

A Narrative Analysis on English Teacher Identity and the Teachers' Ideas on Bilingualism

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Tiivistelmä:

Tutkin sivugradussani englannin opettajien ammatillista identiteettiä sekä opettajien ajatuksia omasta kaksikielisyydestään. Laadullisen tutkimukseni metodina käytin narratiivisuutta eli kertomuksien tutkimusta. Nauhoitettua haastatteluaineistoa käsittelin teemoittelemalla eri aihepiirejä: nostin esiin yhdeksän englannin opettajan kertomuksista mielenkiintoisiksi kokemiani asiakokonaisuuksia: eroavaisuuksia ja yhtäläisyyksiä. Yksi kiinnostava teema oli harhakuvat uravalinnasta: yli puolet tässä tutkimuksessa haastatelluista opettajista (5/9) sanoivat päätyneen opettajiksi eivätkä suoranaisesti valinneet ammattia luullen että tyypillisempää on suoraviivainen urakehityspolku ensimmäisestä yliopisto-opintovuodesta virkaan. Yleiseksi kuviteltu sääntö osoittautui tässä tutkimuksessa poikkeukseksi: vain neljä yhdeksästä opettajasta kertoi kuinka kieltenopettajuus oli jo kouluaikojen haave. Se, että halusiko englannin opettaja ammattiinsa, vai päätyikö hän siihen, ei kuitenkaan kenenkään kohdalla vaikuttanut siihen kuinka hän näki itsensä opettajana. Kaikille haastatelluille tyypillistä oli kiinnostus englannin kieleen ja kieliin yleensä sekä uteliaisuus vieraita kulttuureja kohtaan: kaikki myös olivat jossain vaiheessa opintojaan viettäneet aikaa ulkomailla kieliopinnoissa.

Käsitykset omasta kaksikielisyydestä olivat tyypillisesti ristiriitaisia, joka vastasi viimeaikaista tutkimusta kaksikielisyydestä: kielen puhujat ja käyttäjät suhtautuvat kriittisesti omaa kielitaitoaan kohtaan. Opettajilla itsellään oli myös myyttisiä käsityksiä kaksikielisyydestä kuten täydellinen aksentiton osaaminen tai lapsena kielen omaksuminen. Tässä tutkimuksessa nojauhin kuitenkin ajatukseen kaksikielisyydestä ennen kaikkea kielen käyttökysymyksenä: päivittäin englannin kieltä ongelmitta käytävä voi kutsua itseään englannin kielen puhujaksi. Ristiriitaisuus nousi esiin myös yhtenä tutkimukseni keskeisenä teemana: kaikki haastateltavat ensin kielsivät oman kaksikielisyytensä ja vähätelivät vahvaakin kielitaitoa, vaikka myöhemmin kertoivat käyttävänsä kieltä vaivattomasti monilla elämän osa-alueilla myös Suomessa.

Suurin osa opettajista (8/9) piti englantia yhtenä suomalaisena kielenä ja löysivät sille mielekkäitä käyttötarkoituksia myös kotimaassa: romaanien luku, illalliskeskustelut perheen kesken, jutustelu työyhteisössä, pelaaminen lasten kanssa, päiväkirjan pito, monille jopa myös tunnelmaisut ja jopa ajattelu ja unien näkeminen. Yhteyksiä ulkomaille myös ylläpidetään englannin kielellä. Englannin kieli ei näin ollen ole kielen opettajalle ainoastaan opetustyökalu ja kohde, vaan myös oman minuuden tärkeä rakennuspalikka, jonka merkitys ei hälvene vaikka opettaja ei olisikaan työssä.

Kielenpuhujaidentiteetti samoin kuin opettajaidentiteetti ovat dynaamisia projekteja: jossakin elämänvaiheessa opettaja ja englannin käyttäjä ovat vahvemmin esillä kuin toisissa: esimerkiksi kaksi opettajaa muun muassa mainitsi joskus olleensa kaksikielisiä, muttei enää.

Tarinat englannin opettajaksi tulemisesta sekä opettajuudesta olivat hämmästyttävän samankaltaisia: identiteetti opettajana syntyy opettajan itse rakentamastaan kertomuksesta opettajuudestaan sekä kasvamisestaan joskus vieraaksi kutsumaansa kieleen kiinni.

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1 Introduction

Language teachers have been under little academic focus: publications on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies have traditionally concentrated on learning and the learners. Yet some recent studies have been published on the students' view on teachers and teaching and learning¹. In this study, my aim is to analyse English teachers' professional identity and their relation to their working tool – the English language – through narratives told by themselves. My second aim is to analyse the concept of adult bilingualism within English teachers through investigating the role of the English language in their life outside work. I hope my research will make a contribution as a practical tool for my colleagues as far as professional and speaker identity questions are concerned. Hopefully, my thesis will provide useful information and give ideas to newly enrolled undergraduates on whether to take the teacher's path or not. Moreover, in case some discouraging moments in the teacher's career might appear, I am sure sharing them in a biographical story helps others realise that they are not alone in the challenges of the profession.

A fair amount of research has been conducted through narrative methods in the fields of psychology and educational science. However, as a linguist, I also want to know what linguistics might contribute to narrative research. As in Heikkinen's (2002, 103-104) studies on teachers' identity development during the teacher training, narratives are in this study both a practical tool for building and supporting identity, and a method to report research. Heikkinen sees in narrativity a metatheoretical background, which implies ontological presumptions on the human existence, thus stories give attributes to our past and reconstruct our identity. Furthermore, narrativity conveys epistemological presumptions about the process of knowing: truth is a dynamic collection of stories

¹ E.g. Kalaja and Barcelos (2003). Turunen and Kalaja (2004) have made a study on different teacher metaphors and they came up with six different types of teachers from the secondary and upper secondary school students' stories. Aho (2011) conducted a study that supports the models that teachers illustrate on themselves to cope with the profession. He came up with four different survivor teacher profiles: 1) collective-holistic type that highlights the importance of the teacher community; 2) An independent teacher supported by the community that highlights self-knowledge and the role of the headmaster; 3) A reflective interpersonal profile that highlights solidarity, friends and life outside school; 4) An intrapersonal self-developer that highlights self-knowledge and the ability to recognise one's own needs and feelings.

– not what *happened* but what was *told* about it. I agree with Heikkinen (*ibid.*, 103) in that there must be a preeminent connection between the human existence and narrativity. A human being is a narrating creature who understands life and the events that are seen important in it in a narrative form and builds its identity by means of narratives.

To put it as explicitly as possible: we do not just become (English) language teachers by obtaining the required diploma, sending CVs to various schools and hence become teachers. I am sure we need some stories and events to support the way. At least I see the profession in a very holistic way: language and teaching and language teaching nestle on my skin in so solid a way that even if not working or working on precarious contracts, I cannot stop being a language teacher. I also presume that similarly to any discussion on identity and the fact that the identities in one person are contradictory (e.g. Hall 1999, 28), also language teachers' identities are constantly changing form, taking on new perspectives and discarding obsolete elements. Furthermore, Heikkinen (2002, 101) expands the idea: teaching is a certain way to exist as a human being; it is a social role, a professional identity that builds up in its own special way. Now as for the nine English teachers I interviewed, I want to know what that way is.

With the help of nine tape-recorded interviews, I will analyse the features that have come up in English teachers' oral and thereafter transcribed stories on first, becoming and being an English teacher, and second, on the teachers' relation to the English language from the perspective of their own bilingualism. I invite them to talk about the construction of their professional identity at work and outside work and ponder questions concerning them being English teachers in the near future. All informants have Finnish as mother tongue and work in primary, secondary, upper secondary or vocational schools around Finland: I have contacted them via a joint e-mailing list for language teachers. The group includes both male and female teachers, and their ages range from 30 to 70.

1.1 Defining bilingualism: from fluency to functions and use

A fair amount of research has been conducted on cognitivist, sociological and pedagogical aspects of bilingualism (e.g. Romaine 1995, Myers-Scotton 2006). The notion of bilingualism though is not straightforward and often defined by a variation of criteria. The phenomenon of bilingualism is indeed more widespread than thought and, in Grosjean's terms (2010, xv) "surrounded by myths" such as equal and perfect knowledge, learning two or more languages in the childhood, having no particular accent and being bicultural. In Grosjean's everyday experience the layman's idea on bilingualism varies between, first, being fluent in two languages, second, learning them as a child, and third, using them on a daily basis. His definition admittedly, is concerned with the *use*, since he brings up the fact that one can be fluent and have learnt a second language in the childhood but not use it at all. Therefore in my point of view also, bilingualism is first and foremost a dynamic state of a speaker's linguistic repertoire and identity. It does not imply an even distribution of skills and cultural competence in two languages, but a frequent, perhaps even daily use of two languages, one perhaps more dominant in a certain domain of use. In these circumstances, I am interested in knowing what my nine informants will say on their Finnish-English bilingualism.

1.2 Crossroads between linguistics and teacher educational science

Kaikkonen (2005, 1) promotes the concept of 'language education'² in foreign language learning and teaching. It combines contemporary theories in cognitive psychology and linguistics with the elaboration of a theory of learning. The modern concept of language seen broadly as a cultural, personal and social entity has led us to talking about language education (ibid.). For example, as a distinction to traditional foreign language learning, 'language education' has a more holistic approach as a starting point. It entails concepts of multilingualism, and similar ideas as Kachru (1995) in resisting the hegemony of native speaker standards and aims at appropriating English to

² 'Kielikasvatus' in original Finnish texts

the local use of its speakers and learners. Therefore, language education also according to Kaikkonen (2005, 2) is very learner-oriented and takes into regard the implications that the learner's mother tongue imposes. The main standing on the idea of learning in these circumstances is a socio-constructivistic one, i.e. learning never starts from a tabula rasa but the teacher ought to bear in mind always before the learning session what the learners already know or have experienced on the subject. Thus on that shared information, the learning is constructed together in within the learning group.

Even if according to Kaikkonen (1994, 13) a foreign language teacher's education is a by-product of linguistics: it is didactics where educational science, linguistics and psychology meet and the approach of my study stems from those perspectives. Studies from similar points of view have been made, for example by Maria Mäenpää (2005) who made a survey on Finnish English teachers' job satisfaction³. Further, Tellervo Uusitalo (2004) studied the motives for choosing the career of English teaching⁴.

The vagueness and the relative novelty of the definition of narrativity (Huttunen et al. 2002, 11) in Uusitalo's (2004) case implied that even I her study has a similar approach as mine, she did not mention narrativity at all in her paper. Admittedly, she interviewed six randomly chosen English teachers, tape-recorded the interviews and classified the answers according to topics to do with motives for becoming an English teacher, personal attitude to the English language, and professional identity and motivation. She found out that the motives for becoming an English teacher were linguistic, socioeconomic, emotional, moral and pedagogical. Furthermore, four of the six teachers regarded themselves as "language teachers" whereas two as an "educator". Similarly to her justification of not rummaging for generalisations in a statistical sense, the stories of the

³ Mäenpää, Maria. 2005. *Teachers of English in Finnish upper secondary general school and their job satisfaction*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

⁴ Uusitalo, Tellervo. 2004. *Why become an English teacher: the motives of secondary school English teachers for their career choices*. Tampere: University of Tampere

teachers are, indeed “typical, not exceptional” (ibid.). In other words, even if she did not mention it, she too was involved in a hermeneutic-phenomenological research paradigm, that describes a given phenomenon and not with the positivist one, which aims at generalising.

2 Methods and data

2.1. Qualitative research: phenomenological view

The scientific paradigm for analysis in this qualitative research is what Scott and Usher (1996, 18) call ‘hermeneutic/interpretive’ epistemology, which highlights that in research “knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control, but with interpretation, meaning and illumination”. Qualitative research has connection points with the hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy of science. Unlike positivism, its objective is not to unveil replicable answers to a certain phenomenon, but to describe and analyse a certain situation or phenomenon so as to promote scientific discussion (Eskola and Suoranta 1998, 25). Further, according to Lehtovaara (1995, 71-90) phenomenology does not aim at discovering valid and renewable research outcomes as logical positivism does, but it describes a given phenomenon by qualitative means. Phenomenology therefore is a starting point to scientific research, where the aim is to observe the object of analysis without any prejudices (ibid.).

The stages of qualitative research: collection of data, analysis, interpretation and reporting are often intertwined. Moreover, according to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 16) the problematisation and research plan might need to be revised during the collection of data. Therefore the different stages of the research process are difficult to divide. In my research, this might imply that according to what will come up in the interviews, I might change the formulation of my initial research questions. Since in my study the data is likely to be large, I will arrange the interesting points – similarities and differences in the narratives – according to the topics that emerge. Further,

Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 176) point out that thematising is not only presenting a list of quotations but linking the theory and the empirical part tightly together.

2.2. Narrativity as a methodological framework

According to Huttunen et al. (2002, 5, 11, 20) we can talk about a *narrative turn* in the research methods in humanistic, social scientific and educational literature. Even if narrative research is seen as a *loose frame of reference* and not as a method or school of thought, it can be referred to as a means of processing material and analysis of data (ibid.). Heikkinen and Syrjälä (2002, 185) go on with the explanation stating that narrativity is a loose configuration of research involved with narratives, and for which it is idiosyncratic to direct the interest of analysis to stories or narratives as the producers and conveyors of reality. The reason why the term “narrative turn” is evoked is that narrative research as a concept emerged in the scientific dialogue only in the 1990s, primarily in the field of social sciences. Yet already in the 1980s biographies had been used as research material, but the use of the concept narrative turn was justified only when it began to influence the scientific community’s idea on knowledge, which now is prominently seen to be constructed also by means of narratives (ibid. 184).

2.3 Narratives constructing identity: speaking with multiple voices

According to Bakhtin (1981 and 1986), in a discourse, speakers tend to take multiple roles, which is what he refers to as a *heteroglossia of voices*. According to him, in every discourse, multiple roles and view-points emerge, voices of others are re-created in the form of reported or quoted speech. Bakhtin’s approach to human knowledge is thoroughly dialogical and his notion of *voice* became one of the essential concepts in social sciences in the 1980s. Dufva (2003, 133) interprets the concept of ‘voice’ in narratives as what is said not only in words but what is *meant* i.e. what are the underlying opinions, attitudes and reflections of personality and world-view.

Heikkinen and Syrjälä (2002, 187) also bring up the issue of multiple-voicing and laterality of narratives as constructing tools of identity. This idea is based on a constructive idea of a human being, according to which people build their idea of the self and their knowledge by means of narratives (stories). These stories keep on building up and dynamically change their form all the time. Thus in my study, keeping in mind the theories on heteroglossia or multiple-voicing, I bear in mind that also contradictory ideas on language uses and being a teacher might emerge.

2.4 Collection of data

My study has a data-oriented approach (Eskola and Suoranta 1998, 19). I chose my informants by the sole criterion of being (a) a qualified language teacher, who has at least some experience in teaching English and (b) at least to some extent considers him/herself to be an English language teacher. Language teachers in Finland must have an MA degree, and at least basic and intermediate studies completed in studies of the particular language and teacher's pedagogical studies, equivalent of bachelor of education diploma that includes a teacher training. I do not mind on which level the teacher is working as far as he/she has some experience in the field. I am not concerned with any form of discourse analysis i.e. *how* they speak, but I will concentrate totally on *what* the interviewees say (ibid. 195). I invite them to narrate orally, in English, without specifically interrupting them, yet first show them a list of questions that I would like them to serve as frames for their stories.

2.5 The interviewees

I interviewed nine English teachers, to which I refer to as ET1, ET2, etc. (English Teacher) as listed below:

ET1 Female, 49, a permanent job in an upper secondary school

ET2 Male, 37, temporary contracts in primary schools; unemployed at the time of the interview

ET3 Female, 30, temporary contracts in primary schools, teaches also German; stay-at-home mum at the time of the interview

ET4 Female, 51, a permanent job in a secondary school

ET5 Female, 33, a permanent job in an upper secondary school, teaches also German

ET6 Female, 45, a permanent job in a secondary school, teaches also Swedish; now making PhD in Swedish, does not teach at the time of the interview

ET7 Female, 48, a permanent job in a primary school

ET8 Female, 54, a permanent job in a professional school, teaches also Swedish; PhD in Education

ET9 Female, 70, retired from upper secondary school, freelancer, has taught also Swedish

3 Being and becoming an English teacher

All the English teachers I interviewed had three factors in common: the innate interest for languages – not for English in particular but languages in general –, the will to pursue university studies and finally, the curiosity to travel or to be in contact with cultural diversity in Finland. Completing the required competence requirements did not make the teacher yet aware of the professional identity but what solidified the englishteacherness was rather the first work experiences – both good and the bad ones. Encounters with other English teachers in the first jobs were also mentioned when the new English teacher was looking for role models: the importance of colleagues was particularly highlighted by ET1 (see chapter 3.10). Whether the teacher was employed at the time of the interview or not, did not influence the teacher identity. In fact, ET2, ET3, ET6 and ET9 were not working at that moment but that did not make them question anyhow on their professional identity: it had been already fixed with the first work experiences, with their ups and downs.

Whether becoming an English teacher was intentional throughout the studies, or only a by-product of liking languages or even being gifted in them, it did not have an effect on how one saw him/herself as a teacher. In fact, only four (ET3, ET5, ET8, ET9) declared to want to become

English teachers since the early stages of the studies whereas the others had some hesitations and they had considered other options too. The five who more or less started their story with the words “Actually I never wanted to become a language teacher” became the rule and the explicitly communicated career choice was the exception. Nevertheless, what Grosjean (2010) says on criticism of the bilinguals towards their own linguistic competence, applies also to the English teachers in my study. They are critical on it and indeed utter contradictory, multiple-voiced opinions both on their teacher identity and on their language skills.

3.1 Focus on the teacher

Self-knowledge for some appears to be a facilitating tool to strip oneself down from unrealistically high expectations. Here is what some teachers said on what they think is important in the work:

- (1) Then at work, what is essential is that you like people and you don't feel bad when you are in front of a group, and you enjoy taking control in the classroom because otherwise when you are working in big groups if you don't take control, they will take over and you are just somebody trying to do something but you don't get any feelings of success when the students would rule. So you need to have a feeling that you want to be in charge and still like your students, the teenagers. And I think that that's easier in lukio⁵ than with the younger students. Then I think it's also essential that you enjoy travelling or reading in English; you have to like the language too, otherwise you won't develop, you will forget what you have learned before. So that's what you have to do when you are a language teacher. I think the challenges are finding a way to work with the students so that they will obey you, to respect you and still they would feel that you have somehow something to give to them. So motivation I think is another problem like how to motivate the students. Of course the students know a lot about computers and work with the internet and so on; they are technically more advanced than the teacher but that's not the point, the language is the point. So that is a problem and a challenge. (ET1)
- (2) And then of course you have to get along with young people. (ET9)
- (3) Also what helps me is that I never thought of myself as a brilliant teacher so..Like I needn't try to act like one. So I sometimes say to the students: “We had such a lousy lesson last time that I am sure it's going to be better this time” you know. Also it affects if you have a morning lesson or an afternoon lesson and so you can try and think about that: Now they are going to be tired and they'll have to do something that you get to know the students when you teach them from year to year. (ET4)

⁵ Finnish upper secondary school, students 16-19 years

(4) I think it's self-evident that you speak the language and that you like it and that you enjoy it so that's not something that I would mention here but I think sort of, it's an attitude I think, to life and towards the world. Because you have to be rather international, think globally, especially as an English teacher, certainly, you have to be rather tolerant, in order to give the students the right idea of the language, because, and that's what I try to do in my work, quite a lot, I try to give my students the global attitude. Multicultural issues are rather important in English teaching, and to raise those issues, I teach teenagers, so to give them perspectives into seeing things in different ways. It's very much a skill. If I compare it with other subjects that are taught in my school like maths and science, then I think, I see their subjects as narrower than mine really, but of course they might think the same about me. (ET5)

(5) I think that it is essential that a language teacher is fluent in the language itself is essential. The language as well as the culture is important. So therefore if I had money I used to go to the English-speaking countries and not for example to Germany. I still don't know much about Germany. (ET9)

In sum, for the English teachers the core of "englishteacherness" ranged from emphasising group authority and educative questions to the love of the language and multicultural issues. ET1 and ET8 in particular mention the importance of liking (young) people and having something to give to them. ET5 and ET9 state that the teacher's fluency in English is a substantial factor. Moreover, ET1 sees English as a language to be used when travelling, whereas ET5 highlights multicultural issues even in Finland.

3.2 Teacher identities and speaker identities

(6) I sometimes think who I was when I was living in a village in Finland in the middle of nowhere, somehow it's very difficult to know what studying English philology has meant for me but I think it's very strong part of my personality somehow. (ET4)

Recent studies on identity have been hallmarked by Hall's (1999) idea of a dynamic, constantly changing self. In fact, narrativity and Hall's idea of identity as well as a socio-constructivistic approach to knowing are all intertwined: what we know about ourselves is built on the wordly harness over events and incidents, perceptions on experiences. As ET4 states above, in modern, complex networks, our identity is constructed situation-bound, in a dialogue, in relation to the others: this is what Hall (ibid.) calls "sociological notion of self". In other words identity is the outcome of the interaction between the self and the different social reference groups. For the behalf of the teacher identity, these groups are 'other teachers – class- and language teachers', 'family –

expectations for career choice', 'pupils' and on the other hand for the behalf of speaker identity – 'Finns', and 'other English speakers'. This is what ET3 says on teacher and speaker identities:

- (7) I never get rid of that being a teacher –thing, even in the grocery store; my husband has been criticising me for all the candy boxes and stuff where it says something in English, because I can always use them in class. So he's somewhat fed up with the stuff that we have at home: several boxes of 'this-I could-use-when-I work' as material. Not to mention when we are abroad somewhere or in a bookshop even here in Tampere. Another way in which I am a teacher, a universal teacher outside work is that if someone is bullying someone somewhere, the little teacher inside me raises his head and makes me say: don't bully that boy! So it doesn't leave me alone. There are many mornings when I wake up and I realise that when I've been sleeping, I have dreamt in one of the languages I teach. Because the languages, they aren't just languages or tools that I work with, they are more inside of me and of course I have a special interest in the countries and cultures where they use these languages and that's why I pay more attention to the countries or the regions where they are spoken, for example the news. There are some things that I notice that I think it in the language, and not in Finnish. It is more natural and more easy for some things, to think about them or to speak about them in a certain language. At first I found it somehow weird, but it's surprising that I've got used to it now. I've done that several years already, so..It hasn't come after I've been working, it's been longer. And especially when I'm abroad in the country I start thinking in the language and seeing dreams in them too. But now, after being in Finland for a longer time, they come every here and there, not every night, but they occur. I think I am never going to divorce English, I am going to stay married with it until I die. It's just something I can't get rid of, and I won't get rid of it. It's not something that I came up with, it's something that will stay. And I hope that the relationship between me and English will deepen and that I can get the chance to spend time with people speaking the language and go to spend time in the countries where they speak the language. It can't get thinner, it must get deeper. For example in March we are planning to travel to San Diego for a wedding of the sister of my husband's exchange family. So every now and then there are joyful occasions or reasons to travel to the States or other English-speaking countries. Being a language teacher is not something that I do from 8 to 5 and then forget about it's part of my personality and it will be.

As ET3 states above, the English teachers seem to have a certain, dynamically changing degree of teacher identity and another of bilingual English language speaker identity in them. Yet, many declare the love for the English language or interest for languages in general together with the vocation of teaching. This is illustrated by ET8: "I felt like I didn't want to be classified as a language teacher only because I've got a degree in education, a master's degree in education from Lowbury university and then my doctorate is in vocational education so basically I have more educational studies than language studies". ET2 tends to agree with ET8: "I was teaching maths, biology, history and all subjects in fact in English to grammar school children who were 4th or 5th graders. And I think that that experience has also had an impact on me how I see myself as a teacher: I am not only an English teacher but a teacher, and I just happen to teach English".

Teaching, for most interviewees, on the other hand seems to be an opportunity grasped out of reasons of practicality, to make one's living: these teachers highlight the interest and love for language above the vocation of teaching (see chapter 3.9).

3.3 How to face challenges: tools for coping in the profession

My informants consider the responsibility both as a language professional and as a teacher quite a challenge. The four most frequently mentioned challenges for English teachers were (a) class sizes, (b) limited time, and (c) the much too granted taken a role of English in Finnish schools in the 21st century. Finally, discipline problems were mentioned (d), especially by older teachers (e.g. ET9), who have seen the change in pupils' behaviour throughout decades. Embedded with this question of taken for granted that everyone speaks fluent English, some teachers bring up the issue that not everybody do. The teachers who were aware of that issue, especially in upper secondary school, felt like it is difficult to balance between the differently-skilled students in one group. Lastly, some teachers also mentioned that it was discouraging to deal with students with motivation problems; keeping the learning atmosphere encouraging is quite a task for the teacher.

As for large class sizes, ET2 and ET5 bring in under particular scrutiny: learning through play and conversing in English is 'impossible' (ET2) or 'quite big a challenge' (ET5) in groups of 30 or more. When working with primary school children, ET2 has noticed that the fear of being embarrassed is dismantled once students take on a speaker role. Thus learning through drama and games is a key factor, yet impossible in too big groups.

What comes to lack of time or too much pressure for both the students and the teachers, even if ET8 regrets it, her solution is to concentrate on two factors: giving the students motivation for life-long learning and empowering them to activate the skills they already have, even if they might underestimate their language skills. In this way the students learn to develop their skills also outside school and, to use their strengths instead of being discouraged of what they can not do. ET1,

too, has emancipated herself of carrying the responsibility of making everybody learn terribly much in a small time:

- (8) Maybe it's not up to me, it's up to the students how much they want to study at home and how much they want to work, how much they feel that is needed from them to be good and to sound like real native speakers. But many of them are happy with their Nokia kind of Finnish English, many people think they are happy with that. (ET1)

Yet ET1 does recognise the fact that too much is demanded from English learners in Finland.

ET5 continues to address the problem: "Discouraging otherwise I find the lack of time which is constant, there is so much to do and I feel there's just not enough hours in a day".

ET1 comments on the disillusion that "everybody speaks English": "In *lukio* they often think they know so much and you'll have to find a calm way of showing them that they know a lot but there is still a lot to learn, which is not often the case really, they feel they know everything and they would think 'Oh that stupid old teacher, nothing to give me' ". ET6 sees the same problem as a boys' challenge: "I find it a challenge when especially boys think that they know enough English and they don't have to do anything anymore because they know everything and they think that English is easy, while that's not the case at all, there's always more to learn".

ET4 and ET5 bring up the heterogenous groups in two dimensions: first, the learners' abilities since the beginning of the courses vary extensively, second, there is also variation among the motivation of the students. The enthusiasm of a language lover might get a strike back when dealing with students who "come in class to wait for it to end" (ET5) or "not even open the page or do anything unless I force them to" (ET4). ET9 has seen the change during her working years: according to her, in the earliest years of her studies no one talked about behavior problems in the staff room whereas now that is the only topic that comes up during the breaks. She has also witnessed the emergence of the internet era and regrets the fact that a large number of students settle for copying material from the internet instead of writing the essays they are given.

3.4 English among other subjects

Finnish language teaching professionals have been worried about the narrowing down of the language skills only to English: constantly less people know other foreign languages than English in the 21st century. All my informants have a positive attitude towards language learning in general and feel like promoting the learning of any foreign languages. ET1, in particular, appreciates the language selection her school offers: “how would I know what they would need later?” Nevertheless, ET5, as an English and German teacher feels that the responsibility of making the students study other languages than just English falls on her and that dividing her attention and time between English and German is sometimes troublesome:

- (9) I’d be happy teaching just English or just German, but dividing between those two is quite a challenge but still on the other hand, it gives me so much more to be somewhat fluent in those two languages, so that I can experience both two of those worlds. I feel that I am living in a world a bit wider than it would be in just one language.

Thus, ET5 has noticed that German is not a popular language anymore and her boss wants her to do something about it. English does not seem to lack motivation from behalf of the students though: they think that everybody needs English and therefore do not question its importance. ET8 sees that the students would not criticise the centrality of learning English: “I think that students are very motivated in learning English, everybody knows that English is like your second language nowadays”.

3.5 School English, home English: ESL or EFL?

It is one of the English teacher’s aims to build bridges between School English and the abundant input of English that Finnish students are in terms with on their free-time (cf. Kalaja, Dufva and Alanen 2005). ET2 sees potential in making links between these two Englishes:

- (10) I had a group of 6th graders who were independent students, they knew what they were doing and all that, yet what I wanted to see more was a dialogue, being able to converse in English, even in the lower grades. That might be difficult because of the lower level of learning, for example the 4th graders, they might not have the tools yet for a conversation. But that’s something I’d like to improve, to encourage them to use it in daily life. I think that kind of teaching should be easy to incorporate in schools because of the wide spread of English, for

example in television, music and the internet. When they go home they are all very much in touch with English.

Moreover, many English language professionals and adult bilinguals consider it their professional and identity-building task to keep up their language skills outside work. English use is seldom seen only as a professional ambition, but quite often it is subjected to affectional functions:

(11) Now that I am not involved with the textbook writing anymore, I miss using English outside work. And of course I notice that if I go somewhere like a hobby or something where somebody speaks English, I will always start talking to that person and I would really love to use it a lot. I travel quite a lot so also there speaking and using and hearing English is something I really look forward to. I used to read a lot in English. Then I somehow forgot that, maybe I got too lazy so I realised I need to practice more so I started again to get more books in English. Old books and new books that had just come out and read it in English even before it's translated into Finnish. I would like to watch TV without the subtitles but I notice that sometimes I can't hear what they are saying, I can't hear what they are saying in Finnish either in Finnish programs. So I use the subtitles but I try to listen as well. I notice that I do it because I know that I try to consciously concentrate on the language. Still for example mostly when I watch the Finnish news and not the BBC world or something, I do have that channel so I could use it, so I think I really should start using it now again too. Especially after travelling, for example I found an old notebook when I had been in South America and I had written all the details in English about the things that we saw and the animals and who was the guide, so I had written everything in English. So I think it's such a colourful language that I had used, but if I did the same now it wouldn't sound similar, but that's of course when the environment is English-speaking. (ET1)

ET1 also sees herself both as an English teacher at school and at home, preparing the students for a lingua-franca use abroad:

(12) I do notice that I bring English into the everyday life also, but I don't want to be too pushy about it. She used to say that *ei puhuta englantia*, but my daughter's pretty tolerant today I mean that she accepts different languages and she understands quite a lot, but just little things and so on. I am not really teaching her, it's like playing a little bit with names of birds and berries. So I am introducing English that is useful for you when you are travelling abroad, like if we buy ice-cream she can say I want vanilla and chocolate so things like that that maybe somehow in my subconsciousness are things that she might need when we are travelling. At some point I thought that maybe I would speak English with my daughter right from the beginning but then I thought that hey I am just one parent and there would have to be a Finnish-speaking parent too. So I couldn't do that because we are in Finland, so she would need Finnish anyway. But I thought about that. So if there had been another parent I would have used English with her to see how it goes in the family but also on the other hand I thought that maybe, she's from China so she would have Chinese too, and Finnish, and English and that would have been too much, well, I don't know.

ET2, as well, recognises the importance of English nowadays and feels like neither English teaching nor his own English competence should slow down. He evokes the fact, that even if

Finnish students have been graded high on English competences in international comparisons, work has to be done:

(13) I see English is becoming even more of a lingua franca in the world so more and more as education spreads in China and in the other eastern and southern hemisphere, so English is becoming stronger and stronger so I think that the Finnish school system should well at least remain where it is now. It always needs improvement, it must not stagnate, it must not stop where it is ever, no matter what the test results of Finland compared with other test results are. So that's the way I see English teaching developing if I can call it development. Then I as a teacher will need some updating here and there, not to get stuck, that's my biggest fear actually. Of course there might be some good things that need not to be changed. Anyway I'll just keep an eye on myself not to get stuck. (ET2)

All in all, whether English is solely seen as a school subject and a foreign language (EFL), or, a second language (ESL) is dichotomic: the teachers see it as ESL whereas they think that for the students and pupils it is primarily EFL.

3.6 “How great it would be someday to know something so well that I could teach it to others”⁶ — Why become an English teacher

Apart from the interest for languages, trips abroad and language studies, practicalities such as making one's living emerged as motivations for career choice. For ET1 and ET2 one of the decisive factors was a good working experience in the early teaching years. ET2 puts it this way:

(14) That first work experience helped me realise that that's kind of what I want to do. I somehow then got the picture. Also thereafter every now and then I have worked there. Then two years ago when I graduated I got a job as an English teacher, first 6 months, then another 6 months and then a whole year. I worked as an English teacher in a school for from 1st to 6th graders. I liked it.

ET3 agrees with ET2: having studied for a couple of years German and English yet not with the idea of becoming a teacher, and after spending a year in Austria she came up with the practical idea of doing the teacher training. Yet, the teacher in her rose only after the first work experience: “My work experience has made my identity as a language teacher more secure, more clear: this is what it is and this is what I wanted to be.”

⁶ ET8

Furthermore, ET2, ET4 and ET9 mention that already the choice of language studies at the university in question was determined by a wish to go to a particular city to study. Another motivation was to settle for the selection of humanities, quite often, languages, that the home university offered. ET4 is a clear case in point: “after I had taken my matriculation exam I thought that Tampere is a nice place. I’d move there, I’d start studying something at the university”. Having liked languages at school, ET9 gives a similar explanation to her career choice: “When we went to the university, my friend and me, to check what to study, languages were the first options”. She continues by saying that in those days it was “a common choice” to pick English, Swedish and modern literature if one was interested in humanities, since there were “lots of subjects that you didn’t know what they included”. Not having taken English but Russian as a long course out of practical reasons at school, she stayed in the USA for six months and after that period the career choice as an English teacher was clear. In her days, in fact, the languages to study at school were chosen from German, only taught in the evening, and Russian if one wanted to study in the morning.

ET4, throughout her career has had one driving force: an interest for the English language and languages in general, and literature. As to her other motives, she brings up a sequence of incidents, random events that like not out of her own will, have brought her to working in the secondary school where she now has a permanent job. During her language studies she applied for the teacher training “impulsively just like that” as she says, not thinking she would get in and then to her surprise “somebody who was older and who had studied more cancelled her place” which gave ET4 the chance to do the teacher studies. Subsequently she continued her language studies: “I just wanted to have it done with”. She also “happened to buy a flat” so funding was needed. Yet when she “had a couple of kids” she thought that at that moment, at least, teaching would have been too much.

3.7 Hardships in the first years of working life

The first years are difficult for many, due to the insecurity in the field of being permanently employed. Some are also surprised by the school reality even if many have the experience of working as teacher substitutes or on several consecutive short term teaching contracts before acquiring a fixed job. Job-hunting, too, seems to be quite a stress.

(15) During the first couple of years it's an effort to teach what you have to teach, what the curriculum and books say. (ET2)

(16) Then there was this moment that I applied for a permanent post. I thought now or never. I usually decided very impulsively, like, perhaps I could be there for next week, but then once when I went to an interview for a longer vacancy the head teacher made some um curious..stupid questions..I thought that he was very suspicious of me because of my history I mean that I hadn't been somewhere for ten years which I could have done at the time or whatever, I was probably something..for him. And then I saw a 25-year-old come to the interview as I was leaving and I knew that she'd get it and I said ouch I am getting old too. And then I thought, actually I had never applied for permanent posts anywhere there I could decide so easily that let's take theone. That was the first time that I thought, if I get something, I take it. I applied for three jobs that weren't in Tampere. Here I thought that I should be queuing for a vacancy for 15 years or something, so then I thought that if I liked it where I'd go, that'll be it, then I'd stop this what shall I do to earn a living. It happened, I happened to get a permanent job in a very nice school now that I can compare, because just prior to that I had sort of made a comeback, one of my many come-backs to teaching, by teaching adults in the evenings and then I thought, why don't I try what it feels like teaching teenagers and I gave my information to the school office and they would phone me, a 40-something teacher, in the morning like can you come here, today which I had done in my 20s you know. (ET4)

Nevertheless, just like ET4 explained that despite the uncertainty during the first working years, not having a permanent job but a range of short term substitutions can be an asset: the English teacher gets to know different staff rooms, and eventually, to appreciate the colleagues and the students you end up having a permanent job with:

(17) It was very interesting period you know because when I did that I could compare different schools, like the atmosphere in the teachers' room and everything and I noticed they were very different. Like somewhere I just thought, I don't recommend myself to be a substitute here ever again, bye! And some other places, oh that's nice so that's why I knew, that's why I know now that where I work is a very good place for a secondary school so I can appreciate many things there and so when I went..The first winter was terrible in many ways it was but it's been so much easier now that I am committed and I have the same students for like, you know, from year to year. I have a permanent job now.

ET1 has a similar experience: “I went from a good, wonderful teachers’ room to places where I thought that I won’t stay here for another year. So it took some time to find my own way, five years or so. So for a couple of years I was drifting from places to others and I got to know to different schools”.

3.8 “Some of them come back after years they have left to say hello”⁷ – Topics for joy: sources of empowerment

The way in which narrativity can serve as a practical working tool in a language teacher’s life is that the teacher tries to highlight the positive experiences in her career, seen retrospectively. If an experience teacher can turn even the negative experiences into positive stories like ET1 and ET4 in particular seemed to do, coping with the profession is easier to manage: “With some groups there’s lots of humour and with some it’s like we’ve all gathered here to suffer from studying English” (ET4). ET1 states that it is important to be able to see the good moments “even if there are very few of them”. ET3 and ET7 revel in the moments when somebody has learned something, even if the change in learning in ET7’s words “is really slow”, which is why a lot of patience is needed from the teacher, whose job is actually never completed. However, ET4 brings up the fact that despite the motivation problems of students in their teenage years, the teacher learns how to cope with that when she is engaged in the job and has the chance to teach the same groups for several years; in the end, when you do see the change you might be surprised.

The heterogeneity of groups in terms of motivation and studying attitude comes up in the stories of the teachers who work with secondary school students or older. ET2 and ET3, who mainly have primary school experience, do not mention motivation problems at all. Yet, ET1, ET4, and ET8 by accepting the fact that students set different goals and are differently motivated and that some might concentrate throughout the class on criticising whether the teacher is focusing on what is necessary, they still can enjoy their work and the English language. ET1 has also realised that

⁷ ET4

after marking the test papers the teacher should not cry over what the students have not learned, if she has done her best.

In sum, many mention that the joys comes from seeing somebody learn something. When the teacher realises that not all groups have the same dynamics, her or she also learns to cope with the less motivated groups.

3.9 Teacher's career: wanting or ending up?

What I referred to earlier as multiple-voicing (heteroglossia) is seen for instance in the fact that that when talking about whether they chose the profession or the profession chose them, all of my interviewees use self-contradicting phrases. For example ET5 was impressed by her upper secondary school English teacher and went to study in England after her matriculation exam; becoming an English teacher “daunted her” over a period of time, yet, she claims that she just “ended up in her profession like most people do”.

Many find it an emancipating moment to realise that being an English language teacher is something that they dare to do, against their own or others' odds. For example ET3 says: “Part of this denial that I was living in was because of my father; he was of the opinion that all teachers are no good that they can't do anything, so I guess I didn't allow myself that I could become a teacher before I was mature enough to admit that or to allow it to myself”.

Being a teacher seems to have been something my informants have somehow fought against to a certain point. ET7 and ET4 display typical examples in that matter: “I have had through these 20 years all kinds of thoughts about me being an English teacher. I was always trying to think about something else, where I could see the results concretely, something to observe completing in front of my eyes. It has taken me a lot of time to be able to accept that I am an English teacher and will be it for the rest of my professional career (ET7)”. Yet, she does say she is quite pleased about her professional situation and acknowledges that once you are in working life there is little time to

think about anything else. Even if my aim is not to draw mathematical comparisons over the thoughts of English teachers, oddly enough, out of my nine interviewees six state that they did not plan to become English teachers since the beginning of their studies; one (ET6) says she *never* wanted to become one, it just happened because she did not get into the faculty she originally planned to. Finally, three state that they had some ideas of becoming a teacher right from the beginning. All of the respondents who said they did not plan to become a teacher also share the common misconception that it is the others who have had a straightforward determination to build a career as a language teacher whereas they themselves did not.

(18)I started to study English in the university of Vaasa in 2001 with no intention or idea of becoming an English teacher or teacher of anything. After my basic studies I was still lost about what I wanted to do. The university of Vaasa does not really offer that much, in addition to language studies, other humanities I mean. then at the end of my second year, one of my teachers was reading Tarot cards to me, she was a witch, and actually precisely six years ago she had a Halloween party to the students of English and she read Tarot cards to me at this Halloween party, so she talked about my past, the present and the future. And she turned a card over and said: "It looks like you are heading towards becoming a priest or a teacher. So that was the first moment that I started to think about it, I mean not there and then but after it. I knew anyway that I wouldn't become a priest, so..I guess she somehow woke up the interest in me in teaching, because obviously she knew what kind of person I was because I had studies with her and she knew me, so she made a theory on what I might have wanted to be. Then four days later there was a Finnish TV program on called Teacher or Teachers. It was a tv-series on teachers somewhere in Finland and I was watching it and thought 'well that's quite nice'. And obviously afterwards I discovered that the program was made to encourage young people to the profession, so that was the idea behind the program and it sure lured me in teaching too, because when I was watching the program I said to myself: that's something I might want to do. So those were the two reasons. (ET2)

(19)To tell the truth I never decided to become an English teacher, so I don't know if that's typical of teachers. But, no, it was just a general..I like languages kind of stuff, kind of idea, so..um..and I've never been sure whether is was or is the right field for me, teaching, you know, I just primarily like languages. Somehow, it's difficult to say when..but I don't mind being a teacher now. There was a period when I was like don't tell anybody I am a teacher or I'll punch you and it's difficult, you know to know why but it's been THE difficult thing in my life, knowing what to do for a living and so for better or for worse this is how I have ended up. And not anymore but earlier I got these feelings when I was there, sitting behind the teacher's desk and I like had this inner interview like what are you doing here? Leave! I don't get that, I hardly ever get that feeling these days so it's like ok, this is what it is today. Also one funny thing with this "Do I really want to be a language teacher" perhaps I am not good at doing this bla bla bla..-My daughter wants to become a language teacher, inspite of all my struggle, she'e aware of my struggle to be or not to be but she's very different from me but anyway. (ET4)

(20)I was not planning to become a teacher at all, but I am very practical, even as a student, so I realised that if I do the teacher training I will get a job. So that was my reason to do it. (ET7)

(21)I never wanted to become a teacher, I just went through the education because I thought it was something that I might get a job with later on. I was doing teacher training and then I realised I might actually like it but I hadn't really thought about it before. So it happened gradually during the teacher training that I thought: "maybe this could be my profession". And then I got the opportunity to continue working in Norssi (teacher training school governed by the state and the university) and I realised that I liked it a lot. I think if I hadn't had the option to work there I would have gone back to my studies and thereafter it might have been really difficult to get back to teaching. Then I might have tried some other kind of job like journalism or..I don't know. I didn't have a real plan to become an English teacher, it developed gradually. So for me it might be different from other people, for those who always wanted to become teachers, whereas I did not. (ET1)

In fact, only four out of the nine interviewees, which means less than the half (ET3, ET5, ET8 and ET9) had the idea of becoming an English teacher right from the beginning. However, there are hesitations and multiple-voicing in their stories too.

(22)I remember telling my mother that it wasn't about languages at that point but when I started school I told my mum how great it would be someday to know something so well that I could teach it to others. So becoming a teacher was my dream from the beginning. And when I found out languages I knew that this would be my main area.(ET8)

ET8's story, in these circumstances, is contradictory as well: she goes on to say that since she had a deep interest for international encounters and a variety of European languages, she started to study them at the university; then she compares herself to her friends and says that neither she nor her friends had the will of becoming a language teacher. Then, gradually, by getting experience as a substitute teacher, one thinks that being a teacher is quite a practical choice for someone interested in language, literature and studying. ET8 is not an exception: displaying heteroglossia is in fact quite common in my interviewees' stories: one never wanted to become an English teacher but then again did, and even if she was trying to see for other career options, she is quite content with the profession.

3.10 Independent work?

As a teacher's job, a language teacher's job is very independent and that surprises many who are new in the profession. As long as s/he follows the national curriculum, a teacher is quite free to decide the methods used in class:

(23)What surprised me there was how much I was trusted, being the only English teacher in the school: everyone, the principal included thought that I am an expert in the manner. And in a way I am, I am an expert in the matter. But it surprised me how much everyone trusted me and how independent the work was. I got to decide whatever I wanted to do, I got to do it. (ET2)

ET7 also states that it is surprising how independent a job the teacher's work was:

(24)It is a very practical and independent work; nobody comes to tell you when and how you must do the things, even after 20 years I still have to find out alone how to do some things. (ET7)

Nevertheless, especially the teachers who work in primary schools (ET2, ET3) highlighted the importance of co-operating with the class teachers. For example, since ET2 was the only English teacher, in the primary school, he regrets the lack of having somebody to turn to for pedagogical support. ET3 says she never felt like an outsider among the class teachers, yet she admits having always noticed a difference between her and the class teachers' points of views that came up in discussions. On the other hand, ET1 and ET4, working in secondary and upper secondary schools, had the idea that they are tempted to co-operate with other language teachers, which helps them to get variation in their methods. ET4 says that "we three English teachers really support each other as colleagues". ET1, in particular found it a refreshing project to teach one course together with another English teacher. She emphasises the importance of having a colleague as a tutor to introduce the job for the new teacher:

(25)My identity as a language teacher and as an English teacher was probably most affected by the people I worked with at *Norssi*, because I was very young when I started, 24 I think. There were four other English teachers in *Norssi* and they were all older than I was. They were very helpful, they were very good in their job. So I encountered many different types of teachers there because they were very different.

Hence meeting different types of teachers and having been supported by them has affected how she sees an English teacher should be. Co-operation with colleagues has brought her both life-long

friendships and widened the idea of ‘a good teacher’: things can be done well in a variety of ways. Also meeting colleagues that she had difficulties working with has later on made her appreciate the atmosphere she has now in the school where she has a permanent job.

3.11 Appropriated/nativised English

As for speaker identities, interestingly, for some English has undergone nativisation, i.e. become a local language in Finland, even if nativisation of English is typically brought up in the context of former colonies (Kachru’s outer circle). Since it is characteristic in nativisation that the number of competent L2 speakers increase and the variety develops its own particular characteristics, I would say that in Finland the process is ongoing (cf. Viereck 1996). According to Segalowitz and Gatbonton (1977, 86) ‘going nativelike’ is simulating accents of native speakers, perhaps due to strong need or will for assimilation, which in fact was not the case in any of my interviewees’ stories. If in the same terms, we consider a foreign language belonging to another cultural group, not ours, the speaker takes on identity markers of another cultural group (Lightbrown and Spada 1993, 50), which is not the case among my informants. ET7, for example, does not take on a different speaker role when she shifts to English, yet, she sees English as *her* language:

(26) I don’t see the difference whether I think in English or in Finnish. Of course it’s more challenging to try to explain your things in English; you get more distance in what you are saying. But I think in the same way even if Finnish is my mother tongue. (ET7)

For none of my informants, in fact, English was seen in these terms, as a ‘foreign language’. It is, on the contrary, in the context of English teachers, a second language (S2), a de-nativised lingua franca, or language of Wider Communication⁸ for general communication. The often-suggested Kachru model (e.g. 1997) on three concentric circles of English theoretically places the Finns as speakers of English to the third, Expanding Circle of English⁹. How speaker identities are investigated is essentially an individual task: how we are defined from outside, or, officially, not

⁸ or, Crystal (1997): global English. The word ‘Globish’ was mentioned in the Finnish news paper *Helsingin Sanomat* (20 March 2011).

⁹ As opposed to the first, the Inner Circle (UK, USA etc.) and the second, Outer Circle (former British colonies)

always corresponds to the in situ of our individual speaker identity questions. Indeed, ET2 says “English is like a second mother tongue to me” since despite his Finnish roots, he has “grown with the language”, similarly to ET5:

(27) I’ve grown up with the language really. I feel that the language has been there throughout my life. I remember how I learned English from TV when I was growing up. It had sort of a major effect and all the American pop culture and all that and then little by little books and all that, literature, so that, the language and using that language all through my life. And I’ve always enjoyed English in particular, more than the other languages. Nowadays I’ve come to enjoy German in the same way, but I’ve somehow felt at home with the English language at the very start.

Then my bilingualism: I used to think that I am bilingual in English, I am not anymore; I’ve become monolingual again. I think my work demands that I deal with the language outside of work. I couldn’t do my work well for a long time if I didn’t keep it up in my spare time. I read books in all the three languages that I know: I read one in English and after that one in German then one in Finnish, because I want to keep up my Finnish as well, to polish it a little bit every now and then, although it’s my mother tongue. I try to watch things from TV in different variations of English like Emmerdale sometimes or well American things obviously. Sometimes I watch something Australian just to hear how they speak. I do that consciously even though I am not very interested in seeing that I still watch something for a while just for the language. (ET5)

Questions on the use of English by the English teachers are characterised by Joshua Fishman’s (1972, 441-442) theory on language domains. For a bi- or multilingual speaker, the choice of language is explained by the appropriateness of a given language for a certain domain, e.g. home, education, religion, work. English, admittedly, is the language of work domain for all the informants, but it does not limit itself there. For many, it is also an affective language (ET2), used for communicating and sorting out feelings; it is also a language used within every-day discussions within family (ET4) or with relatives during the holidays (ET6). Moreover, its literal value is essential: all the informants find it substantial to read novels in English.

The accent issue seems to be a topic that makes the English teachers eloquent: what kind of positions to take in teaching a world language? (cf. Kachru 2005) Moreover, the students also have an opinion on the teacher’s accent and sometimes even dare to criticize it. In the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and according to the Finnish National Board of Education (2004), in English teaching, no particular target accent or variety is imposed: as for

teaching of pronunciation, a non-native pronunciation is only a problem when it causes problems of intelligibility.

Approximately half of the interviewees (ET3 ET4, ET6 and ET7) mention that they have learned to accept their accent even if according to themselves it is not a native accent. “I sound a bit Finnish but so what? It’s a pity, but I’ve accepted it”, like ET6 says. Yet she says she admires people who speak “Oxford English” and she would like to speak more like native speakers. She travels regularly to Britain to visit relatives and has no problem at all in communicating with the locals. She says she especially likes British English even if does not speak with it herself. ET3 was surprised to hear her students claiming her accent was Irish, even if she has no connection to Ireland whatsoever.

On the contrary, ET5, having picked her accent while studying in Britain, feels that the Finnish accent is something she needs to fight: “I do have a slight problem with students who have a very strong Finnish accent who don’t even seem to try to sound like English or American in any way”. Nevertheless, she justifies her preference of the native accent in favour of being understood. Then again, the typical, contradictory multiple-voicing emerges:

(28)I don’t see the variants of English in any order in terms of what’s better and what’s worse. I don’t see how you could put them in an order of some sort. So I don’t have a problem with any. But if somebody has an accent I am proud of them, if they are that far. (ET5)

ET6 regrets not having learnt pronunciation well herself, ET4 has similar thoughts:

(29)Something that I regret now, well it was so difficult in those days. I wish I had lived a year or two somewhere in England to pick a beautiful British accent. But about how I feel with English..the thing that I hate is my accent. I can’t name a language idol for myself but perhaps some actresses, I say, listen to her, that’s how I’d like to talk. (ET4)

ET7 says has freed herself of taking on artificial speaker roles:

(30)When I teach I try to bring up different accents, but then again I think why should I use RP because that’s not me, then it would be a role. And as a teacher, I don’t have a speaker role, I am what I am. And the students can see through me if I imagine something else: they would know if I act like a teacher instead of being a teacher. English is something you can use. It is a way of communicating. And I feel quite natural with it. (ET7)

ET8 has strong connections to Britain and personally has learnt the British model of speaking, yet, aims at providing a versatile scope of how English is pronounced: “I try to find people who speak with different accents, because that’s the reality of life”.

3.12 Target variety? Target culture?

English as a global language brings on, apart from the accent issue, the question of the “target culture” of World English (Jenkins 2006) and English as a Lingua Franca. What is the cultural competence that ought to be conveyed during the English classes when 375 million people use it as first language, 400 million as second language and there are 100-1000 million speakers of English in Expanding Circle in Kachru’s terms. Many teachers think that they can provide a variety of accents in the classroom, but no variety as such should be promoted as the sole target form. There are, again, different views on this issue among my informants. ET1, for example, highlights English being primarily a lingua franca, not with a British target but neither a Finnish one. She also uses it first and foremost abroad:

(31) I also find it a bit disappointing, if I travel somewhere like to China and if I don’t find anybody to speak English with, apart from the very basics, then I am a bit disappointed. So I want to find some other tourists like Americans to talk to better than the basic. But that doesn’t really restrict my travelling. For me it’s always interesting to travel, but I do hope that I have somebody to speak good English with, and, who would also be an interesting personality that I have something in common and can talk to them, not just some basic small talk on what you’ve seen and so on.

According to the National Core Curriculum for primary school (2004, 138), oral skills teaching needs to prepare the pupil for a variety of communicative situations. Thus, no mention of a particular accent is brought to question. The Finnish Curriculum for upper secondary school (2003, 102) makes no mention of teaching a particular accent: what is said on oral skills is that the students should learn to communicate in the target language in ways that are appropriate for its “target culture”. Here again, we might ask, what is the target culture in English teaching. Kachru (2005, 160) states that ideological factors come into play when we teach a world language. Since there are many competing native models of English representation – e.g. British, American, Indian,

Canadian, South African and all the dialects within – one could ask whether ‘native-like’ language usage is even needed, particularly in pronunciation. ET5 sees that for herself, British English used to be the target, whereas she is not imposing only British English in the classroom:

(32) Other challenge is to keep up my language skills I feel that at the moment I am struggling with English because I used to be fluent but now I am not, because when you are speaking classroom English all the time, you speak the classroom English also outside work. I also, I’ve noticed some German influence in my English lately even in pronunciation lately, but I don’t know what I can do about it, since I am teaching both. Well, at the beginning of my career I still focused on British English and British issues quite a lot because they were in my fresh memory because of my stay in England, but nowadays, I’ve got a more global approach and accepting a lot more than I did at the beginning.

Every language exists in different varieties, in smaller or larger scope. Wardhaugh (2002, 332) states that it is also the occasion that determines the choice of a variety and an individual can master several varieties, yet they do sometimes overlap and are in constant modification. The question of prestige (ibid.) comes to play a significant role in what the speaker community tends to favour or to take as a model. In these circumstances the hundreds of millions English speakers’ speech in the outer and expanding circles is still judged against the norm that is set in the (British?) prestige forms. McKay (2005, 283) also states that promotion of standard language forms in classroom is linked with issues of power. Here is what ET4 and ET8 think:

(33) Nobody owns English, it’s nobody’s property, as you know, broken English is the world’s most spoken language. (ET4)

(34) I am really interested now in this English as lingua franca, I should somehow reflect that on my teaching. (ET8)

ET1 explains that it is essential that the teaching material also reflects the wide scope of English usage in the world. She takes an example from a trip she made in Bangladesh and says it is a good experience to share with the students:

(35) I was on a language course in Britain and I liked the country. But I think for me any foreign language and country was interesting to me. And I never thought and it shows in our textbooks too that it should be just one kind of English, yet we don’t really separate them, we don’t emphasise the differences really. Whether it’s Indian English or whatever, it’s just English. I really feel strange about people who prefer one to the other and feel so strongly about it. It used to be that people showed slides of all the sights of London and they were so enthusiastic about it, it was wonderful and so on – London and England and the Queen – I don’t really want to talk

in my English lessons about the English speaking countries, I just want to talk about other countries in general.

4 Adult bilingualism: the English language as an identity constructor

‘Stable’ or ‘balanced’ bilingualism is a hypothetical and rare type of bilingualism whereby the speaker has equal proficiency of the mastered languages. According to Grosjean (2010, 19-20), lately, defining bilingualism by the criterion of being stable, balanced, or even ‘native-like’ (Bloomfield) is fading out and making way to the criterion of use¹⁰. Hence in Grosjean’s (2010, 4) fashion, for me too, bilinguals are “people who use two or more languages(or dialects¹¹) in their everyday life”. Similarly, according to Wardhaugh (2002, 95), bilinguals do not display exactly the same abilities in both languages. On the contrary, they possess varying degrees of command of different repertoires. Language choice, in these circumstances, is part of the speaker’s social, and in my study, also professional identity. ET8, for example, uses fluently English with her Finnish colleagues:

(36) Obviously my oral English use in Finland depends on the company: If I am with other English teachers for example or with people I know that understand English so very often it’s much easier to say half the sentence in English like you are too lazy to formulate the whole sentence in English and it would seem a bit awkward. But saying the..finding the best expression, sometimes in English, sometimes in Finnish. Very often English has a shorter way of putting things and then you tend to..depending on the company. And sometimes I notice that if I for example..once I was dating an older man who did speak English, I had to you know, be careful, not to use English with him, because he would have felt, you know, awkward about me speaking English. But it’s very useful..usual with other language teachers or with speakers of English. So we easily tend to do that among colleagues during coffee breaks or so. I remember when I was still studying English and being a substitute in one school where there was this older English teacher and we were taking copies together. And she would say something in English and I thought like “Why is she using English..” It didn’t come as natural to me then. It was easier for her to say it in English.

English has an integral part in ET4’s life: she uses it for reading, at dinner time with her Finnish family, and also admits to be thinking in English, in her “in a way a second language”:

¹⁰ See also Myers-Scotton (2006, 36)

¹¹ Grosjean also recognizes the difficulty in linguistics of defining the basic concepts such as ‘word’, ‘language’ and ‘dialect’. Therefore, for instance, a person using regularly Pugliese and Italian is bilingual.

(37)I sometimes think in English. I read a lot, especially since I discovered Amazon, I think all the language teachers, well I need to talk only about myself. Some things are easier to think in English and also like I have two adult kids still living at home, and a husband and they are all fluent in English so sometimes we just say something to each other in English, because they read books in English, so it's in a way it's our second language. There are some expressions that you don't even know how to put it in Finnish. I never thought in what kind of situations we use English sometimes I just realise that I've been thinking in English. Of course that if you've been reading a lot, if you've been reading..lately I haven't been reading a lot, I have a weird period..I normally read daily, like before I go to sleep so. I don't know if I am aware if I think in English or in Finnish. My daughter wanting to become an English teacher could of course be one of the reasons that there's lot of English in our everyday life. We can make up new words in English, just for fun!

4.1 The role of English in the teacher's linguistic repertoire

Not only professional, but also multilingual identity nestles gradually on the multilingual teacher, even if the adult bilingualism or multilingualism in the case of English teachers is a socially isolated phenomenon (cf. Weinrich 1968, 83). Furthermore, according to Weinrich, the factors which make a language dominant for a bilingual are its usefulness, role in social advance and literary-cultural value by its surroundings. All these points apply in my informants' ideas on English. Furthermore, the question of language use domains (e.g. Fishman 1972) comes to play a part: English is a language that functions over the boundaries of the mother tongue (Finnish) in certain domains of life; in the interviewees' case these domains are reading novels, random dinner time conversations, chats with colleagues and then, certainly, lingua franca use abroad. In the stories on beliefs and conceptions on one's own bilingualism and self-assessment on one's own English skills, there are clear tokens of heteroglossia, even contradictory multiple-voicing (Bakhtin 1986; Hall 1999): the English teacher assumes great importance, both affective and domain-based referential meaning to the language but then again is typically self-critical and sees learning and using English as a life-long learning process, never complete. Here is what ET5 says on how she is attached to English:

(38)I don't feel very confident at the moment with my English; I do feel embarrassed every now and then because I make so many mistakes. Well my personal preferred variant is British English. But it's only my personal variant; I do present the American variants to my students, often. Just today I gave them the word 'court' and I tried to give them the American version of course I don't pronounce it properly but they recognise the American version more easily. Sometimes

they might not understand the British version at all instead only the American one. I did think in English when I lived in England and I maintained some friendships after I left from there but now they've died slowly, so. I don't feel as fluent and as confident as I used to I don't feel that I..well, I am not sure if I will ever..well I must have thought in English yes, for a while. Of course my identity was always Finnish, that was my, the language of me I mean but yeah, I just felt more confident, more at ease with the language nowadays. (ET5)

And here below ET8 and ET9 comment on their English use outside work:

(39)English outside work? I read everything in English, I don't really read Finnish novels. I think like this..I might as well do it in a useful way. And there are so many interesting books in English, and I subscribe to an English magazine. Perhaps it's a bit of an obsession to try to keep up your language skills. I've never been to America, but I've been to England almost every year. Perhaps outside work could be..I have a side job sort of I am, since the beginning of this year I am a member in the Finnish matriculation examination board, and go to Helsinki for meetings every Friday, in the English committee obviously. But we have meetings with all the language teachers there. So that as well is supporting my work here. (ET8)

(40)I might say I could be thinking in English and I use some phrases at home and my husband has learnt English just by hearing me use it at home. And that's what I did when my children were at home I told them something in English so they got used to the phrases. I remember once when we moved from a town to another, my youngest son was 7 years old so he just started school. I was wondering why he never invited any of his friends home and I asked him, I was a bit worried, "you don't have any friends do you?" He said "oh yeah" and I said why don't you ever invite them here? He said they don't dare to come because you always speak English. And I hadn't noticed I always spoke English, I guess it came out so naturally at that time. Then we had an exchange student from the states for a year and one for a week from Australia when the kids were at home. And this poor guy never learnt any Finnish except "hei" because we always spoke English. I never did it with Swedish though. (ET9)

4.2 Contradicting voices on bilingualism

All my respondents display multiple-voicing as for their bilingualism. Their stories correlate with Grosjean's (2010, xv) experience: "many bilinguals do not consider to be bilingual and are critical of their own language competence". ET8 is a typical bilingual who underestimates her skills:

(41)But still I feel my English is not good enough. When I go to England I for example, last, this summer I spent three weeks in England. I first participated in a languages teachers' course called motivating activities in language learning and then the third week I visited teacher education centres, because I was also working in the teacher education. Still I am going to stop that because it's too much work. Anyway, so I spent three weeks in English and always in England I feel that I can't speak as well as they can! You feel like everything should come out as smoothly and as quickly and fluently as from the native speakers. And what I find the most difficult for myself is the kind of everyday chatting. I was living in a family and I really appreciated it because the landlady especially had a lot of time and she would have breakfast

with me and have dinner with me and we would chat about all kinds of things. And there I noticed I was weakest because I am used to teaching English: I always use English all the time when I am teaching, I just speak English in class and I read a lot and I've done all my theses in English and I am used to talking about my research in English. But I haven't had that much experience of everyday sort of simple phrases and idiomatic expressions. (ET8)

ET7 has a similar contradicting voice: she first starts her story by negating the use of English in her life, but then presents a long list of exceptions to her utterance:

(42)I don't really use English outside work. But I do listen to music actually, I follow the words. My friend says that nobody listens to the words but I do, I want to know what they are saying. The same goes for TV programs, I sometimes check why do they translate it like that. Then I would like to know somebody from the states. I was writing an e-mail to a teacher from there so let's see. And then of course I read, I read a lot, mostly English novels. I have a teenage daughter and I sometimes try to teach her but it's not a good idea. I offer my generous work to my bigger children who have some kind of problems with English and I promised to help them both. Anyway they never got too enthusiastic about it so I just said to them that I am here if you need me. I taught all my children to be very independent with school because I noticed that for me teaching at school is enough. We can do other things at home. I've been reading a lot for the past ten years in English.

And also ET2, who calls English "a second mother tongue" and afterwards "not as fluent as my mother tongue":

(43)English has a major part in my life, because of my coaching. I coach American football and I am in an environment where all the literature is in English. So as an American football coach I have to read in English. I get to communicate with many American coaches and players in Finland, so also outside work I use English all the time, every day. There are days that I use more English than Finnish. That's when I am really involved in football. Then also I like to read about a lot of subjects. Sometimes I pick a book in English because it's easier to read in the original language. If it's possible I like to read something in the original language if I can. And in English there is just so much literature in all subjects, that it's easy to pick up a book. It's almost like a second mother to me, I feel. I don't really consider it as a second language anymore because of the daily use. Of course the internet as well.. And then even before going to the United States as an exchange student, I've always been a good English student, and I'd always got top grades in English. But I didn't realize that that year actually changed my life in a sense that I started to use English instead of studying and learning it. But really during my year as an exchange student English became my second mother tongue, because I could use it in every situation, no matter what the subject was.

At the same time I think that it's not as strong that I thought it was. No matter how much I use it, it's not as fluent as a mother tongue. Writing for me in Finnish for example is still easier, for example when I write something scientific. So there are differences in the respect of how I use these languages. I guess I assume a different role when I speak in English. An example of this is that it's a lot easier for me to use curse words in English; it's much easier for me to swear in English than it is in Finnish. In Finnish when I swear it sounds cruel, it hurts my own ear so to speak. In English it's just taught out. I don't think those words for me in English have that much weight, but I know that to an English speaker it sounds just as bad as for me when someone curses in Finnish. I try to avoid it but it's easier.

Many of the other respondents, in fact, use extensively English, yet, do not see themselves as bilinguals or are critical of their language skills. The answers are indeed contradictory, such as ET7 states: “I don’t really use English outside work”, and thereafter gives a long list how she uses it at home. ET2 displays yet another typical multiple-voicing of himself when he talks about English being a second mother tongue, and then again not. What is of particular interest in the domains of use outside work, is to see what kind of motivation the teachers themselves have for leaning the language. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), learning and language use is more developed if the speaker is integrally motivated, i.e. the learner learns the language out of personal and not external motivation. In fact, many teachers’ work does not limit to the traditional classroom work, ET1 has been involved with textbook writing, ET8 in curricula work and supervising theses, and ET9 in developing test materials in the Finnish National Board of Education. She has also been training future English teachers in Bosnia in English.

Table 1: A summary of contradictory voices on bilingualism:

Teacher	Domains of use of English outside work	On bilingualism
1	Traveling, reading novels, keeping a diary playing with the language at home with her daughter. Highlights the use of English as a lingua franca, outside Finland and Britain and the rest of the traditional “English-speaking countries”.	Seeks English-speaking people’s company in hobbies and while travelling. “I would really love to use it a lot”. Wrote a travel-diary in English of “all the details we saw”. Nowadays, “I bring English into every-day life also”. Does not feel at all close to the British culture even if finds her way in expressing everything she has in mind in English.
2	Reading novels, at sports field, cursing – taking distance in it by doing it in English; internet use, spent a year in the US where English became his “second mother tongue”.	“I guess I assume a different role when I use English; It’s almost like a second mother-tongue to me. I don’t really consider it as a second language anymore because of the daily use” Sees though differences in the ways of using the two languages: “at the same time I think it’s not as strong as I thought it was”; “no matter how much is use it, it’s not as

		fluent as my mother tongue”.
3	Thinking and dreaming a given domain; traveling.	Rummages constantly for English contexts in her home town such as sweets boxes for eventual pedagogical use. “I can’t get rid of English”. Has occasionally chances of holiday trips in the States and other English-speaking countries. Wants her “English personality” to deepen.
4	Reading novels, dinner-time conversations, being creative with English –making up new words, sometimes thinking in English –“some things are easier to think in English”.	Has always enjoyed languages and studying. She hates her accent. Sees bilingualism solely in the sense of child bilingualism; perceives language teaching at school as “foreign language education”.
5	Reading novels; watching consciously English TV programs; using dictionaries.	“I used to think I am a bilingual in English, I am not anymore”; “I don’t feel very confident with my English: I do feel embarrassed every now and then because I make so many mistakes.”
6	Reading books; visiting relatives in Britain.	“I wish I could learn to speak more like natives but I’m one of those people who never learned pronunciation properly, that’s a pity but I’ve accepted it. I sound a bit Finnish but so what? That’s ok. I’ll always be interested in languages and I’ll be using English as much as I can.”
7	“I don’t really use English outside work. But I do listen to music actually, I follow the words. The same goes for TV programs, I sometimes check why do they translate it like that.” Eager for having an English-speaking correspondant, reads novels in English, talks in English and teaches English sometimes to her daughter.	“I don’t see the difference whether I think in English or in Finnish. Of course it’s more challenging to try to explain your things in English: you get more distance in what you are saying. But I think in the same way even if Finnish is my mother tongue.”
8	Use of oral English in Finland “depends on the company”: Finnish-English code-switching with other English teachers e.g. during coffee breaks and people who know well English, by “laziness of formulating the whole sentence in one language”. Language choice justified by “finding the best expression”, sometimes in English, sometimes in Finnish. As for written English, she says she loves the	“Still I feel my English is not good enough” Goes regularly to England and by comparing her language competence with British native speakers she feels she is short of idiomatic expressions and small talk. Dreaming of moving to England, admires the language and British culture.

	English language and loves to read and to see how the language changes.	
9	Thinks sometimes in English; uses occasionally at home with her husband and children, hosted English-speaking exchange students.	Friends in the States and in Britain; “I feel pretty comfortable with English”.

The multiple-voicing in all the examples above shows how dynamic the idea on bilingual identities: when in intensive contact with the language, the speaker (ET2, ET5) considers oneself as a bilingual, while when time has passed the speaker’s own idea on the notion of bilingualism can change. Analogies can be found in the notion of language teacher identity: typical answers contradict the ideas of bilingualism and one’s own relation to being a teacher.

5 Conclusions

In this study, I was interested in seeing what kind of stories English teachers have told firstly, on their professional identity construction, and secondly, on how they see their Finnish-English bilingualism. As for the method used, narrated stories, as attributions to a person’s past, the teachers’ stories are full of contradicting voices. A common narration strategy, encountered in all the interviewees’ stories, is typically self-contradicting: the story on whether becoming an English teacher was intentional or only a succession of random events, or, whether the teacher considers him/herself as bilingual includes totally opposite ideas on the same issue (cf. Grosjean 2010, xv).

On whether becoming a language teacher was intentional or not, five out of the nine teachers interviewed for this study said they were interested in languages, but did not explicitly plan to become teachers. Quite often it was those who thought that becoming an English teacher is most commonly an intentional path. In my study though, only four out of the nine had the intention to become teachers since the beginning of the university studies. However, when one finally is a teacher, intentionally or not, does not affect on how one sees him/herself in the profession.

Narrativity is a practical tool when the teachers tell about hesitations on their career – which was quite common – and secondly, on the negative incidents in classroom work: through reconstructing the past some managed to turn bad experiences in to positive ones. ET4, for example, uses the empowering narration: “Also what helps me is that I never thought of myself as a brilliant teacher, so I need not to act like one. Therefore, despite my struggle, I don’t mind being a teacher now.” Thus, narrativity did reveal itself as a practical tool for problem-solving in a teacher’s job: the most commonly mentioned problems were lack of time and a heavy curriculum to follow, students’ misconception that English is easy and does not need to be studied, random misbehaving or unmotivated students and big group sizes. However, by retelling the challenges, the stories can be seen from another angle: the narrations are turned out to a positive experience. According to ET1, for example, it is necessary to make the students take responsibility themselves on how much they actually learn. Furthermore, ET4 said it is acceptable to forgive oneself as a teacher and say that sometimes a lesson has not been successful. For saving time, ET8 concentrates on empowering the students to feel more confident with their already existing skills, and, to save time, for example, make them do the listening comprehension exercises at home.

As for using and teaching English, the line between English as a second language (ESL, L2) and as a foreign language (EFL) is blurred. When in extensive use, even if only for some domains but especially when used affectively, something that a speaker has called a ‘foreign language’ might not be foreign anymore, but one of the speaker’s own languages. English has been, according to all the informants, nativised or appropriated in Finland. The teachers in my study talk about speaking “their own kind of English” (ET3, ET6, ET7) and, contrary to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis¹² not seeing a difference in their thinking whether they use English or Finnish. Therefore

¹² A theory drafted in the 1930s by the Americans Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf on language determining thought.

by the criterion of affectivity¹³ and referentiality¹⁴ in language, many of the teachers are, in fact, adult bilinguals, even if they might not say so themselves. None of the teachers interviewed in fact stated explicitly that they were adult bilinguals even if their accounts of how they use English in their free-time and at work provide clear examples of their relaxed attitude towards using and teaching it. Admittedly, the teachers' attitude towards English dovetails with Crystal's (1997, 56) approach to the role of English in the Kachru model on the outer (former colonies) and expanding circles of English: "there is much more use of English nowadays in some countries of the expanding circle where it's 'only' a foreign language (as in Scandinavia and in the Netherlands), than in some of the outer circle where it has traditionally held a special place". My informants use English in a variety of domains both at home in Finland, for example, when reading novels, cursing, dinner-conversations, among colleagues, and abroad with native speakers or as a lingua-franca.

In view of the bilingualism analysis this study aims at questioning the concept of a native speaker/child bilingual being automatically more competent in a given language: bilingualism is, surely, a dynamic process, and like ET2 and ET5 showed, the most dominating language in our linguistic repertoire can vary in different periods or situations of our lives.

As for the method, following the point of view of Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 16), in qualitative research the emphasis on the original research questions can slightly alter once the material is being gathered. I noticed that eventually it was of little interest to hear "how one became a language teacher"; the teachers started to explain what they studied, typically because they were interested in the humanities, languages in particular, and secondly, out of the appealing chance of moving to a particular city because of the studies (ET4). I might also hypothesise that the fact that all the nine teachers volunteered in this study might show that they, in particular, are especially motivated to develop their teacher identity and work. What all the teachers had in common was that

¹³ A language is used affectively when it is a tool for sorting out feelings, commonly joined with the functions of a mother-tongue.

¹⁴ Referential functions of a language serve purely for information gathering and organising.

they read novels in English and enjoy making holiday or work-related travels in abroad, not only in England.

This study also shows that the interviewed teachers aim both at actively keeping up their language skills/bilingualism and at renewing and developing their teaching methods. If we sorted out the interviews in terms of practical tips for English teachers' work, all nine innovative teachers have their own emphasis: co-operation with other English and subject teachers is promoted by ET1. ET2 recommends opening the eyes for all authentic material available outside school life; ET4 highlights the importance of being honest to oneself and also accepting the bad lessons too, with humour. ET5 has a global attitude towards teaching English, similarly to ET2, yet, she also encourages her students to learn other languages. ET6 thinks that it is important to make the students realise that even if English in Finland is ubiquitous, the students should not trick themselves into believing that there is no need to study it. ET7 recommends learning by doing and pays attention to giving carefully thought-out, interesting example phrases when teaching grammar. ET8 finds it important to ask for feedback after every course; even mid-course feedback sometimes helps a teacher understand what is better for the students. ET9 brings up the issue of being impartial when correcting essays: perhaps we could even ask the students write essays anonymously?

With small differences in the practice of teaching and in maintaining Finnish-English bilingualism, the stories of the English teachers in this study are quite similar. One has an intrinsic interest in languages and in studies, enrolls in a university whose location is convenient and that offers an interesting subject combination. During the first years of studies he or she has not yet the plan of becoming a language teacher. The undergraduate spends some time abroad where the languages are spoken. S/he returns to the studies, by one or two coincidences gets to do some odd teaching jobs, enrolls in the teacher training and pedagogical studies thinking that one might do some teaching for some time too. After graduation, the teacher drifts from one school to another doing short term teaching contracts, meets nice teaching rooms and less nice teaching ones, nice

students and less nice ones, thinks about other career chances, revels in the good moments of somebody learning something and being excited about it. S/he mourns over big group sizes and the haste. And when getting a permanent post, one settles content with the idea of having become an English teacher, and starts to look forward to the pension days, which are surprisingly active for language teachers. The pensioner continues work or studies, other moves to England, and still, at 70 feels that there is something to amend the English skills, at least in the pronunciation and small talk.

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Appendix

Questions shown to the interviewees:

- 1) Some basic information: m/f, age, work situation
- 2) Becoming a language teacher. When did you realise that you would become a language teacher and an English teacher? What has built your identity as a language and an English teacher? Can you name some incidents, encounters that have made you choose the profession?
- 3) At work. What do you think is essential in being a language teacher? What challenges in particular have you come up with as a language and as an English teacher? Encouraging/discouraging moments? Challenges of the profession for you personally and for your colleagues?
- 4) English-Finnish bilingualism and language teacher's role outside work. Tell about you and English outside work. What does the language mean to you and how much are you dealing with it outside the class room? How do you feel with the English language? Do you have any language user idols or preferred variants?
- 5) Future. What will happen to you as a language and an English teacher from now on? What type of changes do you possibly see in your professional identity? What will happen to you and English?