



# Transnationals' Discourses on the English Language in Finland

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Alongside other societies in the world, Finland is facing increasing diversity in its population, and the sociolinguistic changes that follow are challenging existing policies and established structures in Finnish society. The current situation calls for the need to find new ways to live multicultural and multilingual lives in the Finnish community (e.g., Ruuska, 2020, p. 251; Saarinen, 2012). Oftentimes, multiculturalism or internationalism seems to equal the use of English as the assumed shared language (e.g., Saarinen, 2012); in other cases, English is simply positioned as a global language and thus seen as an enabler or a threat (e.g., Saarinen & Ennsner-Kananen, 2020). Here, I concentrate on how transnationals living in Finland talk about English and its use in a Finnish context, that is, their discourses on English. By the term transnational, I refer to people whose background is in a country other than Finland.

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M. Frick et al. (eds.), *Language Contacts and Discourses in the Far North*, Arctic Encounters,

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-42979-8\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-42979-8_7)

Some existing studies on Finns' perceptions of English in a Finnish context show that English is present in the everyday life of Finns in Finland (Leppänen et al., 2008; Leppänen et al., 2011; Leppänen & Pahta, 2012; Peterson, 2019). It has been documented in studies that Finns (often) speak English willingly (Leppänen et al., 2011; Scotson, 2018a, p. 45). The use of English by migrants and their perceptions of English in Finland is, however, a less studied phenomenon. This is because, in the Finnish context, the language studies of migrants focus on Finnish language learning (e.g., Iikkanen, 2020; Komppa et al., 2017), as language skills and finding employment are considered to play an important part in migrant integration (e.g., Tarnanen et al., 2015; cf. Bivojet & Östman, this volume).

Linguistic choices between English and Finnish in particular have been studied in different everyday situations. Migrants' perceptions of languages in Finland and the significance of English for migrants are topics which have been touched upon for example in recent studies by Ruuska (2020), Scotson (2020), and Iikkanen (2020). That is, English is present in these studies when talking about, for example, language choice (Scotson, 2020), the increased use of English in everyday interactions in Finland (Ruuska, 2020; Scotson, 2020), and ideological representations connected to English skills (Iikkanen, 2019). However, Finnish occupies the main role: For example, Ruuska (2020) focuses on advanced second-language speakers of Finnish and their experiences of everyday language use in Finland, and Scotson (2018b) concentrates on the agency of migrants and their language choices between Finnish and English. Also, the relationship between language and identity, along with the topics of inclusion and exclusion, has been the centre of interest in several studies connecting migrants and language issues in Finland (e.g., Ekberg & Östman, 2020; Intke-Hernandez, 2020; Ruuska, 2020; Scotson, 2018b).

To conclude, the discourse on the self-evident position of English, in terms of skills and usage, has already been proven in previous studies among both Finns and migrants in Finland, but it has not been studied in detail. In the current changing society, it is important to discuss the recurrent claims about English in Finnish society as well as consider their possible consequences. Perceptions, attitudes, and ideologies on migrants and language in Finland have been perused in earlier studies, whereas discourses—ways of constructing the world via language—have not been in the focus. In this study, I use a discursive approach to identify different ways in which my informants give meanings to languages and language

users (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2019). My research questions are: (1) What discourses on the English language do the informants of the study construct in the pair conversations? (2) What kind of picture do these discourses paint of the linguistic situation in Finnish society, that is, how is the presence of English in Finnish society as well as proficiency in English pictured in the discourses of transnationals in Finland?

Discourses on languages and also ideologies behind discourses are hardly ever about language alone (e.g., Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen, 2020). Hence, it is important to consider the relationships between different languages in society and, more importantly, the relationships between language users as well as the social structures behind language use (Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen, 2020). Discourses have the potential to reshape dominant perceptions and increase awareness about languages. The informants of the study contribute to the picture of language discourses circulating in Finnish society: They may strengthen prevailing discourses, or they may challenge or even resist them. How the informants speak about English can be seen as a reflection of dominant language discourses. It is also a way to make these discourses visible or provide an opportunity to approach language questions from varied viewpoints and reshape conceptions of the present linguistic state of Finnish society.

The article is divided into five sections: In the next Sect. 7.2, I present the theoretical starting points on which I build my analysis, followed by my data and methodology in Sect. 7.3. I report and analyse my results in Sect. 7.4, which includes three sub-sections, each discussing a particular emerging discourse. Finally, the results and implications of the study are discussed in Sect. 7.5.

## 7.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

From a broad perspective, two distinct viewpoints can be identified in discourses on English around the world: The language is seen as a global lingua franca and an international language on the one hand and as a threat to other languages on the other. The former in particular has attracted criticism (see, e.g., Jakubiak, 2012), since attention is often drawn to a multilingualism where English is persistently portrayed as a lingua franca despite only being a part of the global picture of language use (Makoni & Pennycook, 2012; on linguistic imperialism see Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 2000, pp. 112–114.). However, a discourse on English as an empowering or oppressing language is also a non-fruitful starting

point for a conversation about language as a social phenomenon—these kinds of dichotomies are to be avoided. Instead, studies should go beyond just considering the usefulness or dangers of English as a global language, as this way of thinking glosses over the social structures and ideologies behind it. The studies should concentrate on the layered and complex social implications of English in localised contexts (Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen, 2020). I will proceed to give a brief overview on the current perceptions of multilingualism in Finland, expanding on the introduction to English in a Finnish context in Chapter 1.<sup>1</sup>

### 7.2.1 *Multilingualism in Finland*

Linguistically and ethnically, Finland is relatively homogeneous (Blommaert et al., 2012, pp. 10, 12; Ruuska, 2020) and the linguistic situation and population structure is not consistent between different geographical regions around the country. The regional composition of the foreign population varies: The number of people with foreign background is highest in Uusimaa (14.9%) and Åland (16.7%) and lowest in South Ostrobothnia (only 2.5%) (Statistics of Finland, 2020). The number of foreign-language mother-tongue speakers in Finland is under 8%, and the largest foreign language groups are Russian and Estonian, with English being fourth on the list (approx. 23,000 speakers, i.e., 0.4% of the population) after Arabic (Statistics of Finland, 2020).

Recent studies (e.g., Ruuska, 2020, p. 251) show how linguistic diversity as well as the awareness of a variety of different speakers of Finnish is increasing nowadays. Ruuska's dissertation about highly proficient second-language speakers of Finnish is one example of the existence of this variation as well as of the gradually changing linguistic situation and perception of languages and language varieties in Finland. According to Statistics of Finland (2017), out of the adult Finnish population (ages 18–65), over 90% claim to speak at least one foreign language, and English is the main foreign language of those surveyed.

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed picture of the linguistic situation in Finland see Chapter 1 of this volume.

### 7.2.2 *Perceptions of English in Finland*

The attitudes of Finns towards English and their perception of it have been examined for example by Leppänen, Nikula, and Kääntä (2008, eds.) as well as Leppänen et al. (2011), and English is presented in their studies as a natural part of everyday life. Previous studies have shown that Finns do indeed have a very positive attitude towards English (Leppänen et al., 2011), and English is sometimes portrayed as an integral part of society, to the point of receiving the label of Finland's 'third national language' (Leppänen et al., 2008). However, Leppänen and Pahta (2012) have found different voices when studying language ideological debates in Finland, noticing that English is sometimes described as the *foreign other* and that these discourses reflect nationalist ideologies which originate from the changing of the world.

Proficiency in English seems to be self-evidently considered a prestigious and valuable resource in the sociolinguistic field of Finland. English has acquired the status of an international language, and it can also be seen as an indicator of the level of an individual's education (Leppänen et al., 2011). The position of English can also be seen in the context of Finnish higher education where, for example, Finns' experiences of English learning and usage are studied (e.g., Räisänen & Karjalainen, 2018). The position of English is also evident in studies on Finns' professional use of the language. For example, Räisänen and Karjalainen (2018) studied multilingualism in the work of technical engineers and the kind of (multilingual) communication skills needed in their work. All their informants experienced English skills to be a natural and self-evident part of working life (see also Räisänen, this volume).

From a migrant's point of view, there are two main angles to the discussion of English in Finland, as demonstrated in recent studies on migrants' language perceptions. First, Ruuska (2020, p. 139) states that English is an important resource and lingua franca for migrants in Finland. Second, there are possible disadvantages of English usage when considering the position of English from a migrant's point of view. Positive effects of English emerge when having English as a resource can act as a gateway to Finnish society, since it is often the first language used to interact with the locals. It works as an inclusive language in different areas of everyday life. For example, Iikkanen (2020) shows in her study how migrants see English as an essential skill especially during the first stages of settlement in Finland. In working contexts of migrants, English is seen

as a language that makes communication easier, for example when Finnish skills are felt to be insufficient (Komppa, 2015, p. 176; see also Iikkanen, 2017). Migrants may experience different levels of agency and possibilities to act and participate in different languages. Scotson (2018b, pp. 218, 221) has observed such differences in her informants: Agency is sometimes possible in English, but not necessarily in Finnish. English allows for equal communication and acting in society, whereas using Finnish leads to confusion. English is perceived as a better choice for communication and participation especially in special situations such as institutional encounters and situations where time is limited (Scotson, 2018a; see also Komppa, 2015). English is seen both as a language of time management, quickness, and efficiency and as a language that is easy to use. Migrants in Finland see it as a tool to avoid misunderstandings and also as a language for meaningful conversations (Komppa, 2015, p. 176; Scotson, 2018a).

The possible disadvantages of English usage emerge in views where English is often mentioned as an obstacle to learning Finnish, hindering the possibilities of learning the language (Scotson, 2018a, 2020). If one wishes to have social contacts outside of the English-speaking community, speaking only English can become an obstacle to integration into Finnish society (Iikkanen, 2017). In the same vein, in a workplace context, English is not only a useful communication tool leading to inclusion but also a language that hinders the usage and learning of Finnish (e.g., Strömmer, 2017). In sum, while being able to use English in Finland may initially open many doors for migrants, relying on its use may decrease their opportunities for incorporating local languages into their everyday language practices.

### 7.3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this section, I present my pair conversation data and the informants in the first subsection. In the following subsection, I discuss my discourse analytical research approach and report my research conduct.

#### 7.3.1 *Informants and Pair Conversations*

The data consist of pair conversations between transnationals residing in northern Finland at the time of the conversations. There are 20 informants in total: four men and 16 women. By the term transnational, I refer to persons who have, or whose parents have, moved to (northern) Finland

as adults and who use a language other than or in addition to Finnish at home. The informant group is heterogeneous: The informants represent 13 different countries of origin and 13 different reported mother tongues in total. Among them are seven informants who reported themselves to have more than one mother tongue, and for two of these informants one of their mother tongues was Finnish. Most of the informants have moved to Finland as adults, and their motivations for migrating as well as time spent in Finland vary. One of the informants was born in Finland.

The data consist of 10 video-recorded pair conversations. The conversations last between 45 minutes and two hours each, and there are approximately 15 hours of research data in total. Some of the informants knew each other beforehand, but the pairs were mostly selected at random. One of the pairs was a married couple (pair 4) and another consisted of a mother and her daughter (pair 2). There were no other family relations. Table 7.1 details the data and the informants. In the informant codes, the first number indicates the number of the pair, followed by F for female and M for male. Finally, the last number is the informant's age at the time of the pair conversation.

The pair conversations resembled semi-structured theme interviews (Tiittula & Ruusuvoori, 2005). The informants received a thematically grouped set of questions to discuss together regarding themes of language and inclusion in Finnish society. Some of the conversations between the informants were more flowing and natural, whereas others were more like interviews since the informants directed their answers to me, the

**Table 7.1** The informants and data

<i>Pairs and informant codes</i>	<i>Time spent in Finland (years)</i>	<i>Length of the recording</i>	<i>Language of the pair conversation</i>
1_F37/1_F32	11/approx. 1	1:15	Finnish
2_F20/2_F48	Born in Finland/22	1:16	Finnish
3_F49/3_F45	14/18	2:08	Finnish
4_F36/4_M38	15/12	1:54	English
5_F35/5_F49	10/22	1:24	Finnish
6_M38/6_F40	10/10	1:44	English
7_M23/7_M20	4/4	00:46	Finnish
8_F23/8_F39	4/11	1:37	Finnish
9_F32/9_F26	2.5/2	1:50	Finnish
10_F37/10_F31	11/4	1:23	Finnish (English)

researcher. However, this did not affect the quality or usability of the material.

The informants were allowed to choose the language of their conversation as well as the questions to answer. It was also possible to use multiple languages during the conversations and to receive the questions in both English and Finnish if needed. Out of the 10 pair conversations, eight were conducted in Finnish and two in English.

### 7.3.2 *Discourses in the Study of Languages and Language Users*

I use critical discourse analytical methods (Fairclough, 1989) and scrutinise my data by paying attention to recurring themes and linguistic features that the informants use to construct discourses, that is, the linguistic means the informants use to describe the English language as well as its position and use in Finnish society. I consider discourses to be socially shared ways of seeing and structuring the world in interactions between people (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 16). Discourses are simultaneously linguistic and social phenomena (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2019); they are a social form of language use as well as socially shared ways of constructing the world. That is, the relationship between language use and the social world is a two-way street: Discourses have the potential to (re)construct identities, ideologies, and social reality (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258; Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 6).

There are multiple ways to structure social reality and its phenomena in a language, and language use does not ever exist in a neutral social space. Concretely, this means choosing and using language resources to talk about certain topics or phenomena and, in doing so, structuring reality. Social spaces are connected to the valuations and conventions of languages and language use, which are maintained by individual language users as well as the wider society (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 3–4, 127–130; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2019). One purpose of critical discourse analysis is to recognise naturalised ways of speaking about certain topics and phenomena and make them visible in order to enable change in discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 7). This is important because certain discourses—recurring ways of talking about and seeing the world—have a tendency to delimit other angles to the topic (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2019). Discourses can increase our understanding of how societies work; they can produce beneficial or



detrimental effects on members of society as well as shed light on how these detrimental effects can be reduced or eliminated (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 202–203).

Norms and conventions regulate language use, but language also has the potential to resist rules and re-create new ways to structure reality (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, pp. 258–259). I examine my informants' ways of speaking about linguistic encounters with the aim to reveal discourses on the English language regarding the position of English and the relationships between different languages and their speakers. Via discourses, I take a critical look at the linguistic situation in Finnish society. I detect recurring linguistic features in my data, for example, if the informants use certain pronouns to discuss language use or if their descriptions of the situations include modality, which indicates certainty or uncertainty of expressions. These linguistic features are used as a starting point to describe, explain, and interpret social structures and phenomena.

#### 7.4 DISCOURSES ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The informants' conversations about linguistic encounters in Finnish society constantly lead to discussions on English language use even without being asked about the topic. The themes and questions of the pair conversations revolve around languages used in certain interactions, but none of the questions mentioned any other language than Finnish.<sup>2</sup> The recurrence of English in the pair conversations may be explained by the perceptions Finnish members of society hold of English and its use as a natural part of everyday communication (see Sect. 7.2). Nevertheless, I consider the appearance of English to be a meaningful theme. In the first subsection, I present discourse on English as a common language in Finland, spoken by 'everybody'. The picture of the all-embracing existence of English is interestingly refined and adjusted in the following sections, that is, the claims of English presence in Finnish society are followed by explanations and exceptions. The next subsection considers a discourse in which informants describe people and contexts where English is not commonly used after all. Finally, the discourse is further developed

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the national languages, language rights, and languages used in Finland, see Frick, Räisänen, and Ylikoski, this volume. In this chapter, I examine only the Finnish language in relation to English.

in the third subsection through the presentation of cases in which the informants claim that even though English is widely known and used in Finnish society, it is still somehow insufficient in everyday life.

In the following sections, examples of transcribed data are presented with an accompanying set of transcription notations. A single parenthesis ( ) is used when a word or a set of words is heard unclearly, whereas double parentheses indicate remarks or additions made by the researcher. Brackets [ ] are used to depict anonymised information; dashes mean one (-) or more (- -) words left out of the example text. I refer to the original Finnish words of the examples (beside the English ones) in the detailed linguistic analysis even though the Finnish examples are translated into English. This is due to the fact that discourse analysis is based on the linguistic choices and resources of the informants.

#### 7.4.1 *Everyone Speaks English*

A discourse that emerges recurrently in the data is the self-evident position of English. It emphasises the role of Finland as a region or country where English is commonly known—at least on some level. The first Examples (1 and 2) illustrate the general claims about English language skills and its usage in Finland.

##### *Example 1*<sup>3</sup>

1\_F32: sitten tietysti voi aina, kysyä myös, mikä se on englanniksi koska kaikki, osaa englantia niin hyvin että, jos en ymmärrä jotain tai, on sellainen sana sitten pitää vain, pyytää, kuka voi kääntää.

1\_F32: and then of course you can also always ask what it is in English because everyone knows English so well that if I don't understand something or if there's ((an unfamiliar)) word then I just have to ask someone to translate.

##### *Example 2*

8\_F23: - - sillä ((englannilla)), pärjää aika hyvin ((pause)) siinä mielessä ku, - kaikki, melkei opiskelee englantia, koulussa. ja, -

<sup>3</sup> English translations are made by the author.

monesti ((pause)) - - jos matkustaa, nii on aina, englanniksi jotain ohjeita tai, - -

8\_F23: - - you can get by quite well with it ((English)) ((pause)) in the sense that - everyone, almost ((everyone)) learns English in school. and, - often ((pause)) - - if you travel, then there are always some directions in English or, - -

English is constructed as a common and constantly present language in Finnish society. Common knowledge is reflected in the ways in which users of English are named (*kaikki* 'everyone'; *kuka* 'someone' lit. 'who'; *kaikki, melkei* 'almost everyone') whereas the presence of English is seen in the ways how the position of English is constructed in the descriptions of the recurrence of its use (*aina* 'always'; *monesti* 'often') and in expressions of modality, in this case certainty (*tietysti* 'of course'; *vain* 'just'). Finally, a cause-and-effect relationship can be seen in the discourse: *Jos* ('if') one is in a situation where there is a potential language problem, *sitten* ('then') English is available. All these features in the examples above support the picture of English as a common resource in Finland, and the tendency in the overall data is to praise how it is possible to get by with English *Suomessa* ('in Finland') or *täällä* ('here'), which also indicates the informants' present place of residence. Example 2 makes possibly an even wider generalisation of English knowledge, since it implies other contexts of use outside of Finland. Hence, a view of English as a worldwide lingua franca is visible in the data. Even so, speaking about the language skills of people living in other countries functions mostly as a means to praise the language skills of Finns and English as a useful resource in Finland, as seen in Example 3:

### Example 3

9\_F26: kun esimerkiksi Puolassa, - - se ei ole niin hyvä, englannin taso, Puolassa, kun Suomessa. sitten jos sä et, tiedä mitään, Puolassa, jos, esimerkiksi, sä tulet, töihin, sä et ymmärrä mitään sä, se on tosi vaikeaa. Suomessa, ((pause)) on kaikki - tiedot, englanniksi myös. niin kuin Kelassa tai joku, toimistossa. sä voit myös, he vastaavat, mutta englanniksi jos sä et osaa suomea. mutta toisessa maassa se ei vois olla mahdollinen.

9\_F32: (joo just.)

9\_F26: when for example in Poland, - - it isn't so good, the standard of English, in Poland as in Finland. then if you don't know anything, in Poland, if, for example, you come to work, you don't understand anything you, it's really difficult. In Finland, ((pause)) everything - the information, is in English too. like at Kela<sup>4</sup> or in some office. you can also, they reply, but in English if you don't know Finnish. but in another country it wouldn't be possible.

9\_F32: (yes exactly.)

The discourse on English in Finland is constructed and emphasised by comparing the linguistic situation to that in other countries—usually the home countries of the informants—and the language skills of the inhabitants of these countries. The limited possibilities to use English in Poland are described by making a point that everyday life is challenging for those who do not know Polish (*sä et ymmärrä mitään sä, se on tosi vaikeaa* ‘you don't understand anything, it's really difficult’). In contrast, Finland is portrayed as a country where English is a natural resource with widespread possibilities of use in society (*on kaikki - englanniksi myös* ‘everything - is in English too’). According to the informant, the possibility to use English is essential especially in places and situations (*Kelassa tai joku, toimistossa* ‘Kela or in some office’) where it would be difficult to use a foreign language anyway (on special situations see, e.g., Scotson, 2020). English is seen as an essential resource in the public services, and countries are ranked according to opportunities for its usage. This is one way to praise the widespread use of English in Finland as well as the English skills of Finns, which is also noted in the study of Virkkula and Nikula (2010, pp. 266–267).

In some cases, the repeatedly discussed point that English is spoken ‘by everyone’ and ‘everywhere’ including official situations leads to the conclusion that Finnish is not necessarily needed in Finland. As, for example, informant 10\_F31 points out: *suomalaiset puhuu myös englantia siis, ei tarvi suomea* ‘Finns also speak English so, there's no need for Finnish’. The same way of speaking has been detected, for example, by Niemelä (2019) when she studied students' perceptions of Finnish spoken by foreigners. Her informants consider that not all migrants need to learn Finnish since they know English, a valid resource with Finns

<sup>4</sup> The Social Insurance Institution of Finland.

(see also Iikkanen, 2017). In this study, however, the taken-for-granted status of English goes so far that it reaches the point where an informant questions the possibility to not use English. This is triggered by the imagined situation described in the pair conversation questions as Example 4 demonstrates:

*Example 4*

2\_F48: ((lukee paperista)) tilantees jossa toiset henkilöt, puhuvat kieltä jota et osaa ollenkaan. ((pause)) ei kyllä siellä on aina englantia joku osaan.

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2\_F48: ku, ku mää oon, (ma ei ole) semmosessa tilanteessa varmaan hirveesti ollu.

H: entä silloin ku tulit tänne.

2\_F48: no englantia. kaikki osaa englantia ja sitten mä opin suomen kielen. mutta toki oli se et ku mä tulin että oli ne, ne jotka. (esimerkiks) anoppi, ei osannu englantia. että osas vain suomea, -

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2\_F20: joo, määki oon turvautunu, englantii yleensä että.

2\_F48: ((reading from the paper)) situation in which other people, speak a language you don't know at all. ((pause)) no there's always someone who knows English.

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2\_F48: - - I probably haven't been in many such situations.

Int: and what about when you came here.

2\_F48: well English. everyone knows English and then I learnt Finnish. but it was indeed the case that when I came that there were those, those who. (for example) my mother-in-law didn't know English. that she only knew Finnish, - -

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2\_F20: yeah, I've also usually resorted to English, so.

In Example 4, informant 2\_F48 gets confused and does not seem to understand the question asked. This conclusion can be drawn by noticing the break between the question she reads from the paper and her answer as well as her verbal reaction. She questions the existence of such situations where it is not possible to use English (*ei kyllä siellä*

*on aina englantia joku osaan* ‘no there’s always someone who knows English’). The informant justifies her opinion by expressing that English, as a resource, is always available (*kaikki osaa englantia* ‘everyone knows English’). Even after pondering the situation, she still cannot name any cases where this is not true. It is not fully directly expressed that she speaks namely of English in Finland, but this can be inferred from the part where she speaks about times when she started learning Finnish. Also, the informant’s daughter 2\_F20 confirms 2\_F48’s doubt regarding the impossibility of using English in Finland. However, in the end, the informant manages to come up with a gap in the English proficiency of Finns: She mentions that it is not possible to use English with her *anoppi* (‘mother-in-law’). Even though the language skills of Finns have been generalised in the examples above, the informants seem to have a broader understanding of the variation in these skills within the Finnish population. Such exceptions to the aforementioned generalisations are discussed in the following section.

#### 7.4.2 *But Some Still Don’t Speak English*

According to the examples presented in the previous section, expectations of Finns’ language skills and the possibility of using English in Finnish society are high. Nevertheless, the data reveal a discourse that adds limitations to these claims or even directly contradicts them. Discursively, it is interesting when something seems to diverge from the norm; it must therefore be brought forward or mentioned. This section demonstrates how informants modify the discourse on the presence and position of English in Finland. Firstly, an uncertainty concerning the knowledge and use of English can be seen in certain restrictions mentioned by the informants in Examples 5 and 6:

##### *Example 5*

9\_F32: - - mutta he käyttävät englantia työpaikalla niin kuin - - ensimmäisenä kielenä ja sinä kyllä voit pärjätä englannin kielellä töissä, koska suomalaiset osaavat hyvin englantia, - -

9\_F32: - - but they use English at their workplace like - - as their first main language and you can definitely get by in English at work, because Finns know English well, - -

*Example 6*

8\_F39: - - koska Suomessa yleensä, minusta yleensä, -, ihmiset osaavat, puhua englanti jonkun verran - - tuo tavallinen ehkä keskustelu (hyvin joo), pääsee hyvin, - -

8\_F39: - - because in Finland in general, in my opinion in general, -, people know, speak English to some extent - - this ordinary conversation maybe - - goes well, - -

According to the informants, there are certain groups in which the use of English is always possible. They mention the workplace (Example 5) or hobbies as such places, thus delimiting the use of English to certain contexts after all. This leaves open the option that there might be places in which and people with whom English is not used. In addition, restrictions can be seen in how a certain number of the informants' statements are accompanied by hedges such as *yleensä* ('in general'), *melkein* ('almost'), *jonkun verran* ('to some extent'), and *ehkä* ('maybe'), as Example 6 illustrates. Thus, a contradicting discourse emerges concerning limitations regarding the extent to which English is a possible tool for communication in Finland. Secondly, limitations to the English skills of Finns are visible in how the generalisations are followed by the word choice *mutta* ('but') or some other element to indicate that the description includes caveats to the statement expressed before. The informants may bring up individual cases, such as random people in certain contexts who do not speak English or have limited skills in English, or, more typically, certain groupings among 'those who don't speak English', as Example 7 demonstrates.

*Example 7*

6\_F40: well I, still think that, - - if you go with, an old Finnish person, in an island, during midsummer for like two weeks, a person that doesn't speak English at all, I'm sure, we learn. ((laughs)).

6\_M38: yeah. yeah but, when we work where we work, like there is, people,

6\_F40: yeah yeah it's true.

6\_M38: always speak English. so maybe I yes, maybe we should switch it, our, we should switch our, expertise and just do some, cleaning stuff and, some.

6\_F40: well, this is.

6\_M38: I don't know.

6\_F40: I remember once I told the, daycare ladies, that, oh I should work with you to ((laughs)) actually improve my Finnish. to work with kids an-, and them.

6\_M38: yeah.

Example 7 demonstrates how the informants illustrate exceptions to the possibilities of using English in everyday life in Finnish society. Usually, these limitations consist of people in certain working contexts or living in certain areas, as well as certain age and migrant groups. These groupings seem to be based on two questions: The first asks *who* does not speak English, and the second reveals *where* in Finland English is not perceived to be spoken. Informant 6\_F40 brings about an imaginary situation: with *an old Finnish person*, on an isolated place (*an island*), and during the holiday season (*Midsummer*) when it is typical to retreat to one's summer cabin away from the cities. This scenario is in opposition to the informant's and her conversation pair's normal daily working context of a highly educated person, where English seems to be present to the extent of hindering the possibilities to learn Finnish (*we should switch our expertise*). It is proven that especially persons with a degree in higher education struggle with learning Finnish, since using English resources enable them to manage daily situations without the knowledge of Finnish—hence, their language skills in Finnish are poorer than that of other learners (e.g., Nieminen & Larja, 2015, p. 46; Scotson, 2018b). When discussing the presence of English, the informants create a contrast of contexts between their own working environment and other kinds of jobs. Informant 6\_M38 toys with the idea of working a different kind of job from his as an opportunity to learn Finnish and suggests a workplace where English is not used, that is, a *cleaning* job. Informant 6\_F40 adds to the context *daycare* and *work with kids*. The aforementioned working contexts would increase the informants' ambitions and motivation to learn Finnish.

Peterson (2019, p. 6) notes that there is a sharp contrast between generations: Compared to their parents and grandparents, young Finns are more willing to use English in varying situations. English is a part of their repertoire—a tool they can use as a main language to express themselves or alongside their native tongue (see also Leppänen et al., 2011; Pitkänen-Huhta & Hujo, 2012). The following Example 8 demonstrates



how English skills vary between the generations according to the informants. The term *old people*, who were mentioned to not use English, is elaborated on in further detail in the following example:

*Example 8*

8\_F39: - - kun, menen, miehen, mummu luokse, varmasti, hän, hänelle, kanssa puhua, suomea, koska hän ei ymmärrä, englantia ja muita kieliä. - - kyllä sitä ei käytetä muita kieliä paitsi suomi.

8\_F39: - - when I go to my husband's grandmother's place, I definitely speak Finnish with her, because she doesn't understand English and other languages. - - yes, we don't use other languages besides Finnish there.

Elderly family members (*miehen mummu* 'my husband's grandmother'), usually those of one's spouse's, are considered non-users of English. In-laws or other old(er) relatives are probably among the first persons whom transnationals meet when coming to Finland if they come here because of marriage. These in-laws or other old(er) relatives might also be the only elderly people with whom the informants regularly communicate if their work is not, for example, in the service sector or in any other way related to elderly people. The following Example 9 further confirms the case, since the informant speaks namely of work with elderly people.

*Example 9*

H: riittääkö Suomessa, englannin kieli. teijän mielestä.

7\_M23: ei riitä. tai se vähän riippuu tilanteesta ainakin minun alalla, englanti ei riitä. koska ((pause)) esimerkiksi minä, olen lähihoitajaopiskelija (minusta tulee) lähihoitaja, niin, monet, suomalaiset ((pause)) ikääntyneet ne ei osaa, englantia niin ei pärjää, pelkällä, englan, kielellä.

7\_M20: (no se) (riippuu) (sitten mikä se paikasta) että missä tilanteessa työpaikassa tai koulussa missä, (sä oot että), - -

Int: is knowing English enough in Finland. in your opinion.

7\_M23: it's not enough. or it depends somewhat on the situation. at least in my field, English isn't enough. because ((pause)) for example I am a practical nursing student (I will become) a practical nurse, so,

many Finns ((pause)) who are elderly they don't know English so you can't get by solely in English.

7\_M20: (well it) (depends) (then on what place) what situation workplace or school (you're in so) - -

According to the informant, working as a practical nurse is a context in which Finnish is needed because many elderly people do not use English (see also Pitkänen-Huhta & Hujo, 2012). Both informants also emphasise the situational nature of the language, which means that the context and interlocutors determine language choice and use. This further supports the counter-discourse where the possibilities of using English in Finnish society are not as widespread and the skills are not as common as some generalisations may suggest. English is present, but resources are not equally distributed as shown above: not between different age groups, but also not geographically. Example 10 considers the first aspect of geographical limitations to the use of English in Finland: rural regions.

*Example 10*

8\_F23: - - mullo aika paljon, semmosia kavereita, ketkä ei ossaa englantia tai, kyllä ne, niinku ((pause)) ossaa kirjoittaa, ja, ymmärtää jos lukee, englanniksi joku te- teksti, mutta, ne, ei osaa keskustella, englanniksi tai, niille ei oo sitä, niinku itsevarmuutta, nii, ne kyllä haluais että mä puhuisin englantia, niitten kans et ne oppii sitä mutta, se on tosi vaikea tilanne. ko, ma ((pause)) ossaan niinku suomeksi selittää paljon paremmin, heille, jotain, mitä mä osaisin englanniksi ((pause)) niinku, sillä lailla että ne ei, ymmärrä, välttämättä jos mä selitän englanniksi nyt, pitää tosi, yksinkertaisesti, selittää niitä asioita, nii on, niiku helpompaa puhua suomea - -

H: onko ne suomalaisia ystäviä.

8\_F23: joo.

H: aika.

8\_F39: okei.

H: jännä koska.

8\_F39: jo- joo. (minulla) ei ole samaa mieltä.

- -

8\_F39: yleensä suomalaiset puhuu englannia. joo kyllä.

8\_F23: mutta tää o, ehkä maaseudulla,

- -

8\_F23: niin ne ei siellä, että ei käy siellä niin paljon, turisteja eikä, niinku ulkomaalaisia.

8\_F39: okei.

8\_F23: niin ehkä, oo oppinut käyttämään sitä kieltä, et se on jäänyt vähän niinku, kouluun. ((naurahtaa)). ei,

--

8\_F23: -- niin mä o asunut [kaupunki]:ssa ennen, au pairina, ja, siellä, on, kyllä semmosta ((naurahtaa)) niinku, maaseutua että.

8\_F23: -- I have quite a lot of friends who don't know English or, well they, like ((pause)) can write and understand if they read some text in English, but they can't hold a conversation in English or they don't have the, like, self-confidence, so, they do want me to speak English with them so they can learn it but, it's a very difficult situation. when I'm ((pause)) able to, like, explain something to them in Finnish much better than I could in English ((pause)) like, in the sense that they don't necessarily understand if I explain it in English now, I have to explain the things in really simple terms, so it's, like, easier to speak Finnish --

Int: are they Finnish friends.

8\_F23: yeah.

Int: that's quite.

8\_F39: okay.

Int: interesting because.

8\_F39: y- yeah. (I) don't agree.

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8\_F39: usually Finns speak English. yeah, yes.

8\_F23: but this is, perhaps in the countryside,

--

8\_F23: so there they don't, well there they don't get so many tourists or, like, foreigners.

8\_F39: okay.

8\_F23: so maybe, ((they)) haven't learnt to use the language, so it's kind of remained, like, a relic of school days.

--

8\_F23: -- so I've lived in [city] before, as an au pair, and it's, like, ((laughs)) quite the countryside over there.

8\_F23 describes her friends as people who do not know English. She does not specify the nature of the group in question until the researcher

begins to hesitate and informant 8\_F39 expresses her differing opinion on the matter. Discursively, the most important finding is how the taken-for-granted discourse on the omnipresence of English is countered in Example 10. This can be seen in the reactions of the researcher as well as the other informant. The researcher has not heard such statements regularly in the pair conversations and the other informant 8\_F39 is also bewildered by what is said. She does not understand the possibility of not knowing English until it is explained to her. Informant 8\_F39 points out her view on the language skills of Finns (*yleensä suomalaiset puhuu englannia* ‘usually Finns speak English’), thus making the exception to the discourse ‘Finns speak English’ even more important. Hence, 8\_F23 has to explain herself and provide more detailed information: She is referring to friends *tää o, ehkä maaseudulla* (‘living in the countryside’). She also reflects on the reasons for the differing language situation, which she pinpoints as the lack of contexts to use English in or interlocutors to use English with, or situations in which the possibilities for English use are restricted.

Proficiency in and the use of English are more common among those who live in cities rather than the countryside (Leppänen et al., 2011). Generally, however, linguistic diversity in the Finnish countryside is probably less studied, but exceptions, of course, exist (see, e.g., Ekberg & Östman, 2020). It is not clear as to where the perception of differing English skills in the countryside comes from according to informant 8\_F23 in Example 10. However, the example supports the fact that Finland is not linguistically uniform. Informant 8\_F23 suggests that the way the foreign population is distributed in Finland or the remoteness of some places (*ei käy siellä niin paljo, turisteja eikä, niinku ulkomaalaisia* ‘don’t get so many tourists or, like, foreigners’) might be the reason for the deficiency in language skills. Indeed, people with foreign background are strongly concentrated in the capital area: At the end of 2018, almost half of the foreign-language-speaking population lived in the three biggest cities of Finland, with over a quarter in Helsinki alone (Pitkänen et al., 2019, p. 18). Hence, it seems only natural that linguistic diversity is also a more common phenomenon there than in other places in Finland. The same can be assumed for English, given that it is among the five most common foreign language groups in the capital area (Pitkänen et al., 2019) as well as a commonly used resource among the foreign population, at least during the early stages of their stay in a new home country (Iikkanen, 2017; Ruuska, 2020, p. 175).

Questioning the discourse on Finns' knowledge of English produces another counter-discourse in addition to the differences between generations and places. The following Example 11 serves as a reminder that it is not only about the language skills of Finns; there are also people with foreign background living in Finland whose repertoire does not necessarily include English. Since people with foreign background are concentrated in the capital area, these aspects answer both questions, *who* and *where*, regarding the limitations of the use and knowledge of English.

*Example 11*

7\_M23: no joskus kun, tilanne tulee, joku ((pause)) puhuu vaikka minulle jotain, jotain muuta kieltä kun suomi, tai, oma äidinkieli tai, englanti sitten mä en ymmärrä sitä niin, heti mä, sanon sille jollakin tavalla, että, mä en osaa sitä kieltä, - - vaikka englantiakin, kun mä en osaa niin hyvin, niin, jossain vaiheessa mä puhun (niin) (puhutaan) suomen kielellä tai, omalla kielellä.

7\_M23: well sometimes when a situation arises in which someone ((pause)) speaks some, some other language than Finnish to me, or their own mother tongue or English and I don't understand it, then I immediately tell them in some way that I don't know the language - - even with English too, as I don't know it so well, so, at some point I speak (so) (we speak) in Finnish or in our own language.

If the default in the discourse on language skills in Finland is English, it erases all 'other languages'. Also, even the idea of Finnish as a *lingua franca* between migrants seems impossible (on the topic see Ruuska, 2020, p. 139). The linguistic background described in the pair conversation between two asylum seekers in Example 11 illustrates the situation. It creates a contrast between those who have access to English and those who would benefit more from the use of Finnish. The informants are faced with the need to counter the assumption of English use when encountering unfamiliar interlocutors (*niin, heti mä, sanon sille jollakin tavalla, että, mä en osaa sitä kieltä* 'then I immediately tell them in some way that I don't know the language'). In some cases, in the data, not knowing English seems to construct a picture of a problem as English is presented as a minimum requirement for language skills. The lack of English skills is almost equated with the lack of language skills themselves (e.g., Iikkanen, 2020). Namely, a complete lack of English skills seems

to be the problem, not necessarily the lack of other language skills. As a consequence, English appears as the only foreign language with value in the linguistic markets of Finland.

When considering the informants' own language skills in English, not knowing English (at all) is also almost nonexistent in the data of this study. Only the informants in Example 11 admit that they do not know English so well. Some of the other eight informants mention that they should improve their English, but that is a somewhat different matter. It does not mean that they did not know English in the first place but rather that their skills grew rusty when their use of Finnish increased. In addition to the example above, people with foreign background are only rarely mentioned as a group that does not use English. In these cases, informants indicate that these people differ from themselves: The lack of English resources is connected to a migrant background, usually to stay-at-home mothers and people working in a low-income sector (See also Iikkanen, 2020). That is, sometimes not using English is seen as an indicator of migrant status (Iikkanen, 2020). The same discourses are echoed in this study, but on the other hand, the informants in Example 11 are given a voice to speak for themselves. They were able to remind us that English is not the only resource needed. This topic is discussed further in the next section.

### 7.4.3 *But English Is Not Enough in Finland*

The informants make a contrast between English and managing one's daily life in Finnish society. This section discusses the discourse where the informants question the usefulness of English language skills in Finland. The extent of the presence of English in society is not denied, but the use of English is accompanied by some sort of limitations. The informants used the word *mutta* ('but') when describing the connection between English and managing one's life in Finland to bring out contrasts between using English and Finnish. The informants of the study generally see English as a focal language and useful resource in Finland. Although some of them even claim that it is possible to live in Finland without needing Finnish, many informants still come across limitations to using English in Finnish society. In the following Example 12, informants who do not have access to English emphasise the importance of Finnish even though

they consider English to be a common resource in Finland. The informants answer the following question: 'What kinds of language skills are useful in Finland?'

*Example 12*

7\_M20: - ainakin ensin suomen kieli, ulkomaalaiselle on tosi tärkeä. että s- tilanteissa, pystyy hoitamaan itse, omasta asiasta, ainakin Suomessa, papereja, pittää (täytenä) tai koulussa pitää ymmärtää (asiasta että), jos haluaa, omasta elämässä Suomessa rakentaa tai päästää eteenpäin, kannattaa, että suosittelen (opiskelee), suomen kieli ensin, ei englanti. se on totta kai jokaiselle ehkä (osaa), (suomenkielisille), englantia. (-) siltikin pittää, osata ((pause)) suomen kieli.

7\_M23: ja, Suomessakin, kuitenkin asuvat, aika paljon, ulkomaalaisia. - - jotka puhuvat arabin kielellä, ja Iranista Afganistanista on tullut, ne puhuvat persian kielellä niin ((pause)) niistäkin, on välillä hyötyä niin, voi puhua, - - arabiaa mä en, osaa mutta, puhutaan kyllä, Helsinki päin on paljon, - - niin kuin 7\_M20 sanoo että, ei niille - kielillä, pärjää Suomessa kokonaan. mutta, voin puhua, niin, kuitenkin niin kuin 7\_M20 sanoi että on paljon papereita on ja, töissä ja ((pause)) no, määkin suosittelen että, opiskelis, suomen kieltä. se on tärkein asia täällä Suomessa.

7\_M20: at least above all Finnish is really important for foreigners. so in situations, you're able to take care of your own affairs by yourself, at least in Finland, papers have to be (filled out) or in school you have to understand (things so), if you want to build a life of your own in Finland or move forward, it's worthwhile, I recommend (studying) Finnish first, not English. it's, of course maybe everyone (knows), (Finnish speakers) know English. (-) nevertheless you've got to know ((pause)) Finnish.

7\_M23: and, in Finland too, there are still quite a lot of foreigners living here - - who speak Arabic, and those who have come from Iran and Afghanistan, they speak Persian so ((pause)) those languages are also sometimes useful so, you can speak, - - I don't know Arabic, but it's indeed spoken, there are many speakers in Helsinki, - - like 7\_M20 said, you can't get by in Finland on those - languages alone. but, I can speak, so, nevertheless like 7\_M20 said there are many

papers and, at work and ((pause)) well, I too recommend that you learn Finnish. It's the most important thing here in Finland.

Finnish seems to offer the informants independence in several fields of daily life (*papereja, pittää (täytenä)* 'papers have to be filled out'; *koulussa* 'at school'; *töissä* 'at work') (see also Iikkanen, 2020). Compared to English, it provides a wider range of opportunities for foreigners (*omasta elämässä Suomessa rakentaa tai päästää eteenpäin* 'build a life of your own in Finland or move forward'). English is equated with other languages (*arabin* 'Arabic'; *persian* 'Persian') and mentioned as a tool. In such cases, English is pictured as something one uses *to get by in Finland*, and it does not have a special role distinct from other languages. Finnish, for its part, is assigned a different set of meanings and evaluations (*tosi tärkeä* 'really important'; *tärkein asia* 'the most important thing'). Finnish is portrayed as essential for living in Finnish society (*siltikin pittää, osata suomen kieli* 'nevertheless you've got to know Finnish') (on this subject see also, e.g., Iikkanen, 2017; Strömmer, 2017; Ekberg & Östman, 2020; Intke-Hernandez, 2020; Scotson, 2020), and one example of the importance of Finnish is related to working life as the following Example 13 shows.

### Example 13

10\_F37: - - when I came here and I didn't speak Finnish, and - -, it was okay, cause, you know I was part of the university and something. you belong to somewhere, and you can, manage, your life and, not only like in survival, way, but you can, construct relationships and, you can construct family. you can construct your life, - - but then, when you try to, like in working life for example ((pause)) and, then you, start to realise that you can for example study, in English. the whole master's, - - but then, there is no single working place where you can work entirely in English in [a name of a professional field] - -, that was for me like a really big disappointment. - - when I understood that actually, - -, I was (fedded) by the idea that you can, live, in Finland, by, speaking English. - - and construct your life. but, you have (big) limitations on it.

The informant describes her possibilities for inclusion when using English in Example 13. She was able to participate in student life (I



*was part of the university*), as well as create and maintain personal relationships (*you can, construct relationships and, you can construct family*). However, her account of English usage continues with several *buts* when the discussion turns to entering working life. According to the informant, English is only partly applicable in her field. Highly educated migrants often find their jobs in multicultural working environments, and in their free time, they also tend to choose English as a shared language with Finns (Scotson, 2018a, p. 45). However, in order to participate in social situations at the workplace, Finnish is often needed alongside or over English for conversations as well as informal situations (Komppa et al., 2017; see also Ruuska, 2020, pp. 165–166). Informant 10\_F37 paints a picture of the linguistic reality in which she found herself, that is, a position where she was not included in society in the way she would have preferred. She discovered the real state of affairs—that language made her excluded—without anyone telling her beforehand (*start to realise; I understood that; I was feeded by the idea*).

The disparity between education and working life can lead to situations in which highly educated professionals end up not staying in Finland after receiving their degrees. However, the informants of this study also perceive the necessity of Finnish on a more comprehensive level of belonging than just working life. Such experiences of language use and its significance to an individual's life seem to be quite hard to describe, as shown in Example 14:

*Example 14*

10\_F37: - - I got, the point - - that you don't belong here. that you just live here - - and that you use this, like a physical environment, but you, and you have your, little bubble, - - it's like - really ((pause)) complicated, emotional feeling - - because you live here and you try to, construct your life (in) here, but you have so much environmental limitations, on, actually developing and, - -, like expanding yourself, - - in emotional level I suppose.

- -

10\_F37: and then I (suppose that) when I started to use Finnish language, more and more, started to change a bit.

Many informants still have an experience that something is missing, and without Finnish, they feel excluded from Finnish society in some way.

It seems that one can participate on some level, but on a very technical level, as 10\_F31 describes (*you can get by; you can pay your taxes*). One's life as an outsider not knowing the local language is portrayed as fulfilling one's responsibilities in society, but that does not necessarily mean that one is included. The key factor in the meaning assigned to the language in Example 14 does not seem to simply be 'using the language of the country' or adapting one's language to the language of other interactants in certain situations, but something deeper (*I live here, but I'm not part of, whole thing; emotional level*). I consider this perception to be connected to the fact that while language is a mode of communication, it also means something else, as can be seen from the accounts of the informants. Languages create connections between people, and this is not restricted to the mere transmission of a message.

## 7.5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I have discussed discourses that people with transnational background living in Finland constructed in their pair conversations on the English language in the Finnish context. Firstly, English was presented as a general, self-evident lingua franca spoken by 'everyone' in Finland. However, this discourse was modified when the stories and discussions of the informants progressed. The informants refined their statements by producing exceptions to generalisations of the English skills of Finns in the descriptions in which they pointed out that there were differences between speakers of certain age groups and educational backgrounds as well as places of residence. Finally, the informants stated that it is not possible to fully live in Finland using only English, since certain aspects of life are missing without knowing the local language. It is noteworthy that these modifications to the discourse, that is, exceptions and stories about struggles without the Finnish language, were also in many pair conversations linearly in the same order as presented above.<sup>5</sup>

The discourses found in this study reflect how social structures behind language use affect the lives of individuals in at least two ways. There is an effect on working life and a possibility of the exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups. English is a resource that is empowering and hegemonic at the same time (Saarinen & Ennsner-Kananen,

<sup>5</sup> However, the order of the questions (Appendix 7.1) has an effect on the (linear) structure of the conversations and hence on the data.

2020, pp. 117–118). As this study has shown, English is a different resource for different transnationals and for different Finns. For highly educated persons, English is a taken-for-granted resource when considering the language of education and work. However, for people from certain countries or with a lower level of education, it is not an available resource. Also, the informants reflect in their stories on how English is not enough, and not knowing Finnish hinders one's opportunities to get a job. The prevailing discourse on the commonness of English use at the workplace can mislead people who pursue further education with the expectation of finding employment in Finland. This discourse can prove even more harmful if the education programmes conducted in English do not provide international students with adequate Finnish language skills to manage their working life (Komppa, 2015, p. 169; Iikkanen, 2017, p. 135). In addition to this rather concrete effect, insufficient Finnish skills seem to also exclude the informants from society on some deeper emotional level.

English can be presented as a solution to problems in multicultural interactions: for example, as a means to enhance migrants' inclusion in society. In this study, however, English is not necessarily portrayed to be as inclusive as it might seem at first glance. Instead, it could turn out to be exclusive in cases where one's expected (English) language skills in a situation are in contradiction to the language user's own wants, needs, abilities, and expectations (Räisänen, 2012, p. 223). Firstly, the way of speaking about English as a language every Finn knows is misleading. Such discourse then creates expectations for migrants as well as the majority population. Expectations lead to misunderstandings and actions where some members of society are not able to fully participate. Secondly, the informants' modifications to the discourse on self-evident English revealed even more profound ways of exclusion. That is, the discourse revealed that English is not a skill that can be attributed to everybody; instead, it is possibly a language of young city-dwellers. The discourse on elderly people living in peripheral regions then possibly reveals a larger phenomenon of segregation processes in Finnish society: well-being that is not necessarily equally distributed to different regions and different groups. Hence, language may be one indication of how certain resources, or a lack thereof, may shut certain groups out of society. All languages—including English—should not be analysed on their own: instead, they should be tied to life contexts and the possibilities of their users (Pennycook, 2007, pp. 100–101; Saarinen & Ennsner-Kananen,

2020, pp. 117–118). The informants' discourse on languages is at the same time a portrayal of the social reality in Finnish society. In order to improve the well-being of every member of society, these micro-level messages of people's reality of life should be heard.

## APPENDIX 7.I. PAIR CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

Questions for group conversations

Consider the time you have lived in Finland and answer the following questions (you can also compare the time when you came to Finland with the situation now)

### 1. Language choices in everyday life

- a. Which of the languages that you speak do you NOT use
  - with some people or
  - in some situations? Why?
  - What stops you or restricts you in these situations?
- b. Which languages would you like to use more in your everyday life? Why?
- c. In what kinds of situations do you feel like using your native language/Finnish/some other language? Why?

### 2. Different languages in speech

- a. What languages do people use to speak to you? In which kinds of situations?
- b. In which kinds of situations do you mix another language into your speech when speaking, for example, Finnish? How do other people react to it (a significant other, friends, co-workers...)?
- c. Have you been in situations where other people speak a language you speak poorly or not at all? What happened?
- d. Are your/have your language skills been taken into consideration at work and in your hobbies? How?

### 3. Languages as hindrances or possibilities in everyday life

- a. What kind of language skills are useful in Finland?
- b. Have there been any situations where you wished you were better at speaking a language? What happened?

- c. How meaningful do you find speaking the language(s) of the country you live in?
  - d. What does 'surviving in a language' mean (in your life)? What else does a language mean, or what else can you do with a language?
4. **Situations where you are not understood, or you do not understand others**
- a. What kind of experience do you have of situations where someone does not understand you, or you do not understand others? What happened? What do you think it was that caused the misunderstanding?
  - b. What kinds of means do you have at your disposal when you do not understand, or you are not understood?
  - c. Have you ever used not speaking Finnish (or another language) as a means to an end?
5. **The properties and meanings of languages**
- a. How do the languages you speak differ?
  - b. What do the languages you speak mean to you?
  - c. What does a native language mean?

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