

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO

# “What is a mother tongue?”

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Language identity construction of ESL  
speakers in Finland

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April 2017

Tiedekunta/Osasto – Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta		Laitos – Institution – Department Nykykielten laitos	
Tekijä – Författare – Author Saara Laitinen			
Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title “What is a mother tongue?”– Language identity construction of ESL speakers in Finland			
Oppiaine – Läroämne – Subject Englantilainen filologia			
Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level Pro Gradu - tutkielma		Aika – Datum – Month and year Huhtikuu 2017	
		Sivumäärä– Sidoantal – Number of pages 81 + liitteet	
Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Englantia käytetään yhä enenevässä määrin lingua francana ympäri maailmaa. Suurin osa näistä puhujista puhuu äidinkielenään muuta kieltä kuin englantia, mikä johtaa maailmanlaajuisesti ennennäkemättömiin kielellisiin tilanteisiin, joita vauhdittaa muun muassa kansainvälisten yhteisöjen kasvu ympäri maailmaa. Euroopassa englantia toisena kielenä puhuvien määrä on erityisesti nousussa alueilla, joissa sitä ei puhuta virallisena kielenä, kuten Pohjoismaissa ja Alankomaissa.</p> <p>Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan englantia toisena kielenä puhuvien kieli-identiteetin rakentumista Suomessa. Tarkoituksena on tutkia, miten osallistujat rakentavat kielellistä identiteettiään kertomuksina ja miten he näkevät roolinsa ja oikeutensa englannin puhujina.</p> <p>Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu kolmesta tutkimusalasta: englantia lingua francana (ELF), kaksikielisyys ja identiteetti. Identiteettiä tarkastellaan poststruktuurallisen perinteen mukaisesti dynaamisena ja moninaisena konstruktiona, joka on ristiriitainen ja ajassa ja paikassa muuttuva. Identiteetille on olennaista subjektiivisuus: yksilö voi samaan aikaan sekä vaikuttaa omaan identiteettiinsä että olla ulkoisen vaikutuksen alainen. Tässä tutkielmassa tätä ulkoista vaikutusta tarkastellaan erityisesti määritelmien, kuten äidinkieli ja natiivipuhuja, sekä yksikielisen natiivipuhujan ihanteen näkökulmasta.</p> <p>Tutkielman aineisto koostuu strukturoiduista taustatietolomakkeista ja puolistrukturoiduista kerronnallisista henkilöhaastatteluista. Osallistujina on kuusi Suomen kansalaista, jotka ovat käyttäneet nuoresta asti englantia lingua francana ja kokevat sen vahvaksi kielekseen. Nämä osallistujat ovat elämänsä aikana kuuluneet kansainvälisiin yhteisöihin asuessaan eri puolilla maailmaa. Henkilöhaastattelut on tehty kerronnallisen teemahaastattelun muodossa, ja niitä analysoidaan diskurssianalyysin keinoin. Analyysin tukena käytetään positioteoriaa, jonka mukaan identiteetti rakentuu diskursseissa positioiden avulla. Nämä positiot voivat olla refleksiivisiä (itse määriteltyjä) tai interaktiivisia (toisten määrittelemiä), ja ne muokkaavat yksilön minä-kuvaa erilaisissa diskursiivisissa tilanteissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset tukevat väitettä kieli-identiteetin dynaamisuudesta ja muuttuvuudesta. Osallistujat näyttävät rakentavan kielellistä identiteettiään kontekstisidonnaisesti nojaten erilaisiin kielellisiin tekijöihin, kuten syntyperä, kompetenssi, funktio ja asenteet. Diskurssianalyysin ja positioteorian avulla analysoidut kertomukset osoittavat, että hallitseva yksikielisen natiivipuhujan ideaali vaikuttaa jossain määrin osallistujien kieli-identiteettiin. Lisäksi tuloksista havaitaan, että ulkoinen ja sisäinen (itse-) identifiointi ovat paikoittain ristiriidassa keskenään. Tämän vuoksi väitän, että kielelliset konstruktiot, kuten äidinkieli ja natiivipuhuja, eivät tue osallistujien kaksikielistä ja dynaamista kieli-identiteettiä.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords englantia lingua francana, kaksikielisyys, kieli-identiteetti, diskurssianalyysi, positioteoria			
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited E-thesis			
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information			

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## List of abbreviations

ELF	English as a lingua franca
ENL	English as a native language
ESL	English as a second language
EFL	English as a foreign language
L1	first language
L2	second language
NES	native English speaker
NNES	non-native English speaker

## 1 Introduction

In a globalized world with increased digital accessibility, the concepts of culture and nation are in transition. Due to growing international mobility and communication, English is being used as a *lingua franca* worldwide to an increasing degree, which is manifested in the great number of Englishes appearing throughout the world. Today most of the communication in English takes place among non-native speakers, who increasingly outnumber native speakers worldwide (Kohn 2011: 72-3). In fact, several sources confirm that the current numbers for native speakers and non-native ones are around 400 million and 1.5 billion, respectively (see e.g. Statista 2008). This creates unforeseen linguistic situations worldwide challenging the strong connection between nations and their national languages. As an international language, English therefore has a great mission: to serve the communicational needs of all its speakers, be they native speakers or *lingua franca* users.

There are some countries, such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America (i.e. *the inner circle*), which are considered as the traditional bases with regards to the English language (see Kachru 1992). Then there are other countries, such as India and Jamaica (i.e. *the outer circle*), which have their own standard Englishes because of their colonial history. Finally, there are some countries, such as Finland and Sweden (i.e. *the expanding circle*), in which speakers traditionally speak English as a foreign language. The growth in numbers of English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) speakers has complicated this traditional division for many speakers in the expanding circle possess a high level of fluency in English internationally speaking. Crystal (2003: 6) reminds us that English speakers today live in increasingly multilingual and multicultural environments, and therefore one cannot assume that

speakers in the inner circle are more competent than the others. This leads to a further issue concerning the native–non-native dichotomy as well as the ownership of English. Who has the right to claim the status of a native speaker?

In Europe, bilingualism with English is especially growing in countries where it has no official status (Hoffmann 1996: 48). Multinational organizations and companies have taken part in creating international communities across Europe within which English usually becomes both the primary working language and that of leisure time (Hoffmann 1996: 50). Consequently, many non-native speakers of English have come to consider English as one of their dominant languages. These international organizations are considered the driving force in the growth in numbers of *English as a Second Language* (ESL) speakers throughout the continent.

This study focuses on the phenomenon by considering the language identities of ESL speakers living in the expanding circle. My aim is to study how they perceive their own language identity and their role and rights as English speakers.

Additionally, I wish to examine what factors influence their language identity across time and space.

There are various earlier studies on the language identities of ESL speakers living either in the inner or outer circle (see e.g. Block 2006, Higgins 2003, Nero 2005, Tan 2014). Furthermore, there are studies on the language identities of non-native English teachers (see e.g. Pedrazzini & Nava 2011, Park 2012). There is, however, little research on the language identities of ESL speakers in the expanding circle. Some research has been conducted: for example, Pienimäki (2013) studies in her Master's thesis how ESL speakers construe their language identity in a Finnish setting. Virkkula and Nikula (2010) for their part consider identity construction in ELF contexts by interviewing Finns living temporarily in Germany. However,

surprisingly few studies have addressed this topic arguing for the need to consider how these speakers identify themselves and are identified by others. Further, my personal interest in the matter was sparked by an article on the growing importance of achieved bilingualism with English in Europe (Hoffmann 1996) and observations I have made within my immediate circle. These subjective observations are congruent with the estimates of the growing number of ESL speakers across Europe.

To study this topic, I have conducted a qualitative case study that draws on various fields of research. The participants of this study are Finnish citizens who speak English as a Second Language (ESL). The data consists of structured questionnaires and semi-structured narrative interviews, which I analyse with the help of discourse analysis and positioning theory. I set out to gather information for this thesis with the following research questions in mind:

1. What factors seem to influence the ESL speakers' language identity construction?
2. How do the ESL speakers position themselves and how are they positioned by others linguistically?
3. Are there indications of a dynamic language identity? If yes, what are they?

This thesis is divided into six chapters complemented by references and appendices. In chapter 2, I introduce three different fields of research, namely English as a lingua franca, bilingualism and identity, which together form the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 3 describes the research design, that is, the applied methods and approaches as well as the selected data and data analysis methods. In chapter 4, I present the analysis, while chapter 5 for its part discusses the main findings with a special emphasis on the research questions. Finally, chapter 6

concludes the thesis by summarizing the study and its main findings. Moreover, suggestions for further studies are addressed towards the end of this chapter. Now, I begin by introducing the theoretical framework.



## 2 Theoretical framework

This chapter describes the theoretical framework, which comprises three fields of study, namely English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), bilingualism and identity. First, the research field of ELF is introduced and placed in a European context, after which its relevance to the establishment of international communities is further discussed. The debates over the ownership of English and the native speaker ideal conclude the first subchapter. Second, the research field of bilingualism is introduced alongside relevant terminology. Bilingualism is discussed both in a European and Finnish context with a special emphasis on how ELF has changed the linguistic situation. Third, the concept of identity is introduced from a poststructuralist perspective highlighting such dynamic theories as *positioning theory* and Rampton's (1990) tripartite alternative to the native–non-native dichotomy. Finally, I conclude this chapter by introducing some previous empirical research.

### 2.1 English as a Lingua Franca

*English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF) is a widely studied yet fairly new object of research. The research focuses on situations and phenomena in which English is used as an “additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages” (Seidlhofer 2001: 146). Since the emphasis is on “additionally acquired”, native English speakers (henceforth NESs) have been historically excluded from the definition. Today, however, ELF is commonly understood to refer to communication between all speakers of English who do not share a mother tongue (Jenkins 2007: 1-2). Over the years the term ELF has superseded its predecessors *English as an International Language* (EIL), *International English*, and *Global English*, among others, as the

preferred term for this worldwide phenomenon due to its more neutral and less charged nature (Jenkins 2007: 3-4).

As a new phenomenon, ELF nevertheless creates strong opposition among scholars and English speakers alike. Holding back the recognition of its legitimacy, one major misconception is that ELF is a single monolithic variety which ignores the diversity of English worldwide. On the contrary, Jenkins (2007) argues that ELF as a contact language contains a great amount of local variation, and thereby it cannot be reduced to a single international variety. Given its worldwide distribution, Jenkins (2007) demands that ELF be regarded as a legitimate contact language which exists in its own right as opposed to being constantly compared to *English as a Native Language* (ENL).

Representing a more traditional division, Braj Kachru's (1992: 356) famous three circles model of World Englishes divides countries globally into inner, outer, and expanding circle according to their status of English. The inner circle includes the *first language* (L1) varieties of English that are spoken in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, anglophone Canada, and South Africa as well as some Caribbean territories. English spoken in these countries is often referred to as English as a Native Language (ENL). The outer circle countries comprise the ones in which English enjoys an official status and is used for intranational communication, that is spoken as a second language. These *English as a Second Language* (ESL) varieties are spoken in those former colonies of Great Britain which are mainly situated in Asia and Africa. Lastly, the expanding circle covers countries in which English is mainly used as a medium for international communication (Jenkins 2007: 4). There are usually no historical or governmental ties to the English language within this circle, where it is mainly studied as a *foreign*

*language* (EFL). The outer and expanding circle countries usually comprise non-native English speakers (henceforth NNESs). Contrary to this division, *English as a lingua franca* (ELF) is not bound by geography. Instead, it can be spoken by any English speaker in any lingua franca context.

### **2.1.1 English in Europe**

Europe predominantly belongs to the expanding circle, whereas the UK and Ireland are situated in the inner circle. Malta as a former British colony is the only outer circle country on the continent (Linn 2016: 63). Today most Europeans learn English as a foreign language (EFL), yet it is important to keep in mind that learning foreign languages was relatively rare before the 20th century. Before the Second World War, the first foreign language learned was usually the nearest major language. English gradually gained the status of the first foreign language in most European countries post-World War II (Dollerup 1996: 26). Interestingly, Dollerup (1996: 26) argues that English owes its position in Europe first and foremost to the entertainment industry and “only secondarily to war, technological lead, science and political domination”.

The Nordic countries and the Netherlands are considered more advanced than the Central and Southern countries in terms of level and use of English (Viereck 1996: 16). Germany, Austria and Switzerland are placed in the middle as they have more knowledge of English than their Southern neighbors but less so than those in the North. Eastern Europe for its part has slowly followed the others after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The use of English is constantly spreading across Europe challenging its status as a foreign language. Today it is widely used as a means of communication (Viereck 1996: 16).

One major force in the rise of ELF is the international communities that have been formed around international organizations and companies established across the world. There are several major cities in Europe with hundreds or thousands of members in such communities. Within these communities, English functions as the primary working language and usually that of leisure time, too. Especially children are often being educated entirely in English because of its growing importance (Hoffmann 1996: 50-52). Hoffman points out that people who belong to these communities often end up identifying as bilinguals with English through education or praxis, i.e. work, schooling or growing up in a bilingual family. Hoffman (1991: 173) argues that this linguistic change is the most prominent in the Nordic countries, the Benelux countries and Switzerland. In the following chapters, I refer to such individuals as members of international communities, expatriates or ESL speakers depending on the context and focus of the section at issue.

Another major force is the young generations in Europe to whom English is the language of travel, youth culture and student exchange (Johansson & Pyykkö 2005: 119). Hoffman (1991: 173) argues that internationalization, mobility, education and globalization are the key factors increasing the spread of ELF<sup>1</sup>. For example, in Switzerland, English is considered as the most important second language (L2) among the youth despite the already large amount of national languages in the country. Moreover, English has already bypassed French as the leading language of the EU in terms of frequency of use (Lindstedt 2005: 49). All this has resulted in ELF being used as a means of communication within and between countries (Viereck 1996: 16-20), whereupon the current linguistic situation

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<sup>1</sup> I realise that this argument is over 20 years old. Nevertheless, it appears to be valid in its content.

of Europe, containing one lingua franca and many local languages, has been compared to that of India (Crystal 2003: 46-9).

### **2.1.2 The native speaker ideal and the ownership of English**

There are many researchers who question the construct of nativeness (see e.g. Leung et al. 1997, Nero 2005, Widdowson 1994). In the case of English, native speakers are often considered members of the inner circle countries, disregarding the multilingual and multicultural realities of today. This assumption of a monolingual and fixed native identity does not consider one's relationships with different languages and linguistic communities. Nero (2005: 195-6) states that the concept "reinforces an idealised ownership of English tied to specific races/ethnicities" which goes against the diversity of English varieties. Nevertheless, this ideal seems to largely prevail among English speakers (see e.g. Leung et al. 1997, Mauko 2014, Nero 2005, Pienimäki 2013).

Widdowson (1994: 379) further discusses the ownership of English, which appears to lie with "the custodians of standard English" which are "self-elected members of a rather exclusive club". He (1994: 381) reminds that Standard English is only a variety among others and as such more of an expression of social identity with which one can break away from others. Within the already exclusive group of NESs, the power to make decisions about the English language falls to the speakers of a superimposed dialect.

Since English is an increasingly international language, Widdowson (1994: 385) states that no one can claim its ownership. Yet, at the same time, he thinks that the ownership should be extended to everyone using English. According to Graddol (1997: 10), English must adapt to various local contexts and serve the needs of those

who speak it. ELF therefore must break away from culturally loaded Standard English to meet the needs of the international linguistic community. This means that ELF speakers should have the right to identify with English, and as Widdowson (1994: 384) argues, to “possess it, make it your own, bend it to your will, assert yourself through it rather than simply submit to the dictates of its form”. After all, Graddol (1997: 10) states that it is not NESs but NNESs who will determine the future of the English language. Let us now turn to a related matter: bilingualism.

## **2.2 Bilingualism**

This study contributes to the long and expansive field of research on bilingualism. There is a division splitting the field into two major and somewhat conflicting views, namely the perfectionist or maximalist view and the minimalist view (Hoffmann 1991: 21). On the former view, bilingualism is considered in narrow terms including in the definition only those who have either near-native control or complete mastery of two or more languages (see e.g. Bloomsfield 1933, Oestreicher 1974, Christopherson 1948, as cited in Hoffmann 1991: 21). On the latter view, however, bilingualism is placed on a continuum where speaker competence ranges from a few meaningful utterances to complete mastery (see e.g. Haugen 1953, Macnamara 1969, as cited in Hoffmann 1991: 22). As for myself, I wish to align with the minimalist view because I believe that there are more aspects to bilingualism than competence.

There are several notions used within this field that must be addressed before presenting the empirical part of this study. To begin with the most obvious one, here is an exhaustive minimalist definition of bilingualism by a leading researcher in the field, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 90), as follows:

A bilingual speaker is someone who is able to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the sociocultural demands made of an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and who is able positively to identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures) or parts of them.

The reason I chose to include this definition in my thesis is that it illustrates the multifacetedness of bilingualism, namely the aspects of *origin*, *competence*, *function* and *attitude*. As a criterion for bilingualism, origin refers to a speaker who has used two or more languages simultaneously from the beginning. Competence for its part regards a bilingual as a speaker who masters or has knowledge of two or more languages. Finally, function refers to the ability to use two or more languages, while attitude is understood to be synonymous to identity, and thereby the definition is based on one's identification with languages by oneself or by others (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981: 91). Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 92) argues that often only origin is considered when talking about bilingualism. Instead, the definition should be broadened to contain competence, function and attitude, too. Further, all these criteria should be applied to the concept of mother tongue, which is taken up in the following subchapter.

Before discussing bilingualism on a European level, a few more definitions must be clarified.

### **2.2.1 Conceptualising bilingualism**

There are several distinctions within this field that deserve our attention, namely individual and societal bilingualism, early and late bilingualism, preferred and dominant language. To begin with the first pair, *individual bilingualism* refers to an individual's language acquisition, competence and functional purposes at the microlevel, whereas *societal bilingualism* considers the phenomenon at the

macrolevel, “among communities where two languages are habitually employed by a considerable number of its members” (Hoffmann 1996: 47). For example, when talking about ESL speakers on an *individual level*, I refer to speakers who have learned English in addition to their first (learned) language. Then again, when referring to the *societal level*, ESL usually refers to outer circle countries where English enjoys an official status. As for this study, the focus is on *individual bilingualism* in terms of language identities although these are discussed within the framework of *societal bilingualism*.

Secondly, *early bilingualism*, which is sometimes used synonymously with the term “ascribed” or “primary” bilingualism, refers to language acquisition approximately before the age of three in which two languages are acquired simultaneously in a natural environment, for example, in the home. *Late bilingualism*, in contrast, occurs roughly after the age of three, usually in the form of systematic training, for example, through education. It is sometimes referred to as “achieved” or “secondary” bilingualism (Hoffman 1991: 18-19). The distinction is relevant here since it has been suggested that early bilingualism is more beneficial for one’s future as a bilingual (Hoffman 1991: 35). By studying achieved bilingualism with English, the focus is, however, mainly on late bilingualism.

Third, bilinguals usually have *dominant* and *weaker* languages, which may vary or change during their lifespan or depend on the context. These two notions refer to one’s proficiency in the language. Moreover, bilinguals may have a *preferred language* which may or may not be equivalent to the dominant one. By preferred, Hoffman (1991: 22) refers to the language one “feels more at home in”. I for my part think that preference is highly context-dependent, and therefore I use this notion accordingly within this study.



Notions such as first language (L1) and second language (L2) are mainly used here regarding the chronological order in which one has learned one's languages. These notions may sometimes refer to dominance, which is later illustrated in the analysis section. However, I refer to them only with regards to the chronological order. Herein second language (L2) refers to all languages learned in addition to the first one (L1), be it the second, third or fifth language chronologically speaking. Finally, as *bilingualism* and *multilingualism* can be used interchangeably, I have decided to use *bilingualism*, to refer to the phenomenon of speaking two or more languages. I now turn in more detail to bilingualism in Europe.

### **2.2.2 Bilingualism in Europe**

Languages have historically been important in building nation-states and national identities in Europe. Behind this prevails the 19th century ideal that a linguistic community equals a sovereign nation highlighting the close link between nations and their national languages (i.e. the idea of "one nation, one language"). Thus, bilingualism has traditionally been viewed in negative terms which has resulted in many bilingual European countries becoming officially monolingual (Johansson & Pyykkö 2005). According to different calculations, there are between 200 and 300 languages spoken on the continent (see e.g. Johansson & Pyykkö 2005: 10), which accounts for approximately 4 per cent of the world's languages (Lewis et al. 2016). This number is likely to exclude the languages of immigrants making the de facto number even greater. Representative of Western countries, Europe's linguistic density is rather low compared to other continents.

Finland is one of the few European countries that is officially bilingual having both Finnish and Swedish as national languages. In addition, Sami, Romani and both Finnish and Finland-Swedish sign languages are minority languages

mentioned in the Constitution. Bilingualism has therefore always been present in Finland. Despite this, Finland represents a typical European nation in that its majority language, Finnish, has an enormous amount of symbolic value in terms of national identity (Johansson & Pyykkö 2005: 300-301). There have been major language conflicts over the status of Swedish starting from the latter half of the 19th century and continuing until the beginning of the Second World War. These conflicts still influence citizens' attitudes especially towards Swedish-speaking Finns (Johansson & Pyykkö 2005: 312-329).

As for bilingualism with English, the linguistic situation is gradually changing as English is increasingly being used as an L2 in Europe. A leading researcher in the field, David Graddol (1999), predicted in 1999 that in a few decades, there will be 200 million ESL speakers on the continent<sup>2</sup>. According to Viereck (1996: 19), there is a strong demand in learning foreign languages, especially English, in Europe. Along similar lines, Hoffman (1996: 48) argues that bilingualism with English is growing, especially in the continent's expanding circle. Regarding Kachru's three circles, this would mean a change towards the outer circle for Europe. This growth at the societal level, according to Hoffman (1996: 48), is one of a kind for it is not naturally acquired, neither popular nor elite. She refers to it as *achieved bilingualism with English* pointing out that in terms of this phenomenon "considerations of geography and historical antecedent are unimportant or, perhaps, can be seen as incidental" (Hoffman 1996: 51). In other words, globalization and internationalization have shrunken the world to such an extent that the mobility of languages and cultures is less dependent on history and geography than before. This

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<sup>2</sup> Notice that this prediction is 26 years old. However, I have not come across an updated number for ESL speakers in Europe.

may eventually lead to unforeseen linguistic situations, such as achieved societal bilingualism with English in the expanding circle.

Coming back to the Finnish context, English has gradually gained access to the Finnish education system in the form of foreign language teaching, English schools and bilingual education. There have been debates over the dominance of English, especially over its possible negative effects on national languages. The statuses of national languages, however, can be considered stable despite this pressure, especially that of the Finnish language (Johansson & Pyykkö 2005: 312). Next, I introduce the research field of identity.

### 2.3 Identity

This study aims to build on the non-essentialist and poststructuralist tradition of identity alongside many other researchers (see e.g. Davies and Harré 1990, Hall 1992, Norton 2013, Pavlenko 2002, Tan & Moghaddam 1999, Virkkula & Nikula 2010, Weedon 1997). In line with this tradition, I wish recognize the fluid and dynamic nature of identity and the possibility for an individual of creating not one but multiple identities. Identity, as defined by Bonny Norton (2013: 4), is

the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future.

Further, an identity is regarded as “diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social place” (Norton 2013: 4). Norton (1997: 410) argues that identity is subject to changing social and economic relations and reflects the distribution of material resources in society. Thus, we see the world and our possibilities for the future in different ways depending on our socioeconomic status and place in society. Herein, this is regarded as *social force* affecting one’s identity. Weedon (1997: 21) has brought up the notion *subjectivity*, which suggests that we as

individuals can both affect our set of relationships and be affected by them.

Furthermore, poststructuralist theories entail an assumption that identity is constantly reconstructed and negotiated in discourse (see e.g. Hall 1992), which is why I found discourse analysis the most suitable tool.

One example of such theory is *positioning theory* by Davies and Harré (1990). According to Norton, they challenge the concept of ‘role’ as an adequate representation of social identity for “identities are not merely given by social structures or ascribed by others, but are also negotiated by agents who wish to position themselves” (Norton 2013: 4-5). These agents are active players whose identities are not fixed nor predetermined but can vary and change even within a single discourse. This is referred to as *human agency*, which is an essential force alongside the social one. As a tool for analysis, this theory is further discussed in chapter 3 below.

As for *language identity*, Norton (2000) and Pavlenko (2002) have criticised the current Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories for not considering identity as complex and bilingual. Norton (2000: 4) especially wishes to pay more attention to the relationship between learner and context. I therefore have decided to apply the above-mentioned non-essentialist and poststructuralist thinking to language identity in this study. I wish to refer to language identity as

the sense of belonging to a community as mediated through the symbolic resource of language, or to the varying ways in which we come to understand the relationship between our language and ourselves (Juergensmeyer & Anheier 2012: 1080)

Thus, the focus of this study is in the way the participants see their relationship to their languages as well as to their linguistic communities.

Next, I consider definitions as social and historical constructions and analyse their effect on language identity.

### 2.3.1 Definitions as social and historical constructions

There is the dimension of social and historical force to identity, which manifests itself, for example, in various definitions or institutions. In the case of language identity, such definitions are the concepts of mother tongue, native speaker and first language, among others. These somewhat ambiguous notions have strong connotations to origin, however in their definitions they are varied and multiple (Baker & Jones 1998). For example, Baker and Jones (1998) identify from two to six different definitions for each notion in their encyclopedia. Referring to Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 91), there are at least five different definitions for mother tongue per different criteria, for example, whether it is the first learned language (origin), the best known (competence), the most used (function), identified by self or by others (attitudes). Yet, the strong ties to origin, as suggested by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), reflect deep social and historical contexts which are, perhaps, best understood by the “one language, one nation” ideal. In other words, the way we identify ourselves or are identified by others always reflects the social and historical world around us. However, referring to Hall (1992) and Davies and Harré (1990), we reconstruct and negotiate our identities in every discursive event giving us the possibility to resist or accept these definitions.

Representing an alternative viewpoint, Rampton’s (1990) more dynamic language definition, which considers our relationship to languages, is made use of in this thesis. Instead of replacing the traditional ones, both definitions are used side by side in a comparative manner to enrich the analysis. The tripartite division of languages by Rampton (1990) is as follows: *language expertise*, *language affiliation* and *language inheritance*. The first one, *language expertise*, refers to the proficiency one has in the language, which can be considered as equivalent to Skutnabb-Kangas’

competence. The second, *language affiliation*, considers the relationship one has with one's languages: whether one is attached to and/or identifies with them. This has similarities to Skutnabb-Kangas' attitude and function. The last one, *language inheritance*, is connected to one's origin and more specifically to the ethnic group one is being born to (Leung et al. 1997).

I find that Rampton's notions are more suitable than the traditional definitions for language identity research, even if they may not be extensive. Moreover, the traditional notions of mother tongue, native speaker and first language collide with the dynamic nature of identity in assuming that there are fixed language identities.

Next, I continue to study a few more theories which focus on the effects of external identification.

### **2.3.2 Identification, othering and imagined communities**

I conclude the theoretical part with concepts such as *identification*, *imagined communities* and *othering*. First, *identification* is directly linked to Skutnabb-Kangas' (1981: 91) abovementioned criterion *attitude*, while it also follows the poststructuralist ideas of human agency and social force. According to her, attitude is further divided into identity and identification, which, to my knowledge, are used interchangeably. Identification contains both an internal and an external dimension. The former one refers to a person's own view, whether one "identifies herself with both languages, and/or linguistic communities, and/or cultures" (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981: 88). The latter one, *external identification*, represents one's social relations in that it focuses on other people's assessment of a person, whether they accept him or her as a member of the linguistic community. These two interact with each other in that they can, for example, reinforce one's identity or conflict with it.

Second, to understand the affiliations one might have for one's linguistic communities the concept of *imagined communities* is central. According to Anderson (1991: 6), we imagine communities, such as nations, linguistic communities, religious communities, and identify with them despite the fact that we will never know "most of our fellow-members, meet them, hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". Different communities have their own characteristics, a style in which they are imagined, creating ties and bonds of kinship across generations. Anderson (1991) argues that all communities larger than ones of face-to-face contact are in fact imagined. These products of imagination, shared or personal, have a direct effect on our engagement and investment in these communities, or, for example, in the English language. Furthermore, the way in which English is often regarded "as the province of the idealised native speaker, something that he or she already possesses and that the outsider imperfectly aspires to" (Leung et al. 1997: 553), disregards the hybridity of language identities and the wide distribution of ELF. One may not feel an eligible member, if one does not meet the imagined demands of that community. Then again, positive mental images about a certain community may increase one's willingness to identify with such groups.

Lastly, I have found the postcolonial concept of *othering* useful in terms of this study. *Othering* is the way in which we differentiate ourselves from the others, the in-group from the out-group, usually in negative terms and through opposition (see e.g. Dervin 2012). Weiguo (2013) has extended the notion to *cultural othering* in explaining the static view on cultural identity and nativeness that revolves around the English language. According to him, NNEs are being "othered as something non-essential or peripheral", as an opposite to and distinct from NESs (Weiguo 2013: 148). These views on nativeness or the ownership of English represent external

identification (social force) herein and as such are essential in construing and analysing the participants' language identity.

### 2.3.3 Previous empirical research

There is little research on how ESL speakers with advanced proficiency level construe and perceive their language identity in the expanding circle. Pienimäki (2013) studies in her Master's thesis how ESL speakers construe identity and competence in English in a Finnish setting. According to her analysis, the participants in her study seem to understand competence by comparison to *the native speaker ideal* (Pienimäki 2013: 63-65). Further, she finds identity construction to be dynamic and context-dependent, which is also supported by Virkkula and Nikula (2010) in their study on ELF identities of Finns living temporarily in Germany.

Mauko (2014) for her part studies the conceptualizations of a native speaker in her Master's thesis finding that traditional ties to origin still largely prevail. Additionally, she argues that external identification largely relies on a "black-and-white standpoint", meaning that there is a certain image of how an NES should look and sound like (Mauko 2014: 71). This is supported by various earlier research (see e.g. Anderson 1991, Brutt-Griffler & Samimy 2001, Leung et al. 1997, Nero 2005, Widdowson 1994).

To conclude, my aim is to study how ESL speakers in Finland perceive their own language identity and their role and rights as English speakers. Researchers argue that this role is often externally realised in relation to the prevailing native speaker ideal (see e.g. Leung et al. 1997, Mauko 2014, Nero 2005). Further, there often are discrepancies between the way one identifies herself and the way one is identified by others (see e.g. Leung et al. 1997, Mauko 2014, Nero 2005). Language



identities are mainly seen as monolithic and stable on a societal level, even though research confirms that identity is a dynamic and complex construction (see e.g. Norton 2013, Weedon 1997). Moreover, this monolithic picture is hardly supported by the growing international mobility and wide diffusion of English today.

Before analysing and discussing these theories in relation to the data, I introduce the research design.

### **3 Research design**

In the following chapter I describe the chosen research design applied in this study. I begin by introducing the methods and approaches, which are both qualitative and narrative in nature. Secondly, I proceed to describe the selected data and participants in detail. The data consists of structured questionnaires and semi-structured narrative interviews. Finally, I conclude by explaining the tools for data analysis, namely discourse analysis and positioning theory.

#### **3.1 Methods and data**

I begin by explaining the chosen methods and approach, after which I continue to introduce the narrative approach in more detail. First, this study is qualitative in nature complemented with some simple calculations. Second, I found that the most suitable approach for the purposes of this study is a narrative one. There is a widely shared perception that social identities are created in discourse and narratives (see e.g. Benwell & Stokoe 2006, Cortazzi 2001, Davies & Harré 1990, Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005, Mishler 1999, Norton 2013). Through narratives “we speak our identities” (Mishler 1999: 19) becoming “the stories through which we tell our lives” (Riessman 2003: 7). Narrative researchers argue that we construe our identities in the form of stories: we negotiate, make sense of, perform and even fight for our identities and positions. According to Hyvärinen and Löyttyniemi (2005: 191) qualitative research always involves narratives and stories, thus it was natural for me to apply the narrative approach to data gathering.

How, then, does one define a narrative and elicit them in an interview? A narrative, in its most simple form, means that someone tells another what happened (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 190). There are always the aspects of change,

transformation and process present in a narrative and at least two events must take place, according to the definition. Through narratives we convey cultural assumptions and share information that form the basis of who we are (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 189-190).

Within the field of narrative research, I aim at understanding the interview process as an interactional and collaborative project (Gubrium & Holsten 2002: 15). An interview is thus not a passive transmission of information but an event in which both parties have active roles and responsibilities. This approach also gives the interviewee more responsibility over the interview process while at times reducing the role of the interviewer to that of a sympathetic listener. However, it is crucial that the interviewer knows how to ask to-the-point and elucidatory follow-up questions where relevant to help the process of construing identity. Further, it is, for example, her responsibility to control the direction of the interview, out of traumatic situations, where relevant (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 201). The role of the interviewer is thus changing and various aiming at construing identities in joint discourse (Rosenthal 2003: 920).

Furthermore, the interviewer is often seen as a mediator of the narrative. Thus, narratives, and our identities alike, are always to some extent loaded with other people's meanings and interpretations. For example, when writing someone's narrative, a writer always conveys her own cultural assumptions and knowledge within the text. Thus, she mediates the narrative through her own eyes. As Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 294) describes it, "the word in language is half someone else's... it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions". In other words, a narrative is always someone's interpretation of the

situation at issue. In a narrative interview, the aim is to construe these stories in a collaborative manner, yet the final interpretation lies with the interpreter.

When eliciting narratives, it is important to create a good relationship with the interviewee by paying attention to a relaxed atmosphere, empathetic attitude and easy warm-up questions so that they feel comfortable in sharing their stories (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 41). Thus, the floor must be given to the interviewees to express themselves, if they so wish. Alternatively, a narrative may be jointly constructed in the form of a dialogue, if preferred by the participants (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 222). As previously mentioned, an interview is considered an active event where an interviewer has various roles and responsibilities. These aspects may sometimes be considered distractions, faults or weaknesses in other interview forms. Within this approach, however, these are considered a richness, and as such subject to different and more complex interpretations (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 211).

I claim that all discursive events are loaded with different assumptions. Therefore, by acknowledging my own presence in the interview, I can analyse its effect on the interviewees' narratives. Identities do not exist on their own but rather, as Norton (2013: 4-5) explained, are work in progress shaped by both an active agent and the social surroundings. For these reasons, I consider the narrative approach most suitable for the purposes of this study. The ideas above served as an important starting point in formulating both the progression and the questions for the interviews (see appendix 3).

### 3.1.1 Participants

Next, I introduce the participants of this study. There are six participants who have used ELF since childhood for various reasons, be it due to family background, schooling, travelling or living abroad. They are all socially perceived as highly proficient in English. The most important selection criterion was that the informants should be NNEs by origin (see the definition on page 13) as well as citizens of an expanding circle country in Europe. Further, they should have lived in the expanding circle for most of their lives. Within their social networks, they should have used ELF in various contexts, resulting in them considering English as one of their dominant languages. Within the expanding circle, the location was further narrowed down to Finland so that the interviews could be conducted face-to-face.

I used my own networks to contact the first three participants, after which I used the snowballing method to contact three more. Initially, I created an Excel file with possible candidates I or my immediate circle knew. In addition to the criteria above, I took into account six factors related to English that might affect their suitability for my study. These factors were as follows: mother tongues, languages spoken in the childhood home, languages of schooling, living in the inner or outer circle, current residence, and whether they studied English philology at university.

There were three criteria that I considered an obstacle to participation in this study. First, I ruled out all majors or minors of English philology so as not to elicit specialist-like answers. Second, I excluded my immediate circle so that my relationship with the participants would not compromise the interpretation. Third, all the candidates who lived abroad were excluded due to their inability to attend a face-to-face interview apart from one candidate I knew visited Finland often. I preferred face-to-face contact because I considered it more suitable for a narrative approach.

All the remaining candidates were ranked according to their background, in which all the abovementioned six factors were taken into account. Since the list comprised highly proficient English speakers, I decided to rank the ones with the least connection to the English language the highest. This meant, for example that if they spoke English at home, were schooled in English or had lived in an English-speaking country, they received lower points than those who were not. The reason was that the ones with the least connection to English might generate the most interesting and less frequently heard stories in terms of this study.

I contacted the candidates in this ranking order via Facebook to introduce my study and to enquire their willingness to partake in a research interview. Three candidates replied immediately that they would be willing to help. After having difficulties in setting more interviews, I used the snowballing method and found the last three participants through the first ones. After a participant had agreed to take part, I sent out a consent form (see appendix 1) and a link to accessing a questionnaire (see appendix 2) via email. Next, I shall introduce the data.

### **3.1.2 Data**

The data consisted of answers to structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Before the interview, the participants were sent a link to the questionnaire which was created with the Google Forms application (see appendix 2). There were two main topics in the questionnaire: personal details and English. In the first part, there were questions related to the informants' personal and linguistic background, while in the latter I enquired about their knowledge and use of English. The questionnaire comprised 24 questions, and the information gained from it was utilized in forming the interview questions and preparing for the interview. The questionnaire was first piloted with several people including my seminar group

members and other candidates who were excluded from the final ranking list. The feedback was incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire to ensure its functionality.

As for the interview, it was piloted with one candidate to ensure that it suited my purposes. All the interviews were held in cafeterias in central Helsinki in quiet and semi-private space. They were recorded, transcribed and those excerpts that are quoted below were translated. I provided the translations myself, while the original ones are available in appendix 4. The duration of the interviews was between 26 and 47 minutes. I chose to conduct the interviews in Finnish because it had either been the common language between us during our previous encounters or our joint mother tongue. In retrospect, it would have been a better idea to ask the participants beforehand which language they preferred. All the interviews went well and it seemed to me that the participants were able to express themselves fluently in Finnish. However, on some occasions there was uncertainty as to what language we shall use in the interview situation. I still encouraged the interviewees to express themselves in English whenever they wanted.

The interview format was a semi-structured one, which gave me the opportunity to modify the questions and their order to match every interviewee's narrative. It followed a modified version of the Focused Interview (Merton et al. 1956, as cited in Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008), which emphasises certain themes as opposed to fixed questions as the common element. This modified version by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2005), the theme-centered interview (originally 'teemahaastattelu'), sets out to study participants' subjective experiences on certain themes, thoughts or beliefs. According to Merton et al. (1956, as cited in Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008), there is a common experience or phenomenon that unites the

participants. The interviewer analyses this phenomenon tentatively arriving at certain assumptions. Using these assumptions, s/he then formulates an outline for the interviews. In the interview situation, the focus is on participants' subjective experiences on those essential situations that belong to the phenomenon. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008: 48) for their part argue that this method can be applied to all experiences, thoughts, and beliefs, not just to shared ones. This in mind, I set out to study the participants' subjective experiences and thoughts on their language identities in the expanding circle.

The interviews were comprised of two phases: the first one was a warm-up phase, while the latter one entailed more open-ended questions. Moreover, all the questions were related to four themes: the use of ELF and the issue of competence, relationship to one's linguistic origin, relationship to English, and language identity. In the warm-up phase, I began by asking how the interviewees had learned English after which I asked some follow-up questions regarding the questionnaire. The interviewees also had the opportunity to explain or comment on their answers. In the second phase, we proceeded to more open-ended questions regarding their language preferences, feelings towards speaking English in certain contexts/or at a certain age, relationship to their language inheritance, and view on nativeness, among others (see appendix 3 for the general outline). I encouraged the informants to share any stories that came to their mind during the interview and emphasized that they can always refrain from answering any question they do not wish to answer.

Since the focus was on eliciting narratives, I found that choosing the appropriate questions was the key. Questions related to explanations, facts and opinions often lack the narrative element, whereas functional ones are more open-ended, for example, "Could you tell me...?" or "How did this idea occur to you?"



(Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005: 191). Moreover, the questions should be simple and avoid negation (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 105). This was important since Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008: 49) point out that all the answers and narratives directly reflect the presence of the interviewer: her way of asking questions as well as the previously asked ones. The questions were tentative and modified on the spot according to the participants' narratives.

### **3.2 Data analysis**

The data was analysed using discourse analysis, which allows me to examine how my participants describe their experiences: what they choose to tell and what to leave out. Discourse is defined as covering “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds” (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 7). Further, it can be classified as a goal-oriented activity with a specific purpose (Carol 1992), whereby discourse analysis pays attention to what the participants do with their language. What are the topics they bring up and how do they use language to make sense of the world they live in. This is often done through categorization (see e.g. Potter 1996). Analysing their discourse, I can see how the participants construe their identity and the social world around them (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008: 51). According to Hynninen (2013: 79), “discourses are seen to operate at the same time on the micro level of language use and on the macro level of social context – thus bridging the two levels”. Discourse analysis therefore is very much suited to analyse the dynamic and complex social identity.

Analysing theme-centred interviews, there are three ways in which I proceed. First, I begin by identifying the four predetermined themes and any discourse related to them in the interviews. Second, I look for any other frequently occurring themes the participants bring up during the interviews. Third, I search for positions taken up

by the participants or offered to them within the discourse (see below for positioning theory). Any patterns or differences I find in relation to positions, themes, categorizations, et cetera, are analysed and discussed with respect to language identity. While reoccurring themes may reflect shared experiences, or shed light on the studied phenomenon, positions are central in construing identity and in understanding the social reality the participants live in.

In the transcripts, square brackets [] are used to indicate that parts of the talk or some words are either omitted or added. Omissions are marked with three dots inside the brackets, while additions are written out inside them. The omitted parts were either not relevant to the analysis in question or contained private information that may endanger the participants' anonymity. In addition, the symbol @ was chosen to represent laughter, while three dots without any brackets accounts for an untimed pause. Finally, I am aware that my translations of the original transcripts are already interpretations of the informants' narratives. I have therefore provided the original versions in appendix 4 to increase the validity of this study. However, since the narrative approach relies on interpretation and considers interviews as collaborative events, I do not see this as a problem with regards to qualitative research.

### **3.2.1 Positioning theory**

All the data is analysed with the help of *positioning theory*. Focusing on the dynamic nature of social identity, positioning theorists argue that identity is always negotiated and achieved in discourse in the form of positions (Tan & Moghaddam 1999: 187). We engage in various discursive practices in which we are positioned by ourselves and others, reflexively or interactively, affecting our understanding and production of 'self'. Here discourse must be understood in broad terms: rules, for example, are "a

special kind of discourse having its own social purposes” (Davies & Harré 1990: 44). Rules applying to certain situations offer certain positions that must be acknowledged and either rejected or accepted by the participants. Additionally, the socially constructed definitions mentioned in chapter 2.3 are also considered a special kind of discourse. When talking about one’s mother tongue in an official context, for example, there are certain rules according to which one is being positioned.

*Interactive positioning*, intentional or not, may be either accepted, rejected or further negotiated within the discourse. For example, one might position another as an NNEs due to her origin as a Finn (‘We speak fluent English for non-native speakers, don’t we?’). The other may either accept the offered position (‘Yeah, we do’), reject it (‘Well, I wouldn’t include myself in that category’) or negotiate it by introducing her own, alternative definition (‘Yes, although I consider myself more a...’). We all have our personal stories, or *storylines*, which reflect both our social reality and previous experiences (Tan & Moghaddam 1999: 183). By offering a position to another, we may also offer group membership as well as the chance to take part in creating a joint storyline (‘Yeah, don’t you just hate it when people don’t speak English well’).

Tan and Moghaddam (1999: 183) argue that in addition to sharing our personal storylines through narratives, we often take part in *intergroup positioning* by either sharing group storylines or positioning people according to their group membership. This is often made using “linguistic devices such as ‘we’, ‘they’, ‘us’, ‘them’, ‘I’ (as a member of a certain group), ‘you’ (as a member of a certain group), and specific group names” (Tan & Moghaddam 1999: 183), as in the first example above where the individuals are positioned into a separate group inside NNEs, to

those who speak it fluently. *Intergroup positioning*, according to Tan and Moghaddam (1999), allows for differential power relations, histories of groups, and the dynamic nature of identity, individual or group alike, which are often neglected in identity construction. They claim that “disadvantaged group members often perceive their lower status as legitimate, or at least do not take effective action to achieve greater equality” (Tan & Moghaddam 1999: 188). Within this study, this could mean that NNEs often refrain from claiming the status or rights of NESs, for example, the ownership of English. With the help of this theory, I may approach these power relations in interpreting positions affecting the participants’ identity. In this thesis, I use only some elements of positioning theory, those which I find the most relevant. For a detailed description of the theory, see Harré and Langenhove (1999).

There are some researchers who argue against this theory (see e.g. Benwell & Stokoe 2006, Potter 2001). Potter (2001: 46), for example, argues that the notion of *position* is obscure: what counts as one and what does not? Moreover, he thinks that this theory has had little success with actual discourse as opposed to “made-up talk”. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 140-1) also consider the theory as somewhat mystical and undefined having its own problems. However, since this theory has also received wide support with regards to dynamic identity construction, I found it suitable as a tool for analysis. Let us now turn to chapter 4.

## **4 Analysis**

In what follows, an analysis is proposed for the data. This chapter is divided into four sections according to Skutnabb-Kangas' (1981: 92) factors defining bilingualism, i.e. origin, competence, function and attitudes, since they emerged as common themes during the interviews with regards to language identity construction. Discourse analysis and positioning theory guide the chapter with the help of illustrative figures, tables and quotes from the data. All the figures and tables are based on the participants' questionnaire answers, while the quotes are taken from the interview transcripts.

I begin by discussing the participants' background and how they construe their identity with regards to their linguistic origin. I continue to examine the way the participants describe their language proficiency, especially that of English. Next, I study their current exposure to languages with a special emphasis on how context affects their language choice. Finally, I bring up the influence of attitudes, both internal and external, to the way in which the participants identify themselves. Let us begin with the first topic, origin and background.

### **4.1 Origin and background**

Three males and three females between 26 and 31 of age participated in this study. The selected pseudonyms according to age from the youngest to the oldest are as follows: Viola, Lea, Elias, Olivia, Hugo and Anton. Five of them were born in Finland, whereas Elias was born in Great Britain. He moved shortly after his birth to Finland, which means that all of them have spent their early childhood in their country of origin, Finland.

Viola	Swedish	Dutch	Finnish	
Lea	Finnish	English		
Elias	Finnish			
Olivia	Finnish	English		
Hugo	Finnish	English		
Anton	Swedish	English	French	Danish

Table 1. Languages spoken in the childhood home.

In the questionnaire, I asked the participants to list all the languages spoken in their childhood home in order of frequency of use. The answers are illustrated in table 1, which indicates that all of them spoke at least one national language at home: Viola and Anton Swedish, while Lea, Elias, Olivia and Hugo Finnish. These were also the most frequently used languages, and during the interviews it transpired that they served as a means of domestic communication, i.e. *lingua francas*, in the childhood home. Viola is the only bilingual by origin, that is, she has two parents with different native languages, Swedish and Dutch. All the others have a monolingual language inheritance with regards to Skutnabb-Kangas' definitions (see page 13) on origin. Moreover, the participants' own reports about their language inheritance were parallel with this definition. In fact, they all positioned themselves as Finnish or Swedish speakers, at least when living abroad or referring to their childhood. Notice that English is neither the first language nor the main language or *lingua franca* for anyone by origin.

In addition, table 1 indicates that at least one other language has been present in the participants' home except for Elias. English has been used to some extent in Lea's, Olivia's, Hugo's and Anton's home, while Finnish was used in Viola's home. These additional languages were mostly used between the participants and their siblings. Viola mentions that they spoke some Finnish with her sibling because they

had a Finnish-speaking nanny as a child. Lea and Hugo report that they use almost exclusively English with their siblings, while Anton and Olivia mention mixing their L1 with English. Lea recalls that when she was a teenager she and her sibling and their parents used different languages in the home. Both parties stuck to their languages by refusing to switch, which she describes as follows:

(1) we spoke mainly English together and we also spoke English to our parents, yet they never responded in English but in Finnish

This is an interesting example in terms of positioning: Lea's parents obviously positioned the children as Finnish-speaking, while the children continued to refuse the offered position.

	L1	L2			
Viola	Swedish	English	Dutch	Finnish	French
Lea	Finnish	English	French	Swedish	
Elias	Finnish	English			
Olivia	Finnish	English	Spanish	Swedish	
Hugo	Finnish	English	French	German	
Anton	Swedish	Finnish	English	Spanish	French

Table 2. Order of exposure to languages.

Further, I asked the participants to list their languages according to the order of exposure. Table 2 indicates that the participants know from two to five languages in total. Hence, according to the minimalist tradition, they are all *bilinguals*. Their first language, L1, is their main home language, while English is the second language (L2) for everyone according to their own description. Notice that there might be an error in the table with regards to Anton's answer since he mentioned being exposed to French before English during the interview.

- (2) when we moved to Copenhagen [...] I attended an international school where everything was in English but I didn't know any English back then [...] I don't think that I was even exposed to it at all, you know, probably less than in Finland

Interestingly, according to this table, Viola has been exposed to English before

Dutch. When I asked her whether they had used English as a lingua franca, she

mentioned it being used among relatives and friends, which could explain her report:

- (3) not really but my father is Dutch-speaking and my mother is Swedish-speaking and they have a lot of friends who don't speak both languages or either of them so in that sense, yes, but not with my parents, no

Then again, learning English and Dutch may have happened rather simultaneously in

her case. However, we did not discuss the matter any further, therefore I cannot

verify the accuracy of her answer.

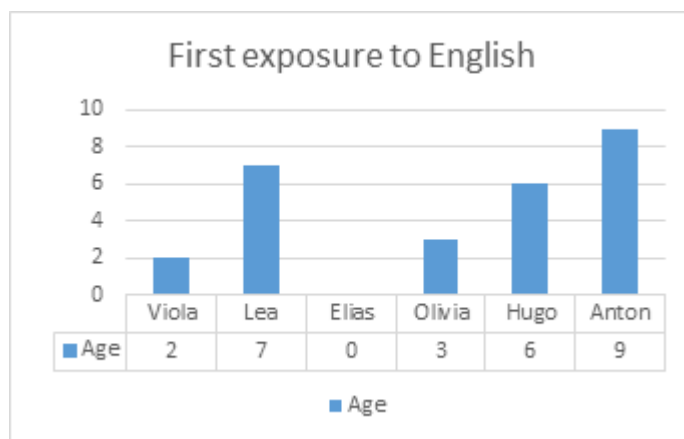


Figure 1. Age of exposure to English.

As for their first exposure to English, figure 1 indicates that there is a great deal of variation in terms of age, ranging from birth to 9 years of age. In terms of English, Viola and Elias, and perhaps Olivia, can be classified as *early bilinguals*, while the other three (or four) as *late* (see chapter 2.2.). Exposure from early on through books or TV were mentioned by almost everyone. Hugo believed that his exposure to English-speaking TV series as a child may have influenced his language learning, which would support Dollerup's (1996: 26) argument regarding the great influence



of the entertainment industry. However, Hugo was not entirely sure whether it had been a decisive factor in terms of his English learning:

- (4) I remember that I watched quite a few English-speaking cartoons when DuckTales and Chip'n'Dale were on the air in Finland @ [...] with subtitles so maybe there was some exposure or that it wasn't a completely foreign to me [...] but I don't know if it necessarily helped me to learn @

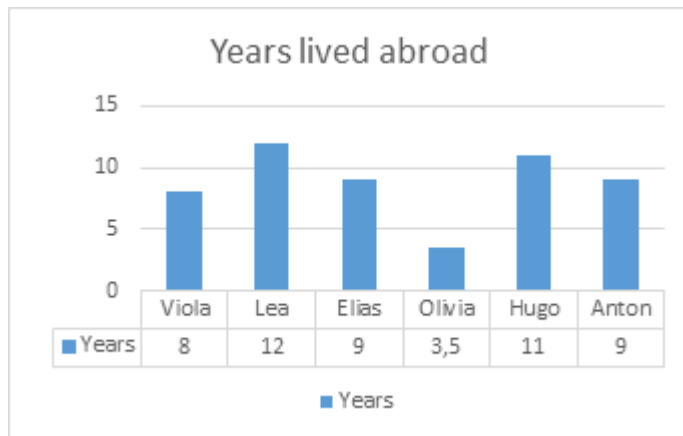


Figure 2. Years lived abroad in total.

Figure 2 shows that the participants have lived abroad from 3.5 to 12 years. All of them moved abroad due to their parents' employment, which makes them members of international communities. During the interviews, all the participants were either reflexively (by themselves) or interactively (by me) positioned as members of such communities. Moreover, English seems to have been the main language used within their international communities apart from Anton in Brussels, where he used French. Thus, they all have a common background as *expatriates*.

In addition, they have lived most of their lives in Finland. However, there are interesting differences in terms of timing. Viola and Olivia mainly lived abroad before the age of 5, while Anton from a preschooler to a school-aged child and Lea, Hugo and Elias from school-aged children to early adolescence. Then again, Viola and Lea are the only ones who have lived abroad for several years as an adult. In

fact, Viola's current country of residence is Sweden, while the others live currently in Finland. Anton refers to his background as being that of a "third culture kid", someone with mixed roots and confusion over belonging to a home culture and/or language:

- (5) in English we talk about third world- I mean @ third culture children or whatever it's called referring to those who have lived abroad as a child and who have mixed roots [...] even if you're home or in your country of origin or you speak your mother tongue it does not feel 100 % natural to you

Notice that while he does not specifically use intergroup positioning his definition covers all the participants in this study, placing them in the same group. It is interesting how he compares "third culture children" to "third world children", even if it seems to be a genuine mistake. He later recalled that the notion is actually not "third culture children" but "third world kid", by which he refers to a sociological term.

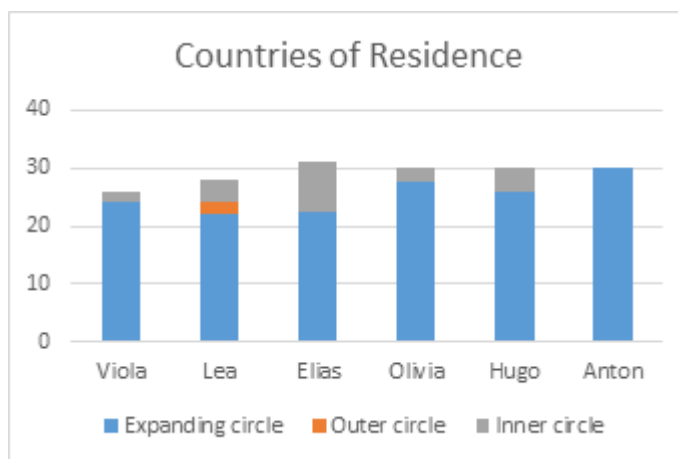


Figure 3. Countries of residence in terms of Kachru's (1992: 356) three circle model.

Figure 3 shows that the informants have mainly lived in the expanding circle. Everyone except Anton has also lived in the inner circle: Viola in the US, Olivia in the UK, Lea in South Africa, Hugo in Australia and the US, Elias in the UK, Ireland and Canada. Interestingly, Anton has lived six years in Belgium and three in

Copenhagen, both of which belong to the expanding circle. Lea is the only one who has lived in the outer circle, India, for two years.

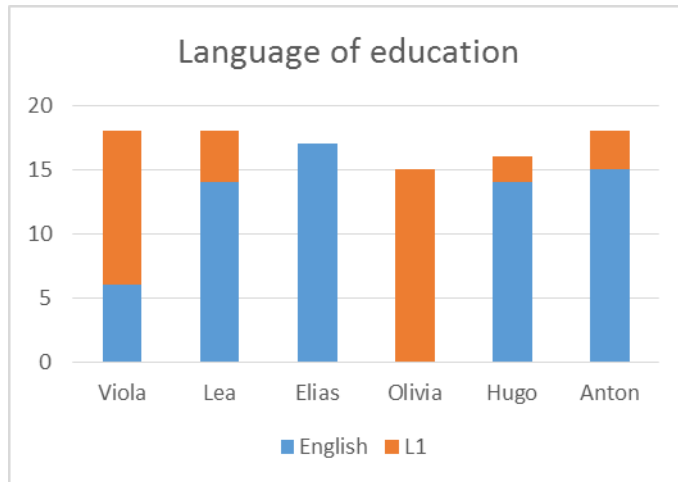


Figure 4. Language of education.

Finally, I discuss the participants' educational background. Figure 4 illustrates that there is variation with regards to their language of education. By education, I refer to formal education starting from primary school until academic or vocational degrees. While Lea, Elias, Hugo and Anton have mainly been through their education in English, Olivia and Viola were mostly schooled in their L1. The latter two, however, are the only ones who have attended day care in English since they lived abroad during that time. Lastly, all the participants are highly educated possessing either a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

## 4.2 Competence

I now turn in more detail to analyse the way the participants talk about their linguistic proficiency. Note that I have decided to use the terms competence and proficiency interchangeably here (see e.g. Baker 1998: 703).

	Speaking	Understanding	Reading	Writing
Viola	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent
Lea	Very good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Elias	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent
Olivia	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Intermediate
Hugo	Native	Native	Native	Native
Anton	Native	Native	Native	Native

Table 3. Self-evaluation of English proficiency.

In the questionnaire, I asked the participants to evaluate their speaking, writing, reading and understanding of English using one word. I provided them with no predetermined scale, and therefore the evaluations are not comparable with each other. However, they are of interest from the point of view of discourse analysis, and as such provide insight to language identity. According to these evaluations, all the participants possess high levels of proficiency, almost exclusively described as “fluent”, “excellent” or “native”. The notion “native” was used by Hugo and Anton to describe all the abovementioned four categories. This notion has connotations not only to a high level of proficiency but to one’s origin, too. Interestingly, Hugo seemed to embrace both connotations identifying as highly competent and an NES, while Anton referred only to the former aspect. I shall return to this topic in more detail in section 4.4.1.

There were two notions within the answers that indicated a slightly lower level: “very good” for Lea’s speaking skills and “intermediate” for Olivia’s writing skills. When asked about the reason for choosing the particular evaluative term, Lea explained as follows:

- (6) you notice that descriptive language, using idioms and such, starts to deteriorate when you don't use the language - or maybe it doesn't deteriorate really but rather there are those specific words that you don't use or you don't come across in any channels [...] that's why I think that it has grown weaker

Olivia, then again, had difficulties in evaluating her writing skills but justifies her decision in the following manner:

- (7) it was very difficult for me to evaluate it [...] but I always check my spelling and grammar [...] although to be honest I do that with Finnish too @

I suggested that perhaps her schooling in Finnish may have influenced her decision, to which she replied "certainly". There seems to be a prevailing assumption in her remark that skilful language users are familiar with all the rules and can rely on this knowledge or instinct.

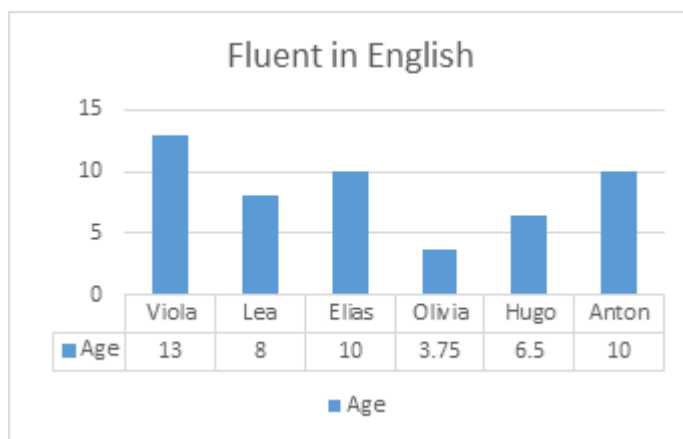


Figure 5. Age the participants' felt they became fluent in English.

I enquired of the participants about the age when they felt that they became fluent in English. Figure 5 illustrates that there is a great deal of variation, ranging from 3.75 to 13 years of age. Olivia reported that she was somewhere between 3 and a half and 4 and so I chose to calculate the median. The same applies for Hugo, who recalled being between 6 and 7 years of age. Interestingly, it seems that Olivia saw herself as a fluent speaker while attending an English-speaking day care, whereas Viola did

not. It must be borne in mind, however, that Olivia attended day care for 2.5 years from the age of 3 to 5, whereas Viola only for one year from the age of 2 to 3. Comparing figures 5 (above) and 1 (on page 36), it seems that many of the participants felt they had become fluent shortly after their first exposure to English. The only exceptions are Elias and Viola, who had a long interruption to continuous exposure for several years.

	Strongest				Weakest
Viola	Swedish	English	Finnish	Dutch	French
Lea	English	Finnish	French	Swedish	
Elias	English	Finnish			
Olivia	Finnish	English	Spanish	Swedish	
Hugo	English	Finnish	French	German	
Anton	English	Swedish	Finnish	Spanish	French

*Table 4. Order of dominance of the languages.*

Finally, I asked the participants to list their languages in order of dominance, starting from the strongest language. Here dominance refers to one's self-perceived proficiency in the language. All the others ranked English first, except for Olivia and Viola. Interestingly, the latter two were among the first ones to become exposed to English, yet they have been through their education mostly in their L1. For everyone, English and their L1 were the two strongest languages. I enquired of Viola about her ranking for Dutch, her second home language, to which she replied as follows:

- (8) as a child Dutch would've been the second because we used it with my father but I've never lived there or attended school in Dutch or anything so it has sort of remained the same or it hasn't developed any further

Notice that she seems to find "developing" an essential part of language proficiency, even in terms of her home languages. In addition, Finnish was her second strongest

language still a few years ago when she lived in Finland. The situation has changed, however, since she moved to Sweden and started using English in her studies and work. Lea also mentioned that her proficiencies in English and Finnish have never been this close to each other, and suggested that they might switch places over time. I asked whether English has been her dominant language ever since she became fluent in it, to which she replied:

(9) yes although this is perhaps the point [...] which is the most balanced [...] it may well be that it will change

In my opinion, these two are prime examples of a dynamic language identity in which dominance has been subject to change across time and space. Olivia is another interesting example in that she seemed to momentarily lose her Finnish skills when living in the UK from the age of 3 to 5. She has been told that she mixed both Finnish and English from early on so that her parents became worried about her Finnish skills. Before moving back to Finland, she apparently communicated in English only:

(10) for the last 6 months we communicated fully in English with my father and when I returned to Finland - oh this is a lovely story - I was put to a swimming school and I didn't understand a single word the teacher said [...] she said to my father that your daughter is so stubborn she never obeys my orders to which my father replied that try saying it in English and she'll know what to do

The situation slowly changed when she moved to Finland. She does not fully recall this but has some memories:

(11) I know what I've been told and I have some vague memories of people speaking Finnish to me and me replying in English [...] gradually we tried to change the situation

She is confident, however, that this incident has had far-reaching effects, especially on her Finnish proficiency:

(12) it came to this point that it still influences my writing that I- there is no word order in Finnish and yet I manage to mess it up somehow @

In her case, it seems that full immersion into English has influenced her bilingualism.

Her young age may have been a decisive factor since it is during that time she

learned to speak. Notice that Olivia still perceives Finnish as her dominant language.

This is further discussed in chapter 5 below.

In this section, I have discussed the way my participants talk about their language proficiency. In the following section, I move on to their language use.

### 4.3 Function

In this section, I discuss the participants' language use with a special emphasis on

how context affects their language choice. I begin with discussing their current

language use: to what languages they are exposed and how frequently. Second, I

introduce the contexts in which English and their L1 is used as well as the reasoning

behind their choices. Finally, I conclude by paying attention to general remarks the

participants make on the importance of context to language choice.

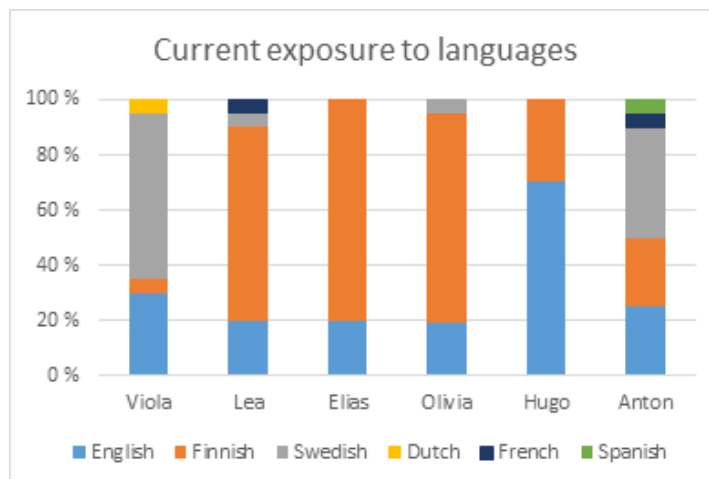


Figure 6. Current exposure to languages.



To begin with, figure 6 shows that most of the participants are currently exposed to their L1 the most. Notice that all the participants currently live in a country where their L1 is a national language, which might explain the situation. The only exception is Hugo, who uses English significantly more than Finnish. He reports this in the following manner:

(13) I feel like English is my language of emotions and I process everything in English [...] when I hear Finnish I sort of understand it but I feel like I process it in English

This extract not only underlines the dominance of English in terms of frequency of use but also the way in which everything Hugo takes in or processes seems to happen through it. Moreover, it seems to indicate that there is a considerable difference between Hugo's proficiency in English and Finnish.

As for the contexts in which the participants prefer to use their L1, there were both similarities and differences. As mentioned above, L1 is the lingua franca and main language in the childhood home for everyone. Currently, Lea, Viola, Olivia and Elias also communicate in their L1 with their partner. For Lea, this is somewhat difficult:

(14) my live-in partner does not feel natural to speak English so we only speak Finnish at home [...] it's very challenging to me @

L1 is also used in public places or due to a necessity or practicality. For example, Hugo describes his use of Finnish as follows:

(15) if I'm alone at a store or at a restaurant or something I don't order in English but I noticed just the other day when I was at a cafe with my work mates and we were already in an English-speaking mode that I ordered in English [...] it just came naturally

Then again, Lea answered the following when I asked her if she can think of any situations in which she would rather use Finnish:

(16) @ the first thing that comes to my mind is no [...] I use Finnish in those situations I know it pays off [...] you know in those situations I either have to use it or it pays off to use it @ [...] but even then it's not like I would prefer using Finnish it's just that I know that it's [English] not a functional language in that situation

Notice that she does not seem to prefer Finnish in any situation and instead feels pressured to use it. Elias, then again, seems to have few preferences over his languages for he says that "it doesn't really matter to me which language I use".

As for English, many participants mentioned that many of their closest relationships are in English. When asked about this, Hugo reported as follows:

(17) pretty much [...] I speak only English with my girlfriend [...] I've noticed that I feel more at home @ in a relationship where I can speak English [...] it's easier for me to express myself in English and it's just more natural and relaxed

This extract suggests that Hugo has a close relationship to the English language, which also affects his social relationships. Anton brought up the subject himself in the following manner:

(18) I speak mostly English with my current friends and with [wife's name] my wife we still speak English which is quite interesting to many but for me it's completely normal

In the extract, Anton seems to refer to their background as Finns. It is natural for him to speak English but for many it may be interesting that two Finns would prefer to use English as a lingua franca. Lea described her feelings as follows:

(19) if you meet someone new and notice that this person speaks English then it's instantly like (snaps fingers) it's like a relief like yes now I can communicate @ [...] it's just more natural on a deeper level

Lea seems to strongly prefer English over Finnish according to this extract. All the participants mentioned preferring to read and write in English, at least in work-related matters. In addition, performing seems to be easier for many in English.

Interestingly, Olivia prefers to write in English too even though she has been through her education in Finnish:

(20) I think writing is awful at times @ so I'd rather do it in English  
 Notice that this is despite that she evaluated her writing skills as “intermediate” in English.

Mixing English with one's L1 seems to be very common. Olivia mentions preferring to mix rather than using one language only. When I asked her if she can think of any situations in which she would rather use English, the answer was the following:

(21) mm... it's just that I mix @ easily so it's like if I- you know it's just awkward ('nihkeää') if it's so absolute you know if it's a must if I don't have that choice @

Olivia's talk indicates a clear preference over mixing the two languages. It is this mix of English and Finnish, Finglish, with which she appears to identify. Lea, Anton and Elias mention mixing their languages to some extent, too. Mixing seems to occur especially when talking to peers, be they siblings or close friends, who have a similar background.

Finally, context appears to be an important factor in terms of language choice. Some languages are preferred in certain situations, while some are considered the most appropriate and functional choices. Moreover, Hugo and Olivia report that it is important for them that the language choice is consistent. If a relationship has been established in one language, one should continue to use it in all encounters. Hugo reports as follows:

(22) it feels- or it would feel weird to suddenly switch [languages] [...] I can't switch anymore because it feels like [...] it feels that I'm trying too hard

Hugo did not explain what he meant by “trying too hard”, however he mentions having difficulties in finding the right words in Finnish. Despite this, he would not

switch to English, if the conversation has begun in Finnish. Olivia brings the topic up in the following way:

(23) I don't know if this is a weird thing to say but I find it horrible to switch [...] let's just say that we've got this our conversation in Finnish because we're both Finns- but if we had started to speak English and we'd suddenly switch to Finnish I'd find it so disturbing [...] if a relationship has been established in one language it should remain that way

This switching she refers to does not seem to cover code-switching or mixing one's languages but rather situations in which one language is clearly preferred over the other. Alternatively, this is indicative of a dynamic language identity where one has contradictory views on different matters. Notice that Olivia uses words such as "disturbing" or "horrible" to describe her feelings indicating that she feels strongly about the topic.

In the following chapter, I discuss attitudes, both from an internal and an external perspective.

#### **4.4 Attitudes**

This section discusses attitudes as defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 92). According to her definition, this notion is twofold including both internal and external identification. First, I discuss the former one including both attitudes towards one's languages as well as identification to them. Second, I describe the way in which the participants have been externally identified and how they seem to experience it. This is done with the help of the concept of *othering*.

I begin by introducing some pros and cons to bilingualism as expressed by the participants during the interviews. An interesting example is Elias who saw it in

both a negative and positive way. On the one hand, when discussing bilingualism and whether one should pass it on to the next generation, Elias saw it in positive terms:

(24) I've noticed that it's been a great asset ('rikkaus') that we moved to England back then [...] it's such a common language today

On the other hand, when talking about the benefits of English, Elias had somewhat contradictory views:

(25) I don't know... [...] I don't think that it has enriched my life significantly [...] at least not in the sense that it would have made me a better person

The context is different, however in the latter extract Elias has more difficulties in pinpointing any benefits of English as opposed to the former one. I find these two extracts interesting in terms of dynamic, context-dependent identity.

On another note, Hugo and Olivia mention the negative effect English has had on their Finnish proficiency. Olivia reports as follows:

(26) I'll always remember my Finnish teachers [...] they were like what are we going to do with your Finnish @ [...] my vocabulary is surprisingly narrow

She mentions several times during the interview that English "shines through" when she speaks or writes in Finnish. The comments she receives seem to bother her, as illustrated in the following extract:

(27) I always get comments like English shines through [...] that's why I was like I'm gonna write my Master's thesis in English like I'm done with this

These extracts are interesting in terms of positioning. Her teachers have clearly positioned her as a Finnish speaker, who should master her L1. As noted above, Olivia prefers to mix her languages as opposed to sticking to one. However, the constant negative feedback seems to have affected her, as illustrated in her talk: "I'm done with this". Hugo, then again, wishes his Finnish proficiency was better:

(28) let's say that if my level of English remained the same @ [...] it would've been helpful on many occasions if my Finnish was better [...] it would certainly be easier if my Finnish was stronger [...] if I were as familiar with it

Notice that it is not only that he wishes that he was better but that he seems to think that it would make life easier for him.

Within Olivia's family, there are differing opinions about the benefits of bilingualism. Her mother suggested that Olivia's nieces and nephews should be put into an English-speaking day care. Olivia and her siblings disagreed, and Olivia says:

(29) wouldn't it be nice to put them in an English-speaking day care like if you look at Olivia she has such an excellent knowledge of languages and then they're like yeah have you seen Olivia her Finnish sucks @ so it's probably not the best idea

While her mother saw bilingualism as an advantage, Olivia and her siblings paid more attention to the deteriorating effect it has had on her Finnish proficiency.

Let us now look at internal identification, that is, the way in which the participants see themselves linguistically.

#### **4.4.1 Internal identification**

In this section, I look at the way my participants consider different notions, such as mother tongue, native speaker and home country, among others. I pay attention to the way they position themselves in relation to these definitions. I begin with the notion of mother tongue. Anton, Elias, Olivia and Viola saw their L1 as their mother tongue. This was not done without hesitation, though, as illustrated in Elias' interview:

(30) Finnish and English I guess [...] I always see it like this: a mother tongue is a mother's tongue so Finnish [...] it depends on the situation but I guess I'd still go for Finnish [...] I've always used it at home and I see it as my mother tongue

Olivia saw the concept of mother tongue as flexible saying that "I feel like it could easily change". Lea and Hugo, then again, were an interesting exception in that they chose English as their mother tongue. The choice was not easy, which Lea reports as follows:

(31) it's very difficult. I've been thinking about this [...] what is a mother tongue [...] if I were to write it down in an official document I'd write Finnish just because it's easier but if someone is really interested I'd say English because I think in English [...] my range of thoughts runs in English

Interestingly, she has different answers to different audiences: one to the public and the other to the ones who are genuinely interested. The choice was difficult for Hugo, too:

(32) mm @ I'd say... It's quite difficult [...] I think I'd say English [...] I feel like I'm faking Finnish @ it just feels like it doesn't fit in my mouth and that I can't speak it freely [...] it just feels weird it's always a bit awkward as a language

Both Lea and Hugo had difficulties in determining their mother tongue but they ultimately seemed to base their choice on their competence in English. Hugo did not seem to identify with Finnish based on this extract as illustrated in his comment: "I feel like I'm faking Finnish".

As for the concept of native speaker, Elias and Hugo were the only ones who clearly positioned themselves as NESs. Elias did, however, hesitate whether he can claim the status in both of his languages as follows:

(33) mm yes I'd say so... yeah I mean English comes so naturally- but can I be a native speaker in two languages?

Anton, on the other hand, responded in a completely different manner as follows:

(34) I mean I'm not a native speaker or is that what you meant? [...] Nah I couldn't say "my native language is English" no not with a straight face [...] I mean I think it would be insulting to some yankees ('jenkkityypeille') if I'd say that my native language is English or my mother tongue is English

The thought of him being an NES seems to be incomprehensible to Anton. Recall, however, that Anton evaluated his proficiency in English by using the word "native". This is an extremely interesting extract for the contradiction it conveys. In general, this question seemed to spark very diverging answers among the participants, as illustrated above, depending on how they understood the notion of "native speaker". External identification seems to weigh more in Anton's than in Elias' case. Anton's word choice 'insulting' is also very interesting: as if he could not claim the status himself. I return to this issue in more detail in chapter 5.

Moving on to the concept of home country, I asked the participants whether they feel like they have one. Lea was undecided about her answer, on the one hand explaining:

(35) this may sound wild but I guess it's more towards that I- I don't have a home country in that sense [...] I don't have one single place that would feel like really natural

On the other hand, she described Finland as her home country, one that feels the most natural:

(36) Finland is in many ways more natural than any other country to me so in that sense I feel like it's my home country- it's easy for me to be here and I blend in [...] Finland is in some ways a safe harbour it's sort of something to fall back on [...] kind of like a home base even if it's not the most familiar to me

These extracts reveal the dynamic way in which she sees Finland: one the one hand, it is a home country, and on the other, it is not. Olivia, then again, saw the concept of home country as flexible and her identification was dependent on certain characteristics she saw as typical of those countries. She reports as follows:



(37) I've been in Finland permanently for so long now that I see Finland as- or there's these aspects that I respect [...] I strongly connect language to culture [...] Finnish culture - if you compare it to any other one - is quite blunt ('suorasukaista') like really stripped-down and straight to the point [...] in England then again [...] there's this warmth and politeness which I don't see as shallow in any way

At present, she feels more close to Finland although the concept seems to be somewhat flexible to her, as it did to some others, too. Anton, for example, described it by saying that "home is where the heart is", yet he saw Finland as his home country, too.

Finally, when it comes to nationality or ethnicity, there are interesting extracts that reveal both controversy and strong affiliations. Anton's identity as a Finn appears to be very dynamic. For example, when talking about his experiences as a teenager, he never positions himself as a Finn. He explains this as follows:

(38) I'm still not that Finn ('se suomalainen') I'll never be- or I'll never have the feeling that I'm truly a Finn

Later, when talking about more recent events, he starts using intergroup positioning, for example: "If I have lunch or go to a bar with a friend who's *also* a Finn" or "*we Finns* are quite the perfectionists". It seems that there is a stark contrast to the way in which he positions himself at times. Especially word choices such as "I'll never be" and "truly a Finn" suggest that Anton feels strongly about his identity.

In contrast, Lea has developed a strong identity as a Finn. Her initial response was affirmative when I asked whether she identifies as a Finn. The extract below is an answer to a question about whether she would refer to herself as a Finn when traveling or being abroad:

(39) yeah yeah definitely I'd definitely say that I'm a Finn - maybe when I was younger I felt more like -this sounds really corny- but I was more a global citizen [...] but today I'd definitely say [...] I've always referred to myself as a Finn [...] even if it had felt somewhat distant

Notice that her relationship to Finland differs from her identity as a Finn: her affiliation to the former one seems to be stronger. Lea and Olivia brought up that they had positioned themselves as global citizens as teenagers. I interactively positioned Hugo as one too but he refused the offered position as follows:

(40) I don't feel like I hail from anywhere ('mistään kotoisin') @ so that  
no no I'm- I don't feel like I'm somehow more international either

None of the participants brought up that they would currently associate themselves with global citizens or that they have an international identity as opposed to that of a Finn. Next, I continue to discuss topics related to external identification.

#### **4.4.2 External identification**

In this section, I look at the way in which the participants have been identified by others and how they feel about it. To begin with, external identification as an NES is widely seen in positive terms, and the participants seem to be unanimous in their opinion. Most of them have encountered such identification at some point. Here is an example from Hugo's interview:

(41) it's a positive thing @ I mean at least it validates @ everything I say  
about myself

The word choice "validate" is interesting in the sense that it seems to refer to an outside recognition that is needed to receive a certain position or status. Viola describes her encounters in the following manner:

(42) I always thought it was nice when someone said that they had no idea  
that I came from somewhere else and it was like okay good now I  
have somehow achieved @

Belonging to the same group as NESs appears to have been something desirable for Viola. Anton, then again, reports that he likes to pretend that he is from the States:

(43) I think I've fooled people at times that I'm from the States just for fun and then I'm like joke joke [...] I mean I've never done that in the States but somewhere else abroad [...] if I've been to a bar for example and someone asks where are you from I've been like from Texas or something and they're like oh really? @

This extract suggests that Anton finds it amusing that someone would identify him as an NES. However, it also appears to me that he finds the recognition somehow positive.

While living in many countries, the participants have often adapted to local accents, to fit in externally. This has been either positive or negative as an experience to them. Hugo and Elias report their experiences mainly in positive terms, for example, as a gradual adjustment to the environment. Elias, however, remembers having been picked on for his "heavy" English accent in Ireland. Sometimes the adjustment is negative, such as a compulsory prerequisite for group membership. Olivia and Lea have come across this in Finland. Lea reports as follows:

(44) I filter [my speech] more if I'm like in an environment where I know that there's a lot of [...] students or like in the classroom where we do group work [...] I don't use English too much because I know it may provoke weird reactions so I just rather not

Lea clearly feels that she must filter her speech so as not to provoke negative comments. Speaking English appears to be somehow inappropriate in those contexts. Viola, then again, reports switching easily between her Swedish accents according to the place she is residing. As for English, however, she often feels as if she stands out:

(45) it's difficult for me to speak with someone who speaks it as a mother tongue for some reason [...] it shows that I've got a bit of an accent and maybe I say some things wrong [...] I just feel like it shows or at least I notice it if everyone else speaks in the same way but I speak differently [...] but if everyone speaks in a different manner and a bit so and so one doesn't notice it really

Viola appears to differentiate between speaking English as a native language and English as a lingua franca. Based on this extract, she seems to prefer talking to

people with different first languages. The other participants did not bring this subject up. In fact, many appeared to prefer speaking to NESs.

I think that the following extract is the most inspiring in terms of accepting one's linguistic background. Lea feels that her accent has always adapted to local ones, whereupon it does not reflect any single accent. She describes it as follows:

(46) I didn't aspire to the American accent it was just the way I learned it [...] I don't really mind that I got this CNN accent- actually it's quite nice [...] now that I have a stronger affiliation to my home country maybe it's nice that it's reflected in my accent to some extent [...] I mean I'm not an American I've got my own cultural identity which is not American even if I talk like this [...] It feels good somehow that something in my being is Finnish so that people don't initially think that I'm an American [...] I think it's nice @ I've never thought about that before

Lea uses the notion "CNN accent" by which she seems to refer to an international accent that resembles an American one. Alternatively, she refers to an American accent but is inconsistent in her talk, which would be typical for a dynamic identity. To me, Lea seems genuinely relieved and empowered by this revelation.

Finally, I wish to address the issue of speaking English in Finland. The participants report of many negative encounters with Finns due to speaking English. The most vocal with regards to this topic is Anton, who reports as follows:

(47) if we're somewhere where there are some new people like in a social situation and they hear that we speak English [...] it's for some reason like really difficult for them to understand like it's upsetting for them like how can you speak English [...] I mean of course it's weird if for example- or actually it's really difficult for me to understand the way they think because I don't see it that way [...] I mean I understand that it's weird that a Finn does not speak Finnish

I find it interesting that he tries to see the situation from their perspective and offer explanations, even if it seems to bother him. Notice that he appears to refer to the "one nation - one language" ideal in saying that it is strange that a Finn would not

speak Finnish. Anton continues that he has encountered similar situations especially in bars. He analyses the situation with regards to his own identity as follows:

(48) It's a very sensitive issue for many like how can we or why- I don't know [...] I feel like we're quite patriotic in Finland [...] when I was younger it was- not shameful really but something like that because I'm still not that Finn ('se suomalainen') I'll never be- or I'll never have the feeling that I'm truly a Finn

There are two interesting issues I wish to raise. First, it appears to me that this negative commentating by others has affected the way Anton sees himself as a Finn. Second, he still uses *intergrouping* in saying that "we're quite patriotic in Finland" referring not only to others but to himself, too.

Lea recalls having similar experiences, which she reports in the following manner:

(49) it was strange to people that we spoke English and many took it that we bragged about it [...] it was difficult for many to understand I remember having many awkward conversations as a teenager [...] surprisingly some people take it as negative in Finland like why don't you speak Finnish [...] it's somehow strange... foreign

The word choice "foreign" is worth pointing out in this extract. While Lea and Anton seem to be annoyed at the behaviour they have encountered, Elias seems to be more indifferent towards it. He recalls his experiences as follows:

(50) well, there's been some jerks ('juntit', literally *yokels*) who want to beat you up for speaking the wrong language but I mean that's just- I don't- it has no effect on me

Elias appears to dismiss these people as 'jerks' ignoring their comments altogether.

Notice that Anton and Lea refer to Finns instead. Thus, there is an interesting juxtaposition within these extracts. While Elias contrast jerks with other people, Anton and Lea appear to confront English-speaking Finns with other (Finnish-speaking) Finns. These three extracts are also interesting from a societal perspective,

especially the word choices of “upsetting”, “foreign” and “the wrong language”. I shall return to this topic in the discussion chapter below.

In summary, I have analysed the data from different perspectives with the help of Skutnabb-Kangas’ four factors defining bilingualism, i.e. origin, competence, function and attitudes. I have demonstrated the multifaceted and dynamic nature of the participants’ identity with several figures, tables and quotes from the interview transcripts. In the following chapter, a further discussion is proposed for the analysis.

## 5 Discussion

In what follows, I shall revisit the research questions in the light of the presented analysis. The questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What factors seem to influence the ESL speakers' language identity construction?
2. How do the ESL speakers position themselves and how are they positioned by others linguistically?
3. Are there indications of a dynamic language identity? If yes, what are they?

I discuss these questions in the presented order. Thereafter, I continue to discuss the findings with regards to the previous empirical research. Finally, I conclude this chapter by considering some limitations to this study. Let us begin with factors affecting the participants' language identity.

### 5.1 Factors affecting language identity construction

I begin the discussion by pointing out factors influencing the participants' language identity construction based on this data. It is important to note that these factors do not reflect language identity construction in general but rather are representative of my data and discuss identity construction within the limits of this study. In the analysis chapter, I argued that origin, competence, function and attitudes play a role in construing the participants' identity. To begin with, I pointed out that all the participants reported about their *language inheritance* according to Skutnabb-Kangas' definition of origin. All of them tie their L1 to their childhood home reporting that it is the main language and lingua franca. Moreover, they position themselves as Finnish- or Swedish-speaking, at least when living abroad or referring to their childhood. Interestingly, especially Hugo and Lea position themselves as

English speakers within this context due to it being the common language between them and their siblings. This position is often contrasted with Finnish-speaking parents, therefore enabling them to acquire multiple language identities within their childhood home. As for Anton, he seems to have acquired an identity as a “third culture kid” with mixed roots. This is not referred to in the other participants’ talk but some controversial and mixed positions may suggest a connection to their background as expatriates. For example, Lea and Olivia recall identifying as global citizens when they were teenagers as opposed to identifying as Finns.

Second, there are indications of the connection between competence and language identity. Hugo, for example, evaluates his proficiency in English as “native”, while also identifying as an NES. In contrast, he seems to think that his Finnish skills are limited, while rarely positioning himself as a Finnish speaker. As for Anton, he seems to have acquired a strong identity as an English speaker, while evaluating his skills as “native”. Interestingly, however, he does not identify as an NES. Rather, he identifies as an L1 speaker of English, by which he refers to his dominant language, not to the first learned one. Elias for his part appears to identify strongly with both of his languages, while also mentioning that it does not matter to him which language he uses. Finally, Lea mentions both a strengthened relationship to Finland as well as growing proficiency in Finnish: these two seem to be connected to each other. Thus, *language expertise* appears to be significant in construing their language identity, either in reinforcing or weakening it.

However, I could not see significant differences between early and late bilingualism in terms of the participants’ language competence or identity within my data (cf. figure 1 and table 4). It has been suggested that early bilingualism is more beneficial for one’s future as a bilingual (see e.g. Hoffman 1991: 35). In this study,



however, Olivia and Viola were among the first ones to become exposed to English, yet they find their L1 their dominant language. Thus, earlier exposure to English does not seem to indicate stronger language dominance or identification within this study. However, early exposure to English may have had some influence on Olivia's and Viola's language identity and competence. Olivia, for example, suggests that it has had far-reaching effects on her Finnish skills, resulting in her mixing the two languages.

Moving onto function, especially Lea and Hugo seem to construe their identity through the frequency and ease of language use. Hugo points out that he processes everything in English, which is more "natural and relaxed" to him. Lea finds it "challenging" to use Finnish in close relationships, and reports that it is not her preferred language in any context. She even refers to using English as the way she is able to communicate. Then again, Olivia seems to identify with both of her languages, while mainly mixing them in her daily life. She finds separating the two languages from one another "awkward" ('nihkeää'), suggesting, perhaps, that they are intertwined in her language identity, too.

The amount of exposure to languages seems to influence language identity among the participants (cf. figure 4 and table 3). On the one hand, Hugo, Lea, Anton and Elias have been exposed to English via schooling for most of their lives, while also placing it as their dominant language. On the other hand, Olivia and Viola were mostly schooled in their L1, which they consider as their strongest language. Further, Hugo, Elias and Lea refer to English as either their native language or mother tongue, suggesting a strong relationship.

Finally, I find attitudes notable in terms of language identity construction. When it comes to internal identification, there are instances where the participants

clearly state that “this is the way I see myself”. Lea, for example, identifies as a Finn even if this identity has felt distant to her at times. Hugo and Lea choose to classify English as their mother tongue because it feels the most natural to them. Moreover, Elias and Hugo seem to be confident in their identity as NESs. These extracts reflect what Norton (2013) refers to as *human agency*: the participants are active agents who wish to position themselves in a certain way. As for external identification, there are examples of *social force* (see chapter 3.2.1) affecting one’s language identity. Olivia is an interesting example in that she keeps referring to her Finnish proficiency, especially writing, as poor. She keeps hearing these comments in school and from siblings, which I suggest has an impact on her language identity as a Finnish user. I base my analysis on the contradiction between these comments and her own evaluation. In fact, she herself seems to have strong ties to the Finnish language, which she positions as her dominant language, mother tongue and native language.

Second, the selected extracts and hesitation over the notions “mother tongue” and “native speaker” seem to suggest that there are differing views over their definitions. Especially Lea’s talk (see example 46) on how she responds differently to the public and private enquiries about her mother tongue seems to reveal that there is a conflict between internal and external identification. Additionally, Anton cannot claim the status of an NES due to external identification. He never describes how he identifies himself and instead externalizes his identity by using words such as “I couldn’t” and “I think it would be insulting”. On the one hand, external identification can reinforce one’s identity: Hugo, for example, sees it as “validating” the way he identifies himself. On the other hand, this “validation” may be a prerequisite for group membership without which one is not accepted. These remarks related to

function and attitudes reflect, in my opinion, *language affiliation*, revealing that it seems to be significant in terms of their language identity.

Lastly, context appears to be relevant in terms of language identity. To begin with, for the participants there are domains for English and L1 in which one is preferred over the other. Additionally, Hugo and Olivia clearly label people as speakers of a certain language. Once they have established a relationship in one language, they prefer to continue using that one, even though they themselves may prefer another language. This suggests that they can acquire multiple identities as both English and Finnish speakers.

In conclusion, there is discourse to support all the abovementioned criteria as influencing the participants' language identity, namely origin, competence, function and attitudes. In fact, the analysis illustrates that language identity is a multifaceted construction, in which many perspectives must be considered. In the following section, I discuss the second research question dealing with reflexive and interactive positioning.

## **5.2 Reflexive and interactive positioning**

This section aims to answer the second research question: How do the participants position themselves (*reflexive*) and how are they positioned by others (*interactive*) linguistically? I look in more detail into the positions they negotiate and achieve during the narratives. Whether they accept or reject them, or perhaps, negotiate them further. This section overlaps with the previous one, therefore I mainly discuss those issues that have received little attention as yet. By *interactive positioning*, I also refer to the social constructions that prevail in the society, for example, the definitions concerning one's language or national identity. Some positions are also discussed

with regards to *imagined communities*: how certain imaginary mental pictures influence our way of thinking and identifying.

I mentioned above that all the participants positioned themselves as Finnish or Swedish speakers, at least when referring to their origin or childhood home. Lea, Anton, Hugo and Olivia position themselves and their siblings as English speakers within their family, too. Some of the participants often position themselves as English speakers, especially when referring to situations in which they prefer English over their L1 (see section 4.4). Thus, the position often is that of an English-speaking Finn as opposed to a Finnish- or Swedish-speaking one. Further, this happens when some participants report about the negative situations they had encountered. Especially Anton and Lea seem to position themselves as English-speaking Finns as opposed to the Finnish-speaking ones who comment on their language choice.

As for their origin, there is an interesting contradiction between nationality (or ethnicity) and home country. For example, Lea and Olivia strongly position themselves as Finns but hesitate to say that Finland or any other country is their home country. Then again, Anton rarely position himself as a Finn but seems to have acquired a strong relationship to Finland as his home country. Lea and Olivia bring up that they have positioned themselves as global citizens when they were teenagers, although it seems that this identification is not strong anymore. Hugo rejects my interactional positioning of him as a global citizen, while the others do not mention the topic. This could either indicate that there is no strong identification to being a global citizen or that the matter is simply not touched upon during the interviews.

Second, I want to discuss certain social constructions that offer specific positions to the participants. For example, the construct of mother tongue is often tied to origin, whereupon it can be defined as the language of one's mother or the

first language learned (Baker & Jones 1998: 704). If we look at table 2 (on page 37), this means that Finnish is the mother tongue for Lea, Hugo, Olivia and Elias, while Swedish for Anton and Viola. As mentioned above, this is accepted by Olivia, Elias, Anton and Viola. Lea and Hugo are the only ones who clearly reject the offered position even if they also hesitate over their decision. One reaction to this conflict between internal and external identification is illustrated in Lea's talk, when she reports that she offers different answers to public and private enquiries.

As for native language, Baker and Jones (1998: 704) define it as a "language which a person acquires first in life, or identifies with as a member of an ethnic group". According to the first part of the definition, the participants' native languages equal their mother tongues. In Viola's case, there are two native languages since she clearly identifies strongly with Dutch. The word "ethnic group" has strong connotations to origin, therefore suggesting that a native language refers to one's *language inheritance*, not to one's *language affiliation*, for example. Again, this prevailing definition is accepted by Lea, Viola, Olivia and Anton. Hugo rejects the offered position, while Elias negotiates it further by claiming the statuses of a native speaker in both English and Finnish. These differences are also questions of definition, whether one relates the notion of *native speaker* primarily to language inheritance, language expertise or language affiliation. For Elias, for example, Finnish is possibly connected to all the above mentioned, while Hugo seems to connect it only to his inheritance.

Third, the home country and nationality (or ethnic group) the participants are assigned to in official encounters is Finland. While these positions are largely accepted, there is negotiation in their talk, too. Olivia, for example, sees the concept of home country as flexible and ties her affiliation to Finland and England to certain

characteristics. These characteristics, such as “blunt”, “stripped-down”, “warmth” and “politeness”, are interesting in terms of imagined communities. Clearly, such characteristics cannot be generalized to refer to one culture or nation as a whole since there is always a tremendous amount of variation within them. However, for Olivia these characteristics seem to be real, therefore influencing her affiliation, as well as attachment, to these countries.

On another note, the negative encounters Anton, Lea and Elias have had with other Finns are interesting in terms of language choice. Remarks such as “some people take it as negative in Finland like why don’t you speak Finnish” or “there’s been some jerks who want to beat you up for speaking the wrong language” suggest that speaking English is not considered acceptable in all situations in Finland. In the light of Johansson and Pyykkö’s (2005) findings, it is possible that the long tradition of the “one nation, one language” ideal prevails in these encounters, as illustrated in Anton’s comment: “I mean I understand that it’s weird that a Finn doesn’t speak Finnish”.

Lea suggests that it is somehow “strange” and “foreign” to Finns that some prefer speaking English, which is perhaps at the heart of the matter. At least with regards to the “one language, one nation” ideal, it is common, as Anton mentions, that people are “quite patriotic”. After all, the Finnish language has a great deal of symbolic value in Finland (Johansson & Pyykkö 2005: 301). Other languages, especially those that are not national ones, may be considered as “foreign” and “wrong” when they challenge the position of national languages, especially that of Finnish. Moreover, Lea mentions that she filters her speech by avoiding English when she considers it inappropriate. These extracts reveal that the participants have encountered *othering* due to their language preference, which is something especially

Lea and Anton see as negative. There is the in-group of Finnish-speaking Finns, while they belong to the out-group of English-speaking Finns.

Finally, I want to raise the issue of being identified as an NES. As previously mentioned, this position is accepted by Elias and Hugo during the interview. The participants seem to be unanimous in thinking that it is a positive kind of recognition. Word choices such as “validating” and “achieved” illustrate this positive feeling around the notion. These remarks seem to suggest that there is an underlying *native speaker ideal* they compare themselves to. There seems to be certain imagined characteristics, such as a particular accent or level of competence, embedded in this ideal.

Next, I move on to discuss the remaining research question, which deals with the dynamic nature of identity.

### **5.3 Language identity as a dynamic construction**

In this section, I discuss references to dynamic language identity within the data. In line with Norton (2013: 4), I wish to consider social identity as “diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social place”. In this section, I introduce the way in which this dynamicity is illustrated in the participants’ talk. I only mention the most relevant examples here so as not to overlap too much with the previous sections. Consider first Viola and her languages, especially the order found in table 4 (see page 44). The order of dominance in her languages has changed both across historical time and social place. Dutch is not as strong anymore since it has not developed over time like the other languages. Finnish and English have switched places due to her moving to Sweden, suggesting a change across social space.

Second, let us discuss Anton's position as a Finn. I suggested (on page 55) that his identity as a Finn has strengthened over the years. While talking about his experiences as a teenager, he does not position himself as a Finn at all. In contrast, referring to more recent events, he reflexively positions himself as a Finn on several occasions. However, the position may also change in different social contexts for he reports that "I'm still not that Finn, I'll never be" clearly referring to his current identity. Lea, on the one hand, sees Finland as her home country, while on the other hand, does not. She reports that Finland does not feel "natural", yet there seems to be some affiliation as illustrated in comments such as "home base" and "safe harbour". Both of their language (or social) identities seem to be subject to change across time and social context, indicating a dynamic and changing identity.

Finally, I want to point to Lea's talk (see example 46) where she speculates on her English accent. She describes the changes that have taken place in her accent, while simultaneously trying to understand how she feels about it. Her remark "I've never thought about that before" indicates that this is not a stable language identity but rather one that has been construed on the spot during our interview. To me, this extract illustrates that the interview process has been interactional and collaborative to some extent. As for Lea's current accent, she seems genuinely relieved and empowered by this revelation of hers. I suggest that she puts aside her aspirations to be the ideal native speaker and creates her own ELF identity in this moment. I support this claim by reminding that ELF as a contact language contains a great amount of local variation, and thereby it cannot be reduced to a single international variety (Jenkins 2007). Lea seems to understand that her accent is acceptable and valid as it is even though it does not resemble any native or L1 variety.



There is a great amount of talk found in the data supporting the dynamic nature of language identity. This is not only demonstrated in this chapter, but also in the previous ones. Next, I continue to discuss the findings with regards to the previous empirical research.

#### **5.4 Implications of the findings**

As mentioned earlier, Pienimäki (2013) studies in her Master's thesis how ESL speakers construe identity and competence in English in a Finnish setting, which comes close to my study. Our methods of analysis and focus are somewhat different, which makes it difficult for me to compare our findings, nevertheless there are similarities in our studies. First, we both find identity construction to be very dynamic and context-dependent. This is also supported by Virkkula and Nikula (2010) in their study on ELF identities of people living temporarily abroad. Second, the participants seem to understand competence by comparison to *the native speaker ideal* (Pienimäki 2013: 63-65). This is illustrated in the following examples. First, Hugo and Anton, for example, evaluate their levels of proficiency as "native" (see table 3), referring to a high level of competence. Second, many participants see external identification as an NES as positive and even validating. Third, Viola appears to feel inferior as an English speaker compared to NESs due to speaking differently from them. Finally, Anton's comments on how it would be insulting, if he were to claim the status on an NES underline this prevailing ideal. Interestingly, many of these extracts appear to illustrate Tan and Moghaddam's (1999: 188) argument on how NNEs, for example, may "perceive their lower status as legitimate, or at least do not take effective action to achieve greater equality".

Mauko (2014) studies the conceptualizations of a native speaker in her Master's thesis finding that traditional ties to origin still largely prevail. Additionally,

she argues that external identification largely relies on a “black-and-white standpoint”, meaning that there is a certain image of how an NES should look and sound like (Mauko 2014: 71). This is supported by various earlier research (see e.g. Anderson 1991, Brutt-Griffler & Samimy 2001, Leung et al. 1997, Nero 2005, Widdowson 1994). Mauko’s findings are in line with mine, which suggests that dynamic identity construction is not reflected at the societal level. As illustrated by Nero (2005), difficulties in answering questions concerning one’s native language or mother tongue may, in fact, reflect difficulties in trying to fit into the prevailing monolingual ideal reinforced by the society. I therefore claim that Rampton’s (1990) tripartite definition is more suitable for studying language identities in their dynamicity. This claim is not only supported by this study, but also by Nero (2005) and Leung et al. (1997) in their studies on the discrepancies between the realities of ESL students and the expectations of ESL classrooms. Moreover, the traditional and socially constructed notions represent stable and fixed identities, which I wish to oppose to in this thesis.

In section 2.2.2, I mentioned that Graddol (1999) predicts that the number of ESL speakers in Europe will amount to up to 200 million in a few decades. The forces contributing to this rapid growth are international communities and the young generations with the Nordic countries and the Netherlands in the lead. The participants of this study are part of this particular and advancing force. Hoffman (1996) refers to this phenomenon as *achieved bilingualism with English*, which I studied in this thesis from the perspective of individual bilingualism with a special emphasis on language identity. One of the most interesting findings is, perhaps, that the participants use English in an intranational communication despite that they usually have a joint mother tongue with their interlocutors. This is especially

interesting since ELF is often defined as being used with people who do not share a mother tongue or L1 (see e.g. Jenkins 2007: 1-2, Seidlhofer 2001: 146). Hoffman (1996) argues in her article that this phenomenon has not reached the level of societal bilingualism in Europe as yet. Since this argument was presented over 20 years ago today, this may only be a matter of time.

Keeping this in mind, I believe that this phenomenon is highly important as a research topic. Moreover, it may reveal important features of the use and development of ELF within Europe as well as bring up new viewpoints to challenge the construct of nativeness. As Virkkula and Nikula (2010) concluded in their study, “there is indeed a relationship between identity and ELF and that this relationship is complex”. Jenkins (2007) argued that the legitimacy of ELF relies on the recognition of it as a contact language that manifests itself in different and local ways. The way to increase the legitimacy is therefore by studying these local varieties and gaining as much information as possible on the way people use and see them. It often takes time for a phenomenon to the societal level, whereupon studying it on the micro level may be extremely beneficial for the future.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

As a small-scale study with only six participants, this thesis could address language identity construction only at an individual level. Moreover, the participants were narrowed down to Finland, and therefore the study is not representative of language identity construction of ESL speakers in the expanding circle in general.

Nevertheless, this thesis has succeeded in presenting new insights into language identity construction with regards to *achieved bilingualism with English*.

Further, I paid little attention to the socio-economic relations affecting one's language identity. I did not consider this aspect the most important in terms of this study, although it could have added value to the analysis. I mentioned above that the participants were all highly educated, yet I did not analyse this any further. There were also many interesting questions (see appendix 2) and narratives which were not included in this thesis, yet were important in terms of the participants' language identity. Due to the limits of this study, however, they were eliminated from the final analysis and discussion. In addition, I largely ignored the participants' background as members of linguistic minorities or majorities. There is evidence that this has a significant impact on one's language identity, especially in the form of pressure to master one's languages (see e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 1984). Since these are recognised as essential forces affecting one's language identity, future studies should take them into account by considering the participants' language background in more detail.

Finally, I move on to conclude this thesis as well as its main findings and implications.

## 6 Conclusion

In the light of this thesis, language identity construction appears to be a dynamic process in which numerous aspects are intertwined forming a complex entity. Such aspects are, among others, origin, competence, function and attitudes all of which highlight a particular relationship to one's languages. Some aspects may influence identity more than others depending on the individual, his or her background and the context. Moreover, these aspects appear to change across historical time and social context resulting at times in contrasting narratives and multiple languages identities. This is often illustrated in narratives by certain word choices and *positioning*, which is why I find positioning theory and discourse analysis suitable tools. There are indications of human agency and social force affecting the participants' language identity. In other words, the participants seem to actively determine their own language identity, while also being subject to external identification. This is illustrated, for example, in the way they consider such notions as mother tongue, native speaker and home country.

In this study, I have found these socially and historically constructed notions inadequate in representing the dynamic language identity the participants express. First and foremost, they fail to address the relationship the participants have with their languages, which I consider as the most relevant aspect of language identity. I therefore prefer the tripartite definition of Rampton (1990), for it is built on this essential aspect. Second, the assigned and stable roles merely reflect one's origin disregarding other aspects as well as one's complex, and often bilingual, background. Third, the monolingual ideal (e.g. *the native speaker ideal*) prevailing in these notions conflicts with the bilingual realities of the participants. This is manifested, for example, in the difficulties in determining the abovementioned notions, as

suggested by Nero (2005: 199). Moreover, there are downright contradictions between the participants' self-identification and the way they are socially perceived, challenging aspirations to the native speaker ideal. Furthermore, this ideal offers fixed roles which determine our place in and relationship to the world, and may thus have far-reaching effects on our identity as well as to our rights as language users.

Internationally speaking, this is especially problematic with regards to the English language which has spread widely across the world as a *lingua franca*. The rapid upsurge in ELF speakers has resulted in a myriad of local and international varieties of English challenging the strong connection between nation and language. Within Europe, Hoffman (1996: 60) argues that English is increasingly important as a medium of communication, even up to the point that it may be considered a prerequisite for participation. Thus, this growing minority of ESL speakers is without a doubt a prominent one. Furthermore, this growth in numbers of ELF speakers calls into question the concepts of native speaker and mother tongue: who has the right to claim these statuses? The reason why these notions may be detrimental is that they often carry a large amount of symbolic value othering, and even discriminating, many individuals. I therefore seek to bring this topic forward in hopes of more research to be conducted within the fields of ELF and language identity. In fact, a large-scale study with more participants could provide more information about the phenomenon in different places across Europe. In addition, a survey distributed widely across the researched area could also support and enrich the analysis, painting a more general image of the studied phenomenon.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Consent form

#### Informed consent form for participants of study

Pro gradu: English as a Lingua Franca - thoughts and experiences

Responsible researcher: Saara Laitinen, (English philology), University of Helsinki

This study looks at English as a *Lingua Franca* in Europe. In this study, interviews will be conducted with multilingual individuals living in Finland whose parents are not native speakers of English. The interviews are held one on one and will be tape-recorded, transcribed, and translated when necessary. The interview material will be stored electronically during the research process, after which it will be destroyed.

Parts of the transcribed text and questionnaire answers may be cited in the thesis. The anonymity of the participants will be secured by keeping personal details separated from the transcribed text and questionnaire answers. Additionally, any identifiers which may be connected to individual people will be removed. The research material is collected strictly for research purposes and will not be shared with or given to any outsiders.

Participation to this study is voluntary entailing the right to withdraw at any time.

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I have read the foregoing information and understood the terms of this study. I hereby consent to a research interview with my signature.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Place and date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

The original version is found on:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Ljk55D90HXrpeoAWHT-YBPmXGfkdOBvQygMWON9oiYg>

3/20/2017

Background form

### Background form

Please fill out the following two sections. You are free to leave answer fields blank or edit your answers later. It takes about 5-10 minutes to answer this questionnaire. Should you have any further questions or comments, feel free to contact Saara Laitinen ([saara.m.laitinen@helsinki.fi](mailto:saara.m.laitinen@helsinki.fi)).

#### Part 1: Personal details

1. Full Name

---

2. Date of Birth

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*Example: 15 December 2012*

3. Place of Birth

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4. 1. Please list all the languages you know in order of dominance (your strongest language first).

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5. 2. Please list all the languages you know in order of exposure (your native language first).

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6. 3. Please list what percentage of time you are currently exposed to each language (your percentages should add up to 100 %). Example: Finnish 60%, Swedish 30%, English 10%.

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7. 4. Please list all the places where you have lived and the number of years spent in each one. Example: Helsinki (Finland) 15 years.

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8. 5. Please list all the languages spoken in your childhood home in order of frequency.

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9. 6. Please list all the languages spoken in your childhood home (2) in order of frequency, if relevant.

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3/20/2017

Background form

10. 7. How many years of formal education do you have? (starting from primary school)  
Mark only one oval.

- 0
- 1
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30

11. Comments

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12. 8. In what language did you go through your education? (if several, please add the level in brackets) Example: Finnish (comprehensive school), English (upper secondary school).

\_\_\_\_\_

13. 9. Please choose your highest education level (or the approximate Finnish equivalent to a degree obtained in another country).

*Mark only one oval.*

- Comprehensive school  
 Vocational school  
 General upper secondary school  
 Further vocational qualification  
 Specialist vocational qualification  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Licenciate degree  
 Doctoral degree  
 Other (please specify below)

14. Comments

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. 10. Where do you currently work/study? What languages do you use for those purposes?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2: English

All the questions below refer to your knowledge of English.

### 1. Age when you... (if relevant)

---

16. a. were first exposed to English

\_\_\_\_\_

17. b. felt that you became fluent in English

\_\_\_\_\_



18. c. began reading in English

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19. d. felt that you became fluent reading in English

---

20. Comments

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**2. Please list the total number of years and months you have spent in each language environment:**

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21. a. A country where English is spoken

---

22. b. A family where English is spoken

---

23. c. A school and/or working environment where English is spoken

---

24. Comments

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**3. Please evaluate your level of proficiency in speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in one word.**

---

25. Speaking

---

26. Understanding

---

3/20/2017

Background form

27. **Reading**

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28. **Writing**

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### Appendix 3: Outline for interviews

#### Warm-up questions

- Tell me, how did you learn English?
- Follow-up questions on the questionnaire

#### Narrative questions

These questions should reflect the following themes:

the use of ELF and the issue of competence; relationship to one's linguistic origin; relationship to English; and language identity.

- How do you feel about situations in which you need to use English? / How do you feel towards speaking English?
- (Depending on the answer) Tell me about those situations in which you consider yourself a fluent/less fluent (replace the word with one s/he used in the previous answer) speaker?
- (If they have lived in an English-speaking country) How did you feel using English/see yourself as an English speaker when living in \_\_\_\_\_ (country)?
- How would you describe your experiences of using English with locals?
- (If they have not lived in an English-speaking country) How would you describe your experiences of using English with other English speakers?
- How would you describe your relationship with your mother tongue? Country of origin/home country?
- Tell me about situations in which you prefer to use your mother tongue, if there are any.
- Tell me about situations in which you prefer to use English, if there are any.
- Have you benefited from your English skills? If so, in what way? / In what ways have you benefited from your English skills?
- Have you ever aspired to native speaker competence? Why/why not?
- Have you ever been identified as a native speaker of English? (Tell me about that, please) If so, how did that make you feel? If not, how would you feel if it happened?
- What is important to you in order to call someone else an NES?

#### Appendix 4: Original quotes

- (1) me puhuttiin tosi paljon englantia keskenään ja silloin me puhuttiin myös englantia englantia sitte vanhemmille niin ei he ikinä vastannu englanniks ne aina vastas suomeks
- (2) ku me muutettiin Kööpenhaminaan [...] mä sit kävin semmoses International schoolissa kansainvälisessä koulussa missä kaikki kävi sitten tai kaikki oli englanniksi mutta silloin mä en osannu yhtään englantia [...] mä en usko et mä en edes ollu niinku exposed millään tavalla niinku joo ollenkaan varmaan vähemmän ku Suomessa
- (3) ei sen kummempaa ku niinku et no mun isä on hollanninkielinen ja äiti ruotsinkielinen ja niil on kyl paljon ystäviä tolleen ketkä mm puhuu sitte ei puhu molempia tai jotain noist kielistä et on niinku puhuttu kotona silleen mutta ei mm vanhempien kaa kuitenkaan
- (4) mä muistan et mä katoin aika paljon englanninkielisiä piirrettyjä kun joku Ankronikka ja Tiku ja Taku oli Suomessa @ [...] tota niin mm tekstitettynä et siin on varmaan jonkinnäköstä taustaa tullu tai et ei ihan vieras kieli [...] mut tota niin ei että se olis auttanu välttämättä oppimaan @
- (5) englanniks puhutaan tämmösestä niinku third world- eiku @ third culture children tai mikä tää nyt on joo et just niitä jotka on asunu ulkomailla nuorempana ja ei niinku et juuret on vähän silleen sekasin [...] et vaikka ollaan kotona tai kotimaassa tai puhutaan äidinkieltä niin se ei kuitenkaan ole sataprosenttisesti luontevaa
- (6) huomaa et se niinku idiomien käyttö ja semmonen niinku kuvaileva kieli ni se pikkasen rapistuu vaan kun sitä ei tuu käytetty tai no ei ehkä rapistu mut no ei ehkä sekään ehkä se on enemmän just et hyvin spesifit sanat jotka vaan niinku joita vaan ei sit vaan kohtaa kohtaa silleen arjessa missään kanavissa [...] sen takii mä aattelen et se on pikkasen heikentyny
- (7) mun oli tosi vaikea arvioida mä jäin miettii näit tosi pitkään [...] mut siis ite kyl mä tarkistan aina et kirjojaks mä oikein [...] mut sanotaan näin et kyl mä suomekski tarkistan et @
- (8) ihan pienenä varmaan hollanti oli sit se toinen ku mä puhuin isän kaa ja tolleen mut sit en koskaan asunu siellä tai käyny kouluu hollanniks tai mitään ni se on niinku jääny vähän silleen tai samalla se ei oo niinku edistyny paljoo
- (9) kyllä et tää on itseasiassa varmaan varmaan niinku se piste missä [...] tää on varmaan niinku tasapuolisin [...] et nythän se voi olla että se kääntyy tässä

- (10) vika puol vuotta on ollu silleen et mejän iskä on täysin kommunikoinu englanniks mun kaa ja mä tulin takasin Suomeen –tää on tää mikä on ihana pieni tarina– on se et mut laitettiin uimakouluun ja mä en ymmärtäny mitään mitä se uimaopettaja sano mulle [...] ni sitte se oli sanonu että mun tytär on tai siis sanonu mun iskälle että sun tytär on ihan tosi vaikee se ei tee mitään mitä mä käsken ja se oli sillee et no sano sille englanniks ni sit se tietää mitä sä haluat sen tekevän
- (11) mä tiedän sen mitä mulle on kerrottu ja mul on jonkinlaisii niinku mielikuvii siitä että mulle puhuttiin suomea ja mä vastasin niinku englanniks [...] et sit pikkuhiljaa graduuaalisti yritettiin sit vaihtaa ympäri
- (12) et menny se kieliki tällaseen pisteeseen että kyl se näkyy mul vielä kirjottamisessa tosi pahasti et mul tulee suomes ei oo sanajärjestyssä mut mut mä onnistun laittamaan sanajärjestyksen päin honkia @
- (13) tuntuu että tunnekieli on englanniks ja kaikki prosessointi käy englanniksi [...] kun mä kuulen suomea ni kyllä mä niinku tavallaan ymmärrän sen mut must tuntuu et mä prosessoisin sen englantina
- (14) mun avopuolisohan ei oikeestaan koe englantia luontevaks kieleks ja me puhutaan täysin suomea kotona [...] se on silleen tosi haaste mulle
- (15) jos mä oon yksin vaikka kaupassa tai ravintolassa tai muuta ni en mä nyt tilaa englanniks mut mä huomasin et yks kerta taas ku mä olin sit taas yhen duuniporukan kanssa kahvilassa ja me oltiin jo valmiiksi englantia modessa niin sitte mä tilasin englanniks [...] se tuli jotenki luonnostaan
- (16) @ ei et päällimmäisenä nousee [...] mä käytän suomea niinku sellasis tilanteissa et mä tiedän et se kannattaa [...] niinku näis tilanteissa on joko pakko tai sit se vaan kannattaa @ [...] mut ei sekään oo sellanen tilanne jossa niinku mä preferoisin suomen kieltä vaan se on enemmän semmonen et on tietonen siitä että se ei oo niinku toimiva kieli siin tilanteessa
- (17) aika pitkälti joo [...] tyttöystävän kanssa puhutaan pelkästään englantia [...] oon huomannu et on ollu paljon kotoisampaa @ olla sellasessa parisuhteessa jossa puhuu englantia [...] helpompi ilmaista itseään ja niinku luonnollisempi- luonnollisempaa ja rennompaa muutenki
- (18) mun nyky- nykyisten kavereiden kanssa niin puhutaan kuitenkin englantii ja [vaimon nimi] kanssa mun vaimon kanssa me puhutaan englantii edelleen koska mikä on aika mielenkiintosta monelle mulle se on ihan täys normaalia
- (19) jos löytää jonkun uuden tuttavan ja sitte huomaa jossain vaiheessa et aha tää ihminen puhuuki englantia ni se on niinku heti niinku (napsauttaa sormia) se

tulee semmonen helpotus et ah jes nyt mä voin kommunikoida @ [...] se on jotenki sitte jollain syvällä tasolla luontevampi

- (20) kirjoittaminen on mulle välillä muutenki kammottava asia niin @ siks mä teen sen mieluummin englanniks
- (21) mm... mul on just tää ku mä sekotan @ herkemmin ni sit se on se et jos mul on mul on niinkun nihkeempää sit se kun mul on absoluuttinen niinkun pakote et ei oo sitä valinnavapautta @
- (22) tuntuis hassulta yhtäkkiä- tuntuu aina hassulta jos yhtäkkiä vaihtaa [...] en mä pysty enää vaihtaa ku sit se taas tuntuu [...] tuntuu että yrittää liikaa
- (23) onks se hassua sanoa näin mun mielestä on tosi inhottavaa vaihtaa [...] sanotaan et meil on nyt tää niinku mejän välinen keskustelu on painottunu suomeksi koska me molemmat ollaan suomalaisia jos vuorostaan me oltais alotettu englanniks ja yhtäkkii vaihdettais suomeks ni se ois mulle tosi häiritsevää [...] jos suhde on luotu jo tietylle kielelle ni sit sen pitäis niinku pysyä
- (24) kyl mä huomaan että ni ainaki mulle se on ollu suuri rikkaus et me muutettiin silloin Englantiin [...] se vaan tuntuu olevan niin yleinen kieli tässä maailmassa tänä päivänä
- (25) emmä tiedä... [...] emmä usko et se on mitään niinku suuria tämmösiä rikkauksia siinä mielessä tuonu mun elämään [...] että mä olisin parempi ihminen yhtäkkiä kun osaa englantia
- (26) mul on ikuinen muisto kyl mun äidinkielen maikoista [...] mitä me tehään sun suomen kielen kanssa @ [...] mun sanavarasto on itseasiassa yllättävän suppee
- (27) mulle tulee kommenttii et englantii paistaa sielt läpi [...] sen takii mä olin taas nyt et se gradu menee englanniks et mä en jaksa enää yhtään
- (28) sanotaan pikemminki niin päin että jos että että mm sanotaan jos englannin kielen taito pysyis samana @ [...] ois ollu hyötyä monesti jos suomen kielen taito olis ollu parempi [...] olis kieltämättä helpompi olla jos suomen kieli olisi yhtä vahva [...] olisi yhtä sinut sen kanssa
- (29) eiks se englanninkielinen päiväkotii vois olla tosi hyvä et jos kattoo Oliviaa et hänellä on niinhyvä kielitaito sit ne on silleen niin katotsä Oliviaa et suomi on ihan tosi sukkaa @ et ei välttämättä niin hyvä idea
- (30) suomi ja englantii varmaan [...] mä aina ajattelen sen silleen et äidinkieli eli äidin kieli että eli suomi [...] riippuu aina vähän tilanteesta mut kyl mä

sanoisin et se on kuitenkin se suomi [...] aina käyttäny niinku himassa ja mä pidän sitä äidinkielenä

- (31) se on tosi vaikee. Mä oon yrittäny miettii [...] mikä se äidinkieli on [...] jos mä johonki viralliseen asiakirjaan ilmoittaisin niin mä laitan suomi vaan koska se on helpompi mut sitte niinkun jos nyt jotain oikeesti kiinnostaa niin ehkä mä sit sanoisin kuitenkin englanti koska mä ajattelen kuitenkin englanniks [...] koko ajatusmaailma on niinku englanniks
- (32) mm @ no mä sanoisin... se on vähän hankalaa [...] mä ehkä sanoisin kuitenkin englanti [...] must jotenki tuntuu et mä feikkaan suomea @ et ja se tuntuu aina jotenki et se ei istu suuhun ja sitä ei pysty puhumaan rennosti [...] se tuntuu jotenki tosi hassulta et aina vähän awkward kieli
- (33) mm joo kyllä mä sanoisin ... joo kyl englanti tu- tulee niin tosta noin vaan et kyl se mut voiks mä olla sit kahessa kielessä natiivipuhuja?
- (34) enhän mä mähän en oo natiivipuhuja vai mitä tarkoittas just? [...] emmä kyl “my native language is English” ei not with a straight face [...] kyl se olis varmaan vähä niinku insulting jos mä sanoisin jollekki niinku jenkkityypeille et joo my native language is English tai my mother tongue is English
- (35) se voi kuulostaa tosi hurjalta mut se ehkä menee valitettavasti enemmän kääntyy silleen et ei oo semmosta niinku kotimaata [...] ei oo niinku semmosta yhtä paikkaa joka vaan tuntuis tuntuis niinku tosi tosi luontevalta
- (36) Suomi niinku tuntuu mulle monella tavalla paljon luontevammalta ku moni muu maa niin silleen just mä koen et se on mun kotimaa et tääl mun on helppo tai mä oon niinku täällä sitä samaa yhtä massaa [...] Suomi on silleen niinku se on kuitenkin jossain määrin semmonen turvapaikka se on something to fall back on [...] et se on semmonen niinku home base vaikka se ei välttämättä kaikin puolin tunnu niin tutulta
- (37) oon sen verran pitkään nyt ollu Suomes niin pysyvämmin ni kyl mä silti miellän nykyisin Suomen itselle (??)- ja arvostan tiettyjä aspekteja [...] mä yhdistän kielen tosi vahvasti kulttuuriin [...] Suomen kulttuuri jos vertaa mihin tahanasa muuhun ni sit se on aika semmosta suorasukaista niinkun kaikki semmonen ylimääräinen pois ja mennään suoraan asiaan [...] sit taas Englannissa [...] on semmosta niinkun tietynlaist lämminhenkisyyttä ja mm kohteliaisuutta ja mm mä en miellä sitä hirveen pinnalliseksi sit taas vuorostaan millään tavalla
- (38) mä en edelleenkään ole niinku se suomalainen mä en tule ikinä olemaan- tai mulle ei ikinä tule niinku olemaan semmonen tunne et mä oon oikeesti ihan suomalainen

- (39) joo joo ehdottomasti joo kyl mä ehdottomasti sanoisin sillon et mä oon suomalainen- et ehkä enemmän just taas nuorempana ois ehkä se ois ehkä vähän enemmän tuntunu siltä että vaik se kuulostaa kornilta mutta jotenki enemmän maailmankansalainen [...] mut kyl mä nyt sanoisin et ehdottomasti [...] aina mä oon kuitenkin ulkomailla jos mä oon ollu ni viitannu itseeni niinku suomalaisena [...] vaikka se ois kuinka etäiseltä tuntunu
- (40) en koe olevani mistään kotoisin @ että ei ei mä oon- vaikee myöskään sanoo et oisin jotenki kansainvälinen
- (41) on se ihan positiivinen asia aina @ niinku että mm ainaki se validoi @ kaiken mitä mä sanon ittestäni
- (42) mun mielest se oli kiva aina ku jos joku sano et aa en mä yhtään tienny et sä oot jostain muualta se oli sillee okei no hyvä no sit mä oon jotenki sillee et noni achieved @
- (43) mä oon ehkä huijannu niinku vaan huvin vuoks ja sit tälle et hei joke joke [...] en oo niinku Jenkeissä yrittäny sitä niinku huijata mut jossain ulkomailla [...] jossain vaikka baarissa tai jotain jos joku kysyy et where are you from ni mä oon joskus sanonu tyyliin et from Texas tai jotain ni ne sanoo et oh really? @
- (44) enemmän niinku filteroin et jos mä oon sellases ympäristös että niinku mm vaikka niinku opintoym- niinku tuol yliopistolla niinku sellasessa paikassa et mä tiedän et on paljon [...] opiskelijoita tai jossain vaikka niinku luokassa jossa tehään vaikka jotain ryhmätöitä [...] sitte mieluummin en käytä englantia että koska mä tiedän et se voi herättää vähän semmosia omituisia reaktioita ni sitte rather not
- (45) se on vaikeempaa niinku puhuu puhuu sellasten kaa keille se on äidinkieli jostain syystä [...] jotenki sillee et sillon sen huomaa et on mul vähän aksentti ja ehkä mä sanon väärin niinku jotain juttuja [...] niinku must tuntuu et sen huomaa tai mä huomaan sen paremmin niinku just jos mä jos kaikki muut niinku puhuu samalla tavalla ja sit ite puhuu eri tavalla ni sen huomaa sit jos kaikki puhuu vähän eri tavalla ja vähän niin ja näin ni sit se on yleensä ni se jää niinku huomaamatta
- (46) emmä sitä amerikkalaista aksenttia hakenu se oli vaan se miten mä opin englannin [...] ei se nyt mua haittaa että se on semmonen CNN aksentti [...] nyt kun on saanu semmosen voimakkaamman suhteen kotimaahan ni tota ni se on ehkä ihan kivaki että se heijastuu jossain määrin [...] niinku mä en oo amerikkalainen et mulla on oma kulttuuri-identiteetti joka ei oo Amerikka vaikka mä puhunkin vähän tälleen [...] se jotenki tuntuu hyvältä et jotain mun olemukses on sellasta suomalaista kuitenkin et ihmiset ei ensimmäisenä arvaa et



mä oon amerikkalainen [...] se on ihan kiva @ emmä oo sitä aikasemmin miettiny

- (47) jos ollaan jossain mis on uusia ihmisiä niinku sosiaalisessa tilanteessa ja ne kuulee et me puhutaan niinku englantii [...] se on aina niinku tosi jostain syystä se on niinku todella vaikee niinku ihmisille ymmärtää et se on niinku upsetting heille et miten te voitte niinku puhua englantia [...] tai siis tietenki se ois niinku omituista jos esimerkiks- tai no itseasiassa todella vaikee niinku mulle päästä siihen tai niinku heijän niinku päähän koska mä en niinku näe sitä sillä tavalla [...] mä ymmärrän tietenki sen et se on omituista et jos suomalainen ei puhu suomea
- (48) se on monelle niinku jotenki tosi herkkä aihe et miten me voidaan miks tai niinku I don't know [...] me ollaan aika isänmaallisia kuitenkin must tuntuu Suomessa [...] ku mä olin nuorempi ni se oli vähän niinku mulle semmonen ei nyt niinku häpeellinen juttu mut vähän sinne pain koska mä en ollu niinku tai mä en edelleenkään ole niinku se suomalainen mä en tule ikinä olemaan- tai mulle ei ikinä tule niinku olemaan semmonen tunne et mä oon oikeesti ihan suomalainen
- (49) se oli ihmisille tosi erikoista et me puhuttiin englantia ja monet koki sen vähän niinku et sillä vähän niinku jotenki prassailtiin [...] se oli monelle tosi vaikee ymmärtää mä muistan mä kävin itseasiassa tosi monta tämmöstä kiusallista keskustelua teini-ikäisenä [...] yllättäen ihmiset suhtautuu siihen vähän negatiivisestikin Suomessa et miks- miksi sä et puhu suomea [...] se on jotenki vähän erikoista... vierasta
- (50) no jotkut on ollu jotka halua hakkaa ku puhuu väärää kieltä mut se nyt on vaan tommosta et en mä ei se oikeen niinku tunnu missään