Sociolinguistic Identity

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Third Semester, Fall 2009
HIB 3.1.1
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1.0 Introduction and Motivation

As students in an international study line, we found the topic of bi- and multilingualism to be very interesting and relevant. Most of us are Danish students studying in English, while the student who studies in her first language is currently learning Danish. All of us have, on one occasion or another, felt a change when we spoke a language that was not our mother tongue. However, we were not able to put words on what exactly this change entailed. Our search for the answer to this question was the inspiration for our project.

Given the growing interaction between cultures caused by expanding globalization, we travel more and see ourselves as citizens of the world rather than citizens of one country. Additionally, we work and study across borders, which is why bi- or multilingualism is seen as a benefit. On a daily basis, we thus interact with more people from different countries and through different languages, which we recognize from our own daily life as international students. This entails that one, to a larger extent, is forced to think more about perception due to participating in many changing social constellations and settings. Consequently, all of these aspects have introduced the need to reflect more on one's own actions. This means that the many inputs one gets today play a more pivotal role in relation to identity and the creation of it.

Our original starting point was an interest in how people employ their native and non-native languages differently. We then began to focus upon how people claim they change from one language to another. It quickly became apparent that a person’s identity is closely linked to language. As we examined the subject more thoroughly, we began to wonder what would happen to a person’s identity when switching between languages. Sociolinguistics seemed to be an appropriate approach to investigate how people use their languages as a tool, both consciously and
subconsciously, to change or be perceived in a certain way.

The complexity of identity has been and still is a never-ending puzzle. There is a tendency to simplify and categorize in order to understand things in the world. However, one’s identity seems impossible to simplify and fixate, as we assume that people change through language depending on their surroundings.

Through a social constructionist perspective, we will explore both socio-linguistic, social psychological and sociological theories. Due to the complexities of the subject, we rely on many different theories as opposed to one or two overarching theories. With these theories in mind, we will conduct a focus group interview. Using our theoretical knowledge, and our empirical research, we will seek to discover what the link between identity and language entails.

1.1 Problem Definition

Our interest lies in the relationship between language and identity, and how language influences the construction of identity. Our point of departure is that identity is constructed through social relations, and thereby, language. Therefore, we presume that when one changes languages, one’s identity construction will change as well. It is necessary to differentiate between native and non-native languages. For this project, we use native languages to refer to the mother tongue and non-native languages to refer to languages that have been learned.

1.2 Research Questions

Cardinal question:
Based on the focus group participants’ experiences, how is identity expressed when communicating in native versus non-native languages?
Sub questions:
How is identity affected when communicating through a non-native language?

How and why do the participants accommodate in the focus group?

2.0 Delimitations

Due to the large subject matter, it is necessary to delimit our project. We did not focus on language learning from a more pedagogical angle, because we were not interested in how people learn or teach languages. We do not define what it means to speak a language. We also did not differ between how well languages were spoken, who they were spoken to, by, or in what context (studying abroad, moving to another country permanently, or speaking a foreign language in one's home country). The focus was on how the individual felt while speaking a foreign language, whether it was fluently or poorly spoken and how that influenced the identity.

In relation to the theory of science, we have limited ourselves to social constructionism. We could have made a chapter on theory of science, where we went through the different world views, but since we already knew our way of seeing this project was going to be through the lens of social constructionism, it did not seem relevant to examine other approaches. Though we will not go into depth with social constructionism, we have extracted the essential epistemological and ontological issues that are relevant to our empirical work and our theories.

Because the field of sociolinguistics is wide, we have limited ourselves to mainly communication accommodation theory and code-switching. This means that we have not gone into the field of ‘audience design’ that deals with accommodation of language e.g. intonation, pronunciation, and word choice according to the audience or
the receiver of the message.

We did not include historical and cultural aspects in the identity section, because we found it too broad. Furthermore, history and culture are highly tied to the specific country, therefore it would have been necessary to operate with that certain country. We did not wish to do that because we did not want to limit ourselves to certain countries and/or certain languages, but rather make a study that did not focus on differences between being a foreigner in varying countries.

We chose to use a smaller focus group rather than a larger one. While large groups can be especially interesting when studying group dynamics, they are an unsuitable choice for this project. We also chose to not use the methods of meaning coding and meaning categorization when analyzing our interviews. For the amount of data produced, they were inappropriate choices and were not used in our analysis.

The analysis has been delimited by only analysing the transcription of the focus group interview and the observers’ notes. This means that we have chosen not to go back and ask the participants for further explanations on unclear points in the transcription. This has been done to avoid putting any pressure on the participants.

3.0 Theory of Science - Social Constructionism

Our project operates within the field of social constructionism. Therefore, a short introduction to the ideas of the approach is appropriate. Later in the methodology chapter, we will talk about social constructionism in relation to our empirical work.

Social constructionism is a lens through which the world is viewed. It derives from
structuralism\(^1\) and poststructuralism\(^2\) which argue that the only way to access reality is through language. Therefore, language has a crucial role in the construction of the world (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002: 17).

Social constructionism is an anti-realistic approach, which argues that our knowledge about the world “…is not a direct perception of reality”, but that we construct our versions of reality between us. Therefore, it makes no sense to talk about truth since “[a]ll knowledge is derived from looking at the world from some perspective or another…” (Burr, 1995: 6). In other words, the way we perceive the world is not an objective picture of the real world; it is something we construct in the interaction with others. Within these social interactions, there are ongoing battles and negotiations about what is true and false. Different constructions of the world can therefore coexist, which leads to different social actions. Consequently, there are some actions that are seen as perfectly common and natural while others are unthinkable within one worldview (Burr, 1995: 5).

Diametrically opposed to social constructionism, is positivism. Their discord primarily arises from their different philosophies on language. Positivism claims that it is possible to find an objective truth by getting “behind” language, whereas social constructionism argues that the world can only be reached through language since the way we speak about something constitutes it (Olsen & Pedersen, 1999: 140).

Consequently, social constructionism insists that a critical approach, to our taken-for-granted knowledge about the world and ourselves, has to be taken into consideration, because we see the world through our own categories. Therefore, “our knowledge of the world should not be treated as an objective truth” (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 5). This indicates that everything could have been different and that our view on the

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\(^1\) Structuralism can mean different things; here it is referring to the Saussurean linguistic approach (Burr 1995: 36) where language is seen as a system which is not determined by the reality it refers to (Phillips & Jørgensen 1999: 18).

\(^2\) "Post" as in coming after structuralism and adding to it (Burr 1995: 39).
world changes depending on who we are.

In accordance to the latter, culture and history play a crucial role because the categories we use in order to understand the world and ourselves are determined by which culture and history we live in at the specific time. Our ways of understanding the world are not just determined by the culture and history, but are products of it. Due to the cultural and historical relativity we cannot see “our” way as the only “right” understanding or more “true” than other understandings of the world (Burr 1995: 4).

Social constructionism is an anti-essentialistic approach, since our understandings are socially constructed. It is impossible to say that there is a determined nature to people or the world and therefore, there cannot be an essence to be found inside people (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 5). When in fact “[w]e behave, think and feel differently depending on who we are with, what we are doing and why.” (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 25). This means that each version of a person is socially constructed, and consequently, personality is not something within a person, it is, on the other hand, something we construct between us (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 27).

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Introduction
This chapter will show how we have chosen to investigate our cardinal question and why. Moreover, seeing that we are inspired by social constructionism, this chapter will help make our choices and deselections visible to the reader, in order to make our project transparent.

It would be impossible to make the cardinal question without having some idea about what we wanted to investigate. This means that we, from the start, constructed a pre-
understanding\(^3\) of the change of identity in relation to speaking different languages. We are aware of the pitfalls, given that our project’s point of origin was such a pre-understanding. Our project could lose its credibility due to the fact that we could be accused of manipulating the data in order to confirm our pre-understanding. However, we talked about these pitfalls right from the beginning, which has helped us in our analysis, because we did not just look for something that could confirm our pre-understanding, but also statements which would challenge it.

4.2 Our Theories

Theory is how we have chosen to examine our empirical work, in other words, to understand our data, we have to look at them through the selected theories. Our theory chapter consists of two parts, part one explains the socio-linguistic terms, which we need later in the analysis, and part two defines and explains identity.

Within the field of socio-linguistics, we have chosen two main theories, communication accommodation theory and code-switching. In communication accommodation theory, we have employed Giles and Coupland, since these are the main theorists within this field. Moreover, they perceive language as having multiple meanings and depending on interpretation, therefore not being something fixed. One could argue that they are inspired by social constructionism. Due to the fact that our project deals with changes in identity, we had to apply a linguistic theory that would deal with change in language, therefore, code-switching was a suitable choice.

The phenomenon of identity is multifaceted, where many try to give meaning to it. On the basis of this, we found it best to combine different views from different

\(^3\) Pre-understanding as an understanding of something without certainty. A prejudice, but not in the normal meaning of the word, but where people have a preconceived opinion about something. (Fuglsang & Bitsch Olsen, 2003: 102). It is here used instead of the word “hypothesis”, because it would not be possible to talk about a hypothesis when our theory of science is social constructionism. Due to the fact that when one speaks of a hypothesis it lies in the word that there could be only one answer to confirm this hypothesis, a truth to be found and this is as mentioned not possible seen from a social constructionist view.
theorists. Our choice of theorist for the definition of identity has primarily been Per Schultz Jørgensen, who has provided a contemporary understanding of the concept of identity. There are many other applicable theorists within this field, but Schultz Jørgensen conceptualises identity from a socio-psychological perspective, which is essential when analysing the focus group participants’ experiences and reflections on certain matters. Schultz Jørgensen’s definition is furthermore inspired by social constructionism where he, to some extent, dissociates from previous perceptions of e.g. a core identity with an essence that would remain persistent.

Additionally, we chose David Block’s approach to identity, because we had a mutual interest and our aim resembled his. He too, is interested in the link between identity and language and even more appropriately, he focuses on identity construction through a second language. He also tries to show identity by the means of many different theorists, where many of them, including Block, are either in the field of poststructuralism or social constructionism.

Through our investigation, we found that there exist many views on identity and language, however, many of them only briefly touch upon views that are somehow similar to our interest and pre-understanding. Thus we ended up with a combination of many different theories, where we selected what we saw as appropriate in order to cover the field.

What is important is that all our theories have more or less the same foundation in relation to theory of science; they all share some of the same ideas as social constructionism.
4.3 Interview Methodology

4.3.1 Introduction

For this project we have chosen to use qualitative research methods rather than quantitative methods. Qualitative research uses fewer and deeper in-depth resources in order to analyze the phenomenon. It can be used to understand the world “out there” by explaining phenomena “from the inside” (Kvale, 2007: x). Qualitative research methods have revealed the kind of information we sought, given that we are trying to understand the individual’s everyday experience within society.

Within the field of qualitative research, we used the method of focus groups, which are small discussion groups lead by a researcher called a moderator. These groups can be defined as “‘…a research method, where data is produced via group interactions about a subject chosen by the researcher’”(Halkier, 2002: 11, quoting Morgan, 1997). The characteristic of a focus group is that it combines group interaction with researcher-chosen subject focus. Focus groups separate themselves from classical individual interviews by giving direct access to action and not just accounts about it (Halkier, 2002: 12). To elaborate on this, the participants exchange their accounts in a socially recognizable context, where everyone in the focus group (except in some cases the researcher), can recognize the presupposed context. This is in focus groups called “‘accounts in action’” (Ibid.).

Focus groups are ideal for this project, because the natural atmosphere shows the members “‘…influencing and influenced by others – just as they are in real life’” life”’ (Litosseliti, 2003: 2, quoting Krueger, 1994). Though it is true that the members influence one another, it is not just as in real life. We have kept in mind that the focus group interview occurs in an artificial environment and under artificial circumstances. In these groups, we hope to learn what it is like to be a member of that group, for example a bi- or multi-lingual person living in Denmark, rather than to learn about
the individuals in the group as individuals (Morgan, 1988: 32).

4.3.2 Criticism of Focus Groups

Focus groups are especially well suited to produce empirical data that describes how we grasp things related to everyday life; what people do in different situations of everyday life, how they experience it, and how the experience is used to understand other situations (Halkier, 2002: 12). It is these social experiences that people draw on, which are taken for granted in a way that they are rarely discussed. This “silent” knowledge of people’s practical consciousness can shine through in a focus group. The interaction of the group can be helpful to “force” participants to become discursively explicit in their communication (Halkier, 2002: 13).

Another strength of the focus group method is its ability to produce structured data in an understandable way about the subject at hand (Halkier, 2002: 17). The method is not as intrusive as other fieldwork or observation, and does not take as much time from the participants. Furthermore, the researcher does not spend a lot of time “hanging in the field” and waiting for something to happen in order to produce some unstructured data. One could argue that this also is one of the weaknesses about focus group interviewing. The lack of fieldwork could mean that the researcher simply misses out on a lot of interesting material, where s/he would have to be present in order to gain access to peoples’ social context (Ibid.). This can hinder the openness from the researcher’s side about which social relations and processes are important in the context. Often the researcher lacks the imagination to figure this out on his/her own, and it can affect the questions produced for the interviews.

Though focus groups are suited to this project, one must still keep in mind the limitations that come with them. Focus groups are not the best way to gain knowledge about individuals, since it is impossible for everybody in a focus group to say as much as they would be able to in an individual interview. Moreover, it is most
likely that the group prevents more deviant and atypical statements from arising (Halkier, 2003: 16). In addition to this, the moderator has to be careful that the group does not come to complete conformity or polarization, because this can make the conversation stop (Halkier, 2003:17). Both of these tendencies can dampen the variation and results of the interview.

Another limitation of the focus group is the fact that it is still an artificial interaction, where the participants are in a situation that is not natural. “The fact that the researcher creates and directs the group makes them distinctly less naturalistic than participant observation so there is always some residual uncertainty about the accuracy of what the participants say” (Morgan, 1997: 14). Because of this criticism, we have to consider our methodology in order to give higher credibility to our project.

4.3.3 Assembling Focus Groups
There are many different ways one can assemble a focus group. While it is recommended that focus groups be homogenous to encourage the participants to share their experiences, it is also beneficial to have a diverse group in order to show more perspectives (Litosseliti, 2003: 4). For this reason, we have chosen to structure our focus groups with some similarities, but still leave room for differences. There are peoples from different backgrounds and cultures selected for the group. What they share in common is that they are all bi- or multi-lingual students attending Roskilde University.

There can also be ranges in the size of the focus group, based on the information the researcher seeks. Most focus groups have between six and ten participants, though there can be as few as four or as many as twelve (Litosseliti, 2003: 3). We have decided upon using four to six participants, called a mini focus group. Smaller focus groups are beneficial when the researcher seeks more detailed information. It is also
4.3.4 Conducting Focus Groups

A moderator in a focus group interview has to play a somewhat different role compared to an individual qualitative interview. This is because the focus group interviews have a more comprehensive form of social interaction. There are differences in the role the moderator plays in the focus groups. It should be noted that the role the moderator plays could affect the group dynamics. One of the most important roles of the moderator is to be able to handle the social dynamics in a group. Thereby, if the group is too tightly controlled, the researcher risks losing one of the most important things in this type of interviews: that the participants address each other, comment each other’s points and ask each other things based on their own experiences (Halkier, 2002: 55).

Because of this, our moderator was prepared to take a medium role in the interview, guiding the interview where it was needed only. She kept the group on track by asking open-ended and thoughtful questions. Because we wanted the interview to have the freedom to unfold naturally, we prepared discussion questions before as a group. After we had prepared these questions, we organized them into groups of topics to introduce to the focus group for discussion (Morgan, 1998: 56). We felt that asking direct questions rather than introducing abstract topics would be more beneficial for the group interaction and inspiring discussion. However, the moderator still had the flexibility to ask follow-up questions when they benefited the discussion or engaged more participants.

Whether a high or low moderator conducts a focus group, they should both have the same starting point. For all focus groups, it is important to begin by informing the participants about “…the topic in an honest but fairly general fashion” (Morgan, 1988: 57). This is important firstly because the participants might not be able to relate
to or understand an in-depth explanation of the research. It is important secondly because it might restrict the discussion of a previously open-minded participant (Ibid.). We stated that our research lead us to them because of our “incomplete understanding” of their experiences and that we were there to learn (Ibid.). Another technique we employed as a starting point was to take a round where each participant introduced themselves to the group in answer to the opening question. This served as an icebreaker and also allowed the participants to get to know a little about each other and see their similarities.

Though we prepared the questions and topics of discussion before the interview as a group, we did prepare them in a certain order. There are five types of questions a researcher should ask in a focus group interview: opening question, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and ending questions. The opening question should be a factual and straightforward. It should “…identify characteristics that the participants have in common” (Krueger, 1994: 54). The introductory questions intend to encourage discussion and reflection among the participants. The transition questions should help lead to the major questions of the project. The key questions are the major questions, the project seeks to uncover. The ending questions help to close the discussion, allow the participants “…to reflect back on previous comments, and are critical to analysis” (Ibid.).

4.3.5 Interviewing Ethics
As with any interview, the researcher must consider the ethical questions beforehand. Firstly, we gave the participants the appropriate and valid information in order for them to give their consent. The participant should not feel lured or tricked into participating. We also offered the participants the choice of remaining anonymous (Flick, 2006: 49). Prior to the interview, we gave all participants an oral explanation of the interview goals. Only after receiving their consent did we begin the interview. We have also given them the option to view the project after its completion.
However, we later realized that our consent form was not thorough enough so we made a new consent form for them to sign before we handed in the project.

Finally, we made sure to make no extreme promises beforehand. It is very important to be able to keep what you, as a group, have promised and not give the participants any false expectations. We found it necessary to create a time schedule that we could follow because they gave up their private time for us. We put in a little extra time in the end so that they could leave, either before, or at the prearranged time. Another thing we did, was to explain to them, that we were students and could not afford gifts such as wine, etc., after their participation, as it is done in bigger analytical companies. Instead we promised them some delicious snacks, coffee, and a good discussion with people in a similar situation to theirs.

4.4 Our Data and Social Constructionism
When doing qualitative research one has to choose which epistemological approach one wishes to use. Our approach to the knowledge we gain from the focus group is inspired by social constructionism. This is based on, among other things, our disagreement with the positivistic approach to qualitative research, where a hypothesis is tested several times with the same outcome (Flick, 2006: 77). Social constructionism’s epistemology states that there is no objective truth to find in the world. It is incorporated in social constructionism that whatever your findings may be, they are only one version out of many (Phillips & Jørgensen, 1999: 120). With that in mind, we are aware that if we made another focus group comprised of different people or if somebody else made this project, the outcome would not be the same, but only another version of the “truth”.

Because of this, it can be difficult to know how to approach the knowledge our focus group produced. However, there can be some rules of validity indicating what is “true or false”. For instance, within a specific field there often exists repeated statements,
which can indicate that some things are truer than others (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2006: 22). To the contrary, positivism claims that “… science must and can be conducted in a way that is value free and objective” (Flick, 2006: 78). Social constructionism argues that all data extracted from qualitative methods is a product of both the interviewer and the interviewee. On the other hand, positivism argues that the data is “out there” whether or not the researcher looks for it (Ibid). In regards to our data, it is important to note that people construct their stories and understandings depending on the social context; being with e.g. friends or parents. These constructions do not give truth to who we are, but they contribute to the ongoing story about who we are (Halkier, 2003: 16).

This again shows that our perception of the world can change over time, and therefore cannot be definitive (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002:14). For example, if we had made the interview in the 1950s the questions and thus also the answers would most likely have been completely different than the ones we received from the focus group in 2009.

4.5 Transparency and Objectivity
We have to acknowledge that our project is in itself a social construction, because we cannot avoid to see the world from one perspective or another: “No human being can step outside of her or his humanity and view the world from no perspective at all…”(Burr, 1995: 160). As a result of this, our perception of the world has influenced our choice of theory and our research question. Therefore objectivity is not an option when choosing to have a social constructionist optic. Furthermore, we accept that our data is constructed by us as a group and our focus group participants (Ibid.). Also, our way of interpreting the data is just one “reading” and not more “true” than other “readings”.

As mentioned above, it is impossible to test our data produced by the focus group and
thereby check its validity. Therefore transparency is an important factor in order to convince the reader of the validity of our findings. To manage this, we have included the empirical work in transcribed form and our deselections and selections in order to show the reader our way from the data to our interpretations and conclusions (Phillips & Jørgensen, 1999:134). Overall, we believe, that by taking these precautions, we have made our project transparent, hence, made it accessible and easier to evaluate and comprehend by the reader.

5.0 Our Approach to the Analysis

5.1 Introduction
Though analysis is one of the final steps of interviewing methodology, the analysis must be thought of even before the interviews take place (Kvale, 2007: 102). Some of the work of the analysis rests in the questions the researcher asks. The researcher must also decide which type of analysis they wish to perform before the interview. They can choose between transcript-based analysis, tape-based analysis, note-based analysis, and memory-based analysis (Krueger, 1994: 143-4). We have chosen to do mostly transcript-based analysis, but will occasionally look towards note-based analysis. This is because we chose to have one moderator and two observers in the interview. The observers were able to take notes, which later proved valuable to our analysis.

5.2 Transcription
Because we have chosen to do a transcript-based analysis, we must also have a methodological approach to transcription. Transcribing means to take an interview from oral to written form. Since spoken language differs so much from written language, it is important to realize, that changing the words said in the interview in order to make it sound better on paper, is a dangerous thing to do. We have to treat the focus group interview as the social interaction, it is, therefore it is necessary to
transcribe both the questions and the answers (Phillips & Jørgensen, 1999: 132). Equally important, it is a reflection upon the fact that when we transcribe a piece of reality in form of a social interaction we change it into a text and during this process we are already making interpretations (Phillips & Jørgensen, 1999: 92). The more focused on language we are the more exact should the transcription be (Flick, 2006: 292). The danger with correcting the language is that you miss some details such as the social interaction, doubt in people’s tone of voice etc. (Halkier, 2002: 77). Therefore, we included the ‘ehms’ and hesitations in our transcription.

Furthermore, it is important to be aware that it is very difficult for other people than the observers or moderator from the interview to transcribe. Others might not be able to separate the voices from each other and incorporate the other sounds during the interview as precisely as the people present. It is key to transcription to identify exactly who is speaking, and in general, to create the most precise regeneration of the interview in writing. This means that even though the participants talk on top of each other, everyone has to be included in the transcription (Halkier, 2002: 77). If it is the case that someone simply cannot be understood in a given sentence, it has to be written down as not understandable in the transcription. One can find the transcribed interview in the attached appendix.

5.3 Analysis Methodology

Though the analysis has already begun with the questions the researcher asks, the interview must still be analyzed in order to discover its deeper meanings. One can identify two different methods of analyzing transcribed focus group interviews. The first is a qualitative or ethnographic summary, called ethnographic analysis, and the second is systematic coding via content analysis, called content analysis (Morgan, 1988: 64). While they are both valid forms of analysis, one will extract different information from the data by using each of the approaches. The main “…difference is that the ethnographic approach relies more on direct quotation of the group
discussions, while the content analysis typically produces numerical descriptions of
the data” (Ibid.). However, we are more interested in analyzing the meaning of the
interviews than tallying the results of them.

Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann offer three main approaches to analyzing the
meaning of an interview: meaning coding, meaning condensation, and meaning
interpretation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: v). Each approach can be used with
different types and amounts of interviews and all will result in different constructions
of meaning. However, since we have one interview, we only needed to rely on
meaning interpretation.

This method is used in contrast to the meaning coding and meaning condensation
methods. Its purpose is to take the researcher beyond the actual text and into its
hidden meanings. This results in an expansion of the amount of text as the researcher
reads in between the lines of the transcription (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 207). The
researcher uses his/her knowledge on the researched phenomenon when interpreting
the interview. Thus the interpretation will use the project’s theme as its point of
departure.

We began the analysis by reading the interview through the lens of our theories. Then
we organized the phenomena in the text into categories composed of similar
phenomena (for example, a category titled “national identity” and another titled
“code-switching”). After organizing the data accordingly, we used the analytical
method of meaning interpretation, guided by our theoretical knowledge, to analyze
the interview.
6.0 Sociolinguistic Theory

6.1 Introduction
This theoretical section examines linguistic actions, furthermore the factors that enable one to accommodate language to the surroundings. These issues cannot be separated from language’s affect on identity, but they are concerned with the sociolinguistic theory rather than socio-psychology. This does not mean that this part will involve many technical details concerning such issues as e.g. code-switching, rather it will be relevant for our analysis, as these phenomena might be something that the participants of our focus group have experienced first-hand. We are interested in examining these personal experiences, thus our focus lies not only on how our interviewees feel that language influences their personality, but also why they choose to accommodate.

The sociolinguistic theory section consists of three parts. The first part examines the importance of seeing language in a context, namely in different social situations. The second part presents the Communication Accommodation Theory and the embedded theory being relevant for our project. Thirdly, the relevant subjects within the theory of code-switching are explained.

6.2 Language in Social Situations
6.2.1 Language and Sociology – An Interdisciplinary Field
Howard Giles and Nikolas Coupland (1991) emphasize the importance of not seeing linguistics and sociology as two distinct entities. This is given that language is not only constructed through social contexts, but plays an essential role in shaping these contexts: “Language and linguistic varieties are… social constructs, and just as much sociopsychological (and political, and sociological) as linguistic.” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: xv). How language is read and interpreted have multiple concerns to it, which is why “… a true understanding of language and society has, ultimately, to
be interdisciplinary.” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: xv).

6.2.2 The Importance of Language in Context

When investigating the communicative dimension of language, it is essential to see language in accordance with its context given that language always is based upon the situation in which it is encoded. One can have different approaches seeing “…language either as determined by or as itself determining the nature of a social context” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 1). If language is built upon the context, then language is also determined by the grade of “intersubjectivity” that the interlocutors, the participants of the conversation, share. This means that the more intensive the interrelation is between the interlocutors, the more esoteric the language becomes: “…much of language use is built on shared presuppositions and shared knowledge about our social contexts; meanings by far outstrip the referents of the words themselves” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 2). The more intersubjectivity the participants share, the more power relations are established, and their relationship becomes more implicit. The natural conditions of the context thus determine the language use.

As emphasized by Giles and Coupland, “language reflects context” (1991: 3). Depending on the social context, a person would narrate his/her response in multiple ways; meaning that one would construct a way to narrate in accordance with how one defines the social context. This furthermore suggests that when one gets a response from a person, it is not necessarily the “ultimate” response, rather it is a reflection of how the person responds sociolinguistically to us. The answer is specified, depending on the person who is addressed (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 4). One therefore also constructs the language differently depending on the formality or informality of the context, where low variety (L) can be defined as that used in informal contexts, while high variety (H) is used in the formal contexts (Ibid.).
6.3 Language Hierarchies
In situations where language can be said to form a hierarchy, the majority language will take a higher position than the minority language. Proper speaking, both pronunciation and vocabulary, of the majority language will be connected to credibility, power and authority and is also likely to open up more possibilities. However, knowing parts of the majority language, but not having a full repertoire, can affect one’s position in the social ladder. In the same manner, the native language will be important to know, in order to maintain a position in the family or ethnic group (Bullock & Toribio, 2009: 258). In the same language hierarchies, it can be an advantage to know several languages, as well as an insight to the culture of each language and be able to switch between languages, and use one’s cultural knowledge to generate as much social power as possible (Ibid.).

6.4 Perceived Structures of Social Situations
There are certain fundamental dimensions that can be said to underlie people’s perceptions of social situations; namely co-operative – competitive; intense-superficial; formal-informal; dominant-equal and task-orientated – non-task-orientated (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 13). In a given social context, these five dimensions are the ones defined by the interlocutors, and from which they interpret the situation. Depending on the social group, the different dimensions have different importance and meaning. It should be noted that people of course not always are “… consciously seeking explanations or trying to assess their cognitive processes” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 15), thus one cannot generalize on all social situations, as social interaction is both an individual process and an interactional process. On routine interactions, these five dimensions are quite applicable, but “… no objective classification of situations… is sufficient in itself for understanding individuals’ subjective definitions of the same social episodes” (Ibid.). What is much more important, is how speakers represent themselves cognitively, and how specifically they decode a social situation. It is important to see these general standard normative
ways of behavior, and yet a subjectivity within social interaction. There is a
distinction to be made between “inter-individual” and “inter-group” communication
and perception. On an inter-individual level one shows personal identity actively,
which means that one makes one’s own characteristics more evident. On an inter-
group level, the group creates uniformity and becomes homogenous, where
community is based on shared beliefs, ideas, behavior etc. (Giles & Coupland, 1991:
16).

6.5 Language Determining Context
Having been through theory, where language is built upon how the interlocutors
interpreted the social situation, a different angle will now be elaborated, where the
relationship between language and power is essential. If one sees language as
determining a certain context, rather than being caused by it, then the statement, “…
that any utterance is the context for the utterances that follow it”, is central (Giles &
Coupland, 1991: 20). This means that interlocutors can influence each other through
linguistic strategies. Furthermore, our language cannot only manipulate the co-
speaker’s cognition, but also “… by our very mouths… influence our own
cognitions” (Ibid.). Depending on the speaker’s powerfulness, s/he can dominate the
situation. An important term here is the “evaluative meaning” of the speaker’s
expressions and statements. The evaluative meaning should be understood in the
sense that “… it is then virtually impossible to describe an event… in an evaluatively
neutral manner, since our linguistic choices betray… our feelings towards the social
object being referenced” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 21). An example of this could be
the media’s use of words as Muslim, immigrant and second-generation Dane to
describe criminals instead of just describing the criminals’ appearance. The use of
these terms, rather than others, has a specific negative denotation to the receiver.

6.6 Ethnicity as a Linguistic Context
Giles and J. L. Byrne have created the InterGroup Model (1982). This model presents
the notions of ingroup and outgroup. The ingroup is the group one is part of, which could be some sort of minority group. The ingroup is defined by a set of boundaries, which will be formed by the ethnolinguistic community’s contrast to the rest of the community or the outgroup. The outgroup will have a clear set of boundaries that defines it as well, being a typical majority group that the second language learner is not part of (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 134-140).

According to Giles and Coupland, ethnicity is at large defined by language; a common code can be a determining factor in setting the boundaries of an ingroup. These boundaries are seen in a large scale concerning entire states, as well as in smaller communities (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 95).

An ethnic group shares more than just language, non-linguistic boundaries such as distinctive features of appearance, beliefs and paternity/maternity feelings. Giles and Coupland, however, assert that language is one of the most important factors of ethnicity: “Most ethnic groups also have a distinct language or dialect, and these can often be considered necessary attributes for a full and ‘legitimate’ membership of the group” (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 96). All of these linguistic and non-linguistic factors shape the ingroup opposed to the outgroup. They are also part of creating the social identity of the group and of the individual group members (Giles and Coupland, 1991: 96-97).

If the general ethnic boundaries of a group are soft or flexible in certain non-linguistic aspects, the linguistic aspect will often be seen as that much more important to distinguish the ingroup (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 98). For instance, one could imagine that Danes living in Southern Sweden would maintain their Danish among each other, to keep on defining themselves as Danes, even though their general lifestyle would resemble the local majority of Swedes in all other aspects of everyday life.
6.7 Communication Accommodation Theory

In interactive communication there are different modes of representing oneself both as an individual and as a member of a group. The way that one expresses meaning through language is of great importance and can be both a conscious or subconscious matter. Howard Giles has developed the Speech Accommodation Theory, in the 1970s, which later developed into Communication Accommodation Therory, CAT. Through accommodating language, we are able to adjust our communication in relation to the basis of the receiver(s), while also being aware of others adjusting to us (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 60, Coupland, 2007: 62).

There are different types of accommodative processes that can either hinder or smooth the progress of the mutual understanding between the participants of a social interaction: “Accommodation is to be seen as a multiply-organized and contextually complex set of alternatives, regularly available to communicators... It can function to index and achieve solidarity with or dissociation from a conversational partner” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 61, Coupland, 2007, 62). Furthermore, these processes are seen within language learning also, facilitating or complicating the acquiring of a new language. It should be emphasized that accommodation strategies are not only used in specific social interactions, but also in total “code- or language selection” (Giles and Coupland, 1991, 61), meaning that something deeper, such as norms and values, can lie beneath as the motivation for accommodative actions.

6.7.1 Basic Concepts of Accommodation – Convergence and Divergence

The different styles of accommodation will now be presented, where these will underline the importance of the link between people’s speech style and their experience of the social conditions. The cognition of a social situation is essential to how a person will accommodate and express him-/herself linguistically.

The first concept is convergence, which can be seen as “... a strategy whereby
individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic/prosodic/non-vocal features” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 63). A person would try to reach a higher recognition and common understanding by e.g. adapting to a certain dialect within the community she/he is trying to converge to. This also means that the interpersonal differences between the interlocutors would be attenuated or even reduced, as the individual converging would to some extent attempt to assimilate him-/herself through communicative actions (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 64). Convergence becomes relevant in second language learning, since a typical pattern of the individuals’ language acquisition would be to converge; not only in accordance with speech patterns but also other socio-cultural elements.

*Divergence* can be seen as “… the way in which speakers accentuate speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and others” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 65). Divergence is thus the opposite of convergence, where the actor emphasizes the differences between the interlocutors rather than attenuating them, this concerns both individuals and groups of any kind.

An example, taken from Giles and Coupland, elucidates a study conducted in a language laboratory, where the use of accent divergence was investigated. People learning Welsh, participated in a study concerning second language acquisition. When they were asked about their motives for learning Welsh, the interviewer described it as a “… dying language with a dismal future” (Ibid.). The participants started replying with more significant Welsh accent than before and diverged from the interviewer, supposedly because of their strong cultural values. This example can be transferred to both individuals and groups having the need to diverge themselves; the motive being either defensive or offensive. A more offensive example of divergence would be maintaining one’s speech divergence because it is part of one’s group identity and it would thus be depriving to converge and “lose” one’s values, such as a certain language form (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 66-67). It should be
mentioned that just as with convergence, this type of accommodation can be seen not only through speech acts, but also through body language. However, the non-verbal language is not a perspective we will elaborate on in this project.

The concepts have now been briefly and simplistically described, and it is thus important to be aware of the fact that they can vary and function in more nuanced forms, one can e.g. converge upwards or downwards (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 67). Upwards would be in more formal situations and vice versa. Upwards would mean having a more advanced language use and downward a more simple. The perception of the context here influences the degree of converging. Another essential point is that convergence and divergence can function simultaneously on different levels. A person can thus converge in one aspect, but diverge in others. An example of this would be how parents converge downwards in language use when raising their children, but still diverge themselves when having a disciplinary tone. Or when writing a formal complaint to a company, where one typically converges with a formal language use, but in the message diverge oneself to emphasize dissatisfaction.

6.7.2 Converging or Diverging – In Contexts

There are infinite reasons for either converging or diverging, and these subjective matters are difficult to define, since they are based on individual experience. Still, one can, to an extent, see common motives among some for these actions. When concerned with integration and thereby also language learning, convergence becomes a relevant subject, given the “…need (often non-conscious) for social integration or identification with another” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 72). As mentioned earlier, the relation between the interlocutors is heavily dependent on mutual sympathy. If one assimilates to a person or culture, a more positive understanding in between is likelier, and integration would be perceived as more completed. It seems as though “… the greater the speaker’s need to gain another’s

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4 Integration is an immeasurable size and difficult to define, thus we will delimit ourselves into saying integration in the sense of reaching integrative success on a socio-linguistic level.
social approval, the greater the degree of convergence there will be” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 73). It becomes clear that convergence is closely connected with the motive of approval. This does not mean that integration and convergence are always conditioned by one another, which one also has to be aware of. Some might diverge instead.

Linguistic convergence can also have other motives than merely social ones, as for instance, economic motives. In a workplace, one can for example, adjust one’s language to the respective work jargon, which can benefit one’s position. (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 74). It is thus evident that motives for accommodation vary greatly.

6.8 Cognitive Organization Versus Identity Maintenance Functions

As explained earlier, convergence and divergence actions do not exclude one another; one can do both on different levels within social interaction. This “shift” between them can have several reasons, but there are two main motives for them: cognitive organization, and identity maintenance. It should be mentioned that this can play out on both individual and group level.

Through cognitive organization one grasps a complex social situation and “…in this way, speakers may organize their output to take into account the requirement of their listeners; listeners may select from this discourse and organize it according to the cognitive structures most easily available for comprehension” (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 85). Converging linguistically can thus be based on the desire for a greater intelligibility between the interlocutors, given their mutual need for a better cognitive organization of the social situation. A person could adjust his/her speech actions for them to be easier to understand for the listener, and the listener would take in the information most digestible of the speaker.

When the main concern is not cognitive organization, the identity maintenance
function can come into action. This occurs when an interlocutor wants to present him-/herself in the most positive manner. The interlocutor will then do anything to enhance his/her own perception of others through speech and will not take any negative utterances about him/her into consideration. S/he will, on the other hand, to some extent, select between the statements s/he receives (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 86). The interlocutor will converge or diverge, depending on what suits her/his idea of the perception made by others. Speakers can attempt to reduce traces of accents when speaking other codes, so that they will speak similar to the majority. They do this, not to gain approval, but rather to avoid standing out (Ibid.). They thus converge for the sake of their own and not for others.

6.9 Code-switching

6.9.1 Code-switching as a Way of Accommodating
A way of accommodating and signaling one’s belonging to a certain speech community or an ethnic group, is by code-switching. Code-switching can be defined as a voluntary choice that can be used to show bonds and sympathy to speakers of the same code. Wardhaugh mentions an example of Spanish-Americans who will switch and mix between Spanish and English to show their bond to the Latin society in America. However, many of them speak both English and Spanish fluently (Wardhaugh, 2006: 108-9). According to Kathryn A. Woolard “[c]odeswitching can be defined as an individual’s use of two or more language varieties in the same speech event or exchange” (ed. Duranti, 2006: 73-74).

Code-switching occurs when speakers of two or more codes, that being both different languages, as well as dialects and slang within one language, choose to switch between their available codes (Wardhaugh, 2006, 101). When code-switching takes place from sentence to sentence it is called “intersententially” and when it takes place within a sentence it is called “intra-sententially”. Code-switching can, as mentioned be both a complete switch from one code to another, as well as it can be a mix of
words and sentences from different codes to form a meaning. Code-switching can be used both by people, who have a full vocabulary in the languages they speak, as well as by people who know only parts of languages.

There are numerous technical details involved in the field of code-switching. However, the focus in this project will lie solely on the social perspective of it; particularly the code-switching between different languages as bi-or multilinguals might do.

Code-switching can also be used to distance or diverge oneself from the out-group or simply just a member of the out-group who does not speak the same codes. Code-switching is seen as a way of expressing identity and signalising belonging (Wardhaugh, 2006: 108-9): “We are what we are, but we do have the ability to present ourselves in different ways.” (Wardhaugh, 2006: 114-15).

6.9.2 Code-switching as a Resource
According to the Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-Switching (Bullock & Toribio, 2009: 97-98), code-switching is in itself a socio-linguistic way of acting. This explains the large amount of variation of code-switching in groups, but also within an individual’s code-switching repertoire. As mentioned above, code-switching also takes place amongst peers to show sympathy and solidarity, but there is also code-switching taking place within hierarchies of age and social rank. Code-switching can, in this regard, be seen as a resource: “Factors within the conversation where CS\textsuperscript{5} takes place: CS is a major conversational resource for speakers, providing further tools to structure their discourse beyond those available to monolinguals” (Bullock and Toribio, 2009: 99). Bullock and Toribio explain how a resource full code-switcher can use the different codes to avoid conflicts. Adjusting one’s language, by taking the role of a stereotype that has either a positive or negative

\textsuperscript{5} CS = code-switching
connotation in society. For instance, the code-switching used amongst peers will
probably be different from the one used in a job interview. The talented code-switcher
will be able to benefit from the societal expectations and adjust to gain most out of
the situation. This occurs every day and everybody uses code-switching; often within
one language. In this project, the focus however lies in the cross language
communication. Thus, the next section will deal with some of the problems that
might occur when one code-switches out of need rather than choice.

6.9.3 Code-switching as a Need Rather Than Choice
So far it has been implicit that code-switching happens by choice, but another
concern, in the field of code-switching, is language disorder, erosion and inadequate
acquisition. When dealing with insufficient language use, Bullock and Toribio argue
that a language can be acquired inadequately or it can be eroded with time (2009:
256). The actual cause is a complex matter and, to some extent, uncertain; it can be
either one of the mentioned possibilities or a mix. This can lead to code-switching by
need rather than by choice (Ibid.). According to Bullock and Toribio, this problem
mainly occurs for minority groups who in their everyday life, outside the family,
speak mainly their second language, the majority language (Ibid). They, furthermore,
state that the earlier the native language is restricted, the poorer the language skills
will be. E.g. adult bilinguals, who have had a large exposure to their native language
(first language) throughout their teenage years will have an easier time remembering
and employing it, than adult bilinguals who have only been exposed very little in
their teenage years and adult life (Bullock and Toribio, 2009: 257-260). Code-
switching to the second language out of need may lead to an experience of not being
able to express oneself properly according to the situation: “Lack of availability or
accessibility of certain words and structures can be reflected in the use of CS and
borrowings “flagged” with pauses, hesitations, false starts, repetitions, fillers,
inaccuracy, and reformulation (Olshtain and Barzilay, 1991)” (Bullock & Toribio:
2009: 260).
The frequency of language use will determine the accessibility and ability of mastering it. These issues will mainly occur, if the majority language is used far more than the native. The general insecurity in the native language might be expressed, as described above, by use of code-switching, but it can also be seen as a mix of native code and e.g. societal sentence structure (Bullock and Toribio, 2009: 260-61).

6.10 Sociolinguistic Conclusion

Through Communication Accommodation Theory, it is evident that the dimensions of assimilation, approximation, social interpretation etc. are essential, when concerned with accommodation or sociolinguistic distance; convergence and divergence (Giles & Coupland, 1991: 89). There can be different motives for both linguistic actions, but most importantly, they should all be seen in their contexts. Context means the grade of intersubjectivity shared between the interlocutors, also the setting and the purpose of the social situation etc. Our context will be bi- and multilinguals and navigating between native and foreign language(s), which will thus combine theory on context and accommodation.

Furthermore, ethnicity and the feeling of belonging to some group rather than another, will affect the way one adapts one's language to adjust according to the social situation. Code-switching, as well can be considered a way of accommodating to the surroundings for those, who have the possibilities of switching and mixing between several languages. However, code-switching is not only a resource, but can also be a necessity in certain situations, if one or more codes are not learned or sustained properly.
7.0 Identity

7.1 Introduction to Identity Through Language

Identity has long been an object of academic study. However, in recent times, there has been an increasing interest in the approach of studying identity, for instance through the escalating awareness of self-identity as a result of modernity (Giddens\(^6\), 1991). Many new concepts and perspectives on identity have blossomed during the last 50 years. It is thus important to take these various and constantly developing perspectives into account, when conceptualizing identity.

Identity comprises an abundance of different aspects as well as fields; it encompasses for instance “social identity, ethnic identity, cultural identity, linguistic identity, socioeconomic identity, subjectivity, the self and the voice” (Miller, 1999: 150). Our focus on identity is concerned with a mixture of various forms of identity. We will attempt to confine our investigation to social and personal identity first and foremost, and examine its relationship with language and, additionally, through a foreign language. Due to the fluid subject matter, we will have to circle within some other fields of identity, such as national identity and identity crisis.

We have attempted to find some definitions, we can relate to in our study of socio-linguistic identity. In this project we examined identity from a social constructionist perspective, where identity is comprehended as something fluid.

Nudansk Ordbog (the Present-day Danish Dictionary) depicts identity as follows: derives from Latin = Idem = same, same as (influenced by Late Latin essentitās, being, identidem, repeatedly), from id, it. In addition, Stuart Hall\(^7\) holds the following opinion on the matter: “… identities actually come from

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\(^6\) British sociologist (born 1938).

\(^7\) British/Jamaican cultural theorist and sociologist (born 1932).
outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition” (Hall, 1995). Hall also argues that identity is never unified, and in late modern times it is rather increasingly fragmented and fractured (Hall & Du Gay, 1996: 2). Some influential factors contributing to this could perhaps be the increasing globalisation or the mass movement of people that Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman also discuss. Hall and Du Gay (1996), conceptualize identity as a process of continual emerging and becoming.

7.2 You Are What You Are
The traditional conception of identity can be associated with the humanistic and essentialist comprehension of a core, something permanent. An essence that was final, not negotiable, as a result of that particular person’s socialisation, i.e. the social, economic and cultural backgrounds all were essential during the upbringing and would determine the outcome of the person’s identity. The idea was, that while going through life, though having many experiences, one would still possess the same identity; have the same views on a matter and act as always. Social Constructionism challenges this perception by being anti-humanistic and anti-essentialistic (Burr, 1995: 40). According to the social constructionist perception, one’s feelings, behavior and thoughts change depending on who one is interacting with (Ibid.). Nonetheless, “… it makes no sense to ask which of these is the real you. They both are, but each version of “you” is a product of your relationship with others” (Burr, 1995: 27). Social constructionism especially insists that one is critical towards taken for granted knowledge, as for example the idea about a stable core within the identity (Burr, 1995: 3).

Previously, the comprehension of identity as possessing an unchangeable core has been criticized and discarded. However, the discussion whether there exists some

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8 Polish sociologist (born 1925).
permanent part of the identity, with the likeliness of changing, is still an ongoing discussion.

7.3 Identity as a Process
Per Shultz Jørgensen⁹ (1999) understands identity as something one attempts to create or construct, which takes place when interacting with others, through life experiences by performing something, and during everyday life. The construction of identity is a constant process that never ceases. “Identity is accordance with others and with itself. The social identities represent various options that are being tested, assessed, contemplated, and involved/implicated in the core one gradually constructs as an adequate image of oneself: the personal identity” ¹⁰ (Brørup et al, 2003: 179).

Furthermore, Schultz Jørgensen depicts identity as having two dimensions: the personal (internal) and the social (external) identity. Every construction of identity consists of both dimensions. However, they are not inseparable, but intertwined processes that are continuously in interaction (Schultz Jørgensen, 1999: 48-62). Thus, the construction of identity is highly dependent on society and hereby culture, occurring both within and around the individual.

7.4 Internal and External Dimensions of Identity
The internal conditions are based on everything that is happening within us (psychological factors); how we perceive ourselves, what we stand for, how we want to be, etc. The external conditions are based on everything that is happening around us (society and culture), what social group and/or community we are included in, how others perceive us etc. Identity is thus both the personal “life story” as well as the social role one acquires or is ascribed within the community one is a part of (Ibid.). However, although identity should be understood as a process, Schultz Jørgensen still claims the existence of a core within the identity. The core consists of a permanent

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⁹ Per Schultz Jørgensen (1933) Danish professor at Danmarks Pedagogiske Universitet (Danish School of Education), earlier chairman for Børnerådet (Children’s Council).

¹⁰ Own translation
part that is transmitted from arena to arena and interacts with the rest of the influential factors. However, he dissociates from the traditional perception by stating that this core undergoes changes and can be influenced throughout life.

7.4.1 Personal Aspects of Identity – Internal Conditions

Jan Tønnes Hansen\textsuperscript{11} depicts the internal conditions of identity as the individual’s personal story in that it entails everything from experiences to adventures. He distinguishes between the “I” and the “me”. The “I” denotes the part of the individual that acts, reflects, thinks etc. and furthermore embodies the conscience. The “me” is comprehended as the inner “essence,” the persona within the individual, the part that is shown outwardly that others relate to. This causes the belief of being “good enough” and moreover it also causes self-esteem (Tønnes Hansen, 2000: 17). Tønnes Hansen argues that it is not enough to want to be oneself, one also has to act accordingly to oneself, it is thus not only the aspiration of wanting to be someone, one also has to actually act and be that person. He emphasizes the importance of nurture within the relation between the “I” and the ”me,” or even between how one acts and the persona one is (Ibid.). In addition, he accentuates the fact that the distinction between the “I” and ”me” enables the understanding that some people can be “I”-strong, as they portray a strong identity without a nurtured relationship between the “I” and “me”. This can be understood as a limited presentation of someone’s identity in that the actions are carried out without any reflections upon, whether the actions correspond with the “me”, what the person stands for and who that person is. It is furthermore important within the “…daily production of oneself” (Brørup et al, 2003: 179) to present a fairly cohesive image that can be accepted by others, but also that proves correct to oneself, i.e. that the identity possesses consistency. This is portrayed within the lifestyle, opinions and specific choices. These are the essential matters that will convey who one is (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{11} Cand.psych., PH.D., lecturer within psychology at Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet (Danish School of Education). Born 1963
7.4.2 Sociological and Cultural Aspects of Identity – External Conditions

Thomas Ziehe\(^\text{12}\) argues, from a socio-psychological perspective, that today it is up to the individual him-/herself to create his/her own world (Ziehe, 2003: 88). This means that one is the architect of his/her own identity. The constructed “private world” hence becomes a collection of private and contemporary culture’s norms and values, which the individual will see as the foremost important in his/her life (Ibid.). The individual alone has to ascribe artefacts and situations different values, interpret signs within culture in order to understand the worth of oneself, and furthermore, what s/he stands for and represents. Giddens draws attention to the fact that the construction of identity is a process that constantly must be created and developed by the individual. The individual is thus continuously faced with new decisions that have to be made, where the consequences are pre-calculated and/or unknown. And furthermore, he argues that the close relations become the object of reflexivity; “A person only becomes committed to another when, for whatever reason, she or he decides to be so” (Giddens, 1991: 91-3) and has the time for it – one exclusively has to choose who to be with, and when this will fit with one’s “private world”. These are the “pure relations” according to Giddens (1991).

Giddens distinguishes between two kinds of reflexivity. The first one is a common trait in people; thinking when acting, called a reflexive act regulation. The other is a distinctive characteristic concerning modernity, which occurs at two levels: at an institutional and at a personal level. Reflexivity in the modern society, Giddens argues, is understood as the steady use of obtained knowledge about conditions for modern systems and social organisation forms. The augmentation in self-reflection is mainly by means of mass communication where the past, present and future become noticeable and are employed as a mirror in relation to reflection. The social praxes, the actions executed by the individual, are continually being studied. The mirror is supposed to symbolize how a person can view him-/herself through the eyes of

\(^{12}\) Thomas Ziehe (1947) professor at the institute of pedagogy at the university in Hanover.
others, and hence become self-reflexive upon own actions. It is a sort of cause and effect, where an individual’s actions cause an effect that the individual will later reflect upon. The result can then consequently change due to new acquired information, where the preceding actions can be understood as linked to traditions, and furthermore were not able to be thought beyond those traditions.

However, it cannot be concluded that reflexivity implies a superior or more reliable knowledge. In contrast, reflexivity does cause insecurity, and thereby doubt due to the constant reflexivity, which means that everything is being rethought and revised independently of traditions (Kaspersen, 2001: 125-127).

7.5 Connection Between Language and Identity
Identity can be comprehended as self-defined. One defines one’s own identity, the self-perception; who one is along with other’s perception of him/her. It is through interaction and hereby language that one “finds” oneself, and thus constitutes one’s identity. In this relationship, language plays an essential part, given that it is through language we can explain to others who we are and what we represent, but also understand how others perceive us. People strive to achieve the acceptance of others. At the same time this acceptance creates breeding ground for the development and construction of identity, because it is within this group or community that we are a part of, and at the same time identify with. Furthermore, Ziehe argues that people choose who they want to be with in their own “private world” or community and, by this, indicate what community they belong to, and hereby how they want to be perceived (Ziehe, 2003: 89). The social group and community one is present in, is therefore highly important in relation to identity. It is, however, not only the social aspect that is meaningful to our identity, but also the verbal behaviour, given that it is through this one is actually able to express themselves and explain who they are, what they think, and their opinion on different aspects of life (Uldal Christensen, 2004). Hence language becomes a tool, as a means of expression, and additionally,
choice of words and how they are employed is essential when presenting oneself. Intonation, voice, and choice of e.g. divergence or convergence are all a part of identity, and all these aspects are central to a complete understanding of a person. Identity is an inevitable part of everyday life e.g. in school, when acquiring a new language, at the workplace and so on. One is always more or less forced to perform who they are through interaction with others, thus also through language.

Lastly, language and identity remain as two terms constantly interacting within every aspect of everyday life (university, job, sport activities etc.). Social communities within specific contexts (language school, among friends or family etc.) play a great part for the individual’s usage of language as well as for the construction of identity (Uldal Christensen, 2004).

7.6 Identity Through a Foreign Language
7.6.1 Language Identity
As mentioned above, language inevitably contributes to defining a person's identity through interactions. Language is therefore a symbolic marker of identity, and constructed through language. Identity is thus socially constructed.

Within one language, it is possible to have several identities, or roles, as they also can be seen as. For instance, certain words or a certain language are used with parents, while another is used among friends. This is usually not something that anyone attaches any significance to. This exemplifies how one undertakes different roles during the day in just one language and often without even noticing it. Nevertheless, one might develop a completely different identity when expressing something through another language than one's mother tongue. In relation to that, David Block\textsuperscript{13} (2007) defines language identity as “...the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might

\textsuperscript{13} Senior lecturer in languages at the Institute of Education, University of London.
be known as a language, a dialect or a sociolect\textsuperscript{14}” (Block, 2007: 40).

7.6.2 National and Bicultural Identity

One can both be obliged to speak a foreign language in one's own or in a foreign country. In relation to this, the issue of whether or not a foreigner acquires a national identity, from the specific country that s/he is currently living in, arises. Even though everyone has their own personal identity/ies, there will most likely always be overall identities of a country consisting of widespread common views and opinions related to lifestyle and values. As Breakwell, stresses: “\textit{there is no such thing as a 'national identity' in an absolute sense. Every nation has many national identities since each individual, in social context, negotiates what the meaning of his or her national identity is and can renegotiate moment by moment}” (Breakwell in Oakes, 2001: 39). These national identities along with values, lifestyles etc. could play an important role in acquiring a new language. This is mainly because the degree of agreement and sympathy of these subjects can affect the approach of the learning processes. This issue is, according to Block, pointed out by Wallace E. Lambert\textsuperscript{15}, when he treats bicultural\textsuperscript{16} identity, which takes the individual's affiliation to a certain country into consideration. Consequently, a bicultural identity is dependent on the feelings concerning a country, be that of its language, people or culture in general (Block, 2007: 50, quoting Lambert, 1972). This is important, if moving to another country, going abroad or travelling for a long period of time.

7.6.3 Crisis-stricken and Insecure Identities

Being in a position where one cannot use his/her mother tongue as means of expression, for instance because it is not spoken in the given social setting or country, identity can ultimately become unstable. This is a result of not being “...the first

\textsuperscript{14} A sociolect is a variety of a language that the members of a particular social class or social group speak (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary).

\textsuperscript{15} Former Canadian professor of social psychology and bilingualism (1922-2009).

\textsuperscript{16} One who possesses two cultural identities.
language self”, which is defined as “...the self that could make itself known, to the world and to itself, in its first language” (Granger, 2004: 56). As an example, native English speaker Richard Schmidt carried out a five months study in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in the 1980s. While learning Portuguese, he experienced frustrations due to the inability to be himself. While teaching in a university he found the breaks in the staff room particularly embarrassing due to the silence caused by his lack of Portuguese small talk skills. Even though they progress, the same experience emerges on several occasions. These observations can be seen as changes in identity, because he is incapable of expressing his thoughts, and thereby acting as he usually would or as his native language identity usually would.

However, Schmidt does not lose his courage and feels incited to learn more, whenever he starts speaking and finds out that he is unable to finish the sentence or express exactly what he wants to. Encouragement thus eases the learning process and speeds up the regaining of his lost identity. At the end of his stay, Schmidt concludes that he never did feel “… as though he was a whole human being in Portuguese” (Block, 2007: 71). Schmidt is trying hard both to learn the language and socialise with the Brazilians, so it seems thought provoking that he still cannot seem to “find” himself in the language. Nevertheless he experiences “noticing” which describes “… the phenomenon whereby language learners register that particular language features occur or are used in particular ways where previously their occurrence and use would have gone undetected” (Ibid.). Firstly, this confirms that identity primarily is created through language, and secondly, that he has explored how difficult it can be to express identity through a foreign language when one usually does not consider one's everyday life vocabulary very thoroughly (Day 2004, according to Block 2007: 69-71).

In relation to this, Bauman stresses how a confused or torn identity can be seen as a “language specific disorder”. It is explained as an abrupt feeling of discomfort, felt
due to the inability “…to read the situation properly and to choose between alternative actions” (Bauman, 1991: 1). For instance, when both surroundings and language(s) are unknown, it can be difficult to know how to act, especially if the language is a hindrance. In addition, Georg Simmel\(^\text{17}\) (1908), according to Kurt H. Wolff, provided a discussion about “the stranger”, which can be used in order to examine how foreigners are perceived in groups. How one is perceived by others, together with own perception, highly influences identity. A foreigner could differ in skin colour, nationality, religion and so on while a group could be a work place, five friends, a different country etc. The only requirement was that the group must have something in common with the individual such as religion, work, age etc. and the individual must never have been a part of the group before. In relation to the stranger, Simmel drew attention to the two terms “nearness” and “remoteness” (Wolff, 1964: 402), which describe the ambivalence about “… being intimate with one's surroundings while remaining metaphorically outside them” (Simmel, according to Block, 2007: 22). In other words, being physically part of a group without feeling or actually being equal with the other members.

Hence, in relation to our assumption, when being situated in a foreign country among people with a different native language, the national identity changes as well as the role played by the individual, even if the individual is part of a social group in the country. This is mainly due to language and cultural hindrances, because it is not possible for the individual to present him-/herself as s/he does in the native language. Even if it was possible, the foreigner might still be perceived as a stranger. Ultimately, this can create a feeling of being left out. It is then highly possible that a usually outgoing personality becomes an introvert (Block 2007: 169).

7.6.4 An Unstable Sense of Self

Bauman emphasises that, “[n]o thoughts are given to identity when “belonging”

\(^{17}\) Former German philosopher and sociologist (1858-1918).
comes naturally, when it does not need to be fought for, earned, claimed and defended” (Bauman, 1999: xxx). By natural, he means a gesture or speech act performed without a thought, because it is carried out as it usually is, more or less subconsciously. For instance, one rarely thinks when adapting language according to social context. However, when being situated in a foreign country or simply when being obliged to speak a foreign language (as in the example above from Brazil), a conflict can arise. Identity thus “…becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty”, as stressed by Kobena Mercer (Block, 2007: 21, quoting Mercer 1990). So identity can stop being natural caused by many, and often new, impressions, because they can shake an otherwise stable identity. As a result, the individual is forced to think before performing an otherwise normal and well-known act that usually would not acquire much, if any, consideration. Therefore, being situated in this new context generates new thinking patterns for the individual. Thus, “…when individuals move across geographical or sociocultural borders” (Block, 2007: 20) they might suddenly and unexpectedly find themselves in a position, where previously known feelings of a stable self disappear. Hence, a conflict can arise caused by the individual entering “…a period of struggle to reach a balance” because “…any feelings they might have of a stable self are upset…” (Ibid.) Thus, the individual suddenly starts to consider things that used to be taken for granted.

Paradoxically, the individual tends to require a certain level of social interaction in such a situation, where s/he is taken out of known everyday life. Since humans are gregarious beings, they function best in interactions and when the possibility to express themselves is present. Consequently, a person might both need and want to be able to express feelings or thoughts that s/he might not be capable of, due to a potential lack of language skills. In the end, this hindrance can provoke annoyance or even anxiety and a feeling of being lost. This means that usually one finds him-/herself in well-known surroundings, but as emphasised by Block; if the
“sociohistorical, cultural and linguistic environment” suddenly changes and becomes indefinable it can cause a destabilisation of the individual's sense of self (Block, 2007: 21).

7.6.5 Identity Loss and Declassing
Another aspect of identity is declassing (Block 2007: 91). This concept emphases how an otherwise skilled and intelligent person can end up being perceived as incompetent or unintelligent person, due to misperception because s/he is incapable of speaking the language (Broeder et al., 1996, according to Block 2007: 81). This is a clear misunderstanding of not just abilities, but also of identity. It can cause a loss of known identity, because the individual suddenly finds him-/herself in unfamiliar positions that s/he are actually over-qualified to exercise, or in between foreign people that are far from their known and safe lives. Therefore, the social status can change hierarchically, even though the person might have been of important matter in her/his home country. However, it is not only the social status but also the identity that is influenced by this in that one also measures oneself from one’s job, social circle economy etc. This means that what is also important for the construction of an identity is social and cultural capital, to employ Bourdieu's fruitful terms\textsuperscript{18}. How one comes across and consequently is perceived by the natives in a foreign country can ultimately be of great importance in relation to the formation of a 'new' identity in a foreign language.

7.6.6 Identity, Culture and Surroundings
Identity is thus also linked to culture, and usually a persons' identity is socially constructed through the culture that s/he is brought up in. If the person is then taken away from the particular culture, it might invoke a confused identity. Language constitutes, as mentioned, the identity to a high degree. This is also stressed by

\textsuperscript{18} French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu describes the phenomenon cultural capital as the educational, social and intellectual knowledge as well as high cultural knowledge that can be possessed by an individual (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2007: 352).
Brown (1980), who states that “… your self-identity is inextricably bound up with your language, for it is in the communicative process – the process of sending out messages and having them “bounced” back – that such identities are confirmed, shaped and reshaped” (Brown, 1980: 53-54). This supports how creating an identity is all about communication, independently of how bad the language is. As long as something comes out, people will be able to perceive the individual in one way or the other, which they cannot do, if nothing is communicated. This also means that if a person usually is funny at home but cannot master the foreign language well enough, s/he might not be as funny in the foreign country as s/he usually is, thus a change of identity. The more one's identity changes, the more confused one can get. This is especially relevant if one cannot recognise him-/herself in the foreign language.

7.7 Conclusion

From an early age, people consciously or subconsciously categorise themselves, as well as others, into social groups; that be according to ethnicity, nationality etc. The values ascribed to the individual through their membership of a certain group, can be seen as contributing to their personal identity (Oakes 2001: 35). Thus, when an individual leaves that group, the identity can become insecure, because the individual is no longer with his/her social group. This is how identity can change through new constellations, consisting of both new people and a new language.

However, in a second language it is not solely about the identity that is inhabited or has developed in the individual, for instance through belonging to a social group. It is very much also the identity that is ascribed or attributed by others through interactions. In other words how one is perceived. This is crucial in new surroundings, where perception easily can be based on misunderstandings for instance if the subject is not capable of expressing what s/he aimed for. This can ultimately result in misperceptions where individuals can develop a feeling of not belonging (Block 2007: 157). Hence, it requires reflection to interact in new
constellations, because the individual is forced to consider how to present him-/herself and his/her identity in a new linguistic setting.

Consequently, when learning to speak a new language, it is not simply a matter of “...adopting foreign norms of behaviour but about finding an acceptable accommodation between one's first culture and the target culture” (Block, 2007: 116, quoting Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001). It is thus important to find a balance in order to develop a stable identity and a feeling of self-confidence in the given language and country.

As shown, it seems that a new language identity is tied to the individual's already existing identity, the new language and the new surroundings. Thus, it is the interrelationship that determines how the new language identity evolves. Furthermore, it seems impossible to maintain one's own identity in new surroundings, because it will automatically change through new social constellations.

In this section, it has become evident that it seems pivotal to actively engage in the new social constructions. By actively participating, it should be easier to improve one's language skills and, through that, become more self-confident in the language and therefore also more confident around the speakers of another code. This could help generate a feeling of acceptance, which is why the identity should develop stably. This said, the individual might still feel slightly different in a foreign language because it requires thinking before talking and because cultural differences can complicate verbal interaction. Thus, as Schmidt also found in his study, it will be difficult to feel as a whole human in the foreign language, as long as it is not mastered to perfection where it is possible to respond instantly without giving the language a thought.
8.0 Introduction to Participants

Our focus group consisted of four participants from varying backgrounds. While they were largely different from one another, what they had in common was their command of two or more languages, and that they studied on the international line at Roskilde University. Though they attend the same university, none of them are close friends. Prior to the interview, we gave each participant a small questionnaire in order to assess their linguistic history. Following will be a brief description of each participant.

Dimitri is a 19 year-old male with Danish, American, and Greek backgrounds. His mother comes from Denmark, his father is a first-generation Greek-American, and Dimitri grew up in America. In his home, he grew up speaking Greek to his parents and English to his sisters, while outside of the house he spoke English only. Therefore, both can be considered his mother tongues. At the age of eighteen he began to learn Danish. However, he is not completely fluent in it. Though he has gone to schools in America, Greece, and Denmark, they have all been international schools, where English was the operating language. Therefore, he feels most comfortable with the English language. He has been living in Denmark for one year and does not know how long he will remain here.

Louise is a 21 year-old female that is Danish and has Danish as her mother tongue. She also speaks English, German, and French and began learning these languages at around the age of six. Inside and outside her home she speaks both Danish and English, although she feels most comfortable with the English language. She has been thinking in English since the age of 12.

Maarja is a 22 year-old Estonian female. Her mother tongue is Estonian. She also speaks English and has knowledge of some Danish and Russian. She began learning
these languages in primary school. In Denmark she speaks both English and Danish outside of her home while she speaks English inside her home, and in social settings. Because she has been living in Denmark and operating in English for three years, she feels as comfortable with English as she does with Estonian. She does not know how long she will remain in Denmark.

Bettina is a 19 year-old German female. She speaks German, English, and French. While German is her mother tongue, she began learning English from birth. Though she grew up in Germany, her education was in English. Thus, she is equally comfortable with both German and English. She started learning French at around the age of 10. While at home with her parents, she speaks German. When at home, she speaks various languages depending on whom she is with. She has been in Denmark for two months and plans to stay here for a total of six months.

Though we originally thought we had gathered students from different backgrounds, we found out in the interview that this was not the case. Both Bettina and Dimitri attended international schools while growing up. These schools use the International Baccalaureate (IB) system, meaning that each IB school follows the same curriculum so they are especially suited for children who move between countries.

9.0 Analysis

9.1 Introduction to Analysis

To provide a thorough analysis of the collected data, it is important to see different layers of sociolinguistic interaction; the ones played out within the focus group interview and the ones taking place in other social situations described by the interlocutors. This entails both a conscious and a subconscious level to analyze. The consistency between the two is not a natural matter of course, i.e. what is stated in the interview about social interaction is not necessarily consistent with what actually
happens during the interview. This matter will be taken into consideration on the basis of our theories and the conducted interview.

The analysis is divided into seven parts, where each part will consider the above mentioned. Part 1 examines the establishment of an in- and outgroup, both within the focus group and outside as well. This is one of the first actions that occurs during the interview. Part 2 treats power relations and hierarchies in relation to languages, given that language hierarchies are formed within the group, as two of the interlocutors consider themselves native English speakers. Part 3 is concerned with code-switching, as a method of accommodating or of necessity in certain social situations. Both will be examined as seen concretely in the interview and according to the participants’ experiences. Part 4 is equally concerned with communication accommodation as the participants have experienced it and as it is inevitable in the interview. Part 5 is concerned with the link between language and culture. We examine the participants’ different perceptions and experiences on this subject in relation to their backgrounds. Part 6 investigates national identity, considering the connotation of home and “feeling of belonging”. Lastly, part 7 covers a thorough examination of each of the participants’ relations to identity change, both on a conscious and subconscious level.

Throughout this section, the most important words, phrases or sentences within the examples will be marked in **bold** typing, and the examples will be in *italics* to separate them from the rest of the text. Furthermore, the participants will be referred to by their first initials in the transcription quotes.

**9.2 Formation of Ingroup and Outgroup**

There were two different backgrounds amongst the participants of our focus group, an international, shared by Bettina and Dimitri, and a monolingual, shared by Louise and Maarja. This quickly leads to a separation between an ingroup defined by Bettina
and Dimitri, and an outgroup consisting of Louise and Maarja. The connection established appears from the following example:

B: ...I basically grew up speaking both German and English, I went to an English kindergarten, so English is ...[stopped] In my schooling system we called it the kind of A2, like A was your native language and then ([interruption] by D: AB)(cannot hear what she says because of D’s interruption), and B is like your foreign language.
D: Were you IB?
B: yearh (smiling)
D: yearh, same here (smiling) (appendix: 106).

As seen, Bettina and Dimitri immediately converge towards each other and form a bond consisting of the same educational background and on several occasions defining themselves as “us” opposed to “them” i.e. Maarja and Louise. This could indicate an implicit type of divergence:

D: I mean it goes with... it is a very hard point to make because the two of us (D and B) we speak of internationals and internationalization and our version is completely different from what anyone else in this room believes, and like, international for us means a very specific setting... (appendix: 119).

Throughout the interview, Bettina and Dimitri’s body language was supportive in looking at one another, laughing consistently and mainly addressing each other. Furthermore, they tend to complete each others' sentences and generally behave supportively towards one another. It is common to have presuppositions about social situations, i.e. different matters will have a various degrees of importance depending on the given social situation or context (cf. “Perceived Structures of Social Situations”: chapter 6.4). It is uncertain how Bettina and Dimitri have decoded the situation specifically, but still, it can be interpreted that they have seen each other as co-operative, rather than competitive. One could argue that in this inter-group communication (between in- and outgroup) they have become more homogenous in their statements in order to signify uniformity even when their opinions are not necessarily coherent or identical. Furthermore, as stated in the theory on identity,
Ziehe (2003) explains how people choose with whom to socialize and associate. They hereby indicate what group they belong to and how they want to be perceived. Bettina and Dimitri's interaction and supportiveness towards each other could be an example of the aforementioned. One could interpret how they quickly read the situation, and are drawn towards each other as a result of their high level of English as well as their backgrounds. Belonging to the group of the "internationals", they identify with this etiquette and it becomes an integrated part of their identity.

We assume, the forming of an ingroup-outgroup within the focus group was on a supposedly subconscious level, but when turning to the described social actions of the participants’ narratives, it becomes evident that they are more aware of their participation in a certain ingroup. In the previous extract, Dimitri defines Bettina and himself as part of a bigger ingroup – “internationals”. Stating that “we come from an international environment” and “they always ask” (appendix: 125), he creates an oppositional relation between him as a world citizen as opposed to a common person:

D:… But I mean it is kind of hard for anyone else to relate to that because they don’t really understand the, ehrm, it’s almost like a cultural background that we carry. Like we said before we don’t have a really deeply rooted sense in any national country, but we do have this feeling of a community (appendix: 119-120).

Bettina furthermore converges towards Dimitri by supporting him in his categorization of the international community, by stating:

B: And it’s the feeling of being a part of this group of people that comes from everywhere. Even the feeling of being everywhere and this knowing that there is something else out there that makes it a special thing to be a part of an international group, I guess… (appendix: 120).

Unification is created between a group of people “that comes from everywhere”, even though this definition is literally impossible, given that identity
can be seen as culturally and historically relative. One could wonder what this sense of community would be based on. Although Bettina’s intension is to emphasize that this group does not define itself by nationality or ethnicity, this is exactly what is done by making another categorization; namely by the group of “internationals”, which is made as an opposition to other social categories. Louise implicitly accepts that Bettina and Dimitri form a strong ingroup, by not replying or counter arguing, when she is interrupted and contradicted. Whether this is by choice or because she accepts her place in the hierarchy, one can only speculate.

9.3 Language Expressing Power Relations

Within the focus group, a hierarchy is implicitly produced, expressing the power relations between the interlocutors. This can be said to be a language hierarchy, which means that the ones who master the majority language the best will have a higher position or possibility of gaining a higher rank in the hierarchy. This is seen when Dimitri and Bettina dominate the conversation. They seem more accustomed to English than the others. Both pronunciation and vocabulary are connected to one’s competencies, how they are perceived by others has an effect on one’s authority as well (cf. “Language Hierarchies”: chapter 6.3). The general level of spoken English within the focus group is relatively high, but still there are some differentiations. Knowing the language, but not having a full repertoire as a native speaker can affect one’s confidence and thus position in the social situation. This can be examined in Maarja’s reticence and her occasional modest statements. The interview has been proceeding for quite a while before she enters the discussion. One might suggest that this is given her insecurity when speaking English. Dimitri and Bettina, on the other hand, as a result of their strong confidence in English, express their opinions freely and without hesitation. They emphasise the importance of speaking “proper” English as essential to be understood:

L: You could turn it the other way around and say, for example, English has become
so international in a way, that there is no right way to speak it and there is no right context as such. [interruption]
D: Ehrm (Disagreeing)
B: Yeah no! [laughter from D and B] because there is a right way to speak it. Because there is a right way to speak it is for other people to understand exactly what you are saying, and in order to be able to say what you want to say and have other people understanding it you have to be at the core of the language.
D: Yeah, like an American would relate to British just the same way as an Australian would relate to British. And the American and the Australian would understand each other (appendix: 120).

As seen, there is a strong disagreement between the participants, where Bettina feels that there is a core in the language that one needs to understand to get the full communicative profit. Dimitri provides examples of England, America and Australia, as if these are the only nations and the only people who have the possibility of communicating across nations without misunderstandings, as if these are the nations that solely possess the “core of the language” (appendix: 122) that Bettina mentioned. Dimitri and Bettina attempt to define what they might categorize as proper English. One should see this definition as subjective. An important term here is the evaluative meaning of the speaker’s expressions and statements. The evaluative meaning should be understood in the sense that it is impossible to describe a matter in an evaluatively neutral manner, as described by Giles & Coupland. There is no objective description of any matter, it will always be influenced by one’s presuppositions, which affects the use of language (cf. “Language Determining Context”: chapter 6.5). Bettina and Dimitri thus strive to define English objectively, even though, what Bettina calls, “the core” of it for them is defined subjectively. Seen from a social constructionist perspective, there can be no objective definitions, given that everything we define is defined by our worldview, which is influenced by demographic categories as one’s gender, age, sexuality etc. One creates a version of reality depending on who one is. As mentioned earlier, we construct our identity in the interaction with others through language. Therefore, our versions of reality can only be seen as one out of many possible versions. So what seems to be proper
English for Dimitri and Bettina is not necessary the same for others, such as e.g. Louise and Maarja.

9.4 Hierarchies Within Groups

As earlier stated, identity is not only created by oneself through interactions with others, but also influenced by the social group that one belongs to. By consciously choosing to socialize with someone specific, one subconsciously deselects socializing with others, which hereby influences one's identity. Additionally, this plays a significant role in how one strives to be perceived. The groups one is a part of therefore also represent a part of one's identity i.e. one chooses a group that has to conform to one's identity and vice versa.

As mentioned, an ingroup is quickly established between Dimitri and Bettina. This is quite interesting, given that they already are in a group - the focus group (this is however not a group of their choice). Nonetheless, they still seem to have the need to separate themselves and hereby passively form the two others as part of an outgroup. Whether this is conscious, because they feel better-equipped linguistically and recognize each other's backgrounds, or unconscious due to other factors, is unknown. Based on their socialization and educational background, one could interpret that they implicitly define their group as being of higher ranking; Dimitri even mentions it in the following example:

OB: So do you think your friends from back home would perceive you differently than the ones from here? Could you explain how your, like for example Greek friends or your Danish friends see you in another way?
D: I'm pretty sure that they would, like ehm, not a huge difference but like, I can see myself here in the classroom or in the house, I am very much involved, like, I know a lot of people and I really put myself out there because it's like I feel really comfortable with the English, whereas in my old school, it's not that I wasn't involved... but I was only involved when it was in English... Ehm and I feel like, that there is definitely a different social ranking or whatever that you place yourself into depending on how well you know the
Dimitri is linking the language abilities within a group to the status one is ascribed or acquires. He argues that the better one knows a common language, the more comfortable one feels speaking and interacting within that language. During the interview, it is obvious given that he is speaking his native language and thus has an advantage and becomes the most dominating participant from the very beginning. The same can be said about Bettina. Furthermore, it is through language identity is expressed and understood. Mastering a language fluently makes it easier for others to understand who one is. One does not have to be concerned about word choice or pronunciation and can easily perform the identity one strives to express.

Bettina and Dimitri see this as a matter of course and furthermore express and use it to their advantage to establish their status within the group. On several occasions they interrupt the other interlocutors and each other, especially when the others are looking for words or hesitating. To them, this however seems to be a natural consequence when they appear superior linguistically. They boldly disagree with other perspectives and opinions, where Louise and Maarja are more moderate in their utterances. Considering Bettina's word choice in the following quote, she, consciously and subconsciously, reveals how she perceives herself in contrast to others who do not possess the same level of English.

B: *But it is true, because if I can’t understand a lecturer in their English, I mean it *drams down my level* because when I raise my hand to say something in class I’ll try to make it easier for them. I mean it sounds really ridiculous but I know they understand everything I’m going to say cause obviously they speak English but just because I cannot always understand what they are saying in English, I’ll try to dumb it down* (appendix: 113).

This quote could demonstrate that Bettina believes that she possesses a higher position within an English-speaking environment, whether it is within the focus group or during lectures. Employing the term "dumb it down", which has a negative connotation to it, she implies that she sees people who do not understand her level as
being limited, and she feels obligated to help them by simplifying her language. The language hierarchy hereby expresses itself in intergroup power relations, in the case of the focus group endorsed by Bettina. Consequently, the feeling of superiority can be comprehended as an invisible ranking within social groups.

9.5 Code-switching

The participants discussed their experiences within code-switching, in what types of situation they code-switch, if it is out of need or choice, and how they feel about it. Dimitri describes his code-switching between his three available languages; Danish, English and Greek, and the slang codes employed within the international schools:

D: That’s really like, it depends because when I am here and people are speaking Danish only or English only I can only do one or the other. Like if four people are speaking Danish around me, I actually have to look at each person and pay attention and I can’t do the half English half Danish. Ehmm and if someone speaks English to me then, there is no way in the world that I can switch into Greek. I can only do two languages in one go. And vice versa if I am speaking Greek with my parents for example and someone comes up to me I can easily switch into English but I can’t do Danish and so it really becomes like necessary to stay focused on one language because if you don’t and you do it, like I can do half Greek and half ehmm English in one sentence or you know half Danish and half English but then you really start losing touch with your language and because you don’t have a cultural background like you really don’t have something that is other than language, language is basically the most important part of your identity and you don’t want it to break down (appendix: 110).

Dimitri states that he can only speak one language at a time, that he cannot speak “half English half Danish”. The next statement follows; he can “only do two languages in one go”. One could interpret this as Dimitri is capable of inter-sententially code-switching, but not intra-sententially code-switching, however what he specifically means by this is not clear (cf. “Code-switching”: chapter 6.9). Furthermore, Dimitri’s experience is that he only masters two languages at a time, and that three languages become too extensive. Danish, English and Greek seem to form a hierarchy in code-switching; English is the language he feels
most comfortable in, and he can switch between English and Danish and between English and Greek. He does not mention the possibility of switching between Greek and Danish. Dimitri continually employs the more objective “you” instead of the more subjective “I”. By this, he generalizes on the basis of own experiences and feelings. He argues that if “you” are navigating within more than the two languages “you” begin to lose “your” identity.

Dimitri’s description of identity loss can symbolize the enclosed confusion by switching between languages and different environments. One can only interpret that what he is referring to by breaking down the identity, must be the change he undergoes every time he transforms language and context and thus identity. How one is perceived by others in foreign surroundings can be highly significant to the construction of the altered personality or identity within that context. If misunderstandings occur, it can cause loss of a known identity, given that one is in an unfamiliar position. One could speculate that Dimitri’s point that if one uses more than two languages, one risks losing one’s identity could be his attempt to reason why he has a limitation in two of the languages (Danish and Greek) and the understandings of these cultures. This could also explain his earlier mentioned over politeness in the Greek culture: “...when I’m speaking Greek I’m very ehrm refined in a way, like putting myself at a distance and only throwing what is absolutely necessary even though I can speak fluently and I can understand everything...” (appendix: 117) and his insecurities in how to act when speaking Danish: “... Like, for example, when I speak Danish I really don’t know how to act...” (Ibid.). His realization of the situation is, he believes, that in the Greek culture, one only gives a little bit of oneself. This could be seen as a fear of giving too much and hereby get misunderstood and in the end develop an unstable identity or an identity in crisis (cf. “Crisis-stricken Identity and Insecure Identities”: chapter 7.6.3).

Thus, his over politeness could be seen as an attempt to limit his feeling of identity “loss”, to employ his own words. It is likely to feel a loss or confusion within identity
in new surroundings, and consequently it would be necessary to change identity or simply adjust to the given surroundings. One could interpret this as a lack of full competency of expressing himself, or missing the previous stable identity that is attached to his preferred language, English. This feeling might cease, when he masters the new language sufficiently. Thus the new identity becomes stable and familiar.

Another important matter within Dimitri’s statement, is his connection between language and identity, where he claims language to be the most important part of the identity (appendix: 110). This portrays a rather nuanced and reflected perspective on the matter, where he actually ties the two factors together. This might not come as a revelation, given that this has been established long before, however, the others are not reflecting upon this like Dimitri.

Dimitri describes a code that would typically only make sense within an ingroup, in this case this specific international school. This common code is described both with a pride of the uniqueness, but also with the underlying sense of compromise, a compromise that is due to insufficiency in common English.

D: So either you form your own little subset of language which is kind of common in international schools. [B: laughing] Like every international school has their own subset or own little words or things that means something specific or you totally keep to the ehm language. I don’t know if you guys agree with that. (appendix: 110).

Later, he explains the language skills of his former co-students at international school:

D: They all come together and they all got English and have grown up in similar situations, like maybe it’s not always English background and maybe their English isn’t perfect, but because that they are part of the club it’s okay, I mean they will still fit in (appendix: 120).
In the following example Bettina and Dimitri discuss code-switching according to specific settings as above, but also according to societal expectations more precisely family norms:

(continued) B: I do and I don’t. Because for me it is very different because I don’t have two backgrounds from my family-
D: Okay.
B:-you know my parents are both German.
D: hmhem
B: So at home I only spoke German. It was a very clear role, that in kindergarten, I spoke English only and at home I spoke German only (appendix: 110-111).

Bettina describes her family rules on language and the difficulties it entails; e.g. the idea that if one mixes the languages it will eventually lead to erosion of the native language and maybe a confused identity. Bettina appears to share this view on the matter, based on her experience of forgetting German words and the need to search for them. She blames this on the fact that she spends so much time in English speaking environments.

Both Bettina and Dimitri have experienced that not all languages are appropriate at all times, there are situations where only e.g. German is acceptable, as well as situations that are more flexible with friends from an international school:

B:….But, and it has happened with my family as well, cause my brother goes to international school still and we have kind of rule in our household that no “Denglish”, like German/ English, Deutch/ English because it happens so easily that when you are surrounded with English people all the time, at home you just start losing the German words. But it happened a lot, “uuhh what’s that word in German” You know.
D: Yeah.
B: So you just say it in English and then everybody in the room is like “no no no it is this in German”. But yeah, it is a bit different from you I guess.
D: No no, cause I see what you say, we had that in my house too.
B: hm hm
D: My sisters and me have grown up with English obviously. We only speak English between us but there are some words like ehhm that is just a lot easier in
Greek, like they come out and same vice versa for speaking Greek with my dad its like or people from school it is so much easier some words in English or the meaning that they have is so much stronger and you can’t really like translate it from one language to the next (appendix: 111).

In this last statement, Dimitri argues that some words, depending on the language, are more suitable or have a stronger or more precise meaning than in other languages. It is an internal feeling rather than external expectations that determines the outcome. So far, both Dimitri and Bettina have described code-switching based on conscious experiences. In the following, Maarja provides examples that are based on not only experiences, but also situations that occur during the interview, where code-switching takes place out of need. Maarja mentions insufficient language use and the relation between her native language, Estonian, and second language, English19.

MA: Well I think at this point I am more confident in ... [pause] ssspeaking in English. I’m, I have been here three years mostly speaking in English. Ashamed as I am, I am losing touch with my native language. I. Of course I can express myself but I wouldn’t know if I could write something academically, like, though I think I might have better possibilities, but I ... am ... not capable of ... expressing myself. (Speaking in a low and slow voice) (appendix: 112).

As mentioned, there are two aspects that are relevant to take up in this example: partly Maarja’s experience and partly how she expresses herself verbally. To start with her own experience; Maarja feels more comfortable in her second language in academic situations, because she is accustomed to operate in English after spending three years in Denmark and is attending the international program for a year and a half. She afterwards employs the word “ashamed” to describe an experienced erosion of her native language as a result of this. Secondly, as can be heard in the recorded interview, Maarja pauses on several occasions, restarts the sentence and searches for the words. This can be seen as a case of, what she is also aware of, not being capable

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19 English is not the majority language in Denmark. However it is the majority language within her circle of friends, which mainly consists of L2 English speakers.
of expressing herself sufficiently according to the situation. The inadequate language vocabulary or momentarily unavailable language is an example of a situation, where code-switching would have been an obvious choice. Maarja would have had this option, if she had been in a situation where she shared a common code with one or more of the other participants. Since this was not a possibility, she consequently slowed down and stopped completely, without finishing her point, it seems. This same search for words is seen again later in the interview, and this time forces her to code-switch to continue her train of thoughts:

MA: Some of my best friends, the foreigners who are here, I can see when they speak with their people from home I cannot recognize because, you know, when you get so like (can't find the word looking at B and says the word in Estonian which happens to be the same in English so B nods) temperamental... you know into the… It is very well perceived. I guess… I’m mumbling now... [laughter] (appendix: 117-118).

9.5.1 Frustration Due to Code-switching

Maarja lacks words, which forces her to either stop or slow down. She chooses to code-switch, while doing so, she looks at Bettina. This can be interpreted either as a sign of randomly searching for help, or because she might think the Estonian word would be similar in German, a point that had come up earlier in the focus group. She is here exposing herself and hereby her identity to criticism and judgement by the others in the room. She is labelled as not being a strong character and being careful. As seen in the example above, Maarja catches herself slowing down, searching for the words and mumbling. This time however, she jokes about it, which could be seen as a self-salvation tool. She is aware of her weaknesses and manages to make a joke out of it given that mumbling was actually one of the conversational topics. Furthermore, this might be her attempt to preserve a higher status in the group, by simply indicating that she might show language insecurity, but still she is aware of it. However, often when misunderstandings or difficulties to express oneself occurs, others might misperceive her as unintelligent and fragile. This example could be
interpreted as declassing (cf. “Identity Loss and Declassing”: chapter 7.6.5), however only figuratively. Maarja’s opinions and statements seem intelligent but due to misperception, she has difficulties with remembering words and does not annunciate. Therefore, she could end up being perceived as incompetent or unintelligent (Broeder et al., 1996, according to Block 2007: 81).

To return to the concrete code-switch in this situation, Maarja says “temperamental” in Estonian and the rest of the group are fast to confirm her in that the word is the same in English. The observers noted that it seemed to be an example of downward convergence, however, this did not stop Bettina and Dimitri from interrupting. This was so to speak a successful code-switch, even though it arose out of need rather than accommodation. The code-switch allowed Maarja to continue with her sentence and potentially finish her statement. Throughout the interview, the observers noticed an overly supportive behavior from the rest of the focus group, as an encouragement by smiling and nodding towards Maarja (OB notes, see appendix). This furthermore supports the interpretation of the other interlocutors converging downwards, as they might perceive Maarja’s language terminology as limited. They thus act supportively, which might facilitate Maarja in expressing herself.

9.6 Accommodation in Formal and Informal Contexts

Another element that has an effect on the language used, depending on the certain context, is the degree of formality and variety. It becomes evident that depending on the language, there are certain perceptions of how and when formal language is employed, and these perceptions vary from language to language, since this is intertwined with culture:

B: ...the only **politeness difference is that in English you only have “you”, but in German you have a polite version of “you” for(...) people that you just met compared to how you speak with your family(...)
D: I think that there is a major difference between my Greek and my English and
Danish, like with the English and Danish I know how to be polite, but I’m not polite to everyone whereas in Greek it took me three years to kind of understand that you don’t use the formal you with everyone. Ehm [laughter] it’s just like you have certain cultural things that you really have to pick up before you really push yourself into a crowd... (appendix: 118-119).

Bettina clearly addresses the formal vs. informal differences between languages; a complexity that Dimitri exemplifies through his experience. As mentioned before, he, to some extent, uses different codes depending on the social context; depending on how he reads the situation and wants others to perceive him. It is essential to know certain norms to decode a situation properly – when a low variety of language should be used (informal context), and when a high variety is suitable (formal context) (cf. theory “The Importance of Language in Context”: chapter 6.2.2).

Dimitri had difficulties understanding the formal norms in Greek, which had an effect on his language use. Dimitri’s difficulties in Greek might be a result of being inadequate in the language. He ties politeness to culture (appendix: 118-119). The degree of politeness varies from language to language and is embedded in culture. Bettina, Dimitri and Maarja all have this experience.

9.6.1 Convergence and Divergence

Throughout the interview it is evident that convergence and divergence takes place in-between the participants. But, only at few points, are the participants conscious about the concrete language accommodation that can occur when interacting.

MA: Yeah, I have been told that I speak very softly in English, I think two grades softer in Danish- or in Estonian so I’m very soft... sound.
L: I think it is something that has to do with ehm, what you are used to.
If you learned your English from example watching television, then you have one kind of intonation that you use, and if you got it from being somewhere with a specific ehm group of people, talking with a specific accent then you might get your intonation from there, so I think it changes on which environment you are in. Ehm, but from my own experiences I know that I am inclined to speak more clearer when I am talking English. I present the words better I think, because you think about it a bit more when you are speaking in a language that isn’t your
Well ... I don’t know if I can agree with that. Because I think Danish in general is a mumbling language. It is very difficult to understand Danish, but I think at this point I consider English more like my daily language so I mumble more in English than I do at home I think I speak more clearly so it's just the environment that you live in… I don’t know (appendix: 116-117).

Louise makes some general statements regarding pronunciation and intonation. She ties the use of these to specific settings, social groups and interactions. These are all examples of linguistic tools that can be used to converge, in the situations Louise mentions, but also diverge. Her personal experience is that she speaks clearer in English than in Danish. She concludes that this must be a result of increased awareness in non-native language. During this conclusion, she returns to generalisations, instead of personal experiences. This could be interpreted, either as, just a manner of speaking, or as a divergence from the idea that, she is not as good at English as a native English speaker.

Maarja’s main language for the past three years has been English. She has experienced that her English pronunciation has become more mumbling, during her stay in Denmark. Maarja, furthermore, states that she speaks clearer English at home, presumably in Estonia. Pronunciation changes, analysed in the perspective of her personal experience, is not a result of insecurity, but rather an unconscious convergence towards the “mumbling society”.

Maarja converges linguistically towards Danish and Danes. This happens even though the accommodation does not take place in the same language as she is converging towards. It is interesting that, in this case, the intonation and pronunciation can be seen as just as important to accommodate to the society, as an actual language shift. We conclude that she has been affected by the “mumbly” Danes.
9.7 Culture and Language – Using Language Internationally

Culture and languages are pivotal points of the discussion that they return to several times during the session. Especially the conflict of moving in-between cultures and languages is essential to our participants. The discussion seen in the quote, in the previous paragraph, continues and Bettina emphasizes that there is an inter-European language understanding, because English is a mix of various invading countries’ languages:

B: Yeah exactly, and ehrm, about the washed up thing, for example *English is composed of French and German you know, and it is washed up in that sense you know... because it’s mixed it is very mixed, but the core of it lies in the history of Great Britain. French people invading, German people invading, a big old mix, and then you get the language. So I think that history and culture are so closely linked that if you look at the history of a language, you get the culture of a language and therefore you cannot divide culture and language, if you know what I mean?*

MA: Yeah we have a lot...But at the same time *I can relate to the Latvian people even though I don’t understand the language at all* (appendix: 123-124).

It seems that Bettina, in order to maintain her bond with Dimitri as English speaking “internationals” and to verify her own argument, she claims that one needs a cultural understanding of a language to understand it. She brings in the historical perspective to ‘defend’ her German background, but still remain credible as an English speaker. It becomes evident that language and culture cannot be separated. The participants’ discussion on whether or not the use of English is tied with specific cultural backgrounds, demonstrates this complexity. Depending on their different backgrounds, they have different perceptions of what English really is. For Dimitri it is not merely an international language, but also his mother tongue. He thus has a quite different relation to the language than the others. One could e.g. also argue that a Danish person would have certain ideas about, what it means to speak correct Danish, and which meanings the certain words would have. Dimitri thus seems to have the same conviction regarding his mother tongue. Louise and Maarja might
perceive it differently, given that English, for them, might be seen more as an international language, used by “everybody” and in a global context. They do not necessarily connect the language with a specific culture conditioned by a nationality, nor a specific set of rules or norms of the language. Bettina’s relation to this matter seems somewhat more nuanced, given her background being so “international”.

9.8 National Identity

One of the first issues raised in the interview, is the matter of belonging to a certain country. What it means to be from a country and what factors are crucial when determining the sense of nationality, or whether people actually feel that they are part of a nation. From our theoretical perspective on identity, national identity is salient in the following example. National identity can be understood as constructed, given that each individual construct his/her national identity depending on the relative context (cf. “National and Bicultural Identity”: chapter 7.6.2). The question was structured to encourage a discussion and reflection upon national identity, and understand how or if they actually constitute themselves in the light of their presupposed nationality.

MO: What do you think it means to be from a country, are you from there when you are born there or raised there or maybe if your parents come from there? Well what do you all think about that?
...
L: it is a big one to start out with. But I think I say it is something to do with the norms you live by and that probably has something to do with what kind of society you grew up in, and with your parents so … [pause] I don’t think we, I don’t know if we can sit here and sort of like make determinations of which countries have which norms but if you ask a question more about how they were raised and what kind of, more in depth about how they grew up you could probably make a pretty correct assumption about where they are from (appendix: 107).

Louise starts out by talking about societal and family norms and values. This could be comprehended as a cultural identity or even national identity. When growing up in a
certain country with specific norms and values, one is, according to Louise, identified by these, and will make these a fundamental part of one’s identity. She believes her socialization influences her identity in that she links the question of being from a country to who she is, and the rules and norms she lives by.

Bettina’s description of home is a bit more emotive, and she claims that it is a matter of feelings; where one feels s/he belongs i.e. home is where her family and friends are:

B: yeah, at the moment my parents live in Vietnam, so when I am with them I am at home, my grandparents live in Hamburg so when I am with them I am home and the same here, I live with my boyfriend when I am there I am home. So I don’t have one place that defines me or whatever, I guess, my surroundings (appendix: 108).

This is a rather modern view, given that she does not need a fixed place with her possessions to feel at home. Her definition of home is connected to a feeling of comfort and maybe also safety among friends and family. Bettina sees this as an advantage, rather than an obstacle (appendix: 108). From an identity perspective, one could discuss, whether this is a result of social conditions. She appears to be an extroverted person, who enjoys the company of others and quickly adapts to different situations. It is hard to say, whether she is just outgoing or actually, as earlier mentioned by Tønnes Hansen (2003), that there might be an inconsistency between her “I” and ”me”. She appears to possess a strong social persona, as mentioned, she quickly adapts to the situation and rapidly establishes herself in the social hierarchy. One can sense that she is used to be around a lot of people and feels comfortable with it.

When discussing nationality, Dimitri feels American, because he was born and raised in the USA. Due to his international background, he feels that he is “at home”, when he is with people that share his educational background, and continues by
emphasizing “... for us home isn’t really a special place but more like a system or like a way of life” (appendix: 108). Dimitri defines himself by the institutions in his upbringing, rather than his nation and thus feels at home within English speaking environments; for him language is more important than culture or geographical location. Through his life he has changed nations, but the schooling system has been the only constant variable. His point is even further accentuated, when he points out the opposition between the international and national perspective that he assumes Louise represents:

D: …whereas if you ask a Danish person, who has grown up in Denmark for example, lived in Denmark all their life and never really gone outside Denmark except to go to Thailand for vacation or something, they will tell you that being from somewhere means that you have grown up with certain cultural norms and you have grown up with certain like standards and that makes you Danish or German or whatever. But I think for us (nodding towards B) it is really hard to answer this question, cause we are used to having so many different nationalities, and like most people we know have two backgrounds already, like I have three and that doesn’t even go into my mum and dad’s background because like they have multiple passports as well and not the same ones as I have, so it is like, where do you start, like, I could even be French if I wanted to. But [laughter] I mean just because I don’t want to, basically. I feel most at home in an English speaking environment, it doesn’t have to be anywhere specific (appendix: 108).

Implicitly, one senses the allegation of not knowing enough if not being an experienced world citizen, like Dimitri indirectly claims to be. Dimitri subconsciously sees himself as being capable of understanding these matters in a more nuanced way. He implicitly states that people like Louise, who lack experience within the international environment and are hereby limited, he assumes, will not be fully capable of understanding this matter rather than unilaterally. This assumption is however interesting, given that his claims can be seen as unilateral or narrow-minded. Generalizing on the stereotype of people who have grown up in one country, he contradicts himself. Dimitri claims that one cannot define him as a specific character in that he is multiple characters, with corresponding identities according to the
environment or country he is in. However, by defining the other, or people as Louise, he is also defining himself. He categorizes them as unilateral, whereas he is multilateral. One could interpret that, based on a generalization, he constructs something to be in opposition to. Dimitri categorizes people from a one-sided point of view, exactly the point of view he wishes to dismiss.

Dimitri sees himself in a position to generalize because of his upbringing. In this perspective, Dimitri is just as biased by his international background, as he indirectly claims Louise and Maarja to be by their national background.

As Dimitri states, he feels at home within English speaking environments, i.e. language plays a more essential role for him in order to be comfortable and feel that he belongs rather than culture or geographical location. This could be comprehended as he doesn't care about the country, but rather about being in an English speaking environment; thus the social constellations are most important to him and it is through interactions and social constellations that one create one’s identity. Consequently, he reckons that in order to having a stable identity, it is not about a country, but about the people surrounding him. That is when he feels at home and maybe even safe in the “right” constellation of people, no matter where he is. Hence, interactions are crucial for a stable identity.

9.9 Identity Change

9.9.1 Dimitri’s Alteration

Throughout the focus group interview, Dimitri is the only one who claims to change, what he calls, “personality” and “identity” completely, when he travels between countries or switches between languages:

D: ehm and then I am equally at home, like I go to Greece no problem, I can change
Dimitri explains how he adjusts his language and social interaction in accordance with the context, as described by Giles & Coupland. It is a matter of self-perception and how one is perceived by others. He decodes the social situation depending on the country, and is aware of his own alteration within these transitions. Language use is based on presuppositions, and Dimitri constructs his positioning and his responses, depending on how he wants to be perceived. He accommodates his language differently, depending on the image he wants to portray (appendix: 108).

Dimitri states that he changes when moving between environments and is very reflective and conscious about this change. He argues that he can select the perception, he “give[s] other people”. He accommodates according to the situation, probably to promote his own purposes. However, in some situations he is not capable of doing so. For instance, he does not define Danish culture as his culture, and finds it difficult to act Danish when speaking Danish. ”...when I speak Danish I really don't know how to act, because Danish people and Danish culture is very open in a certain way, so I am much closer to the English because I don't feel any social restraints” (appendix: 117). Dimitri explains how this can be frustrating, not to have the possibilities of expressing himself; as he probably feel he can when speaking English and using his known, stable identity. He might experience, what Bauman describes as, a torn or confused identity, since he wishes to preserve his known (English-speaking) identity, when he speaks Danish. Earlier in the same quote, he is talking about the Greek culture, thus this (the American and Danish culture) could be seen as an opposition to the Greek: “so I am much closer to the English because I don’t feel any social restraints” (appendix: 117). It could also be that he finds the Danish culture open as a similarity to the American, but it is open in another way, “a certain way”. This means that he can speak Danish, but only act according to his own known culture. He feels a restraint, because he has not become fully acquainted
with the culture. Dimitri uses the term “to fit in” on several occasions to describe the accommodation that occurs when changing from one context to another (appendix: 122). He is aware of this both in relation to himself and others. His awareness of this reveals a rather reflective mindset. This could be interpreted according to Tønnes Hansen as a nurtured relationship between Dimitri’s “I” and his “me”. He is conscious about his actions as well as what he stands for. He can, furthermore, read the social context and is aware of the expectations of the given situation in addition to his identity change within these situations.

9.9.2 Maarja’s Observation of Personal Change

Maarja has experienced personality change; not only personal changes but also among her friends. She has been told that she speaks softly in English, but she believes that she is “softer” in Estonian, she thinks “... two grades softer in Danish- or in Estonian so I’m very soft... sound” (appendix: 116). This is however said with: “...the most polite/nervous English tone” (OB notes, see appendix). She furthermore states that by working in an international environment, she is constantly a witness to the fact that “… you can’t really recognize the same person speaking in English and Danish... just... it’s hard...” (Ibid.). Maarja is trying to emphasize that language affects one’s identity and one thus changes when switching between different languages.

MA: Well ... I don’t know if I can agree with that. Because I think Danish in general is a mumbling language. It is very difficult to understand Danish, but I think at this point I consider English more like my daily language so I mumble more in English than I do at home I think I speak more clearly so it’s just the environment that you live in... I don’t know (appendix: 117).

Maarja describes her adoption of the English language as a daily language. Even though she is living in Denmark, she uses English as her primary language. This corresponds with Maarja’s statement that she is operating in an international environment in Denmark. This could be seen as her deselection of socializing with
Danes and can be interpreted as an “unwillingness” to become acquainted with Danish national identity. She does, however, not state that this is a conscious choice.

9.9.3 Bettina’s Core

Bettina claims that she is not perceived differently when speaking changing between languages:

B: *Ehm, I don’t think the friends that know me speak in English would describe me any differently than the friends that I speak in German with... But I guess it is just because that I am a very extravert (in a high tone) character I would say so...* (appendix: 118).

Thus, she asserts that she possesses a constant identity in that she does not change according to context. This could be comprehended as partly true, given that she portrays an “extrovert” character. However, one could wonder, whether she has reflected upon these matters. It could be argued that Bettina has not given this so much thought as Dimitri, and thus has not reached the same consciousness on the matter as he does. It seems that she has not reflected so much upon her relationship between her “I” and “me”. The “I” represents the identity outwards i.e. the identity in social relations. From her responses throughout the interview, she seems not to be considering how others may perceive her in different social situations, and is more focused on maintaining her “core identity” as e.g. an “extrovert” personality.

Bettina claims that she is the exact same in English and German and feeling equally comfortable in both, due to her comfort level in both languages. However, she has experienced waking up, and instinctively speaking German to her boyfriend, even though she is in Denmark, and they have English as their common language.

B: *...I have that with my boyfriend, where I will just forget that I am in an English environment and I will just start talking in German, and he will look at me like ‘What the hell are you saying’? Then I will repeat it in German, and it will take a while before it will catch on that I am actually speaking in the wrong language and just continue saying it* (appendix: 121).
An interpretation of this could be, that there is an inconsistency between Bettina’s conscious and subconscious self. There seem to be a natural inclination towards the German language, rather than the English. However, as Bettina also states, this could just be a question of habits.

9.9.4 Louise’s Subconscious Change

Louise states that she is more self conscious when speaking a foreign language, because she emphasizes the importance of finding the right words and pronouncing everything correctly. Consequently, she says that she speaks clearer in English, because she thinks more before speaking:

L: I think it is something that has to do with erhm, what you are used to. If you learned your English from example watching television, then you have one kind of intonation that you use, and if you got it from being somewhere with a specific erhm group of people, talking with a specific accent then you might get your intonation from there, so I think it changes on which environment you are in. Erhm, but from my own experiences I know that I am inclined to speak more clearer when I am talking English. I present the words better I think, because you think about it a bit more when you are speaking in a language that isn’t your native (appendix: 116-117).

In this example, Louise clearly shares the same view. She is generalizing by employing “you” and offers another definition of a language context by associating it not only to the people one is around, but also to the source one extracts “tools” from in order to learn. Furthermore, it shows how she changes identity when speaking English, because she thinks more. As mentioned (cf. “Crisis-stricken and Insecure Identities”: chapter 3.2.3) people often think more before speaking a foreign language. Usually, this is not the case when speaking in a native language the increased reflectivity can be seen as a change in identity.

Louise’s situation could be interpreted as an aspiration to become international. One could suggest, based on her comments throughout the session, that she feels
international and is striving to achieve the same international status as Bettina and Dimitri. This is another evident point in that “internationals” is a categorization, just as being of a nationality. This can be seen in, for instance, her choice of education, which she describes as opportunity-creating (appendix: 112) and her daily communication “with people from different continents” (appendix: 109). Furthermore, she states that she has been thinking in English since the age of 12 (appendix: 114). All these statements can be comprehended as an attempt to “join” the international group and converge to a more international identity. Throughout the interview, it is evident that language and identity are inseparably in the everyday social interactions.

9.10 Sub-conclusion

As a conclusion, the moderator asks, whether the participants feel that they have acquired new knowledge about themselves during the session. Dimitri and Bettina are fast to ascertain that most of the topics discussed were not new to them. Because they come from an international environment, they “...have been confronted with these matters for years” (appendix: 125). One could argue that, due to the increased reflexivity, to employ Giddens’ term, and the focus on identity in our society today, many of the discussed matters are not foreign, partially given that all the participants are following international courses in humanities and are more or less forced to reflect on these issues. It can be assumed that all participants have given thoughts to the topics beforehand, and maybe even have pre-prepared answers to some of the questions. Louise also states that she is familiar with the topics as well due to conversations with a friend. One can then conclude, by employing Bauman’s observations, that identity “… becomes an issue when it is in crisis” (Block, 2007: 21). All participants have experienced crisis more or less in that they have become acquainted with a foreign language, lived in another country and faced new environment, with the exception of Louise though. Whether the crisis has been big or small, they have all been through it and learned from it. One could argue that Bettina
and Dimitri have faced these issues their entire lives, and it has thus become natural and an integrated part of their identity.

10.0 Discussion

10.1 Introduction to Discussion
The aim of this part is to discuss, how identity is expressed through the use of various languages, where the following issues are based on our analysis of the focus group interview. Furthermore, we will discuss the individual alteration occurring in social situations concerned with foreign languages. Throughout the discussion, we will attempt to uncover the link between language and identity, as this is embedded in the various subjects.

The discussion consists of five parts. The first part examines the reliability of the selected focus group from a methodological perspective. The second part discusses identity and accommodation. Thirdly, identity is discussed from a social constructionist perspective and conceptualised as fluid identity. Next, we investigate the participants associations with “feeling at home”. And lastly, the insecurity within foreign language as a result of both internal and external processes will be explored.

10.2 Focus Groups - A Reliable Resource?
Seen through a social constructionist lens, we change depending on whom we interact with, how and why. Therefore, it could be argued that the participants would have said something different, if they e.g. were with their close friends. It is therefore worth questioning the foundation of their statements, given that it is impossible to check the reliability. We can, however, reflect upon it through different perspectives. From a qualitative methodological viewpoint, an important issue is the imbalance that can arise, if a focus group is not coherently comprised. As mentioned, focus group
interviews are intended to create open forums, where the participants can question one another's accounts. Because of the researcher’s lack of contextual understanding, the participants are more equipped to do this. This is a pivotal point in a discussion of the imbalance that was created in our focus group. It was clear that half of our participants did not have the same contextual understanding as the other half. In effect, this meant that Maarja and Louise were not able to question the knowledge of the others. The imbalance in the contextual background quickly resulted in the creation of an ingroup consisting of Bettina and Dimitri. One could wonder if the interview would have progressed differently, had the group consisted of four people with either different or similar backgrounds. This could have opened up for other perspectives. The opportunity to question the other participants’ accounts, would, in this case, probably have had a more fruitful outcome. After having experienced the imbalance, we realized that the functionality of the focus group would affect the interaction. We tried to integrate the outgroup more in the beginning, but when this was unsuccessful, we felt that further action would have disturbed the natural setting and the established social order of the interview.

Due to this imbalance, it is also important to question the foundation upon which the participants base their statements. It is impossible to determine the motivations of the participants’ answers, for their statements may be affected by conscious choices of self-presentation. Nonetheless, we will never be able to know exactly if that is our interpretation, or if they truly believe what they are stating; we can only interpret their answers. It is plausible that their statements were constructed in accordance with how they wanted to be perceived, and consequently, not how they really felt. From this perspective, one could argue that the participants consciously staged a certain image of themselves. It can also be considered that they wanted to accommodate to what they thought we wanted to hear. The fact that they participated in the interview, could also be comprehended as a form of accommodation in itself. Through agreeing to participate, they have already reacted positively towards us.
10.3 The Accommodated Identity

We assume that most people strive to possess a stable and coherent identity. Consistency within appearance is crucial to the feeling of a stable identity, given that other’s perception is the breeding ground for the construction of one's identity. Even though one changes or adapts to different situations by choice of words or body language, the person should still possess a “… composed … set of characteristics which go together” (Burr, 1995: 18). By changing radically from one situation to another, one may be perceived negatively by others as being inconsistent or unstable. Therefore, what our participants do could then be investigated in order to construct an image of a stable identity.

To the contrary, it can be a sign of consistency to change behavior depending on the social contexts. One’s behavior may appear inconsistent, but the purpose of this behavior could be consistent across the different situations. One always strives to fit into the various social situations to reach one’s comfort level. Thus, one can still appear coherent and stable outwardly, whether it affects one’s identity internally is individual and unknown. In the end, accommodation is not a choice; social interaction cannot take place without it.

Dimitri perceives identity as changing from environment to environment. He speaks openly about his adjustments and changes in behavior, with the risk of being perceived as inconsistent within the focus group. This could support the naturalness about accommodating to the situations as more important than what one stands for. From Dimitri’s point of view, it is possible to possess different opinions at different times, according to the various social situations. Conversely, Bettina argues that her identity remains unchanged, no matter where she is and whom she is with. One can then claim that Bettina sees herself as just accommodating in the different situations, or is more concerned with the maintenance of appearing consistent.
From a socio-linguistically perspective, in connection to the hierarchy within the focus group, there is a clear division linguistically in the comfort level. Because Bettina and Dimitri are both strong English speakers, they do not need to accommodate and thereby compromise identity-wise. The outgroup, on the other hand, has to converge in order to be perceived as linguistic equals. This convergence could alter a part of their character, and they would thereby be perceived as not having a consistent identity. However, one could question the link between accommodation and identity change. An example, from our focus group, is when Maarja talks about her shame in losing touch with her mother tongue. One could comprehend this as a consequence of the fact that she has been living in a foreign country, and by this accommodated. Then again, this change is not necessarily permanent, given that one accommodates differently depending on the social environments or out of different motives. Therefore, it is not automatically an indicator of stability or instability. This is exactly an example of the idea that identity can be perceived as fluid.

On the other hand, accommodation through language could be understood as a part of a flexible identity, as opposed to what we have previously called change within identity. A flexible identity could comprise different sorts of accommodation both convergence and divergence, dependent on the different social situation, one accommodates out of need or by choice. Consequently, one could claim that being flexible does not influence the identity in a radical way. It is however, literally impossible to prove that the identity remains the same or changes, depending on the shift from one language environment to another, given that no one can see each other in all situations.

10.4 Fluid Identity

Social constructionism challenges the view on identity as coherent or stable, and comprehends identity as constantly changing and fluid. Not many can argue that
they are completely the same person during an entire day, e.g. one would behave, feel and think differently when speaking and being in informal and formal social situations, respectively. Consequently, one shifts between different varieties of “you”, depending on who one is with. The same happens when one shifts between languages, either dialects, code-switch or changes to a different language. The fact that one interacts in different social environments calls for a different “you” which corresponds to the given situation, e.g. when Dimitri speaks to Greeks compared to Americans, he consciously shifts between different presentations of himself, thus he accommodates.

This can create a feeling of living an illusion by adapting to all the different social situations. Yet, all the different kinds of “yous” should be considered equally real. They are all contributing to the ever-changing story about oneself. But this does not explain why people seem to hold on to the notion about a stable core within identity. Social constructionism argues that this feeling is constructed by one’s memory in that one can choose to go back and see a coherent pattern, and thus feel that one possesses a stable identity.

10.5 Feeling at Home

A recurring subject in the focus group interview is the participants’ relation to their different languages. In the following, we will only take Dimitri into consideration and especially his statement that: “language is basically the most important part of your identity and you don’t want it to break down” (appendix: 110). He continues by associating the feeling of home with speaking English. Initially he states that he is “equally at home” (appendix: 108) whether he is in Greece, Denmark or the US, but almost immediately after, contradicts himself by specifying that: “I feel most at home in an English speaking environment, it doesn’t have to be anywhere specific” (appendix: 108). He expresses that he does not feel at home in e.g. Denmark, since it is not an “English speaking environment” (appendix: 108), it is
not enough to speak English with non-international Danes. Initially, he states that “for me like the most, the closest place to home is somebody like, like-you (nodding towards B) who has gone through the IB” and adds to that the Americans, the British and the Australians, as nationalities he expect to be able to relate to as well (appendix: 108). This contradicts his statement of identity being tied to language, but is instead tied to a specific culture of which the language is part of. Dimitri’s examples of places and people that will make him feel at home, confirms that it is the language culture or his expectations to the culture that will provide him with the feeling of home, not the language in itself. It is presumable that he only has this feeling, when he is in familiar settings; either in California, where he was born and raised, or at an international school. To our interpretation, these familiar “English speaking environments”, allow him to feel comfortable. He feels most at home when his identity is challenged the least.

Familiarity and stability thus seem to be the returning points in Dimitri’s statements concerning language, identity and home. Whenever he is outside this comfort zone, comprised of language and the culture it is tied to, he challenges the stability of his identity and experiences insecurity. As already mentioned, Dimitri has an experience of being on uncertain grounds in Greece and Denmark. He does not fully understand the two cultures, and has a hard time to adjust to the social expectations, such as the politeness norms. He does, however, expresses that it is easier to adjust to Danish, which he describes as “open in a certain way” (appendix: 117) somewhat similar to the English cultures, that he feels comfortable in. He generally argues that some parts of cultures can be transferred from one language to another; that is if the cultural backgrounds are similar. As a reference he uses Greek and Italian cultures. He constantly seems to look at language through a lens of familiarity. It seems Dimitri feels less insecure, if he can maintain some parts of his familiar culture and identity, and bring it with him into another. It thus becomes evident that Dimitri sees language and culture as inseparable.
10.6 Insecurity within Foreign Languages as a Result of both Internal and External Processes

In the analysis, it becomes evident that on several occasions Maarja feels limited in her communicative and expressive abilities in English. Also, she appears to be the withdrawn character in the social context of the focus group. A link could be established between these two elements, as they seem somehow interconnected. As explained in our theory section, one could have a lower confidence in a non-native language, given the feeling of being somewhat limited or ranked in a language hierarchy (cf. “Crisis-stricken and Insecure Identities: chapter 7.6.3). One could thus be more confident or have a higher self-esteem in one language than another, depending on the social situation. Dimitri supports this thesis by stating that he becomes fully active at Roskilde University with all activities played out in English. When attending his old school in Greece though, he was more inactive or even withdrawn, given his insecurity concerning foreign languages. Through language, identity is expressed, and when mastering it fluently one does not have to worry about choice of words and how this will affect others’ perception of one (cf. “Language Hierarchies”: chapter 6.3).

One could argue that this insecurity Dimitri describes, does not only emerge based on an internal definition, but also on an external one. Both internal and external dimensions construct identity, where the individual through social interaction can be seen to identify and define him-/herself in relation to others. This means that the external dimension is only possible through social and linguistic interaction, given that the definition of oneself has to be made on basis of others’ perception. The individual is thus affected by the perception others have of him/her. In a linguistic context, people might often tend to consider a person, who is limited in a foreign language, as having a rather simple personality, merely given his/her inadequate vocabulary. Bettina exemplifies this by her choice of words in “...dumb it down” (appendix: 113), referring to her language when speaking to people.
having a lower level of English than herself. This could be understood as rather condescending, as Bettina uses the negative word “dumb” to explain her actions. If she sees downwards converging as something negative, it will be evident in her expression and presentation of words. Moreover, if the individual, being limited, in a foreign language decodes this negative expression from the external surroundings, the capability of expressing one’s identity would be further complicated. This is given that the external perception that one interprets from others, along with the lack of expressing the essential features of one’s identity, could create feelings of inferiority and rejection. One might feel as being part of a minority, rather than the majority. Furthermore, one’s ingroup might be distinguished by the superiority of the outgroup, which will be elaborated in the following.

Linking these perspectives to an issue with present societal relevance, one could consider the effect of the external influence on immigrants trying to integrate into the Danish society. As mentioned, the shape of identity is influenced by internal and external factors, these being interrelated and indispensable to one another. If having poor Danish language skills, one might be categorized externally as possessing a low status in the language hierarchy. This disadvantage might create problems within general everyday social interaction as e.g. job interviews, where immigrants might have the feeling of being misinterpreted as simple or even stupid. Mastering the majority language, Danish, will be connected to credibility, power and authority (cf. “Language Hierarchies”: chapter 6.3). If immigrants feel negatively or condescendingly defined from the external surroundings, this might have an influence on their internal reflections upon themselves. One could consider the general consequences of this. Some might have feelings of discrimination and inferiority complexes. Furthermore, it might result in ethnic minorities possibly sensing an alienation or dissociation from the Danish society and its values. One might then assume that ethnic minorities might form a minority ingroup, which could, furthermore, lead them to diverge from the Danish majority group. The possible
establishment of an ingroup based on being of the minority and feeling alienated or outside the Danish society, is already an implicit sign of diverging.
In this perspective, one might argue that this could also explain why foreign students are likely to create their own ingroups, as seen in Maarja’s case when she claims to mainly socialize with other foreigners, given that she might feel less connected to the Danish students. It is also a possibility, however, that it is the majority group not wishing to socialize with the minority.

11.0 Conclusion

In the following we will answer our research questions, starting with the sub-questions and proceeding to the cardinal question.

11.1 Communicating Identity Through a Non-native Language

Identity can be affected in various ways, when communicating through a non-native language. What we discovered throughout this project, and have seen directly in our empirical work, is how it is affected negatively. Within the focus group, a language hierarchy was implicitly produced and expressed, where the more advanced and confident English speakers, Dimitri and Bettina, quickly dominated the conversation. Thus, one conclusion could be that Louise and Maarja’s identities were affected when they were not able to choose their social status within the group, but rather ascribed a place in the language hierarchy. Maarja and Louise generally made fewer and modest comments in the interview, as a consequence of being passively put into a certain category or placed in the language hierarchy. It seemed that they accepted this position and acted accordingly.

During the interview, we have seen examples of how communicating through a non-native language, can induce an unstable identity. Declassing can directly result in this, especially in relation to social status, where one can appear more introverted or
extroverted as mentioned above. It all depends on personal perceptions and, more importantly, others’ perceptions because others' interpretations are crucial when forming social identities. Consequently, we need others in order to know what or who we are. Maarja, for instance, is perceived as withdrawn and insecure. This is thus the identity that she is ascribed, even though it might not be consistent with her self-perception. Therefore a clash can emerge between personal and others’ perceptions. Such a situation is of course not desirable, which is why it is crucial to be able to express oneself according to one’s self-image. This should confirm that others perceive one accordingly; hence, one's identity is stabilized.

11.2 Accommodation Within the Focus Group

In the focus group, we quickly discovered how Bettina and Dimitri converged towards each other and formed an ingroup. They furthermore diverged by defining themselves as “internationals”, as a way to contrast themselves from the others. This ingroup is not merely defined from within, but also outside the focus group context. We observed code-switching on one occasion, where Maarja experienced a momentary loss of words and thus resorted to code-switching as a means to continue her argument. Although this was the only observed example, all of the participants had previously experienced situations that required code-switch. Furthermore, Maarja’s code-switching positioned her relatively low in the language hierarchy, since she appeared to be limited in her non-native language. Maarja appeared withdrawn when speaking English. Her silence could also be a conscious choice to avoid feeling uncomfortable or stupid, due to insufficient English skills.

Accommodative actions are a natural, unavoidable and necessary requisite for social interaction in the group to be played out smoothly. Even though it might be a natural effect to accommodate, it still does not imply that the dynamics will always be solely positive for all participants. What happens between the interlocutors are on some occasions more conscious than on others. Due to the specific accommodative actions
in the interview, power relations were expressed through language. The accommodative actions are the only concrete evidence of how the hierarchy was established in practice. Through these, the participants defined themselves and one another internally and externally, placing all in a hierarchy. It is important to conclude that the conditions of this social situation cannot be generalised upon or transmitted to other situations. Had the focus group consisted of other participants, been conducted by other people, or in another time or setting, the outcome would have been different.

11.3 Linguistic Confidence Affects Identity
All participants had different views on how they expressed their identity, when communicating in their native versus their non-native languages. The way they expressed their identity in a native versus a non-native language was tied to their comfort level. This can be expressed either consciously or subconsciously. The fact that they felt more comfortable in one language over another emphasized that they have had different experiences of their identity from language to language.

Dimitri, Maarja, and Louise all experienced changes in their identity when speaking a native and a non-native language. Dimitri was most confident in speaking English and therefore claimed that he could truly be himself within the context of English; he could be both outgoing and introverted. However, in both of his non-native languages, he was more introverted due to less knowledge of the language and culture. Maarja was also different between her native and non-native language. She was both less polite and louder in English. Her change in identity can be seen as linked to her comfort level. Because she knows the cultural behaviour of Estonia, she knew how to act and thus was more comfortable. Louise was aware of the changes she experienced when switching between languages. She claimed to speak more clearly and think before speaking when operating in her non-native tongue. This is indicative of a lower level of comfort, because we assume that she was less relaxed.
Therefore, their identities are highly bound to feeling safe in the linguistic context.

Like the others, Bettina consciously presented her identity in relation to language. However, she claimed that she was not different between her native language and English. This is due to her high comfort level with the English language, since she has been learning it from birth. On the other hand, when one examines her subconscious presentation of her identity, it is evident that she is not necessarily equally confident with both languages. One can see this in the fact that, when living in Denmark and speaking English in her home, she occasionally woke up and instinctively spoke German to her boyfriend. Despite her previous claim, one can see that she does have a natural inclination to the German language. Thus, we assume that there is an inconsistency between her conscious and subconscious self-perception. Therefore, we can conclude that all of our participants have different comfort levels in their native and non-native languages, respectively, whether they are willing to recognize this or not. By looking at the subconscious statements, one can see that a consistent identity is not a possibility, despite how confident one is with the language. These different comfort levels result in different identities.

Based on the participants’ experiences, we can conclude that they change depending on whether they speak their native language or a non-native language, just as well as when they change from one social environment to another by accommodating differently. This exactly confirms the social constructionist idea that identities are not fixed. Therefore, they strive to speak the non-native language as well as possible in order to maintain a consistent identity. This phenomenon emphasizes the strong link between identity and language.

12.0 Future Perspectives

Through this process, we have discovered that the subject is not yet exhausted. Many
things would have been interesting to pursue.

An inspection of body language would have shed new light on the project. Through theoretical knowledge regarding body language, the observers could have gathered more information. This would mean that we could have observed a physical change when the participants spoke, for instance, about their native language versus their non-native languages.

In retrospect, it might have been beneficial to employ a more worldly theorist to add a broader perspective, given that Schultz Jørgensen, Tønnes Hansen and Ziehe are all Europeans. Even though they do not mention a tie to a Western perspective on identity, one can only assume that they are writing from their ethnocentric perspective. Theorist Stuart Hall could also have been interesting to use extensively, given his background within cultural studies. While we employed Hall’s definition as another perspective, it was not as our main theoretical background.

It would have been interesting to further investigate the aspect of history and culture, in regards to identity and languages, especially when considering that it was such a large discussion topic amongst the participants. This means that we could have investigated how a culture or history influences language learning and identity.

With the knowledge we have now gained, there are some things related to the interview that we would have done differently. Having the opportunity of doing a follow-up interview with the focus group, so we could expand on some of the interesting topics they discussed, would have been enlightening. Also, experimenting with different combinations of focus groups and then comparing them would have given us more data to work with.
13.0 Dimensions

This project is predominantly an empirical-analytical project. We examined how identity was expressed differently in various languages, based on a focus group interview. The interview was conducted with a qualitative methodology, focusing on the individual experience; hence, one evident dimension to cover is **subjectivity and learning**, as we were investigating the individual’s linguistic interactions and experiences with his/her surrounding society. Having the context of identity expression in foreign languages in focus, we saw these individuals in relation to their subjective experiences within different languages, furthermore to the social-cultural norms he/she is accustomed to, depending on their backgrounds. We thus not only dealt with the individual as a subject, but also with the subjectivising processes this entails, as we were examining the alteration that could take place within identity in social situations when switching between languages – the effects of social structures and conditions. An understanding of the mutual interdependence between society, social relations and these individuals’ consciousness and identity was thus essential in order for us to examine them as subjects.

As this is a project on communication and how identity is expressed through various languages, the dimension of **text and sign** was covered. We furthermore conducted and transcribed a focus group interview and afterwards analyzed the results. In order to examine the experiences and interactions of the participants of the focus group qualitatively, we incorporated linguistic theory, which is another academic field that the dimension of text and sign covers. This enabled an analysis and interpretation of the meanings and understandings embedded in the linguistic actions, made by the participants of the focus group.
14.0 Group Reflections

As a group of seven, it took a while to decide on the direction our project should take. However, when we had decided how to build it up and which sections it should consist of, we split up into subgroups consisting of two-three people who worked on linguistics, interview and identity. Those groups then managed their own sections and revised them along the way accordingly with feedback from the others. Later in the process, new groups were formed to write sections such as analysis, discussion, conclusion etc. on the basis of a previous brainstorm with the entire group. This working method hastened and eased the process, though the drawback was that we were not completely knowledgeable of each others' theoretical parts, just like we could not all participate in and conduct the focus group interview.

Being so many members served both as both a hindrance and an advance. The positive effects were the many opinions that gave rise to good and thorough discussions, where all aspects of a subject could be touched upon before starting to write. We also benefited from the great amount of feedback that we all received for our sections.

Communication was a little confusing at times with so many members. Also the need to split up the project and form subgroups can entail that not everyone knows, what the others are writing about. Additionally, the number of pages to read for every group meeting could be time consuming.

This semester, it was clear that each person was interested in exploring areas of personal interest in regards to further studies. This was both positive and negative, because it made it hard to compromise as regards to content. However, it gave rise to immersion and a positive work ethic.
15.0 Critical Discussion of Material Used

15.1 Theory of Science
Vivian Burr’s book on social constructionism helped us to understand this specific theory of science, even though one could argue that an introduction book is not deep enough to fully understand the theory. However, in our case it was exactly our aim only to briefly touch upon it in order to see the project in the light of Social Constructionism. We could have used some of the main sources such as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, but their book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966) is not as intelligible as Burr’s book is. Burr is good at using examples that explain the different scenarios, she is talking about. These examples painted a clearer picture of social constructionism, giving us the understanding and tools to incorporate it into our project.

15.2 Sociolinguistics
In the section on sociolinguistics we have used Howard Giles and Nikolas Coupland’s *Language: Context and Consequences* from 1991. This book provides a general knowledge of sociolinguistic matters and was the main literature for the chapter concerning Communication Accommodation Theory. Since Giles was the founder of Speech Accommodation Theory in the 1970s, and one of the developers of CAT, we have chosen to use this book as main literature.

We have supplemented our general knowledge and determined some terms with Wardhaugh’s *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-Switching*, which has been the foundation for our theory on this subject, furthermore *Language: Context and Consequences* and *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* has been used as supportive literature.
15.3 Identity Through Language

Due to the amount of literature on the subject of identity, it has been difficult to find a suitable definition of identity that was neutral in the sense that it did not encompass a tie to e.g. history or culture. Per Schultz Jørgensen’s article on Identity as a Social Construction provides a definition of identity from a socio-psychological perspective. This becomes essential when analysing the focus group participants’ experiences and reflections. He coins the term within a sociological and personal context. This definition is rather useful given that we are working with identity as a personal matter as well as investigating the interactions in societal and local groups operating in foreign languages. Another important factor for our choice of theorist has been that Schultz Jørgensen’s theory is characterized by a rather contemporary view on identity and he is to some extent influenced by social constructionism. We have also employed Jan Tønnes Hansen in order to elaborate on the internal aspects of identity and Thomas Ziehe to examine the external aspects as a supplement to Schultz Jørgensen’s definition.

15.4 Identity Through a Foreign Language

In the section on identity through a foreign language, we started out with several books but soon discovered that only few of them turned out to be very useful. We had difficulties finding books that specifically dealt with identity through second language learning, since most books were on either identity, second languages or language learning, but not a combination.

The most applicable book was Second Language Identities by David Block. This was mainly because he aimed for the exact same findings as we did. However, throughout the book, the reader can easily tell how the author struggles with the content because he cannot seem to find good enough sources to base his book on. Consequently, he keeps mentioning that even though a specific theory is good, it still does not consider language in relation to identity, identity in relation to language or it only treats native
languages and not foreign languages. If we have not had both theory and empirical work to support each other in our project, we too would have been struggling to point out our assumptions and relate them to everyday life. Block uses many sources in his book, which we also found necessary to do. This was because we found it hard to find applicable ones for our section about identity through a foreign language.

Though Block's book was very useful, it was only secondary literature. Therefore, we started looking for the primary literature he had used in order to write a more thorough and credible project. It turned out to be fruitful even though we only used a small amount of the many books we found because their focus was not solely on identity through a foreign language. However, browsing through the books gave us a greater knowledge of the theorists and their theories, which made it easier to choose useful parts. Those books are *Silence in Second Language Acquisition: A Psychoanalytic Reading* by Colette A. Granger, *The Stranger* by Georg Simmel, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* by H. Douglas Brown as well as *Modernity and Ambivalence* and *Culture as Praxis*, both by Zygmunt Bauman.

*Language and National Identity* by Leigh Oakes sounded more useful than it was, because it was a study on France and Sweden wherefore only few theoretical areas were general enough to be applicable. *Klassisk og moderne samfundsteori (Classical and Modern Social Theory)* by Heine Andersen and Lars Bo Kaspersen was used only as reference work to look up terms.

All in all, the books we ended up choosing all contained usable parts. Thus we ended up having more than enough material on the subject.

**15.5 Interviewing Methodology**

We relied on many different books for our Interviewing Methodology section, though some were used to a higher degree than others. The most heavily used were David L.
Morgan’s *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, Richard A. Krueger’s *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, Lia Litosseliti’s *Using Focus Groups in Research*, and Bente Halkier’s *Fokusgrupper (Focus Groups)*. All were equally beneficial for learning how to properly conduct focus group interviews. It was obvious that the authors had had extensive experience with focus groups, so the books clearly challenged other works in the field, especially with their high attention to detail. Furthermore, the practical examples given in the books inspired us throughout the process. All in all, these books made it easy to make the transition from beginners into the field to experienced students.

All three books from the Focus Group Kit (*The Focus Group Guidebook,* *Developing Questions for Focus Groups,* and *Planning Focus Groups*) were used to a small degree but still helpful for providing a broader perspective of the topic. As for the analysis section, we relied almost entirely on Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann’s *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. This book provided a clear methodological direction for us to focus our analysis on.
16.0 Bibliography


Publishing.


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17.0 **Summary in English**

The purpose of this project is to uncover the link between socio-linguistics and identity. We sought to discover if identity changes coincide with language changes. We view this project from a social constructionist perspective, while using socio-linguistics and sociology as the theoretical background. We used this knowledge to analyze the focus group interview we conducted. We found that there are clear identity changes that occur when switching from one language to another. However, these changes vary from person to person. Through using this empirical data and theoretical knowledge, we cover both the Text & Sign and Subjectivity & Learning dimensions.

18.0 **Summary in Danish**

Formålet med dette projekt, er at belyse sammenhængen mellem socio-lingvistik og identitet. Målet var at undersøge, om ændringer i identiteten er forbundet med ændringer i sproget. Projektet er set i et social konstruktivistisk perspektiv, hvor socio-lingvistik og sociologi ligger som den teoretiske baggrund. Denne viden er brugt til at analysere det fokusgruppe interview, som vi har afholdt. Vi fandt ud af, at der er tydelige ændringer i identiteten, som finder sted, når der skiftes fra et sprog til et andet. Disse ændringer ændrer sig dog fra person til person. Ved at bruge vores empiriske data samt teoretiske viden, har vi dækket dimensionerne Tekst og Tegn og Subjektivitet og Læring.
19.0 Appendix

19.1 Introduction to a Few Linguistic Terms

**Bilingualism and Multilingualism**

Bi- and multilingualism are the abilities to speak two or more languages, respectively. However, according to Ronald Wardhaugh (2006: 96), this does not mean that the language repertoire in both or all of the languages equal. There are many definitions of how large a repertoire has to be in order to be considered bi- or multilingual, we have left it to the participants to define this themselves.

**Codes**

Code is a neutral word that covers languages, styles, dialects, accents etc. The term, codes, can be used when trying to avoid ascribing value to certain expressions a value, e.g. naming a person’s language as a dialect can be employed to position one’s own language as more important and more powerful than the other (Wardhaugh, 2006: 89).
19.2 Transcription - Focus group interview 20th of October 2009

Moderator: MO aka Maya
Observers: OB
D: Dimitry
L: Louise
MA: Maarja
B: Bettina

[ ] Noise, overlap in speech or interrupting.
() Our interpretation.
… short pause

MO: Okay, ehhmm…, we are doing a project, essentially about people that speak more than one language and their perceptions of communicating in a non native language. And we are doing this, this is a focus group interview so I am kind of gonna ask some questions and try and guide them a little bit, but it is mostly you all that will do the talking.

OB: Hopefully. [Laughter]

MO: And I just want to remind you that there are no wrong answers, and I will be doing most of the questions and these two are my note takers and maybe they will help with the questions here and there. And we will be recording this with these tape recorders which you just saw. Just want to remind everyone about the prober behavior, so please don’t

D: [makes noise] start bashing [mumbling]. [Laughter]

MO: yea, please don’t interrupt and try and give each other time to answer and share the floor, and try not to split of into side conversations with your neighbors, [laughter by OB] if you would. Ehhm and hopefully this is going to be like a conversation and nice and easy…. oh also with noise, try not to make too much noise with your cups and your chairs and plates, well you don’t have plates but..okay..
I am going to ask just an opening question for everybody to get to know each other a little better. I would like you to say; where you are from, which languages you know and what is your mother tongue. Starting with you. (MO looks at B)

B: Well, I am Bettina, I’m German and I also speak English and French, obviously English because we are talking English, but ehhm I basically grew up speaking both German and English, I went to an English kindergarten, so English is …[stopped] In my schooling system we called it the kind of A2, like A was your native language and then (interrupted by D: AB) (can’t hear what she says because of D’s interruption), and B is like your foreign language.

D: Were you IB?

B: yearh (smiling)

D: yearh, same here. (smiling)

B: So basically English is not like a foreign language to me, but it is not my first language.

MA: eehhh, I’m Maarja, Estonian and English, Danish some- among- too and very basic Russian.

MO: What was your mother tongue, sorry?

MA: Estonian

MO: Okay.

D: Your name?

MA: Maarja

D: Maja, okay.

L: ehm Louise, and I am Danish and I speak Danish, English, German and French and ehhm my mother tongue is Danish.

D: uhmm I am Dmitri and uhmm I grew up in America but actually I am bilingual, because I spoke Greek at home with my parents. Ehmm and then I have lived in Greece so there’s where the A1 A2 thing comes into play ([interruptation by B. [laughter]]) so for me yearh IB for me was A1 English higher.

B: hmhm
D: but A2 Geek
B: right.
D: and my mother is Danish so that is kind of my third language. But it is not really
100 percent.
OB: cool (looks at the moderator, as does everybody else)
MO: What do you think it means to be from a country, are you from there when you
are born there or raised there or maybe if your parents come from there? Well what
do you all think about that?
D: deep conversation, like. (smiling)
Female [laughter]
B: It is a really difficult question.
L: it is a big one to start out with. But I think I say it is something to do with the
norms you live by and that probably has something to do with what kind of society
you grew up in, and with your parents so … [pause] I don’t think we, I don’t know if
we can sit here and sort of like make determinations of which countries have which
norms but if you ask a question more about how they were raised and what kind of,
more in depth about how they grew up you could probably make a pretty correct
assumption about where they are from.
(small pause)
B: I agree, but I disagree at the same time. I have an Australian friend, her and I
always go into these huge arguments about exactly the same topic. Cause she is like “
it’s your nationality that counts” (imitating her friends voice) But you know what it
says on paper doesn’t necessarily say something about what you feel. For me it is a
feeling of belonging! And not something you can determine by looking at a passport
or ancestry or whatever. You know, if you grow up in Denmark but you are actually
from Turkey but you hang out with … I don’t know [pause], Greek friends –where
are you from? Is it your Greek friends or Turkish parents, Danish background, I guess
it just depends on where you FEEL you belong.
MA: ehm.
D: Yeah, but it also comes into play where you have grown up, like I grew up in the states, I was born American, like, I fit into the stereotype very well.

B: hmhem

D: ehm and then I am equally at home, like I go to Greece no problem, I can change in a certain way. Ehm and then I go to Denmark, again I change, like the whole perception I give other people and for me like the most, the closest place to home is somebody like, like- you (nodding towards B) who has gone through the IB, like we have been through a very international community and for us home isn’t really a special place but more like a system or like a way of life. Ehhm whereas if you ask a Danish person, who has grown up in Denmark for example, lived in Denmark all their life and never really gone outside Denmark except to go to Thailand for vacation or something, they will tell you that being from somewhere means that you have grown up with certain cultural norms and you have grown up with certain like standards and that makes you Danish or German or whatever. But I think for us (nodding towards B) it is really hard to answer this question, cause we are used to having so many different nationalities, and like most people we know have two backgrounds already, like I have three and that doesn’t even go into my mum and dad’s background because like they have multiple passports as well and not the same ones as I have, so it is like, where do you start, like, I could even be French if I wanted to. But [laughter] I mean just because I don’t want to, basically. I feel most at home in an English speaking environment, it doesn’t have to be anywhere specific.

B: I absolutely agree. I have exactly the same, I wouldn’t say it is a problem cause I see it as an advantage but I don’t HAVE a specific PLACE I call home, I call home where my family is. At the moment.

D: Basically, yeah.

B: yeah, at the moment my parents live in Vietnam, so when I am with them I am at home, my grandparents live in Hamburg so when I am with them I am home and the same here, I live with my boyfriend when I am there I am home. So I don’t have one place that defines me or whatever, I guess, my surroundings.
D: It becomes more like a business than actual history like instead of seeing things you know through multiple generations it becomes much more like what’s what your ascents are, I guess. Where your family is-

B. Yeah.

D: - where is all your stuff and where you have potential to grow. (or go) ?
MO: Ehhm attention to that question about where are your connection, what, and something you said earlier about is it with your friends or with your family. I am curious as to who do you all currently socialize with, what nationalities are they, what languages do you speak.

B: I think at Ruc, that is like pretty much mostly Danes but because we are in the Humbas department there is so many nationalities. I, from my background, plus where I lived plus where I lived, you know all together I have Australian, English, German, Danish, Vietnamese, You know I have American in there. For me I socialize with pretty much all continents. [laughter] So to speak. I wouldn’t even be able to like label it, say I socialize with Danish people. Can’t really say that.

MO: What about you as a Dane, do you have friends from other linguistic groups?
L: Ehhm, yes, actually most of my communication these days is with people who are from a different continent because I speak with people every day on different voice communication systems or programs so ehh pretty much from around the world so it is very rare that I go a day without speaking with someone from a completely different country. So these conversation mostly happen in English.

MO: So what about with you, do you have any friends in Denmark from your home country?
MA: home country? No. No I have only foreigners, uh not only, mostly. Some Danes, but mostly foreigners.

MO: And you operate in English?
MA: Yeah.

MO: Shifting to a more language based question. Do you ever switch between languages…when you are speaking to someone?
D: It gets hard.
B: What do you mean, like when you are in a Danish conversation you quickly switch to English or do you mean that when one person speak English and the other German?
MO: I mean, I mean in the same conversation.
B: all right.
D: That’s really like, It depends because when I am here and people are speaking Danish only or English only I can only do one or the other. Like if four people are speaking Danish around me, I actually have to look at each person and pay attention and I can’t do the half English half Danish ehmm and if someone speaks English to me then, there is no way in the world that I can switch into Greek. I can only do two languages in one go. And vice versa if I am speaking Greek with my parents for example and someone comes up to me I can easily switch into English but I can’t do Danish and so it really becomes like necessary to stay focused on one language because if you don’t and you do it, like I can do half Greek and half ehmm English in one sentence or you know half Danish and half English but then you really start losing touch with your language and because you don’t have a cultural background like you really don’t have something that is other than language, language is basically the most important part of your identity and you don’t want it to break down. So either you form your own little subset of language which is kind of common in international schools. [B: laughing] Like every international school has their own subset or own little words or things that means something specific or you totally keep to the ehmm language. I don’t know if you guys agree with that.
B: I do and I don’t. Because for me it is very different because I don’t have two backgrounds from my family-
D: Okay.
B: You know my parents are both German .
D: Hmhem
B: So at home I only spoke German. It was a very clear rule that in kindergarten, I
spoke English only and at home I spoke German only.

D: yep.

B: So for me it is very, I can distinguish it clearer but I do have a Swiss friend and she has been in international school all her life, so English is actually easier for her than Swiss or German for that matter so some times when we speak German to each other she will just switch into English because it is easier for her or she will switch back into German because she has just found the word that she can’t find in English so that does happen. But, and it has happened with my family as well, cause my brother goes to international school still and we have kind of rule in our household that no “Dinglish”, like German/ English, Deutch/ English because it happens so easily that when you are surrounded with English people all the time, at home you just start losing the German words. But it happened a lot, “ uuhh whats that word in German”

You know.

D: Yeah.

B: So you just say it in English and then everybody in the room is like “ no no no it is this in German”. But yeah, it is a bit different from you I guess.

D: No no, cause I see what you say, we had that in my house to.

B: hm hm

D: My sisters and me have grown up with English obviously. We only speak English between us but there are some words like ehhm that is just a lot easier in Greek, like they come out and same vice versa for speaking Greek with my dad it’s like, or people from school it is so much easier some words in English or the meaning that they have is so much stronger and you can’t really like translate it from one language to the next.

B: Yeah, I even have that here because my boyfriend is half Danish so sometimes I can’t find the word in English so I’ll say it in German and he will try and find the Danish equivalence because they are so similar the languages but sometimes it works out. So, also like when you can’t explain a word ehm there is different examples but it obviously doesn’t come to my mind right now. But, for example “Hyg-
“Hygge”²⁰ you can’t explain that word but it is easier to understand it related to German than to English because there is a German word it’s not the same but it is MORE the same than the English equivalence. You know, so, yeah.

MO: ehhm the next question wont relate so much to you two I think, because you to have a real strong foundation in English.

B: [laughter]

MO: and studying in English but more for you two, how is it to study in university level in your non native language, do you think your performance is the same as it would be in your mother tongue? Do you feel as confident in your writing?

L: I think it might be better actually. Simply because for me English has more opportunities when it comes to an academic level, ehm there is a lot of words in English to describe various things so for me it was a definitely advantage and a reason for choosing and actually had an international education, so I don’t know if, I - I think it has been an advantage, I don’t know what- what others might think.

MO: And what about you? (looking at MA)

MA: Well I think at this point I am more confident in … [pause] ssspeaking in English. I’m, I have been here three years mostly speaking in English. Ashamed as I am, I am losing touch with my native language. I. Of course I can express myself but I wouldn’t know if I could write something academically, like, though I think I might have better possibilities, but I … am … not capable of … expressing myself. (Speaking in a low and slow voice)

MO: How. Can you two maybe image if you were maybe in a German university and you in a Greek? (looking at B and D)

B: Well, I am. I am only doing an exchange semester so technically I study in German. But I have noticed that it all depends on how long you are in the environment cause when I just came from international school to my university, on first semester I actually asked a professor whether I could write my paper in English because I was like “ it would be easier for me to express myself”. And he said “Okay

²⁰ “Hygge” Danish word for when the mode is cozy.
no problem”. But second semester I realized writing in German was becoming easier because I had read a lot of the literature in German and now when I come here sometimes I find it difficult to write it in English because I’m so used to the German again. But I bet ya that when I come back to Germany it will be harder to write in German again. [small pause] So yeah I think it depends on what you are used to.

D: Not for me, English because ehhm like I’m bilingual but only speaking, I learned how to read and write Greek much later. English was always, my mom is a linguist so she always insisted that one language first and then another one. So, ehm no I can’t really relate to that one. But I can say that the level of English in this school is really low. I don’t know if anyone cares but. [Laughter]

B: I agree, hear hear.

D: Yeah it’s really low and it kind of brings everything to a lower level but that’s more my project than it is this one.

B: But it is true, because if I can’t understand a lecturer in their English, I mean it drags down my level because when I raise my hand to say something in class I’ll try to make it easier for them. I mean it sounds really ridiculous but I know they understand everything I’m going to say cause obviously they speak English but just because I cannot always understand what they are saying in English, I’ll try to dumb it down.

D: Yeah.

B: So, I don’t know, I have just noticed it with the lecturer’s. In my project group it is absolutely fine, we only have one girl who doesn’t speak good English and we will always understand what she is trying to say and just rewrite, it’s not a problem.

MO: So you would say that when you are speaking to someone that you think might understand you less, you change your language for them?

B: Yeah definitely.

D: Yeah.

B: I have noticed it a lot in Vietnam for example. If I knew that the Vietnam people I was talking to didn’t speak as good English I would dumb it down so much that I
would be ashamed of myself because how are you meant to help someone by
dumbing it down. They won’t, it won’t benefit them, I mean they will understand it
better but it won’t make them learn better.
D: Actually I can’t help saying this but one of the people you should have
interviewed in our house, ehm he is Danish I think or maybe Danish/English or
something but he went to Vietnam and spend two years there and had a lot of French
friends and his English, he sounds like he is born and raised in France. Like he has
such a strong French accent when he speaks-
B: [laughter]
D: and when you ask him where he is from you expect like Paris or something, “orh I
am Danish” [laughter] So ehm I think it definitely starts to have an effect on you after
a bit.
MO: Have you ever been in circumstances maybe when you are with a language that
you don’t know perfectly when you perceive the people change their language for
you?
[Pause]
B. Yeah.
D: yeah.
MO: Can you remember any times, anyone?
B: Yeah, for me it was Vietnamese cause I started learning a little bit of Vietnamese,
you know the basic: “go left”, “go right” “go straight” you know or “this is too
expensive for me” and things like that and I would notice that people would try to
really use the simple words that they knew a German would know. But it did not
bother me cause I mean it was just so difficult I would rather have someone else
make it simple for me.
MO: Do you ever find yourself thinking in a non native language?
L: Oh definitely, I think I have been thinking in English since I was 12 or something.
That’s just, I think it has been natural even when it was a language I didn’t speak
perfectly. I would think in English and then I would remind myself of the words that I
needed I needed to find to complete my inner sentences.
MO: hmhm, what about dreaming?
[pause]
D: That is a hard one.
L: That is a good question.
[laughter]
B: All languages.
L: yeah.
D: yeah.
[pause]
D: Even languages you don’t know how to speak you have heard. [laughter] So, well. (B & L laughing)
D: yeah so that is kind of. Kind of like, I don’t know.
B: ??? (says one word while laughing)??
D: yeah that was what I was gonna say. Ehmm what was that I had a good point. (says it with a low voice) yeah I can’t remember but like cursing in Greek is so much better than in English, I don’t know why-
(girls laughing)
D: - but there is so much more meaning in the curses but everything else is in English like…
B: Thinking
D: -thinking yeah.
B: for me it is both, it always depends on how much of which language I have slipped in during the day. Dreaming, I have noticed myself dreaming in French when I started to get better in French class and talking more to my French teacher… and we used to exchange emails and stuff-
D: in your dreams or?
B: No.- and then I started to dream in French and then I noticed and then stopped because I was English, French, German … English.
MO: Do you think that your language or your word choice or even your intonation changes when you speak another language? Cause for example I have been told that my voice gets deeper when I speak Danish than when I speak English and I swear more when I speak Danish.
D: yeah okay.
B: I don’t know. I swear a lot in both languages.
D: No, but you definitely change like even your hand motions if you, if you are bilingual your whole personality changes.
B: I wouldn’t say the whole personality but I would say the word choice. For example if you talk on a more academic level or I don’t know a more day to day language because I can use fancier words in German than I can I English, it doesn’t mean that I can express myself better it’s just the fancier words. So when I write an email in German it will be a lot fancier than it would be in English. I guess that’s pretty much, I wouldn’t think intonation would be different.
MA: hm I think it is different.
B: yeah?
MA: well, I work in a international environment so I hear all the time, how you know you can’t really recognize the same person speaking in English and Danish… just.. it’s hard-
D: yeah its true.
MA:- though… I don’t know to hear myself but I know that in Estonian I am definitely more polite and I believe (tidy?) and stuff so and I think well I speak (softly?)
MO: In English?
MA: Yeah, I have been told that I speak very softly in English, I think two grades softer in Danish- or in Estonian so I’m very soft… sound.
L: I think it is something that has to do with erhm, what you are used to. If you learned your English from example watching television, then you have one kind of intonation that you use, and if you got it from being somewhere with a specific erhm
group of people, talking with a specific accent then you might get your intonation from there, so I think it changes on which environment you are in. Erhm, but from my own experiences I know that I am inclined to speak more clearer when I am talking English. I present the words better I think, because you think about it a bit more when you are speaking in a language that isn’t your native.

MA: Well … I don’t know if I can agree with that. Because I think Danish in general is a mumbling language. It is very difficult to understand Danish, but I think at this point I consider English more like my daily language so I mumble more in English than I do at home I think I speak more clearly so it’s just the environment that you live in… I don’t know.

B: I absolutely agree. I think a lot of it doesn’t have to do with the language when your intonation changes or whatever changes, it just has to do with the people that you’re with….

Ob: You said something about that your body language changes[

D: Actually my whole personality changes erhm in English I think I’m … a much wider person a range of character, like I can be very quiet and polite or I can be clowning around and everything but when I’m speaking Greek I’m very erhm refined in a way, like putting myself at a distance and only throwing what is absolutely necessary even though I can speak fluently and I can understand everything, I don’t want to throw myself into a conversation and I think that is more because of a cultural thing, like… it’s very impolite to kind of throw everything out you know, whereas in English it is exactly the opposite and you got to push your argument a lot.. erhm so I think it really carries the meaning that language, erhm implies a strong amount of culture and culture and language are intertwined. Like for example when I speak Danish I really don’t know how to act, because Danish people and Danish culture is very open in a certain way, so I am much closer to the English because I don’t feel any social restraints.. Erhm so I think your personality changes entirely when you switch from language to language.

[pause]
MO: So do you think other people perceives this difference?
MA: Oh Yes.
D: Oh for sure.
MA: Some of my best friends, the foreigners who are here, I can see when they speak with their people from home I cannot recognize them because, you know, when you get so like (can’t find the word looking at B and says the word in Estonian which happens to be the same in English so B nods) temperamental.. you know into the.. It is very well perceived. I guess… I’m mumbling now.. [laughter]
B: No no.. [laughter]
MA: But definitely, even though you don’t understand what they say, you recognize the sound, you get like a whole different personality just through, like changing into another language.. Mumbling words [laughter]
OB: So do you think your friends from back home would perceive you differently than the ones from here? Could you explain how your, like for example Greek friends or your Danish friends see you in another way?
D: I’m pretty sure that they would, like ehrm, not a huge difference but like, I can see myself here in the class room or in the house, I am very much involved, like, I know a lot of people and I really put myself out there because it’s like I feel really comfortable with the English, whereas in my old school, it’s not that I wasn’t involved… but I was only involved when it was in English… Ehrm and I feel like, that there is definitely a different social ranking or whatever that you place yourself into depending on how well you know the language…
B: Ehrm, I don’t think the friends that know me speak in English would describe me any differently than the friends that I speak in German with… But I guess it is just because that I am a very extravert (in a high tone) character I would say so.. []
D: Would you say that like, you are more polite in German?
B: No, no the only politeness difference is that in English you only have U, but in German you have a polite version of U for elders or you know professors and so forth for people that you just met compared to how you speak with your family, that’s the
only politeness difference that I can see…
D: I think that there is a major difference between my Greek and my English and Danish, like with the English and Danish I know how to be polite, but I’m not polite to everyone whereas in Greek it took me three years to kind of understand that you don’t use the formal U with everyone. Ehrm [laughter] it’s just like you have certain cultural things that you really have to pick up before you really push yourself into a crowd…
MO: So you think you need to speak a language really well to be a part of the group?
D: Yeah..
L: Ehrm, yeah I would probably say because there is a lot of, ehrm, it has to do with the way the words are said and the way, for example what gestures you do when you say them. There is a whole connection behind the meaning of the word that you might not understand if you don’t speak the language that well… Ehrm but I mean that has to do with various cultures because if you see in England, their humor is very alike the Danish, but if you come from a country that has a totally different kind of humor then they might not understand that in the context of the conversation. If you haven’t been exposed to English that much…
B: I think that is a really good point with the humor thing (D backing her up with a yeah) because you don’t understand humor unless you understand the language really well. So I guess that is a big part of belonging to a group whether you understand the humor. Or hidden meaning or whatever.. But it depends on which context you are in because in an international school for example not everyone speaks perfect English, but they belong to the group of internationals. You know, so it just depends on the context.
L: Yeah that is true. If it is an international context then people are more used to actually understanding each other and toning the differences down I think. They are a bit more versatile in speaking with other people.
[mumbling and laughter]
D: I mean it goes with… it is a very hard point to make because the two of us (D and
B) we speak of internationals and internationalization and our version is completely different from anyone else in this room believes, and like, international for us means a very specific setting, it means that you got 30% of the class which belongs to the state department and you know the embassy and army and stuff. Then you have the big corporation kids and the private sector. They all come together and they all got English and have grown up in similar situations, like maybe it’s not always English background and maybe their English isn’t perfect, but because that they are part of the club it’s okay, I mean they will still fit in. But I mean it is kind of hard for anyone else to relate to that because they don’t really understand the, ehrm, it’s almost like a cultural background that we carry. Like we said before we don’t have a really deeply rooted sense in any national country, but we do have this feeling of a community.

B: Yeah, I think it’s a type of knowledge… Because I know a lot of things that my German friends that haven’t been to an international school, don’t know… And it’s the feeling of being a part of this group of people that comes from everywhere. Even the feeling of being everywhere and this knowing that there is something else out there that makes it a special thing to be a part of an international group, I guess..

[laughter] It is very hard to grasp…

[Pause]

MO: Ehrm, going back to language, can you remember any circumstances where you were speaking another language and where the other person was confused? Or where

[overlap in speech]

D: It happens all the time with Danish

[overlap in speech]

MO: Where you can’t get your point across?

D: Yeah, but I think that is more because of poor language skills than anything else…

B: Well I have sort of a small anecdote…When I was little, as Germans do, we used to spend our holiday in Denmark, ehrm and I grew up in west Germany. So I talked to people in the streets in German and if they couldn’t understand me I would switch to English and if they still couldn’t understand me I would get so frustrated because I
thought that if you can’t speak German or English then what do you speak? [laughter] So I have definitely been in that situation where you are confused.

D: What about translating from English to German? Like, English expressions, the classical American expression is ‘like’ [laughter and some saying yuk and showing there disgust over the word] if you translate that into anything else it doesn’t make any sense what so ever.

B: Yeah definitely. It also happens if you have just woken up in the morning, I have that with my boyfriend, where I will just forget that I am in an English environment and I will just start talking in German, and he will look at me like: ‘What the hell are you saying’? Then I will repeat it in German, and it will take a while before it will catch on that I am actually speaking in the wrong language and just continue saying it. But yeah.. [laughter]

MO: I have heard it come up many times, the ties between language and culture. Is there anything more you guys have to say about that? [pause]

B: There is a huge tie…

MO: What do you think the tie is?

L: I think everything is connected. For example if we should take one thing very concrete, you could say ehm, that you have certain expressions from a language that are purely originating from that country and that culture. If you try to translate that word then it doesn’t make any sense, people won’t understand the context. So in that sense, I think generally in the way you speak there might be a tie to your culture. For example we talked about being more polite in one language.

B: Absolutely, absolutely, there is just no way that you can learn a language without understanding the culture that’s behind it. French is a really good example, because the French are so proud of their language. When I was learning French, I could always hear the culture in the background. For example, there is no such thing as using English words in the language. There is no English words. They actually took the dictionary, went through it, crossed out all the English words and replaced them
with French. In order to understand this, or understand the grammar, you have to understand the culture.

MO: So would you say that you couldn’t really know a language if you didn’t know something about the country?

MA: But what do you do with languages that has been kind of washed through other cultures? Like my language has influences from Swedish, Danish, German and Russian...

[interrupting]
B: Yeah but that is part of your culture and part of your historical background of the country.

MA: But then again I don’t think I can relate that much to all those cultures. I don’t think that language and culture are that strictly connected.

D: I think it gets to a certain depth, like, you can go to Vietnam to buy an t-shirt and you might be speaking Vietnamese or English but there is not much cultural exchange in asking for t-shirts, but if you are doing this hand movement that I’m doing now. You wouldn’t really do this in another language. I couldn’t see myself doing this in Danish, erhm, and I know for a fact that you use much more body language in southern languages than you use in northern languages..

[interruption]
B: And you are louder.

D: And you are louder, and it’s just.. that’s part of the culture, that’s who they are. And when you are down there, even my mum she is Danish and she learned how to speak Greek, she started using her hands, she will try to get her tone right, she will nod her head in the right way- Like, it’s… you won’t be understood. Just to fit in you have to do these things.

L: You could turn it the other way around and say, for example, English has become so international in a way, that there is no right way to speak it and there is no right context as such

[interruption]
D: Ehm (Disagreeing)

B: Yeah no! [laughter from D and B] Because there is a right way to speak it. Because the right way to speak it is for other people to understand exactly what you are saying, and in order to be able to say what you want to say and have other people understanding it you have to be at the core of the language.

D: Yeah, like an American would relate to British just the same way as an Australian would relate to British. And the American and the Australian would understand each other.

L: Yeah but if you have people from countries that do not originally speak English, if you have two people from two different language cultures that speak British with each other, then they won’t be using the British context because they don’t know it, but they will still be able to understand each other.

D: To a certain extent yes, but [interruption]

L: To a certain extent..

D: But if you want a hundred percent accuracy, you are going to have to bring in a cultural side, and there is no common, like an American and an Australian have similar cultural aspects, but not the same, but they can both relate to the British to a certain extent, and that is how they come to the core. They will kind of do away with their national aspects, like little, like the Canadians do a or like about (said in the ‘Canadian way’) [laughter] they will change that around so that they can fit into the American language or the British language. There is a standard English amongst English native speakers.

B: Yeah exactly, and ehm, about the washed up thing, for example English is composed of French and German you know, and it is washed up in that sense you know… because it’s mixed it is very mixed, but the core of it lies in the history of Great Britain. French people invading, German people invading, a big old mix, and then you get the language. So I think that history and culture are so closely linked that if you look at the history of a language, you get the culture of a language and
therefore you cannot divide culture and language, if you know what I mean?

MA: Well (looking confused) yeah..

B: Because if you say that Estonian is a mix of so many different languages…

[interruption]

MA: Yeah we have a lot..But at the same time I can relate to the Latvian people even though I don’t understand the language at all.

D: So yeah, that kind of agrees with the point doesn’t it? Cause your cultural background doesn’t allow you to cross the borders and take in everything that your bordering countries might… Like if I come into an Italian, like a southern Italian he will understand most of the hand motions because there is a very similar cultural background, but ehrm, not necessarily with the northern Italian, he would maybe relate easier to what a northern European would do. So if I tried to speak Italian, not that I know how to but, then it would be easier to relate to the southern person, using my cultural background from Greece, than it would be to relate to the northern person using the same cultural background.

MA: I’m confused..

D: My bad [laughter]

B: No but just going back to culture being a link to language, for example Danish, oh my god, Danish is such a perfect example. There are so many words that you don’t understand unless you have been in Denmark. Denmark has such a feel about it, that you probably wouldn’t be able to speak the language if you don’t know what it feels like to be Danish. Again the word ‘hyggelig’, you don’t understand the word unless you have been in Denmark or you have been around Danish people, you know what I mean? It is so closely linked that you can’t actually pull them apart I would say.

[pause]

D: So can we like take a break?

MO: Ehrm, if you don’t mind I think we only have a few more questions, it is only going to take a few moments longer.

D: Yeah okay, go ahead.
MO: I just wanted to ask, something that has also come up a few times, the link between language and personality. Is there more that can be discussed on that?
D: I guess I have kind of exhausted that one out, but like I said I think you change from one person to the next, even in the slightest bit, when you change languages. And ehrm, even if I would go from an American to an American international environment I am in different way in the American environment that I am in the international environment in America.
B: I think it has to do with the culture again.
[interruption]
D: Yeah I mean it does because when you are in California it’s like: ‘What up bro’ and then in the international school you can’t whip out the old peace sign and say ‘what up bro’ it won’t work. [laughter]
B: Because only half of the people will understand it.
D: Yeah, so your personality definitely changes, even if it is only to be polite.
MO: So kind of in conclusion; is there anything new you have learned about yourself in this conversation?
D: Sorry guys, I hope you weren’t hoping for like a mind blowing revelation…
B: Because we come from an international environment. We have been confronted with this for years.
[Interruption]
D: Every class you have come into they ask you: ‘What is your native language’? What is your background? How does that take an effect on your opinions?
B: And as I said I have been discussing this with my Australian friend for, like, ever. Where are you actually from is it your nationality on your passport blah blah blah. Just the background.. Coming from an international school you are just confronted with this so much that learning something new about the topic would actually only happen if you were introduced to new parts of a language or something, if you know what I mean? I don’t know about you two? (directed to the people that aren’t from an international school).
L: I would say, that I have had a friend for some time who has been studying Danish for some time now and it is something we have been discussing for a long time him and I. Because at a language school you have an environment where you get a lot of different people in. And he has been saying:’ She said this and this and he didn’t and this’ So it is not something new to me either. It is a daily thing for me to think that I am glad that I have been in Denmark because of this and this. And I have these ties to other cultures because of other things. So yeah..

[pause]

MO: Okay thank you guys so much for your time and if you are interested, you can all write your emails on that paper and then we can send you the finished project.
**19.3 Observers Notes - Made During the Focus Group Interview**

**Norms**
Depending on what kind of society you grew up in.

**Belonging:** Bettina/Dimitri find each other fast because of their international backgrounds. They agree on calling home where your family is.

**Code-switching**
It is difficult for Dimitri, especially if you speak more than two languages. Example: Danish to Greek to English.

Language is the most important part of your identity according to Dimitri.

Bettina agrees again: It happens easily to switch if you are home and speaking only German and then you forget a word in German and want to find it in English.

Hyggelig is for example a very difficult word for Bettina to find in other languages.

**Studying in a Foreign Language**

L: It is easier to study in English because of the possibilities.

MA: Is getting more confident in English (while still looking and sounding insecure) – Losing touch with native language.

B: It takes time for Bettina to get used to studying in a different language depending on how long time she is in that environment. She is dumbing the language down.

D: Affects you, your environment. (agreeing again with B)

**How You Change with Language**

D: Change personality with language. Clowny in English/ push your argument in USA. Greek more refined. Social ranking within languages (talking passionate and serious every time he talks about Greece.)

MA: Polite in Estonian. More Soft and relaxed in English. You change your
personality a lot when speaking different languages. (Said with the most polite/nervous English tone.)

B: For me it is about who you are with.

**Being Part of a Group**

Everyone agrees that knowing a language is very important when you want to be a part of a group, but it is still possible to be a part of a group if you know the cultural background. E.G D and B shares a lot and agree that as long as you share the same culture and have the same cultural roots you can still be a part of the group.

**Own Personal Observations**

It is clear that there are some limitations in the argumentation because of the language. It shines through that there are two fluent people and it is emphasized because they are also from the same background so they tend to agree and back each other up. It is a bit unbalanced because it is often two vs. one in a discussion. It Feels like Louise has a lot of pressure on her because of her statement that she started thinking in English when she was around 12. It seems that she has difficulties getting her point through with the two ‘stronger’ speakers around. Maarja seems very nervous and no matter what she says about her feeling more comfortable in English it still feels like it would be the reason for her nervousness. Furthermore, the other participants seem to smile and nod to support and encourage her when she is saying something.

It is almost like B and D seem superior and tend to diverge when talking about their international school background. Sometimes when the two others say something they tend to quickly disagree both of them and laugh a little bit in a ‘know it all you have no clue what you are talking about’ way. Maarja code-switched once when looking for a word (temperament)

In the beginning we were waiting for the last person to come, but he never showed. B was texting until just before we started, D was small-talking. The two others were
waiting for us to start.
The mood was a bit withdrawn and timid. We offered them to take some tea/coffee
and some cake, some did.
The first time M speaks, she has to repeat what she just said because she spoke low
and mumbled a bit. (e.g. In the introduction, her name and her
nationality)
L speaks loud and clear with a British accent.
D also speaks loud and clear in an American accent. He interrupts several times when
others are speaking. But he is very careful when putting down his glass etc. He and B
seem the most comfortable being there and speak the most and have long answers.
On the other hand M says very little and in shorter sentences.
During the introduction D and B connected immediately. They have apparently
attended the same school system. They speak primarily to each other during the
whole interview, have eye contact, finish each other’s sentences and B laughs often
when D talks. They understand each other in another way than the other two.
Sometimes it seems like they are the only two in room, mostly when they talk about
the international school. They both use their hands when speaking.
B changes her tone of voice, up and down and emphasizes many of her words by
saying them louder and slower. Sometimes it sounds like she is making a speech.
L seems very controlled and thinks more before she speaks than B and D. Her tone of
voice is the same all the way through.
The participants borrow each other’s words. E.g. B just said “continents” and just
thereafter L uses it.
All of them say “I don’t know” or “I guess” after finishing a sentence. And B and D
use the word “like” loads of times.
M turns to B when looking for a word.
Later on B and D team up and agree on many things, they ask questions to the others
and disagree. E.g. when D makes M confused.
When the recorder is stopped and we ask them what we could do better only D, L and
B say something.