drastically with the constantly evolving technology and communication cultures. Game communities are no longer exclusive gaming clubs with strict communicative practises and instead have evolved into massive online forums with people from all over the world. The size of the community affects the percentage of involved players. In smaller groups everyone can be equally involved but the larger the community grows the more likely it is that the members differ in their commitment to the community. (Mäyrä, 2016, p. 152)

Tabletop role-playing games employ a hybrid of older and newer layers of gaming community. There are online tabletop role-playing games that largely follow the same conventions as other online multiplayer games. However, there are still more traditional tabletop role-playing games often referred to as *pen-and-paper* role-playing games (Gellar-Goad, 2014). These games get their name from the fact that in theory one only needs a pen and paper to play. Local tabletop role-playing game groups can also vary anywhere from close friends to acquaintances. They might play one game session together or they might

already have played together for years. Players who play in local groups are often part of their own community be it a local game club or a friend group. In addition, some of them can belong to an online game community too.

Like all communities, game communities need cohesion and shared feelings of community to not scatter. It is important that the community has values and goals most members can relate to. (Siitonen, 2007, p. 115) These goals and values are the framework that guides the community in some direction. The line between what is a goal and what is a value can be hard to discern as the goals are often based on the values. A community's values are reflected in its norms and rules. (Siitonen, 2007, p. 117) All communities have their own values, goals, norms, and rules. As such, when studying one it must be taken into consideration that there are no two communities alike. Every community has its own rules, norms, goals and values. These values and goals affect the players decisions when interacting with the game or the community.

Storytelling is a big part of role-playing games be they videogames or table-top games. The difference between the two is that usually in videogames the player chooses their story and utterances from a readymade list and the communication is between the player and the game character. By contrast, in tabletop games the communication is more freeform and happens between players. The players can create their own story and use different methods to achieve the narrative they want. Because of this notable difference in storytelling mediums, I will only be discussing storytelling from the point of view of tabletop role-playing games.

Storytelling is a crucial part of table-top role-playing. As such to reliably analyse the interactions of a role-playing group one must understand the genre specific linguistic storytelling devices used. Norrick (2000) states that different kinds of storytelling can have different communicative purposes and furthermore that those purposes may be accomplished via different linguistic devices (Norrick, 2000).

As a linguistic device, style-shifting has largely been studied in the past as a social reaction or a response that is a reflection of the speaker's attention to their own speech when considering external factors like audience or topic. (Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012, p. 4) However, more recent studies on stylistic variation often see it as a creative process where the speaker actively takes part in shaping the norm instead of just accommodating to it. (Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012, p. 4) The connection between language and



identity formation has been in the front of sociolinguistic interest since the beginning (Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012 ;Edwards, 2009). On a large-scale linguistic variation depicts the shaping of human relationships. Dialects, styling and their styling are markers of social meaning (Auer, 2007). They connect to social stereotypes and caricatures that include a much wider array of aspects than just language and ideologies (Dirven & Kristiansen, 2008, pp. 72-73).

The use of different linguistic variants is also related to social class and “sociolects”. A variant might be used more frequently among high-status classes and less frequently by intermediate and lower-status classes, and the other way around. For example, different language features like the pronunciation of certain letters can carry prestige. In such a case, the use or the frequency of use of such a variant is relative to their social status. (Hernández-Campoy, 2016, p. 69) A person might choose to use a specific variant of a language when speaking as their character depending on what or who they want to represent. Especially the game master who often plays multiple characters might make them more distinguishable by using different styles.

When imitating characters in game play, their pronunciations, speech patterns and talking styles are often utilised to channel the character’s likeness. Edwards (2009) presents that people build detailed linguistic portraits of each other within close circles and family. In these portraits, the linguistic characteristics often highlight or caricature real or at least supposed traits in the persons speech. (Edwards, 2009, p. 21) The way a person speaks is often unique enough for it to be used to identify someone (Dirven & Kristiansen, 2008, p. 72). In tabletop role-playing games using a different style of speaking for every character makes it easier to point out who is speaking or being spoken as. People are often used to language being an identity marker that reveal speakers’ memberships in different speech communities, national and ethnic groups as well as social classes. Different variants, registers, jargons and styles can signify age, political affiliation or occupation. (Edwards, 2009, p. 21) As mentioned earlier, players can use these markers to show that their character belongs to a certain group. For example, a player playing a noble character might choose to use a register and variant that is often associated with the upper class.

Maintaining or changing these linguistic aspects of a character can be part of the story. Always speaking in the way that is natural to us and what we have chosen for ourselves is a part of us and represents us. The continuity in the way one speaks signifies sameness and tells

us that we are ourselves and not someone else. The way a person speaks can tell a story; a dialect can tell where they are from and the words they use can give clues about their education, work and interests. (Nazikian, 2010) Choosing to change something in the way a character speaks can be part of a deeper change in the character. Maybe the character has due to some circumstance become to despise their origins as a noble and started to use a more informal register. However, it must be taken into account that sometimes the change in a character's speech style has nothing to do with story and everything to do with the player just wanting to try something different. Given all this, it is no surprise that style-shifting is such a common phenomenon in table-top role-playing games. Style-shifting is a common way of enhancing storytelling so using it in an environment where voice can sometimes be the only way of distinguishing characters and people makes perfect sense (Norrick, 2000). I have decided that in this study I will be excluding deeper character-player style shifting from my analysis, because style-shifting is such a common occurrence in the world of tabletop role-playing and analysing it further would require a study of its own.

#### **2.4.2 Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> Edition**

Today, there is an abundance of different kinds of tabletop role-playing games on the market. However, *Dungeons and Dragons* is one of best-known ones both in and outside of the tabletop role-playing community. It's newest and most popular edition, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition, is the most played game on the online role-playing site Roll20. In the year 2021, 53.19% of games being played on the online role-playing site Roll20 were *Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* games with the next most played game being *Call of Cthulhu all editions* at 11.87% (Roll20).

*Dungeons and Dragons* is a cooperative storytelling and role-playing game. The only tool needed to play the game is the rulebook *Player's Handbook* which includes all rules needed for playing the game. However, there are many supplementary rulebooks like *The Dungeon master's guide* and *The Monster Manual* that many groups utilise. In the game, the players create characters of fantastical races like gnomes, elves and orcs who are from different backgrounds and have different skill sets (Player's Handbook, 2014, pp. 17-45). One of the players takes the role of the *dungeon master* also known as the DM or as they are sometimes called the *game master* or the GM. This thesis will refer to them as either the *game master* or the GM. The rest of the players form what is often called an adventuring party or a party. The game master works as the storyteller and rules referee for the game. They create the adventure and the backdrop for all situations the characters face as well as the puzzles for the players to

solve. The game master narrates what happens in the world and how it reacts to the players choices and the actions of the characters. Because the game master is in the charge of the rules of the game, all games are different with their own game culture and habits. (Player's Handbook, 2014, p. 5)

The tabletop role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* has been translated into multiple languages. However, the publisher of the game Wizards of the Coast does not have direct control over all of these translations. This changed in 2021 when they resumed direct control over some localised versions of the game. (Barrett, 2021) However there is no list of all the languages the game has been translated to. Relevant to this study, the game has not been translated into Finnish.

The game is often played in campaigns. In the context of tabletop role-playing games, a *campaign* usually stands for a series of games that tell a story. A campaign can last anywhere between a few game sessions to many years of play. Shorter games that only last one game session are called one-shots. How long one game session is completely depends on the players, their preferences and timetables. A session can stretch anywhere from an hour to however long the players feel like playing. There are not set rules for how long a campaign should last, how often a game should be played or how long a game session should last.

Games and sessions often consist of different types of play that can roughly be divided into two categories: combat and adventuring. Different groups have different amounts of each of these in varying ratios that can change each time they play. As these two are very different environments for communication and give rise to different types of language use, both sub-genres of play must first be understood before any conclusions or analyses of communications can be made.

Adventuring consists of everything that happens inside the game that is not combat; discussions, adventuring and puzzle solving. Social interaction and talk are often very free in form with players telling what their character does and saying what they say either in character or out of character depending on the situation. Compared to adventuring, social interaction during combat is often more structured with clear talking turns and phrasing. In a combat situation, the game is played in rounds that consist of one turn per player. In the beginning of combat all players roll a specific die and add their character specific bonuses to the value of the roll. This value determines how quickly their character manages to act in the

situation. This number is also called an initiative. The GM throws the initiative for the enemies and all other non-player characters (NPC) they control. The ones who roll the highest number goes first, the second highest second and so forth. During combat in-game talk is often limited to the players own turn or sometimes short sentences can also be exchanged during someone else's turn depending on the GM's ruling and the situation.

Player's often use the terms *in-game* and *off-game* when making talking about the game. Everything happening inside the story, for example what a character says, is considered to be in-game. In turn, everything outside the game world is referred to as being off-game. For example, a player might make a funny remark but then realise the other player might have thought he said that as the character and correcting it by mentioning it was an off-game comment.

I will now describe a prototypical game session for the group observed in this study. The sessions typically start with the game master recapping the events of the previous game. In this example, the party has been hired to solve the kidnapping of the mayor of the town they are in. The party starts by adventuring and finding clues about the kidnapping. They engage in social play to interrogate possible witnesses and do investigations on the crime scene. However, the players had bad dice luck and did not catch that one of the people they investigated was lying. Unbeknownst to the party that character gave them a false lead. The players follow the lead and end up getting ambushed. The players enter combat. During the combat one of the players gets knocked unconscious and magically teleported away. The party emerges victorious but short one member. Luckily, a character in the party knows a spell that can locate any object within a certain distance. Using the spell on the disappeared character's dagger the party manages to locate the base of the kidnappers. Meanwhile, in the base the kidnapped character wakes up locked in a cell next to the mayor. The party sneak into the base and find both the mayor and the missing player. While they are sneaking out one of them makes a low roll on a die causing them to get caught. This triggers a combat. The session ends in a cliff-hanger as mid-combat it is revealed that the boss of the base is actually a demon who is also revealed to be the ex-husband of one of the party members.

Even though, all groups are different and the style of play can vary drastically between groups, in some groups the gameplay is gritty and realistic while for others the game might be close to a soap opera, the goal of the game is the same; to have fun. There is no losing in

*Dungeons and Dragons*. Failures and mishaps only create more story and possibilities for it to grow in unexpected directions.

### **3 Methods**

As playing dynamics and custom can largely vary from one group to another, I decided to focus on only one set of players. This enables me to analyse the data more closely from this group and make a more reliable analysis of it. The study was conducted as an ethnographic study by observing the participants in a real-life environment. I chose to use audio recordings as my main data collection method. According to Levon (2013), when analysing language interaction patterns recording is essential for reliable results (Levon, 2013, s. 208).

Furthermore, voice and video recordings are the main data collection methods for studying code-switching (Altarriba & Basnight-Brown, 2009).

My secondary data collection methods were fieldnotes, short interviews, and a questionnaire. According to Peräkylä (2016), interviews and other additional data can offer information without which understanding the recordings could turn out insufficient (Peräkylä, *Conversation analysis*, 2016, p. 169). The fieldnotes worked as a support for the audio to catch things that the audio could not for example gestures and context for noises. They also served the purpose of making the audio easier to navigate as all instances of code-switches were marked and timestamped. The interviews were conducted for the purpose gaining another point of view on the topic. I chose to use structured interviews because of their strict focus on the target topic area and easy comparability between the participants answers (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 135). Using questionnaires to collect linguistic background data from the participants was the most practical and efficient way.

Of the three major strands in code-switching studies — the structural approach, the psycholinguistic approach, and the sociolinguistic approach (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 14). I used a mix of structural and sociolinguistic approaches.

#### **3.1 Applying conversation analysis and Goffman's participant framework to role-playing interactions**

I utilised conversation analysis (CA) when analysing my recorded data. As a method, conversation analysis is a good fit for my study since it studies the structures and processes of

social interaction (Peräkylä, Conversation analysis, 2016, p. 1). Audio and video recordings are also the most common data used in conversation analytical studies making it easily applicable for this study as well (Peräkylä, 2016, p. 3; Stivers & Sidnell, 2013, p. 2).

Conversation analysis is a very detailed and orderly method that looks at the very minute details in interaction (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013, p. 2).

It often produces examples of reoccurring conversational practises and structures (Peräkylä, Conversation analysis, 2016, p. 1). Conversation analysis sees code-switching and language choice being a significant aspect of talk organization contributing to preference organisation, repair, turn-taking, and side-sequences. (Gafaranga, 2009, p. 120) The methods of the study of social interaction and theories on social interaction are closely intertwined (Peräkylä, 2004). The methods of conversation analysis were utilised and applied to a meaningful extent.

Peräkylä (2004) divides the process of using conversation analysis into the following steps: selection of research site, tape recording, transcribing, unmotivated exploration of data, identification of phenomena, collecting instances, determining variation, accounting for variation, and looking at the bigger picture. These steps were followed when choosing and analysing the data. The order above differs slightly from the order of study in this thesis because fieldnotes and observation enabled exploration of the data before its transcription. A more detailed description of the analysis process is described in chapter 3.5 Data Analysis.

To better understand and validly analyse these group interactions, I used Goffman's (1974) participant framework. According to Goffman (1974), there are many levels and ways a person can be a participant in a conversation. In this section, I will present Goffman's participant framework starting from interaction quality and leading to different participant roles.

First, when analysing conversation, one has to look at the interaction itself and determine if it is a focused or an unfocused interaction. In a focused interaction there is one central purpose to the interaction and the participant roles and rules are rather rigid. Any other activity outside the central main purpose is seen as a distraction. Examples of focused interaction include courtroom and classroom. In comparison, interaction in a school hallway or at a bar can usually be seen as unfocused interaction. An unfocused interaction has no central purpose, and its participant rules and roles are laxer. As there is no central purpose there is no notion of distraction. (Goffman, 1974)

Moving on to the participants, Goffman (1974) makes the separation between ratified and unratified participants. Ratified participants are participants that are officially included in the conversation and have right to speak. Unratified participants on the other hand who are for example passers-by or observers do not usually have the right to participate. Unratified participants have fewer chances of participating in the interaction and have the risk of them not being ratified being pointed out. The participants are aware of the ratification status of other participants and can comment on it or change it. (Goffman, 1974)

The participants of an interaction are divided into production and receptor roles. The production roles being the animator, the author, and the principal. Whereas the receptor roles which are the addressees and the unaddressed. For the production roles, the animator is the one doing the talking, the author is the one who composed those words, and the principal is the one responsible for the words spoken. Regarding the receptor roles, the addressees are the people officially being addressed and talks to while the unaddressed are the people that are not addressed but can hear what is being said. Goffman (1974) further separates between overhearers and eavesdroppers the difference being that the overhearers are in the same space and happen to hear what is being said while the eavesdropper is that they are people who are not being addressed but are trying to hear what is being talked about. (Goffman, 1974)

Lastly, there are states of talk called dominant and subordinate. The state of talk is dominant when it involves only ratified participants in standard reception and production roles and the participants are focused on the topic of the interaction. The subordinate state of talk can be divided into three categories byplay, crossplay, and sideplay. Byplay is when ratified participants talk to each other about something else than the topic of the interaction. Crossplay is when there is talk between a ratified participant and an unratified participant, and sideplay is when two unratified participants talk about something else than the topic of the interaction. (Goffman, 1974)

This framework was applied in the analysis to evaluate changes in speaker dynamics and who is being addressed in the group. The position of a person in a conversation affects how they participate and are expected to participate. The participant framework gives a basis for analysing this.

### 3.2 Study design

As mentioned earlier, I used four different methods for collecting information for this study: recording, observing, questionnaires, and interviews. The primary research method being the voice recordings with observation, interviews and questionnaires taking a more supportive role.

Before the data collection session, the participants were given a handout informing them of the study as well as the consent forms. The handout and the consent form can both be found from the *Appendix* section 8.3 *Consent form*. The participants were also encouraged to ask if they had any questions or concerns relating to the study or how the information would be handled during or after it. They were told that they could decide to drop out of the study at any point but that the data gathered previously could still be used in the study. The participants were encouraged to ignore the researcher and do everything as they normally would.

The recordings and observations were carried out in two parts: a data session and a control session. The main data recording was recorded during the data session and the control recording during the control session. The main data recording was 6.5 hours long and recorded during the data session while the control recording was 3.5 hours long and recorded later during the control session. The reason for the control session was to ensure that the data and findings from the first session were not dependent on that session and that the same findings could be replicated. To prevent loss of data due to corrupted files or other interference, the recordings were recorded double using two recording devices located at different ends of the table.

Prior to recording, the seating arrangement with the recorders' placement marked on it was drawn in the fieldnotes accompanied by a list of possible entities and actions that could cause interference with the recording. This was done with both data collection and the control session. During the recordings, fieldnotes were taken to help with the analysis of the recorded data. The fieldnotes contained notes on the following things:

- 1) The use of Finnish words
- 2) The use of Finnish grammatical structures
- 3) Other code-switching
- 4) Context notes when the situation would otherwise be unclear
- 5) Disturbances



All notes were followed with a timestamp. The observation and the fieldnotes served multiple purposes. The fieldnotes were taken to ease the later analysis process so that instances of code-switching could be more easily found and to take notes on things that audio cannot capture for example gestures as well as context of sounds.

After both recording sessions, the participants were all interviewed briefly using a structured interview model and the following questions.

- 1) Why do you use English as your main language while playing?
- 2) When do you use Finnish while playing?
- 3) How do you feel when you use Finnish during a game?
- 4) Do you recognise speaking different kinds of English while playing? If yes, what?

The interviews were conducted after the recordings so that the questions asked would not affect their performance. After the interviews, the participants were told about the specifics of what was studied. They were also asked to fill an online questionnaire about their language backgrounds. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions about their native language, other language proficiencies, how long and where have they studied English as well as how often do they converse with native speakers of English. The definition of what is being meant by different kinds of English was left open for the participants to interpret themselves. This was done to prevent prompting of one specific type of answer.

### **3.3 Participants**

This study gathered data from one table-top role-playing group consisting of six participants: five players and one game master. All the participants were adults between the ages of 25 and 41. The players were of differing experience levels some having played role-playing games more than a decade while for others this was one of their first games. The campaign in question started in 2020 with one native English-speaking player. However, it saw the change of two players and has been running with the current players since early 2021. Thus, it can be expected that the group has established playing dynamics and developed their own table culture. The campaign's game master has run the same storyline in Finnish before finding themselves in a unique position of running similar scenarios in two different languages.

We can see from the questionnaire data that the native language of all the participants was Finnish. In addition to English, all of them spoke Swedish with most of them also knowing either German or French. All of them had studied English at school for at least 8 years and

most had encountered English in their later studies or work environment. About half of the participants said that they converse with native speakers of English multiple times a week, one told the number to be a couple a times a month and counted it being once a month or less. However, all the participants agreed that they use English more frequently in the context of speaking with other non-native speakers. The more specific linguistic backgrounds of the participants can be examined from *Table 1* in the *Appendix*.

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

Guidelines to good scientific practice were followed in all phases of the study (TENK, 2012). Before the study, the participants were given informative handouts about the study and how the information would be stored. To maintain authenticity in the data, the participants were not told what the exact focus of the study would be. The topic was instead referred to as language dynamics. The specifics of the topic were discussed after the interviews. Consent for the study was gathered in written form. All the participants were adults able to give informed consent. Both the handout and the consent form can be found from the appendix (8.3).

Participation in the study was voluntary and the participants were told that they could stop taking part at any moment. However, already collected data could still be used in the study.

No personal data was collected from the participants and all data was anonymised by changing both character and player names. Recordings were transcribed in verbatim, and the original recordings were destroyed after the final analysis. During the research all data was stored securely on a server where only the researcher had access to it. There were no aspects to the study that would have caused the participants physical or mental harm. The study did not require any additional time resources from the participants as data was collected as a part of a standard game session.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

After completing data collection, the analysis process begun with exploring the fieldnotes. Contrary to Peräkylä (2004, p. 169) the transcribing was not done as the first step of analysis, as the fieldnotes made it possible to study the data without having to transcribe it fully. The exploration of the data consisted of the data being investigated by listening to all the timestamped instances from the fieldnotes as well as examining the fieldnotes themselves. This was followed by the steps of identifying phenomena and collecting instances. During this stage, the most common instances of code-switching were identified, and the focus points of

the study were defined. The instances that were to be analysed further were divided into four groups: word searches, cultural references, asymmetry of knowledge, and out of game talk.

The next step in the analysis process was the transcription of data. The chosen instances were transcribed using a modified version of conversation analysis transcription markings (Peräkylä, 2004, pp. 178-179). The transcription markings used in this study can be found from the appendix (8.2 Transcription symbols). After the data was transcribed, it was inspected once more to determine what variation could be found. During this step, the transcriptions were studied, and the data was listened to repeatedly in very small sections. The next step after finding variation was to account for it and find reasons for it. Lastly, all the notes and findings were brought together to inspect the bigger picture and build theories.

The interviews were analysed using applied thematic analysis. Thematic analysis focuses on identifying themes and ideas within the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 10). As the interview dataset was quite small including only six short interviews, there was no need for larger scale segmenting like one would usually do when using applied thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012, p.49). Another central part of applied thematic analysis is coding and constructing a codebook (Guest et al., 2012, p.10;53). Coding, as a process, means linking codes to specific kind of data (Guest et al., 2012, p.50).

I used a very simple version of coding. I first inspected the data question by question, highlighting parts of answers with different colours by different themes. I then constructed a very small codebook where the meanings of different colours were explained. The themes in the data were simply found by reading through the answers repeatedly and marking them thematically. According to Guest et al. the use of very formal techniques to find themes is always not necessary depending on the data and goals of the study (Guest et al., 2012, p.66).

After the coding process, the most common themes were identified. The participants' answers were examined from the perspective of a qualitative thematic comparison. The number of participants mentioning each theme was counted making it a not purely qualitative comparison (Guest et al., 2012, p.162).

### **3.6 Limitations**

This study only examined data from six participants who were all native Finnish speakers between the ages 25-41. Taking this into consideration the results can not be widely applied to

other demographics. As the style of play differs largely from group to group the result of this study might not be applicable to other *Dungeons and Dragons* tabletop role-playing groups. Taking in on more groups would have led to the data being more easily generalisable but the study would have had to take a more surface level approach.

Another limitation of this study is that the recorded data was audio only. Although, the fieldnotes and observation lessen the impact of the lack of video data, they can not be similarly revisited like a video could. Therefore, items of interest could have been missed by the researcher. However, using video recordings would have made the data more sensitive. It would have also been hard to position cameras so that all six participants had been equally filmed. Being recorded is less intimidating when compared to being videotaped and getting participants to agree to being only recorded on audio is easier.

## 4 Analysis

This chapter discusses the analysis of the data. As there were four major types of code-switching happening in the data, the analysis of the sound data is divided into four sub-sections: word searches (4.1), cultural references (4.2), asymmetry of knowledge (4.3), and out of game code-switching (4.4). In addition, the last sub-section (4.5) will discuss the results of the short interviews conducted after the control recording.

The sub-sections include transcriptions with anonymised player and character names. In the transcriptions the names are marked in the following way: Player 1/Bill, Player 2/Dan, Player 3/Jen, Player 4/Max, Player 5/Fin, and GM/NPC. The part before the slash consists of the player's name. For the players this is *player* combined with a number. In the case of the game master this is *GM*. The part after the slash stands for the character name or in the GM's case NPC. It is important to note that the pronouns and sex of a character does not always correspond with pronouns and sex of the player. To better the readability of the transcriptions and the analysis I have listed the pronouns of the participants and their respective characters in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Pronouns

Player	Pronouns	Character	Pronouns
Player 1	he/him	Bill	he/him
Player 2	he/him	Dan	he/him
Player 3	she/her	Jen	she/her
Player 4	she/her	Max	he/him
Player 5	he/him	Fin	he/him
GM	he/him	-	-

#### 4.1 Word searches

One of the most frequent contexts for code-switching found from the data was word search. Word search itself is treated as a distinctive phenomenon by conversation analytic literature (Kurahila, 2003, p. 140). This section discusses what goes on when the participants engage in code-switching as a result of a word search. Do the other participants react and if so, how? Is there hedging or hesitation involved when code-switching?

In example 1, the party is having a conversation about the use of fire against a type of enemy and how characters with no abilities to magically create fire can manage those situations.

Example 1: Tulukset

01: Player 3/Jen:@ i think we could try find some way of us to also do some da- fire, (1.0)  
just to we don't always.?(0.5) we ↑can't always be this full group when we go to places. (1.0)



himself. According to Kurhila (2003) a word search can be directed to a different amount or set of participants (Kurhila, 2003, pp. 140-141). The word *tulukset* does not have a rising intonation of a question but a falling one indicating that there is no need for another answer. Of course, there is a possibility that the others do not intervene because they do not know the word either or they do not care that player 2 used a Finnish word because they can all understand it.

In the discussion in example 1, the discussion concerns all the players and therefore all of them can be counted as ratified participants and they have the possibility of commenting. The role of the game master is more complex. On one hand he is not expected to take part in the discussion unless it is to remind the players of a factor or a rule and helping could be seen as giving the answer away. In this case the game master also does not have a non-player character present, so they are unable to take part in in-game discussion. On the other hand, the game master is never truly an unrated participant. As the story master and rules keeper of the game, they can always comment without someone having to ratify them.

In this example, all the talk happens in-character. This means that compared to a prototypical casual conversation the speaker does not have all the production roles in the framework. The player creates the words and is responsible for them however they do not present the words as themselves but as the character. Even though it can be seen that in reality the player is the author, the principal, and the animator following Goffman's framework in the context of the game talking in character is seen as the character speaking not the player. This leads to the conclusion that the player is the author and the principal while the character is the animator. Although it could be argued that both the player and the character can carry the role of the principal. In the real world the player is always responsible for their words but in-game in the fantasy world it is the character who is accountable for their words. This is an important distinction to make because it does affect the participant framework and the dynamics. It could even be suggested that the participant framework roles between the players and game master is different compared to the roles of the characters.

In example 2, the party is discussing guarding measures during camping and player 4 as Max has been playfully asking questions about how strict these measures should be. Even though there are similarities between example 1 and example 2, including that they both include sound stretching and neither includes other participants taking part in the word search, the context of example 2 differs greatly from example 1. This leads to a different interpretation of

the situation. In the example, player 3 as Jen is calmly explaining what the best course of action would be when player 4 as Max jokingly and in a teasing tone challenges it by presenting a very unlikely but hilarious situation.

Example 2: Riuku

01: Player 3/Jen: @as long as you stay in proximity of yell. so you can yell when you're attacked by two undead creatures while [you're having],

Player 4/Max: @ [well how would we] know if somebody has has built a (.) ööm riuku over a ce old cemetery and they just pop up and bite you in the butt?

In examples 1 and 2, the words in question are crucial in making the sentence understandable, so leaving them out or replacing them would change the meaning and tone of the sentences. Additionally, in both examples the players who decide to code-switch seem to do so to preserve the fluidity and flow of the game and the sentence. This illustrates that in these particular situations player 2 and player 4 are oriented to agenda of progressing in the story. In example 2, player 4 is building a narrative that she does not want to disturb with a longer pause to find the word. As there is no equivalent for the word *riuku* or more specially *riukukäymälä* in the English language, player 4 might have realised that there is no fitting alternative. A *riukukäymälä* or *riuku* is a type of temporary camping latrine. It is built by tying a thin tree trunk horizontally between to trees to act as a seat. A hole is dug underneath. Finding an alternative in this case would have required her to completely rework the sentence and narrative. The rhythm and narrative of the line favour code-switching instead of longer word searches.

In example 3, player 2 is describing to player 1 what their character Bill sees when he walks into a room where player 2's character Dan is currently preparing a ritual.

Example 3: Liitu

01: Player 2/Dan: that he can like (0.5) do something to that wall and kinda like (0.5) and then like ((makes a sound of fast movement)) aa: points you with aa: (1.5) with a ↑liitu[=chalk.] and like @ don't you dare (.) step (.) on (.) that,

02: Player 1/Bill:

[↓mmm.]



In this example, player 2 engages in a word search similar to examples 1 and 2. Sound stretching, hesitancy sounds and a pause are all present. In addition, player 2 exhibits other structural incoherencies like repeating a part of his turn. Unlike in the previous examples in this one the conclusion of the word search and the word used are confirmed and approved by player 1. This indicates that player 1 actively takes part in the word search. A word search can be deemed completed when the participants reach intersubjective understanding of the word (Kurhila, 2003, p. 140). In this case, player 2 is talking directly to player 1 signalling to him that he is the target his speech. In this case, the participation stretches to the word search because player 1 feels the need to affirm that the search has concluded.

In this case, too, we can look at the participant framework. In example 3, player 2 has the production role (holds all three) and player 1 is the receptor. Player 1 is the only one officially being addressed by player 2. The other players are sitting around the same table as players 1 and 2 but their characters are in a different space in-game. In this situation, the other players are not ratified participants. However, in the name of maximising entertainment and fun for everyone they are unofficially being addressed even though they are overhearers. They are meant to hear what is going on even though what is being said is not primarily meant for them. In this case the game master is counted as a ratified participant since they have choice of commenting without consequence if he feels like it is necessary. The only one commenting on player 1's word search is the only other ratified participant.

Example 3 raises one more interesting question regarding code-switching: why does player 2 add the word *chalk* after the work *liitu* even though he knows all the participants understand the word *liitu*? The fact that *liitu* is the literal translation of *chalk* eliminates the possibility that the work would have been used for nuance reasons. This thesis considers two main possibilities. One being that player 2 realised that he had involved player 1 in the word search meaning that he then had to get player 1's approval to complete the search. The other being that right as player 2 said the word *chalk* he remembered the word *liitu* and wanted to show that he does indeed remember the word. The pause preceding the word *liitu* is a long one lasting 1.5 seconds. Compared to example 2 where there is only a minimal pause before the word *riuku* the difference is substantial. It can be that as the word *liitu* is commonly seen as a part of simpler vocabulary there is more pressure to find it. In example 2, the shortness of the pause could indicate that the word search is abandoned more than it is completed. The process certainly starts as word search, but it could be argued that because the word is so niche and

there is no fitting alternative there is no pressure to translate the word. In this case player 4 uses the Finnish word instead of using it as a way to complete the word search.

In example 4, player 3 is describing her character Jen's reaction to Dan. This example does include many of the non-lexical speech perturbations connected to word search also present in the other examples. However, player 3 does a longer code-switch and not just borrow one word. She starts laughing right before the code-switch happens and continues to laugh while talking through the entirety of the line. During the code-switch her tempo picks up considerably. Furthermore, she does not take any breaths in between the words opting to instead take a big breath after switching back to English.

#### Example 4: Valkuaiset

01: Player 3/Jen: @he is a small gnome who can explode things with fire. i m th ah do know that i said that i trust him, i'm having very ha(h)rd ti(h)me@ ·heheheh·

Player 2/Dan:

·hehehe·

Player 4/Max:

·heheheh·

02: Player 3/Jen: ·an(h)d her ey(h)es her ey- <silmä(h)n valkuais(h)et näk(h)yy sillee niinku> very hard time· h

Player 3 is looking for the equivalent of *silmänvalkuaiset* which is *the white of the eye* or *sclera* in English. For instance, the word *sclera* is a rather technical term and as such unlikely to be quickly retrievable. In this situation the reason for the code-switching and the word search can be understood when looking at the context. Most of the players including player 3 are laughing loudly. Player 3 even laughs while talking. It is possible that the laughing is disturbing her enough that she sees it easier to go with the flow of the situation and not start looking for the word she is missing. Similar to example 2 it seems that one of the motives for code-switching is flow. Player 3 starts talking louder right before the code-switch so the code-switch might indicate that she is more comfortable speaking loudly in Finnish. Like mentioned earlier she also picks up the tempo considerably after switching to Finnish supporting the idea that is easier for her in this situation. Furthermore, she at the end of turn 02 switches back to English her tempo becomes her normal one again. Player 3's pronunciation here is closer to a stereotypical Finnish accent for example the "r" in very more of a tapped alveolar flap "r" than a postalveolar approximant "r".

In example 5, code-switching happens in an off-game situation. The game master is guiding player 3 to find a die that has dropped on the floor. In this example, the code-switching happens after player 3 does not find the dice and the game master is trying to tell her where to look but does not recall the word *sermi* (screen). In this situation the game has stopped to give player 3 time to look for the die. There is pressure to find the die and continue the game as others are waiting for their turns in combat. Choosing to use the word *sermi* is a quicker solution to the word search. Additionally, using the word *screen* could have been misleading in this context because there were other screens close by. The change in language can also point to the change in orientation. The act of looking for the missing die is not something that could happen or is happening in the game currently. It breaks the immersion, and the participants orient more towards the world out of the game. Because the participants are no longer in the world of the game there is no need to find an English alternative for the word *sermi*.

#### Example 5: Sermi

01: GM/NPC: right next to your chair leg [and] (0.5) undern[eath] the, (3.0) it's like under the: ↓sermi.

Player 3/Jen: ° [yep,] ° ° [yes,] °  
 ↑ah? ↓okei.

In example 6, the word search is preceded by multiple instances of self-repetition. Player 5 is talking slowly while describing the unfolding event. Like in previous examples he decides to use a Finnish word instead of continuing the word search. However, in this case he actually uses the word *kiuas* (stove) instead of *laude* (bench). He does not realise his mistake and goes to continue when player 3 loudly repeats the word *kiuas* and immediately follows it with the word *laude* and laughs. Noticing his mistake, player 5 quickly goes to correct his mistake and starts laughing. Studies have shown that correction and rejection are dispreferred responses and that they are often hedged (Gafaranga, 2009, p. 120). Here the humour in the situation makes the correction not a dispreferred one. It is likely that player 5 does not want his character Fin to touch the hot stoves.

## Example 6: Kiuas ja laude

01: Player 5/Fin: >we go in very very slowly and and first (.) first like touch touch each each  
(,)↑kiuas. (.) and maybe a- no <laude. laude.> hehehhe

Player 4/Max: ·↑kiuas·? =↓laude. Hehheh

Similar to example 6 in example 7 the end result of the word search is questioned by another player. This time it is to ask what the word used actually means. Instead of explaining the word in English or Finnish player 2 decides to act it out instead. After this player 4 accepts the explanation by signalling that they understand. *Ynnykkä* means an emotional state where one is overwhelmed by negative feelings and just wants to go into a fetal position and hide.

## Example 7: Ynnykkä

01: Player 2/Dan: dan is going to (1.0) ↑ynnykkä (0.5) on the floor,

Player 4/Max: what's that?

02: Player 2/Dan: aa: a bit like this. ((gestures what he means))

Player 4/Max: ah.

The last example in this category includes a very interesting incident in both word search and code-switching. In her study about word searches, Kurhila (2003) talks about what she calls *fennitized* words. These are words that sound Finnish and phonetically could be Finnish but are not (Kurhila, 2003, p. 164). The same phenomenon can be detected in example 8. In example 8 the game master is asking player 4 what her character Max is currently doing.

## Example 8: Möhnying

01:GM/NPC: (-- ) is max (--)?

Player 4/Max: aa: but yeah he is (.) he is like in the tent still ↑möhnying,

In this example player 4 decides to resolve her word search by using resources from English. These made-up words are usually not treated as the final resolutions to word search and instead treated as something to be processed and oriented to (Kurhila, 2003, p. 166). In this instance no one continues the word search and instead accepts the word as is. This could be

due to the word's qualities. In the case of the word *möhnying* the word *möhny* is a Finnish content morpheme adapted into English morphosyntax. In other words, the Finnish, EL, word is inserted into the morphosyntactic frame of English, the ML. In addition, the word *möhnying* is onomatopoeic as it sounds and looks like what it is describing. As a word it sounds like the character Max would be rolling around in his bedroll mumbling and snuggling his blanket happily. Because the natural descriptiveness of the word, it is possible that even though the word means nothing the players feel that it gives them enough information to not inquire further. After player 4's line everyone gets back to the main conversation. No one responds to her suggestion of a word opting instead to move forwards. So even when the context of the word *möhnying* as well as Kurhila (2003) would support classifying it as a word search, the participants do not seem to treat it as such. There is also the possibility that the word *möhnying* is a regular part of player 4's lexicon and it is nothing new to the other participants. Clarifying this would require further interviewing of the participants.

In majority of cases of word search in the data, excluding some, like example 6, no one took it upon themselves to correct the other person's word search. The word searches in this data were also all resolved quicker than in Kurhila's (2003) study. It could also be noticed that the later in the game the word searches got the quicker they were resolved. For example, in example 3 there is a considerable pause before the word *liitu* whereas in example 4 there is barely any pause. In earlier word searches, like example 3, the word is even be repeated in English afterwards. The internal rules of the group seem shift toward accepting the use of Finnish words and code-switching in the favour of fluency.

## 4.2 Cultural references

This section looks at the examples that have to do with cultural references<sup>2</sup>. In the following examples the code-switching is not triggered by word search but by a choice to refer to a cultural symbol, saying or idiom.

In example 9, player 1 is describing how his character Bill is acting while arriving to a ball.

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<sup>2</sup> Sauna-related vocabulary was not classified under cultural references because those words were not used in the context of cultural referencing but instead were used to reference the physical objects in the space.

## Example 9: Hangan Keksi

01: Player 1/Bill: bill assumes it's all about us. =[and] .h he is smiling like

↑ hangon[keksi].

Player 3/Jen: [(anto)]

[HE HE]

Player 2/Dan:

[he he]

Player 4/Max: [he he]

02: Player 1/Bill: and ↑nodding to everyone that looks at us and @£↑mmmm?

↑mmmm? (1.0) °this is going ↑well,°

Player 1 tells that Bill is “smiling like a Hanko’s Cookie” which is an idiom in Finnish referring to a happy very widely smiling person. The idiom originates from the round widely smiling face that the company Hangan Keksi used to put on their adverts, cookies and packaging. What separates this from a word search is that there is no hesitancy in the sentence. Player 1 clearly knows what he is about to say next. This can be deduced from a number of things. First, player 1’s accent and pronunciation are completely different from his usual one. He opts to use a more Finnish stylisation compared to the one he uses normally. On line 02 player 1 is back to using his normal way of pronunciation. Second, right before he delivers the line “smiling like hangon keksi” he takes a breath like he is about to deliver the punchline of a joke. He chooses to take a breath mid clause instead of between the clauses. This leads me to believe that the code-switching is a part of a joke. It is used as a rhetoric device to add shape and dramatics to what player 1 is saying. Since code-switching is triggered by player 1 himself, it is considered metaphorical switching (Gumperz, 2009).

In example 10, the party is in combat. Player 4 has by magical means conjured a group of baboons on the battlefield. The game master is explaining how the group of baboons affect the combat mechanically while player 4 and player 1 are joking about the situation.

## Example 10: Esi-isä

01: GM/NPC:      cause they [are small like(.) they're not really gonna affect much],

Player 4/Max: [they emerge from the from the bushes.]

02: GM/NPC:      so they're just lying about. [and (.) are you sure they're acceptable(--)?]

Player 1/Bill: ((making baboon noises)) [↑AH? a they're like esi-isät from  
moomins,]

Player 4/Max:

[YEAH?]

In this example there are two conversations going on at once. The first conversation's state of talk is dominant, and the second's is crossplay. The first conversation is between the game master and player 4. In the example, it is currently player 4's turn making her a ratified participant. The game master on the other hand can always be seen as a ratified participant because of his position of authority. The other conversation is between player 4 and player 1 of whom player 1 is not ratified. It is not his turn, so it is not his turn to speak.

On line 02, player 1 makes the realisation that the baboons are like the ancestors from the tv-series *The Moomins*. However, instead of calling the ancestors ancestors he calls them the Finnish equivalent *esi-isät*. He decided to use Finnish only for the word *esi-isät* not for example the whole unit of "esi-isät from moomins". This gives the impression that there must be another reason for the code-switching in addition to any cultural referencing. One reason for this code-switching of only the word *esi-isät* could be the connotations of the word. The ancestors in *The Moomins* are not the bloodline ancestors of the *Moomin* characters but they are their evolutionary ancestors; a species that eventually evolved into the *moomin* race (moomin.com, 2022). It is likely that being native Finnish speakers the other players are more familiar with Finnish names of *The Moomins* characters. By using the Finnish name *esi-isät* player 1 is making sure his reference is being understood correctly. He is not talking about *The Moomins'* ancestors but about the *ancestor* characters. Another viewpoint is that player 1 sees the word *esi-isät* as a proper noun and not something that needs to be translated. Though, the fact that he did change *Muumit* to *The Moomins* does challenge this hypothesis.

Even though examples 9 and 10 are outwardly very similar in their presentations there are some major differences between them. The code-switching in example 9 is more planned and has a more nuanced function. Whereas in example 10 code-switching largely serves the purposes of clarity and bringing up connotations of fun fuzzy creatures, in example 9 code-switching is used to give shape and vibrancy to the narrative. The code-switching is used as a linguistic device to strengthen the joke.

### 4.3 Asymmetry of knowledge

In the data, there were situations where an asymmetry of knowledge prompts code-switching. In Example 11, player 5 has not been present at one of the previous games and is consequently missing information gained that game session. This imbalance in knowledge between players brings about the following conversation.

#### Example 11: Walker

01: Player 3/Jen: aaa: i help they are [here], [walker]

GM/NPC: [viscount and l-lady walker.]

Player 5/Fin: [↓mmmm]

02: Player 3/Jen: [jeah se on] ihan riittävä se (.) se on vivian se tytär(.) joka oli se [scout]

GM/NPC: [(-) walker]

03: Player 3/Jen: yeah who jonka me kohdattiin sillä joo sä you dont know [her actually]

Player 5/Fin: [hmm yeah]

04: Player 3/Jen: koska sä tulit vasta sen jälkeen

Player 4/Max: mmm

05: Player 1/Bill: to she was a bit like ((makes a rawr cat sound))

Player 3/Jen: she was bit like a Jen



Player 4/Max:

a ↑bitch

06: Player 1/Bill: and not a little bit.? he he

Here the players and GM are reminding themselves of an NPC the characters met another session. Player 3 is vaguely saying miscellaneous facts she remembers when she realises that player 5 was not present that session. She code-switches multiple times on line 03. It seems like she is trying to remember things about the NPC switching from one language to another trying to possibly prompt a memory. Player 5 confirms that he was not indeed there when they met the NPC. Player 3 then uses Finnish to confirm why player 5 was not present. As this knowledge, is known by all participants it is likely this is something she is saying mostly to herself. Players 4 and 1 then begin describing the NPC. Similar to example 5, the language changes as the discussion moves outside the game environment. This further underlines that English is the language of the game and that discussions outside the game offer an opportunity for code-switching. Talking in Finnish indicates that the participants are no longer in the game world.

In Example 12, there is another instance of asymmetrical knowledge seemingly inducing code-switching. However, this conversation is more complicated as the facts in the situation are less clear. The premise is that the party has gotten their hands on various items and is trying to decide who to give one of those items, a poisonous dagger, to. However, there is a problem.

Example 12: Metal

01: Player 2/Dan: @let's give the dagger to max. he is like [the]

Player 5/Fin:

@[yeah.]

02: Player 2/Dan: @mh shroo[ms and poisons and stuff,]

Player 3/Jen:

[it's]

GM/NPC:

[uhmm it's metal though.?)

03: Player 2/Dan: ↑OH.

mmmmmm,

Player 4/Max:

ye[ah, he can't use it.]

GM/NPC: [that's probably yeah] i yeah think druids have [a problem]

04: Player 3/Jen: well,[it is (--)] (0.5)well.·BY] THE BOOK· it ah it is [but] .h(1.5)

Player 1/Bill: [it's with armour but is it also with weapons?] [okei.]

05: Player 4/Max: (--) [we could fit?]

Player 3/Jen: [i i i rule] in my games öh that it they don't, because i don't see the  
↑point?(2.0) of why they couldn't be using metal.

06: Player 3/Jen: but that's [a ↓decision,] .hhhh [but you can't]

Player 4/Max: <[but] it could be fitted with aaa: (3.0) a wooden (0.5)[(part)?]>

07: Player 3/Jen: =it's basically that if we go by ·jos mennään kirjan mukaan niin sit se  
tarkottaa siis sitä et jos se on tehty metallista.· ((clicks pen against table repeatedly))(0.5)

08: Player 4/Max: [↑AAAAA? okei.]

Player 3/Jen: >·ni sä et voi käyttää sitä sen mukaan sä et myöskään vois esim vois käyttää  
studded leather armoria jos siinä on metalliset studit,·<

09: Player 4/Max: [joo,]

GM/NPC: [°mmm,°] mut se on [se on] vähän niinku siin se on niinku pieni osa,

Player 1/Bill: [°hmm ↑joo°]

10: GM/NPC: = mut tavallaan et jos se on se on made of studded leather is made of

leather [it]. has some [metal], this is made of [metal(.) also metal shields no.]

Player 3/Jen: [yeah] [hmmm] [yeah yeah that's true]

11: GM/NPC: =[metal armour no] and so on,

Player 4/Max: [(------)]

Player 3/Jen: yeah

12: Player 3/Jen: and it's i i think the basically the lore we-wise it goes to kinda like it's worked metal? so it's not like natural(.) [thing]? (1.0) druid don't see it as a natural thing,

Player 4/Max:                      hmm [okei]

13: Player 3/Jen: = that and it's...

Player 4/Max:                      i don't(0.5) care, that's okay,

Player 2 talking as Dan takes initiative and opens the conversation by giving a suggestion that player 4's character Max should have the dagger. The sentence "let's give the dagger to Max" is an assertive proposition since there is no rising intonation, hedging or wording that would point to a more tentative suggestion. Player 5 talking as Fin quickly takes the preferred response of agreeing while player 2 gives reasons why the dagger would indeed fit Max the best (Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013). Preferred action agreements prototypically happen quickly after the prior assessment has been given (Pomeranz , 1984, p. 65).

As player 3 is about to comment, the game master cuts in stating that the dagger is made of metal. The GM knows that he is taking a dispreferred action by giving a disagreeing response. This can be seen in how he hedges and pauses before he delivers his comment. Pauses and hedging are typically seen in cases where a dispreferred answer is given (Pomeranz , 1984, p. 65;70). Despite the game master's position of authority, it is clear that the positioning of the situation makes him feel like he must hedge and warn the others of his disagreement. Instead of saying no, the GM gives a reason why he would disagree with the statement. Giving a dispreferred response in a conversation is more difficult compared to giving a preferred one (Pomeranz , 1984). Furthermore, in this case player 5 has already agreed to player 2's proposition.

The others immediately react to the game master's comment. On line 03, player 2 shows surprise and makes it clear he is thinking. Player 4 jumps in to agree with the game master. The game master then continues to add still heavily hedging why metal is a problem. Player 3 starts by sighing and seemingly uncomfortably says that according to the book it is a problem. On line 04, player 3 is very strongly hedging what she is going to say. She recognises that she too is taking a dispreferred action by correcting and going against player 2's original idea. She

puts heavy emphasis on the word *book*. She is effectively saying that the rules agree that it is so but she does not.

Player 1 brings up a question about if the rule applies to weapons to which Player 3 answers that “by the book” it does. Player 3 again puts emphasis on the word *book*. An interesting notion here is that the physical book is actually not present, and no one is checking the actual rule from anywhere. Player 1 immediately accepts this response. After this player 3, wants to strengthen the narrative that she is not disagreeing with anyone by saying that she often decides, in her games, to ignore that rule.

On line 06 player 4 tries to bring up a solution to the situation but stops when Player 3 starts explaining why that solution would not work. Here player 4 talks slower than others possibly to calm the situation, hedge her idea or to take time to gather her words and thoughts. Player 3’s speech on the contrary has been slowly getting louder and the tempo has quickened. As player 3 explains to player 4 why her idea would not work, she code-switches to Finnish. This code-switch is paired with a significant rise in volume while her tempo does not change. In addition, player 3 starts vigorously clicking her pen against the table. Another interesting note is that when speaking in Finnish player 3 still uses the passive voice borrowed from English.

Code-switching on line 07 could be the result of a few different scenarios. One possibility is that player 3 sees changing language as helpful for the receiver to better understand what she is saying. In this scenario, she would interpret the way player 4 speaks slower as an indication that they do not quite understand the mechanic they are discussing. Interestingly, here player 3 changes the language rather than slows down her speech. Alternatively, changing language could also be seen by her as the way of getting her point through quicker. In another scenario, player 3 changes language because she feels that she can more easily retain her position as being right in Finnish. She does not need to worry about making mistakes and she can more easily speak louder and argue her case further. In this scenario, code-switching would also be a way of gaining authority.

During this conversation the participant framework has shifted multiple times. At first everyone was included in the discussion and later it became something only between players 3 and 4. The game master had decided to take the role of an overhearer. On line 09 he steps back into the conversation and starts to take the lead. If we look at the situation from the point of view of authority, it is possible that by code-switching to Finnish and by starting to

strongly dominate the discussion, player 3 has in a way overstepped the boundaries of a player. Usually, the game master is the one explaining and laying out the rules but in this case player 3 is overtaking that responsibility. The game master sees this and decides it is time to return to normal order and regain some of his authority by code-switching back to English.

At this point on line 08 player 4 has already noted that she has understood the mechanic. If the situation had only been about clearing up information, it would have seemed correct to stop after the point had been understood. However, in this case it seems that after line 08 the discussion is no longer about clearing up rules but more about bouncing back to their normal roles and sharing understanding of hierarchy. They are both telling specifics of the dynamic to player 4 who is now whispering with another player. The tension ends when player 3 announces on line 10 that the game master is correct. She then goes back to explaining to player 4, who announces that she really does not care. The way player 4 says this in an annoyed tone indicating that she felt like this took longer than it should have and that they should move on already. In the end, player 4 shows orientation to wanting to move on with the game. In this example, code-switching serves to bring the Finnish byplay into the foreground.

It is clear from this conversation that code-switching is not only the change of language but often accompanied by other changes in speech like volume, and that code-switching can be used to assert authority.

#### **4.4 Out of game talk**

In addition to word searches, cultural references, and asymmetry of knowledge there were other occasions where code-switching was very common: talking outside the game. The difference between *out of game* talk and *off-game* talk is that off-game talk is still within the constraints of the game. Out of game talk on the other hand includes things that are not current to the situation in the game. Talking about what to do about a missing party member is off-game talk while talking about your niece's graduation is out of game talk.

Code-switching during out of game talk happened without any exceptions, especially when it included a person not participating in the game. In these cases, the nature of code-switching was always situational. This happened multiple times during the game as other people in the apartment walked by or one of the pets in the space came to get attention.

Another common context of code-switching in out of game talk was mentioning topics outside of game. Talks about food orders and real-life events often included a lot of code-switching. So much so that it would need a study of its own to examine those cases.

During gameplay code-switching was sometimes used to signify the importance of what was being said. Many comments that were not crucial information to all or not constructive in other ways were often spoken in Finnish. For example, often when someone was distracted on their phone and due to that missed something they would quickly ask about it in Finnish from the player next to them.

In example 13, player 1's character Bill is having a conversation with an NPC. Bill tries to offend the NPC by implying that they probably do not even have an invitation to the party they are currently at. To this player 4 adds with a singing voice *kuokkavieraat* (*uninvited guest* or *gate-crasher*). If player 4 had decided to use English instead of switching, the other would have most likely thought that she was talking in-game as Billy. Choosing to use Finnish instead makes it certain that the others understand that the comment is an off-game comment made by the player not the character.

Example 13: Kuokkavieraat

01: Player 1/Bill: hmmm yes @ i don't think you have even have an invitation to this soiree

02: Player 4/Max: kuokkavieraat ((said with a singing voice))

## 4.5 Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to gain information about the participants own insights about their language use. The interviews can further credit already made hypotheses and create new points of view (Gardner-Chloros, Code-switching, 2009, p. 15). They also give further insight into the group's attitude towards code-switching and the use of English and Finnish in the context of the game.

The answers will be looked at in the light of the recorded analysis as well as how their opinions might affect their code-switching.

- 1) Why do you use English as your main language while playing?

- 2) When do you use Finnish while playing?
- 3) How do you feel when you use Finnish during a game?
- 4) Do you recognise speaking different kinds of English while playing? If yes, what?

The answers to the first question shared many themes. Five out of the six participants mentioned that one of their reasons for playing in English were the materials. They brought up the fact that *Dungeons and Dragons 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* materials are in English and that all the terms and spell names are also in English. The five participants all brought up that translating these terms would be tiresome and awkward. Furthermore, two of these participants also mentioned that they feel like English is more fitting for the fantasy themed environment. One of them even went to as far as to describe it as a language better for “a softer fantasy environment”.

Another common trait in the answers for question 1 was the participants bringing up immersion in the fantasy world. This motivation was brought up by five out of six players. Three of the five participants explicitly mentioned that playing in English helps them get into the roles of their characters easier. Two of them also further elaborated that accents and character voices come to them easier in English than in Finnish. At a first glance it seems curious that native speakers of Finnish would find it easier to use different variations of English rather than Finnish. However, going back to English as a lingua franca, English is one of the major entertainment languages. The participants are likely to be exposed to many different character voices and accents on a wider scale in English than in Finnish. Taking this into consideration it is no longer such a big surprise that the participants would prefer English for character voices since it is what they are exposed to. One participant mentioned that reacting in character is quicker in English as they feel like they are in a constant state of readiness to react and that speaking as the character in Finnish feels fake. Moreover, three participants mentioned that playing in English makes it easier for them to separate in-game and off-game comments and situations. It makes it so, that there is a clearer difference between the character and the player leading to less confusion.

Additional points mentioned by individual include the game master’s desire to practise their English. It was also brought up that when the campaign first started with a slightly different assembly one of those early players was a native English speaker. One participant also mentioned that as many people in the group would change the language constantly anyway speaking English “just made sense”.

The question about the context of using Finnish while playing got very varying answers. Three participants mentioned Finnish often being used as a means of clarifying rules, situations, mechanics and complex puzzles. Three participants mentioned that they might use Finnish when they do not remember the word in English. Three participants mentioned that they use Finnish as an off-game and out of game language. Two of those participants explicitly mentioned using Finnish when commenting on something non-game related, like sharing memes, while playing. Interestingly, one of the players mentioned that they sometimes use Finnish as a tool for immersion. They elaborated that they use Finnish as a way to act out another in-game language. However, this was not captured on the recorded voice data.

Question three had to do with the participants' feelings about speaking Finnish during a game. One participant noted that the change feels natural and that they do not mind it. However, the rest noted that switching language into Finnish can lower their immersion and disturb their flow. Two of the participants mentioned that speaking Finnish does create negative feelings. One mentioned that switching to Finnish can sometimes feel like a small failure if it is connected to forgetting a word. On the other hand, another participant noted that they feel guilty that they could be breaking another player's immersion. However, they specified that the feeling of guilt more strongly present if the comment made in Finnish is unnecessary and not related to the game. One participant also described that when they switch to Finnish it often relates to unclear situations and difficulties in communication and possibly sometimes even frustration.

The fourth question brought forward different kinds of English and if the participants notice using different kinds of English when playing. Five out six participants mentioned using a different style of talk when speaking in character. The most common way of doing this was changing one's vocabulary; the amount of curse words, formality, jargon, and intensifiers. Most also mentioned changing their tone of voice, tempo of talk and intonation. Using accents was mentioned by three participants. However, two out of three of these participants mentioned that most of the accents they use are a mix of many accents instead of being a specific one. Participants mentioned using stereotypes and archetypes to define their character voices. One participant said that using a different voice for their character helps their immersion and the separation between their own self and the character. Another participant said that they can test their limits in using English when speaking in character.



To summarise, the participants reported that using English as an in-game language helps them immerse themselves in the world of the game. The reasons for this ranged from practicality and not having to translate different terms in the game to finding character voices easier to do. The use of Finnish was mostly connected a couple of different situations according to the participants: not knowing or remembering words, speaking out of game, and clarifying mechanics or situations. For most participants, speaking Finnish was not associated with any specific feelings, but one participant did mention it sometimes bringing up feelings of failure. One participant did bring up the feeling of guilt, but it had to do with the context and not the language. The use of different kinds of English varied within the group, but most participants mentioned using different words and tone of voice when speaking in-character. The use of English as a tool for immersion can clearly be recognised from these interviews.

## **5 Discussion**

### **5.1 When does code-switching happen and what are the reasons for it?**

Code-switching was found to be present in many contexts and to be triggered by many different things. One of the most common contexts for it was word search. The participants often opted to code-switch instead of trying to find the word in English. Unlike in Kurhila's (2003) study the participants often concluded the word searches before finding the corresponding words in English. This could very much be because all of the participants were native Finnish speakers and so there was no pressure of them not being understood. In addition, another reason for this could be that code-switching is more rewarding when compared to finding the English words. Unarguably, code-switching instead of continuing to search a word is faster. This would point to the the group's values being more tied towards progressing in the game than finding words that they are missing. Progressing in the game is a more communal global level goal while finding the word is a local level goal. Here the participants show orientation to the global goals rather than smaller local level goals.

Despite of all the participants using code-switching to find the words they were looking for, only half mentioned it during their interviews. As code-switching is a conscious process (Gumperez, 1971; Hoffman, 1991; Li, 1998), it is likely that at the moment of the interview, word search did not cross their minds. However, this does show us that it must not be the most prevalent situation of code-switching in their minds in role-play situations. Clarification

was another type of situation that was brought up by half of the participants; be it rules, mechanics, or a complex situation.

Code-switching was repeatedly observed in situations where there was some type of misunderstanding or an asymmetry of knowledge. Code-switching was used to make sure that everything was understood correctly. Finnish served as the language of crucial game related background information. Interestingly, it also served as the language of additional comments made for amusement value. When quietly whispering to each other about a funny meme they found on their phone, the language was always Finnish. This was also brought up in the interviews as two participants confessed to usually using Finnish when talking about non-game related things during the game.

Another reason for code-switching was to prevent misunderstandings, especially when it came to identity. In multiple instances in the data, situations where the participants own comments could have been easily perceived as the comments of the character had it not been for a change in language. This was also brought up in the interviews as some participants mentioned that using different languages for different purposes makes playing the game easier and clearer. This is clearly something that is unique to each group as in Suominen's (2014) study it was very clear that there were no patterns in code-switching when it came to distinguishing levels of play. He even goes to mention that it was very rare that such a misunderstanding happened. (Suominen, 2014, p. 57)

Cultural referencing was almost without exception accompanied by code-switching. Usually, the cultural word or its surrounding sentence was the one being code-switched. In some cases, there were simply no corresponding words in English or using one would have required changing the sentence completely. However, sometimes code-switching seemed to be more of a choice the participant decided to make either to create wanted connotations or to preserve qualities of the word.

Even though code-switching has been studied to reinforce different social hierarchies (Shin S.-Y. , 2010, pp. 110-111), I was surprised when I encountered this kind of use of code-switching in my data. However, it was clearly there on multiple occasions and especially in one of the examples mentioned in this study (Example 12). Code-switching was used as a tool of amplifying one's messages and bringing them to the foreground. It was also used to remind participants of their stations and to bring the dominant role where it usually lies. As the game

master and players typically adhere to such a strong hierarchy, situations like these are not very common. However, they brought with them interesting linguistic choices that could be an interesting point of further study.

## **5.2 How is code-switching used as a resource in the environment of tabletop role-play?**

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, code-switching is a conscious process. As Nazikian (2010) believes that one's stylistic language choices can be used to tell a story, I believe that code-switching too can be used as a tool in storytelling. By setting this research question, I wanted to study the ways the participants used code-switching as an instrument of language and storytelling.

As discussed in section 5.1, in most cases of word search the search was concluded in code-switching. I mentioned that a code-switch was usually preferred in the stead of finding the English word and that that was because of the communal goal of moving on in the game. I now take this hypothesis further and add that in some cases this was not only a choice of practicality but also one of narrative. In multiple cases of code-switching during a word-search, the search was clearly concluded to preserve the flow and immersion of the sentence and moment. When dramatically telling the story of how your character's family was lost at sea, one does not stop to wonder what the right word for a lantern is. Furthermore, in these cases deciding to code-switch was often a tool in preserving the tempo of the story. In other terms, code-switching was used as a tool of continuation and preservation when not coming up with or remembering the right word.

In addition to this, code-switching was used to create and amplify jokes. Using code-switching made it possible for the participants to deliver jokes that would not have worked in the other language or possibly even either. The participants combined features of both languages to create banter that would otherwise not have worked or been witty or funny. Code-switching and the proximity of the languages during play made it possible for the participants to not be restricted by only one language. In addition to jokes, it enabled the participants to utilise the lexicons of both languages sometimes even creating newish words.

This furthermore amplifies the thought that English itself is a tool for immersion and that Finnish is the out of game language. The interviews further support this with notions of out of game talk and separating in-game and off-game.

### **5.3 What are the participants' perceived attitudes towards code-switching?**

With this research question, I wanted to compare the participants' own answers to what could be interpreted from the audio. First, looking at the participants' thoughts on why the main language of the game was English, many different approaches were taken in the answers. Many started with the very practical approach of the material being in English and continued that not having to translate terms is preferable to them. However, many brought up that to them English is the language of the genre. From a lingua franca perspective this is an interesting take since English as a language is not tied to any country but a genre of entertainment.

It must be taken into account that the presence of a native English speaker might have affected the language choice at first. However, even after their departure from the group they continued speaking English. This would suggest that the participants are not speaking English because they have to, but because they can and choose to do so. In chapters 5.1 and 5.2, I mentioned that the participants often chose fluidity over "correctness". The participant also created their own ways of using different linguistic features of English to enrich their experience. This would advocate for the theory that the participants do not feel tied to the rules of speaking English created by the native speakers of the language (Baker, 2015).

When asked about how they felt about speaking Finnish, some participants admitted to experiencing feelings of guilt or failure. However, these feelings could not be recognised by an outsider from observing them play and code-switch.

## **6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the data yielded many curious findings of which all would benefit from further and more detailed study. The main findings of the study were that the participants used the languages more like tools than languages in a traditional sense. Instead of talking about their use of two separate languages mixed via code-switching, it would be more appropriate to refer to it as them using their language reserves. The participants' reasons for code-switching were numerous and complex but two phenomena stood out from among the rest: word search and preserving fluidity, as well as changing the participant framework. In cases of word

search, code-switching was used to preserve fluidity of the narrative as well as speech. Code-switching was used as a local level means to solve a global level problem. The fact that the other participants did not offer words, step in or cut in also points to this preservation of fluidity and immersion. Conversely, the other phenomenon observed did the opposite of preserving fluidity and immersion. Code-switching to Finnish was used to shift the participant framework to bring byplay to the foreground. Code-switching brought one-on-one conversations to the front, making them the mainline and changing the other participants into overhearers. The shift in the participant framework prompted by code-switching cuts the immersion.

It must also be mentioned that in most cases of code-switching the language was not the only thing that changed and instead it was accompanied by a change in style, tempo or volume. Findings from the data suggested that the goals of the community affect its language use. This and the effects of tabletop group dynamics and communal goals need further study. Lastly, it is important to remember that each community is unique, and that their linguistic profiles cannot always be compared.

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## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Tables

8.1.1 Table 1: Participants' linguistic backgrounds

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Mother tongue</b>	<b>Known languages</b>	<b>How much English they have studied</b>	<b>How often they are in contact with native English speakers</b>
<b>A</b>	Finnish	English, Swedish, German,	10 years, but studies at university mostly in English	Multiple times a week
<b>B</b>	Finnish	English, Swedish	13 years, but English has had a major role in their workspace and hobbies for 23 years	Multiple times a week
<b>C</b>	Finnish	English, Swedish, German	10 years	A few times each month
<b>D</b>	Finnish	English, Swedish, French	8 years	Once a month or less often

<b>E</b>	Finnish	English, Swedish, French, Spanish	9 years and the mandatory courses in Universi	Once a month
<b>F</b>	Finnish	English, Swedish	10 years	A couple of times a month

## 8.2 Transcription symbols

.	falling intonation
,	level intonation
?	rising intonation
.?	slightly rising intonation
↑	rise in pitch
↓	fall in pitch
AND	increased volume
:	lengthening on sound
°	indicates a passage of talk quieter than surrounding talk
·	indicates a passage of talk louder than surrounding talk
£	smiling voice
@	character speech
<>	talk inside is spoken at a faster pace than the surrounding talk
><	talk inside is spoken at a slower pace than the surrounding talk
h	h or several of the indicate an audible aspiration
.h	a period + h (or several) indicates audible inhalation
he he	laughter
a(h)nd	laughter within talk
(.)	micropause less than half a second
(0.5)	silence timed in tenths of seconds
=	no silence between two adjacent utterances
[]	simultaneous talk
()	item in doubt
(--)	indecipherable talk
(( ))	researchers comment

## 8.3 Consent forms

### TIEDOTE TUTKIMUKSESTA

#### Language dynamics in TTRPGs // Kielidynamiikat pöytäroolipeleissä

##### Pyyntö osallistua tutkimukseen

Teitä pyydetään mukaan tutkimukseen, jossa kielten sisäisiä ja välisiä dynamiikkoja pöytäroolipelien kontekstissa. Tämä tiedote kuvaa tutkimusta ja teidän osuuttanne siinä. Porehdyttyänne tähän tiedotteeseen teille järjestetään mahdollisuus esittää kysymyksiä tutkimuksesta, jonka jälkeen teiltä pyydetään suostumus tutkimukseen osallistumisesta.

##### Vapaaehtoisuus

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista. Voitte myös keskeyttää tutkimuksen koska tahansa syytä ilmoittamatta. Mikäli keskeytätte tutkimuksen tai peruutatte suostumuksen, teistä keskeyttämiseen ja suostumuksen peruuttamiseen mennessä kerättyjä tietoja ja näytteitä voidaan käyttää osana tutkimusaineistoa.

##### Tutkimuksen tarkoitus

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää pöytäroolipeleissä tapahtuvan kommunikaation kielellisiä ominaisuuksia sekä käytetyn/käytettyjen kielten lingvistisiä sekä sosiaalisia dynamiikkoja

##### Tutkimuksen toteuttajat

Tutkimus toteutetaan osana Pro gradu -tutkielmaa. Tutkimuksesta vastaa Helsingin Yliopisto.

##### Tutkimusmenetelmät ja toimenpiteet

Tutkittavalta ei vaadita muuta kuin normaali osallistuminen tutkittavaan pelikertaan sekä suostumuksesta riippuen lyhyt haastattelu. Aineisto kerätään kahden pelikerran aikana, joista toista pelikertaa käytetään kontrollikertana. Tutkimuksessa Susanna Kalliola havainnoi peliä paikan päällä sekä nauhoittaa pelikerran tarkempaa analyysia varten. Tutkittavat eivät esiinny materiaalissa tai tutkielmassa omilla nimillään (tutkittavien sekä hahmojen nimet muutetaan) eikä heitä pysty tunnistamaan tuloksista kerrottaessa. Lyhyitä haastatteluja ei nauhoiteta. Susanna Kalliola sitoutuu huolehtimaan aineiston käsittelystä huolellisesti. Tutkimuksen valmistuttua aineisto hävitetään asianmukaisella tavalla.

##### Kustannukset ja niiden korvaaminen

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen ei maksa teille mitään. Osallistumisesta ei myöskään makseta erillistä korvausta.

##### Tutkimustuloksista tiedottaminen

Tutkimuksesta ja sen tuloksista kirjoitetaan Pro gradu -tutkielma, joka tullaan julkaisemaan avoimesti verkossa Helsingin Yliopiston sähköisessä tietokannassa.

##### Lisätiedot

Pyydämme teitä tarvittaessa esittämään tutkimukseen liittyviä kysymyksiä tutkijalle/tutkimuksesta vastaavalle henkilölle.

**Tutkijoiden yhteystiedot**

Tutkija

Nimi:

Puh.

Sähköposti:

Tutkimuksen nimi: Language dynamics in TTRPGs // Kielidynamiikat pöytäroolipeleissä

Tutkimuksen toteuttaja: Helsingin Yliopisto, [Susanna Kalliola, puh.num, sähköposti.

Ohjaaja: Turo Hiltunen]

Minua \_\_\_\_\_ on pyydetty osallistumaan yllämainittuun opinnäytetyöhön, jonka tarkoituksena on tutkia kielidynamiikkoja pöytäroolipeleissä.

Olen saanut tutkimustiedotteen tutkimuksesta ja ymmärtänyt sen. Tiedotteesta olen saanut riittävän selvityksen tutkimuksesta, sen tarkoituksesta ja toteutuksesta, oikeuksistani sekä tutkimukseen mahdollisesti liittyvistä hyödyistä ja riskeistä. Minulla on ollut mahdollisuus esittää kysymyksiä ja olen saanut riittävän vastauksen kaikkiin osallistumista koskeviin kysymyksiini.

Minua ei ole painostettu eikä houkuteltu osallistumaan tutkimukseen.

Minulla on ollut riittävästi aikaa harkita osallistumistani.

Ymmärrän, että osallistumiseni on vapaaehtoista ja että voin peruuttaa tämän suostumukseni koska tahansa syytä ilmoittamatta. Olen tietoinen siitä, että mikäli keskeytän osallistumisen tai peruutan suostumuksen, minusta keskeyttämiseen ja suostumuksen peruuttamiseen mennessä kerättyjä tietoja ja näytteitä voidaan käyttää osana tutkimusaineistoa.

Suostun tarvittaessa nauhoituksen lisäksi lyhyeen haastatteluun.

Allekirjoituksellani vahvistan osallistumiseni tähän tutkimukseen.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_

Allekirjoitus: \_\_\_\_\_

Nimenselvennys: \_\_\_\_\_

Alkuperäinen allekirjoitettu tutkittavan suostumus liitteineen jäävät tutkijan arkistoon.

Tutkimustiedote liitteineen ja kopio allekirjoitetusta suostumuksesta annetaan tutkittavalle.

