“Mä otan tuommoisen perinteisen combon; et otan tuon stuntin suoraan tänne skilliksi”: Mixing of English and Finnish in a role-playing game.
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1. Introduction

In this paper I intend to show the results of my research into the interactions that occur between Finnish and English in spoken Finnish, in the setting of playing a pen-and-paper roleplaying game. In role-playing games, the participants describe their characters, their abilities, actions and feelings, as well as the results of these actions. Thus, the setting is one where almost all interaction is done verbally. It is also a real situation, not a constructed one, giving a good example of everyday language use. I have also chosen the role-playing setting, as I believed that in it the phenomena will be more pronounced and easier to detect.

The focus of the study is on how the two languages intertwine, as it has been my experience that this occurs regularly. I am using the autoethnographic method, in order to try to dig deeper into the motivations and reasons for the language alteration, mixing and transformation. This spontaneous switching of languages is what interests me. I hope that my own experiences and feelings can shed more light into the use and selection of the varied language resources. Today's paradigm views language as a superdiverse, fluid construct, changing constantly from within and without, and views multilingualism as a common human condition (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Piirainen-Marsh, 2010; Valdés, 2016; Wardhaugh, 1992). I will also discuss the previous studies done on the use of code-mixing (e.g., Wardhaugh, 1992; Auer, 1998) and borrowing (Haugen, 1950; Hoffer, 2002; Poplack, 1998), and some of the studies relating to gaming and language interaction (Piirinen-Marsh, 2010; Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio, 2007; Suominen, 2014), in order to have a framework and a reference point for my own analysis of the findings, viewed through the lens of autoethnography (Anderson, 2006; Muncey 2010).

The participants themselves are native Finnish speakers and the games are played in Finnish, but it has been my experience that there is frequent mixing of English and Finnish. I have been an active role-player for over fifteen years and have personally witnessed this phenomenon frequently. I have also witnessed similar interactions between the two languages in everyday conversations, as well, especially between Finnish speakers who are fluent in English.
As a role-player myself, I intend to use the autoethnographic method, especially the guidelines given by Anderson (2006), to study this phenomenon, in order to gain deeper understanding in the reasons and motives of the participants. Previous studies (e.g., Wardhaugh 1992; Piirainen-Marsh 2010) have shown that the code-mixing often occurs subconsciously, but I wanted to see if I could use my own experiences as a guide on how and why this is so prevalent in the role-playing genre.

Section 2 of this thesis will discuss the aforementioned theoretical background and previous studies on the subject. Section 3 is focused on the research methods; autoethnography, how the study was conducted and how the findings will be analyzed. The findings will be detailed and discussed in Section 4, with Section 5 analyzing the research, it’s goals and the results gained. Section 6 will conclude the study, giving perspective to the findings and ideas for further studies.
2. Theoretical framework

This section will discuss the theories behind the key aspects of the study: multilingualism (Piirainen-Marsh, 2010; Valdés, 2016; Wardhaugh, 1992) and superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Piirainen-Marsh, 2010) and explain how code-mixing (Auer, 1998; Wardhaugh, 1992) and borrowing are used to transform the languages and transcend the barriers between them. In the current paradigm (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) language is ever-changing and fluid and the focus of my study is to look at how English and Finnish intertwine in spoken language.

2.1. Multilingualism

Multilingualism is, in its simplest form, the ability to use of two or more languages. However, previously multilingualism was seen more as an ability, where the two or more languages would be acquired more or less in an early age, giving the person several native languages. Today, the paradigm has shifted to include learned languages, and simply stating that the person can use the language in some way, not necessarily be fluent in it. Valdés (2016) further explains this shift:

“Some researchers have favored a narrow definition of bilingualism and argued that only those individuals who are very close to two monolinguals in one should be considered bilingual. More recently, however, researchers who study bilingual and multilingual communities around the world have argued for a broad definition that views bilingualism as a common human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function, at some level, in more than one language”.

(Valdés, 2016, p.1)

In addition, Wardhaugh (1992) also states that, “in many parts of the world an ability to speak more than one language is not at all remarkable” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.98), giving credence to the wider definition of a multilingual. He goes on to say that a purely monolingual individual would be seen in many societies as lacking an important skill, that of being able to interact with speakers of other languages in the same community. He also says that “these various languages are usually acquired naturally and unselfconsciously and the shifts from one to another are made without hesitation” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.98). However, Wardhaugh’s view of multilingualism does seem
to be narrower and more traditional than that of Valdes’, focusing on individuals who have gained the linguistic skills in the second language much the same way as people learn their native language, i.e. having two or more native languages.

Wardhaugh also comments that the multilingual situation can produce effects on the languages concerned. In case of immigrants, it can lead to loss of language, but he continues that “sometimes it [multilingualism] leads to diffusion; that is, certain features apparently spread from one language to the other” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.102). In my study, I wish to see if this same phenomenon, the spread of linguistic features, happens between a native and non-native language as well, and if so, to which extent.

I will discard the traditional view of studying only native multilingual speakers, and will instead adopt Valdes’ (2016) view of bilingualism as a common human condition. This means that the individuals can be classified in a continuum of a sort, which separates individuals by their level of proficiency in the second language. One individual could be highly proficient in both languages, whilst someone else might be a proficient speaker, but lacking in written skills. Valdés continues to say that “according to this perspective, one admits into the company of bilingual individuals who can, to whatever degree, comprehend or produce written or spoken utterances in more than one language” (2016, p.1.).

The above perspective will also be my basis for the study, since the studied group has individuals who are all native speakers of Finnish and have different levels of English proficiency. As mentioned, much of the previous research has concentrated on the narrower definition of multilingualism, with the paradigm shift being quite recent (Valdés, 2016). I’m interested to discover if English, as a learned but quite omnipresent language, will have similar effects to the native speakers of Finnish.

Bilingual or multilingual spoken interaction has been studied before in gaming. Most of the studies have been done in relation to video games. However, the results of these studies are relevant to my study as well, since the interactions and the mixing of the languages are quite similar. A study
by Piirainen-Marsh (2010), investigated how the players used bilingual language resources in a collaborative environment, a cooperative video game, organizing their action and participation. Even though the setting and the method (conversation analysis) used in this study were different from mine and the Finnish players mainly spoke Finnish to each other, there were also some striking similarities in the findings as well. Piirainen-Marsh (2010) gives the following example on the use of the English language resources:

While the players’ turns are mainly constructed in Finnish, they recurrently deploy language resources which are made available by the game locally or through its ongoing relevance as the field of activity. Terms adopted from the game index objects, events or choices available in the local context.

[...]
The players’ linguistic choices are interwoven with the processes through which they make sense of and manage actions in game-play.

(Piirainen-Marsh, 2010, p.3018)

The linguistic choices, which themselves are often subconscious (Wardaugh, 1992), are determined very quickly and are not separate from the situation. In fact, these choices are intertwined with the action. The rapid switch and alteration of the languages can be seen in my study as well. Closely related to the view of common, almost ever-present, multilingualism is the notion of superdiversity.

2.2. Superdiversity of language

There has been a paradigm shift in the recent decades of language study. Earlier, language was seen as something with very clear boundaries, but today the strict borders between languages are fading away with the idea of superdiversity. As Blommaert & Rampton explain:

Over a period of several decades – and often emerging in response to issues predating superdiversity – there has been ongoing revision of fundamental ideas (a) about languages, (b) about language groups and speakers, and (c) about communication. Rather than working with homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication

(Blommaert & Rampton, 2011. p.3)
Globalization and new communication technologies have altered the social, cultural and linguistic aspects of societies all over the world. Superdiversity as a term has been originally coined by sociologist Steven Vertovec in 2007, in regard to the significantly grown levels of population diversity in Britain. Vertovec argues that superdiversity in Britain is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade (Vertovec, 2007, pp. 1024-1054). He is most concerned about the challenges superdiversity can create, be it in research, policy making or integration of the scattered communities. However, we can apply superdiversity in linguistic study as well. This enables us to view the language as something very dynamic, changing rapidly and adapting to new situations. In the case of this study, it is evident that the switch from one language to another is very rapid, almost instantaneous and usually done by instinct, rather than design.

In the context of language, one way to look at superdiversity is to view it as the underlying and ever-present change in the language. In the age of globalization, the change and the diversity of communication is greater than ever before. As Blommaert & Rampton (2011) stated, mobility and mixing should be the starting assumptions, when we look at a language. This is, of course, very closely linked to borrowing, code-mixing and the new idea of multilingualism; that is, the idea that nearly everyone is a multilingual. In fact, multilingualism should be seen as “a common human condition” as stated by Valdés (2016) previously. Blommaert & Rampton go even as far as to state that the whole concept and idea of a distinct language might have become obsolete:

There is now a substantial body of work on ideologies of language that denaturalizes the idea that there are distinct languages, and that a proper language is bounded, pure and composed of structured sounds, grammar and vocabulary designed for referring to things. (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, pp.3-4).

Connected to superdiversity and the idea of constant change and fading borderlines between languages is the term heteroglossia. Heteroglossia, the idea that a single language has different, co-existing varieties within in, was first used by Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin in 1934. He thought that language always has different varieties and registers, mainly achieved by extralinguistic properties, such as perspective, evaluation, and ideological positioning. In his view,
language was bound to the context in which it exists.

When viewed together with superdiversity, it can be said that a single language has almost an infinite number of different varieties co-existing within it, not only using different words but also having different extralinguistic properties. As languages’ natural state is not to remain rigid, but to change and evolve, it is easy to see that the languages are constantly changing, not just due to outside influence, but also from within.

In order to study the interaction between languages, we must have some way of determining where the interaction occurs. Language can also be seen as a code, which according to Wardhaugh (1992), is a useful choice due to its neutrality. In contrast to terms like dialect, language or style, code can be used as a neutral term to describe any kind of a system that is used for communication. Most people have several codes they can use, be they different languages, registers or anything in between. He goes on to say that “people are nearly always faced with choosing an appropriate code when they speak” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.89). This means that the use of a particular code is always a choice and that “moreover, you can and will shift, as the occasion rises, from one code to another” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.89). From this phenomenon come the terms of code choice, code-switching and code-mixing. In this study, I am interested to examine where and when these phenomena will occur. To find out if there is a link between certain actions in the game and the switching of the code, for example.

2.3. Code-mixing

Code-mixing and code-switching, is very common all over the world. Often, as I have done, the terms are used interchangeably, but code-switching could be seen as suggesting a more complete change, whereas code-mixing would suggest a more hybrid form. Wardhaugh (1992) states that “most speakers command several varieties of any language they speak, and bilingualism, even multilingualism, is the norm for many people throughout the world” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.103). However, even though code-mixing occurs regularly, the term itself is very hard to define.
The line between code-mixing and borrowing is especially translucent. According to Nilep:

[A] search of the Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts database in 2005 shows more than 1,800 articles on the subject published in virtually every branch of linguistics. However, despite this ubiquity – or perhaps in part because of it – scholars do not seem to share a definition of the term”

(Nilep, 2006, p.1)

According to Nilep (2006), one of the most influential researchers in the field of code-switching has been John J. Gumperz. In his 1972 study of Norwegian dialects with Jan-Petter Blom, they categorized code-switching as either situational or metaphorical. Situational code-switching was considered to occur “wherein a change in linguistic form represents a changed social setting” (Nilep, 2006, p.8). He continues that “the definition of metaphorical switching relies on the use of two language varieties within a single social setting. Blom and Gumperz describe interactions between clerks and residents in the community administration office wherein greetings take place in the local dialect, but business is transacted in the standard” (Nilep, 2006, p.8).

The above example concerns code-switching between two dialects, but the same effects take place between languages as well. Auer (1998) explains that code-switching has mostly been studied either as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, relating for example to language choice in positions of power or inequality, or as a grammatical phenomenon, addressing for example syntactic constraints. He goes on to say:

[O]n the one hand, macro-sociolinguistic aspects of the speech situation never determine completely language choice, including code-switching and the absence of it. Often, and in many ways, the verbal interaction of bilingual speakers is open to local processes of language negotiation and code selection.

[...] This means that neither the sociolinguistic approach (sensu stricto) nor the grammatical approach explores the whole range of observed regularities in bilingual speech.

(Auer, 1998)

Indeed, in many cases, code-switching does not serve to increase one’s social status, but is instead
more of a convenience or a habit. Hoffer (2002) describes code-switching or rather code-mixing in an American Finnish context in his article:

In bilingual situations there may be frequent codeswitching of words, pronunciation, or so on, but each element is from one or the other language. In American Finnish, "mennin norrtiin muuseja huntaamaan" (I went north to hunt moose), all but the first word is from English but the grammar is all Finnish.

(Hoffer, 2002, p.10)

Code-mixing (between languages or registers) can be, and often is, used to belong to a certain group (Auer, 1998; Lehtonen, 2015; Wardhaugh, 1992). Describing Puerto Rican communities in New York, Wardhaugh states that, “conversational code-mixing is often used by bilinguals, primarily as a solidarity marker” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p.108). Lehtonen (2015), has somewhat similar results in language use and identity. She has, for example, studied how Finnish teenyboppers speak and act and found out that they use:

[…] lexical resources daa, ihku (ihq) ja oumaigaad (oh my god) ~ ooämgee (omg). All of these features get multiple mentions in the interviews.

(Lehtonen, 2015, p.134, translated from Finnish)

According to Wardhaugh (1992), code-switching is often subconscious, and the speakers might not even be aware that they have switched the code, being unable to recall which code they used for which topic. In the view of sociolinguistics, code-switching is often also a mark of solidarity between participants. One language is used inside the group and another for more formal and out-group relations. Code-switching can also be conversational, where two languages are deliberately mixed without an associated topic change. (Wardhaugh, 1992).

Suominen (2014) has studied code-switching in role-playing games, in a somewhat similar way to how this study has been conducted. He states that the line between code-switching and borrowing is difficult to make, especially when it concerned single words or terms, which were a common element in his study. Regarding these, he continues to say that:

However, this microlevel code-switch can be considered to be code-switch, instead of
borrowing, as the operative environment is clearly bilingual, and the player groups use the languages in a speech situation without a clear boundary between the primary and secondary language. The inflection is, almost without an exception, done as per the paradigm of the primary language (in this case Finnish), but the words themselves are not really modified from their original form, unless they are recurring often in the speech.

(Suominen, 2014, p.27, translated from Finnish)

Another point that Suominen (2014) makes is that the participants will utilize the language resources on the character sheets as well. These list the abilities of the player characters and are usually in English as per the parent game. Suominen found that “[t]he terms in the character sheets are directly transferred into the conversation” (Suominen, 2014, p.30, translated from Finnish), it is interesting to see if similar phenomenon will occur in this study as well.

In the context of my study, I would theorize that the code-switching occurred more as a type of metaphorical code-switching; where Finnish is the primary language used and the language of the role-playing game, English, is the second “language variety”. The function of the code-switching could perhaps be likened to the Blom’s and Gumperz’s example of using local language (Finnish) and the formal variety (English), as it has been my experience that especially the terminology and various concepts described in role-playing games seem to be the most commonly code-switched elements, as Suominen (2014 mentions as well. Much of the code-switching done in my study could perhaps better be described as code-mixing, in a similar vein to Hoffer’s above example of American Finnish, wherein the English terminology and vocabulary was adapted to the Finnish grammatical structure.

2.4. Borrowing

According to Hoffer (2002) borrowing can be defined as “the process of importing linguistic items from one linguistic system into another, a process that occurs any time two cultures are in contact over a period of time” (Hoffer, 2002, p.1). In the widest sense, all words that have become a part of a language, due to cultural contact, can be considered to be loanwords gained through the process of borrowing, although the further back in time they were borrowed, the more they have
become an actual part of the language itself.

Borrowing has been studied quite extensively, since studies related to borrowing have been done from as early as the 18th century. However, in 1950, Einar Haugen provided the framework for the modern study of borrowing in his article “The analysis of linguistic borrowing”. Hoffer cites Haugen’s work to be “the major reference point for the field of borrowing” (Hoffer, 2002, p.5). Haugen attempted to “define more precisely the terminology used in linguistic analysis of borrowing, and to set up certain hypotheses concerning the process of borrowing” (Haugen, 1950, p.210). He goes on to explain that the most basic definition for borrowing is “the attempted reproduction in one language of patterns previously found in another” (Haugen, 1950, p.212).

Haugen categorized the different types of borrowing according to the original pattern or model of the word. An import is an item similar to the model; a substitution is an inadequate version of the original, which the speakers of the original language would not recognize, altered in some way. The term hybrid can be used, when only part of the phonemic shape has been imported. Loanword is the least precise term as it included almost all other terms. There is also loan translation or calque, where the word has been literally translated, as well as semantic loan, where meaning has been imported for an existing word. (Hoffer, 2002, p.5)

Hoffer explains that these definitions may also be “restated as a division of loans by the extent of the morphemic substitution: none, partial, or total.” He goes on to state that “loanwords show morphemic importation without substitution; loanblends show morphemic substitution as well as importation; loanshifts show morphemic substitution without importation” (Hoffer, 2002, p.5.)

According to Haugen, “the simplest and most common form of substitution is that which takes place when a native sound sequence is used to imitate a foreign one” (Haugen, 1950, p.215). This same effect can be seen as a ‘foreign accent’ by a native speaker and it can also be considered to be a form of code-switching or code-mixing. However, it would seem that the more complete the substitution, the nearer the utterance could be considered to be borrowing rather than code-switching.
The definition between the two is by no means an easy one. Hoffer explains that since 1950 many attempts have been made to distinguish between borrowing, transfer, interference, code-switching, code-mixing, and other forms of linguistic phenomenon by some form of diagnostic criteria. He goes on to cite two views on the matter, by Scotton and Poplack. Hoffer explains that in Scotton’s view, the way to distinguish between code-switching and borrowing uses the social significance of the item. “If the nonnative item carries social significance, it is a codeswitch” (Hoffer, 2002, p.10).

On the other hand, Hoffer says that “Poplack (1988, p.220) seems to suggest that the use of a borrowed item is codeswitching until enough speakers use it and it is accepted by native speakers into the dictionary. A more precise delimitation seems difficult at this point in the study of borrowing and codeswitching” (Hoffer 2002, p.10).

As evident from the above, a precise separation between code-switching and borrowing is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Spoken language is also subject to constant change, both over time and distance. However, as Scotton and Poplack suggest, there does seem to be some kind of a hazy border between the two terms.

Naturally, since there is no strict definition when some utterance changes from code-switching to borrowing, the results of the study will be somewhat subjective, even when using Poplack’s (1998) suggestion of social significance as a guide. That which is socially (in)significant in my mind, might not be so in another’s. Also, worth remembering is that the code used, be it Finnish, English or a mixture of the two, is, as discussed in the previous chapter, always a choice by the speaker. As a researcher, I can, with any certainty, only reflect on my own choices of code, not on those of the other participants.
3. Research approach

In this chapter I will discuss my chosen research method, autoethnography, as well as providing details of the data collection. I will also discuss the role-playing games in general and describe the setting of the study and the participants of it; how the study was conducted and how the participants were chosen. In addition, I will provide details of the transcription process of the raw data collected as well as give some examples on how and why my original transcription differs slightly from the examples found in chapter four.

3.1. Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research method, where the researcher is also a subject of the study. As Muncey (2010) explains, “Autoethnography is a research approach that privileges the individual” (Muncey, 2010, p.2). She goes on to say that “[autoethnography] attempts to portray an individual experience in a way that evokes the imagination of the reader, viewer or listener” (Muncey, 2010, p.2). In essence, the method of autoethnography uses the experiences of the researcher to gain understanding and insight into the subject of the study.

The roots of autoethnography are in the fields of anthropology and social sciences. Anderson briefly goes through this history in his article ‘Analytic Autoethnography’ (2006):

“In the 1960s and 1970s, there were some notable examples of social scientists experimenting more explicitly with self-observation and analysis. Anthropologist Anthony Wallace's (1965) self-observational study of the cognitive “mazeway” he constructed and used for driving to work is one example. In sociology, David Sudnow's Ways of the Hand (1978), in which he describes in minute detail the processes and stages of skill acquisition that he experienced as he learned to play improvisational piano jazz, represents a virtuoso example of phenomenological research based in self-observation.

(Anderson, 2006, p.376)

However, Anderson (2006) sees both examples as being very subjective and lacking any greater ethnographic focus. He instead attributes the creation of autoethnography as a fully fleshed
Hayano argued that as anthropologists moved out of the colonial era of ethnography, they would come more and more to study the social worlds and subcultures of which they were a part. In contrast to the detached outsider characteristic of colonial anthropologists, contemporary anthropologists would frequently be full members of the cultures they studied.

(Anderson, 2016, p.376)

Hayano’s autoethnographic researchers would then be members of the group or culture studied, enabling them to look at the culture from within, as opposed to the earlier outside-in view of traditional ethnographic researchers, and thus giving greater insights into the phenomena studied. This has been the case in my study as well, being a full member of the group will hopefully enable me to analyze and understand the motivations behind the mixing of English and Finnish better than an outside observer would.

3.1.1. Analytical autoethnography

In Anderson’s view, the best way to conduct autoethnographic research is thought analytical autoethnography, an opposite of evocative autoethnography. Anderson (2006), quotes Ellis and Bochner (2000, p.744), who explain that in evocative autoethnography, “the mode of storytelling is akin to the novel or biography and thus fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature ... the narrative text refuses to abstract and explain” (Anderson, 2006, p.377).

Anderson (2006) proposes five key elements that make up analytical autoethnography. They are: (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the
researcher’s self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson 2006, p.378).

He continues to say that “[t]he first and most obvious feature of autoethnography is that the researcher is a complete member in the social world under study” (Anderson, 2006 p.379). This notion holds true for my study, as I am also a member of the role-playing group that I am studying. We have been playing together for several months and I have known most of the people for many years.

Describing complete member researcher (CRM), Anderson (2006) states that:

*Patricia and Peter Adler (1987, pp.67-84) make a useful distinction between two types [of CMRs]: “opportunistic” and “convert” CMRs. Opportunistic CMRs (by far the more common) may be born into a group, thrown into a group by chance circumstance (e.g., illness), or have acquired intimate familiarity through occupational, recreational, or lifestyle participation. Convert CMRs, on the other hand, begin with a purely data-oriented research interest in the setting but become converted to complete immersion and membership during the course of the research.*

(Anderson, 2006, p.379)

Personally, I fit into the first group of opportunistic member researchers, since as mentioned above, I have been a member of the group for quite long. I have also played role-playing games over fifteen years, so I am very familiar with the gaming concepts and vocabulary as well.

Anderson (2006) points out that “[a]t a deeper level, reflexivity involves an awareness of reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants” (Anderson, 2006, p.382). That is, the ethnographer must be aware that, he or she also influences the studied group and the setting, and is also being influenced by them. Thus, by introspection, the researcher can better understand both themselves and the other participants.

In autoethnography, this is even more important, since as Anderson (2006, p.382) explains,
Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003) have observed that:

“[Auto]ethnographers-as-authors frame their accounts with personal reflexive views of the self. Their ethnographic data are situated within their personal experience and sense making. They themselves form part of the representational processes in which they are engaging and are part of the story they are telling”.  

(Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003, p.62)

Analytic reflexivity should be understood not only as the relationship between the researcher and the data, but in a broader view, where the researcher also forms a part of the studied group. And even though reflexivity is important in all aspects of ethnography, it is even more so in autoethnography, “by virtue of the ethnographer’s unique positioning as a member of the group under study” (Anderson 2006, p.383). Anderson goes on to explain that as a CMR, the researcher, unlike a more detached observer, has also greater stake in the belief, values and actions of the other members of the group. They may indeed affect and even transform the researchers own beliefs and actions. (Anderson 2006, p.383).

The third key element Anderson (2006) describes is the narrative visibility of the researcher’s self. As the autoethnographer is both a member of the studied social world and a researcher, Anderson claims that autoethnography also “demands enhanced textual visibility of the researcher’s self. Such visibility demonstrates the researcher’s personal engagement in the social world under study” (Anderson 2006, p.384). The idea is that autoethnographers should gain insights into the phenomena studied through discussing their own experiences and thought processes. It is however important not to get self-absorbed. Although it is possible to gain greater insight by evoking the researcher’s personal feelings and thoughts, the researcher is not the subject of the study.

As Anderson explains, it is the dialogue with informants beyond self, which seeks to avoid the aforementioned pitfall of self-absorption. Analytic autoethnography shouldn’t generalize from the perspective of a single participant. Analytic autoethnography should try reach beyond that perspective. Here, it is somewhat opposite to evocative autoethnography, where the narrative fidelity stems solely from the researchers own experiences (Anderson 2006, pp.385-386).
The final key element in Anderson’s list is the commitment to theoretical analysis. Relating to this key element, Anderson (2006) comments that:

“The purpose of analytic ethnography is not simply to document personal experience, to provide an “insider's perspective,” or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader. Rather, the defining characteristic of analytic social science is to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves”.

(Anderson 2006, pp.386-387)

That is to say, the data must be the key, but autoethnography should enable the researcher to gain greater understanding than just simply analyzing the data could yield. However, the analytical autoethnographers should not be content in just their own perspective, but should strive to generalize as well and to provide a greater theory of the phenomenon studied.

3.1.2. Evocative autoethnography

Unlike Anderson, Tessa Muncey (2010) seems to prefer what Anderson called evocative autoethnography. Evocative autoethnography is firmly grounded in the researcher’s own experience and perspective. Muncey explains how she thinks autoethnography has evolved, by stating that:

I kept returning to the notion that it somehow emerges out of the iterative process of doing research, while engaging in the process of living a life. I rarely come across people who set out to do autoethnography but I do rather meet many people who resort to it as a means of getting across intangible and complex feelings and experiences that somehow can't be told in conventional ways.

(Muncey, 2010, pp.2-3)

I share the feeling that there is something intangible and complex in that phenomenon, which makes it quite hard to explain or separate it by more conventional research methods. For myself, the whole subject of my study came to me as I noticed myself mixing English terminology and
utterances into my Finnish, whilst conversing with my Finnish friends. I wanted to learn more about the phenomenon of English affecting my native language. In essence, by using autoethnography, I hope I can answer not just to “how” or “when” or “in what way”, but also to the “why”.

I was also considering phenomenography as a possible tool for analysis, but I felt that even by thoroughly interviewing the subjects of the study, it would be very hard to find out the motivations and individual feelings for the usage of multilingual speech from someone else’s perspective. Especially since much of the second language use is done subconsciously. As Muncey explains, “[i]n order to take the leap into creating an autoethnography one has first to recognize that there is no distinction between doing research and living a life” (2010, p.3). She goes on to say that:

The person who suffers from a long-term condition cannot be separated from the researcher investigating it, who has him/herself experience of the condition. Just as a counsellor is both a therapist and a client, the autoethnographer is both the researcher and the researched.

(Muncey 2010, p.3)

The evocative autoethnography is the more common variety, as Muncey states that “[t]he current discourse of autoethnography refers almost exclusively to evocative autoethnography” (2010, p.36). Evocative autoethnography is usually a blend of science, art and autobiography. Muncey’s own introduction to autoethnography was by Carolyn Ellis in 1999. Muncey (2010, p35) explains that she [Ellis] was aiming to “extend ethnography to include the heart, the autobiographical and the artistic text” (Ellis, 1999, p. 669).

As my study is not a social study as such, and focuses on the language mixing and change instead of evoking a feeling of culture or a group, I think that a more analytical perspective would serve me well. Therefore, I will conduct my study using the five key elements of analytical autoethnography, as detailed above. I think that by using analytical autoethnography I can gain
valuable insight into the data, whilst still remaining as objective as possible.
3.2. Role-playing games

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a role-playing game as “a game in which players take on the roles of imaginary characters who engage in adventures, typically in a particular fantasy setting overseen by a referee” (oed.com). Even though the OED specifically mentions the fantasy setting, this is not always the case. In fact, a role-playing game’s genre and setting can be anything, both in space and time, from realistic depiction of the Stone Age to imaginary fantasy set in the far reaches of the future. The limit on the scope and style of the game is imagination.

The referee mentioned, often called a Game Master, or GM for short, is the person who has designed the framework (plot, setting etc.) of the game being played. Usually, the GM plays all the other characters and creatures except the player characters that appear in the game as well as being the one to give background information and describing the setting and the action. Therefore, the GM is almost always the one who speaks the most (at least in-game, i.e. when playing) in any given session, with the other players mostly describing the actions of only their own character.

Role-playing games are usually governed by a set of rules, ranging from very simple ones to extremely complex ones. The rules are commonly provided in a rule book or books, with the vast majority of them written in English. Finnish role-playing games do exist, and are for the most part written in Finnish. There have also been a few translations into Finnish, most notably in the 1980s’-90’s, but also today, with games such as Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Cyberpunk, Twilight 2000 and HeroQuest. Therefore, high proficiency in English is by no means necessary for role-playing. I have actually started role-playing myself with the Finnish version of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. However, in my experience, the sheer volume of games in English does mean that the players are mostly quite proficient in English.

There are two main types of role-playing games; pen-and-paper and live action. In addition, computer role-playing games could constitute a third group. Pen-and-paper role-playing games are played just like that, with pen and paper. They sometimes use maps, grids or other extra equipment, but for the most part they only require the character sheets, pencils and dice. Pen-
and-paper games usually have set rules and commonly use different dice to determine whether an action is successful or not. Live action role-playing, or LARP, is much more freeform, with the players acting in character the whole time. LARPs generally take a day or two to play and are usually played in secluded areas to increase immersion.

The main reason I chose pen-and-paper role-playing game as the setting for my study is because in a pen-and-paper role-playing game, someone is always talking. The entire game is based on imagination and discussion. Through describing the actions of the characters in the game, the game and its narrative is both created and reshaped. This discussion provides plenty of opportunity to study how language is used in the game, and what, if any, effects English has on the spoken Finnish.

The other reason for choosing the setting was that I can conduct the study with people who are already familiar with each other. In essence, role-playing is much more than a game; it is also a social activity, so the time spent “off-game”, outside the game’s narrative, will also benefit my research and will hopefully provide fruitful data. I am sure that recording a live action game would also serve the purposes of my study. However, I am much more familiar with the pen-and-paper games, and they are also much easier to record, as all the “action” is around one table. The setting also lent itself well to the autoethnographic method that I am employing in my study. Being familiar with the setting and the participants will hopefully set everyone at ease, making the results as realistic as possible.
3.3. Data collection

The data was collected by audio- and videotaping a full gaming session, where the participants first transferred their characters from *Fate Core* to *HeroQuest* and then proceeded to play *HeroQuest*. As envisioned in the planning stage, this provided me with a wealth of material. Commonly, role-playing sessions are three to six hours in length. Our recorded session lasted for just over four hours, the exact duration of the recording being 4 hours, 11 minutes and 37 seconds. There are some gaps in both the audio and video recordings due to technical issues, but when used in conjunction, I was able to record the session in its entirety. I have done my best to synchronize the tapes’ timecodes in the transcription, however, there might be slight impreciseness due to human error.

Our group had six people in total, myself included, so I had hoped that the study would have six participants as well. However, one group member had to cancel his participation to the recorded session due to illness, so in actuality, the study only includes five participants. This is still within the usual limits for a role-playing game, which commonly have between four and seven participants. All of the participants are native Finnish speakers, who have been playing role-playing games for years. All of the participants know each other and at the minimum have played a few sessions together. Others have been friends for many years and have also played several campaigns (a string of several, interconnected, gaming sessions) together.

I have chosen to also videotape the sessions, because even though I am mainly focused on the use of spoken language and not so much on things like non-verbal cues for example, it does make identifying the speakers easier. Our gaming session had five participants, by using the audio tape only, it was sometimes difficult to discern between speakers, especially when several people are speaking at once. Therefore, the video recording was very useful. It also gave me spatial reference: seeing how the participants acted when they were using English words or phrases, whether they were reading from the manual, explaining the rules, looking at the character sheets or simply getting excited about something. It also enables me to better understand the motives and feelings.
of the speaker, as I can see the non-verbal actions, such as frowning or smiling, as well. This reference helped immensely when doing the analysis of the data, even though I had originally thought to largely ignore other than verbal details, the actions associated with the code-mixing gave meaning to it in many cases. Also, due to technical issues, i.e. the tape recorder not functioning properly at first, the video recording proved invaluable.

Ideally, I would have used more than one camera, due to the gaming usually taking place around a large table. However, I managed to place the camera in such a way, that even with the single camera I was able to identify all of the speakers. As planned, I used the audio recording as my main source of information, due to better audio quality, with the video recording providing identification, context and clarification.

3.4. Participants and setting

The physical setting for the game was the home of one of the participants. It was our group’s usual location for gaming, so everybody was already familiar with the surroundings. In my experience, home is also the setting that is by far the most common in paper-and pen role-playing, as the gaming itself really only requires a table and some chairs. The home setting also makes for a relaxed and informal atmosphere, in my opinion, and I had hoped that it would make the participants feel at ease and forget about the cameras, in order to get as authentic results as possible. The participants sat around a single table, making the audio and video recording quite simple.

As mentioned above, I had five participants in this study, all male, between 25-33 years of age. I am one of the participants myself. All of the participants have been playing role-playing games for many years, some from their teens. The participants have at least adequate English skills, with the majority having a high level of proficiency in the language. All participants have read and signed the forms of consent (both in Finnish and in English) prior to the recording session. To conceal their identities, I have used pseudonyms instead of their real names. The pseudonyms are Joonas,
Before doing the study, I had estimated that the raw audio and video data collected would be around four hours long. This estimate was surprisingly correct, as the exact duration of the recording was 4 hours, 11 minutes and 37 seconds. As per my original plan, I have transcribed the data only partly, concentrating on parts where the participants utilize English or where mixing between English and Finnish. Transcribing the data completely serves no purpose for this study, as I am focusing on how English is utilized and mixed into Finnish in predominantly Finnish conversations, not on the Finnish used. However, for the most part, I have included quite a lot of the Finnish speech as well, to provide context and detail to the English parts or the matter being discussed.

Furthermore, I am mostly interested in the actual speech and the mixing of the two languages, as opposed to other details such as pauses or turn-taking. Therefore, I have transcribed the data only in its verbal, spoken form. When there are indications that the reason English is used instead of Finnish relates to some non-verbal cues, I have naturally taken note of these. But for the main part, the transcription is only of the verbal portions of the data, without sighs, pauses or other similar phenomena.

I used a pronunciation key in my original transcription, *e.p.* being English pronunciation and *f.p.* being Finnish pronunciation. I have also marked *f.g.* if the phrase follows the Finnish grammatical rules, for example having Finnish suffixes in an otherwise English word. This enabled me to remember the way the English was used, without constantly checking the tapes. However, I have mostly omitted this pronunciation key from the examples, and rather explained the pronunciation and other features in the text.

When English is used in the conversations, on its own or mixed with Finnish, I have used **bold** text in the examples to set it apart from the regular Finnish speech. I have also added text in
parentheses and in italic font, in some examples, to emphasize specific uses of English or to clarify the situation. Time code is marked as the actual total time elapsed, not as the timecode on the individual recordings. This is to clarify when the example took place, as the audio and video timecodes differ. Aside from clearing the timecode and omitting the pronunciation code from the examples, the changes are mostly cosmetic, making the examples clearer and easier to follow. In addition, I have translated the examples in this thesis to English. The English translation is always under the original speech. Examples are also marked by numbers in parentheses, in the order that they appear on this paper.

Underneath are two examples, (1) is taken directly from my original transcription, (2) is the edited and translated version, similar to which I will be using in the examples:

(1)

->08:44 (26:27)
Mi: Pittääkö niitä olla sitten kolme?
S: Joo. Flaw:ta (e.p. + f.g. ‘flaw’ -> floata) kolme. Abilityjä (f.p.) tulee yhteensä...äää.. (jää miettimään).
<-08:53 (26:36)

(2)

Mikko: Pittääkö niitä olla sitten kolme?
Seppo: Joo. Flaw:ta kolme. Abilityjä tulee yhteensä...äää... (pauses to think)

Mikko: Should there be three of them?
Seppo: Yes. Three flaws. Abilities will be a total of...umm... (pauses to think)

(26:27-26:36)

In the above examples, Seppo is using the English terminology interspersed into the Finnish speech. He is talking about flaws and abilities, which are some of the traits the characters have in the HeroQuest role-playing game. In the original transcription version, we can see that he is
pronouncing flaw correctly, but adding a Finnish suffix to it, marked as flaw:ta in the transcription. In ability, a suffix is also added, but here the whole word is (mis)pronounced as if it was a Finnish word, therefore, it is marked as abilityjä. I used these types of markings, instead of marking the pronunciation code directly to the examples, as the main focus is on the intertwining of the two languages as a whole, not in specific phonemic actions.
4. Findings

This chapter will detail the ways in which Finnish and English were used together and will also discuss how and why English was used in place of Finnish. The study showed that the languages intertwine in multiple ways. The use of English was prevalent throughout the data and it was used in a variety of situations. I will discuss these findings in relation to my own experiences and feelings, as per the autoethnographic method. In this study I’m a complete member researcher (Anderson, 2006) as I have been an active role-player for over fifteen years and have also played one previous campaign with the same group. Thus, I will attempt to narrate my own experiences, my reasons for using English, whilst still remaining as objective as possible, trying to decipher the motives of the other participants as well.

I anticipated, based on my previous experiences as a role-player, that even though the clear majority of the speech would be in Finnish, code-mixing and borrowing would occur regularly and possibly even frequently. However, this was even more frequent than I had thought, with English words, phrases and grammatical structures mixing into English steadily throughout the conversations. There were rarely more than few minutes of “purely” Finnish interaction before English was used or mixed, in one form of another, into it. All participants used both languages, but there was naturally an individual variance on the amount of language mixing done. Seppo was the Game Master for this campaign, and was the most familiar with the rules, I believe that that is one of the reasons he can be found speaking in most of the examples.

English was used in a multitude of ways inside the Finnish speech, from exclamations to terminology to quotes. The different forms of speech can therefore be classified by their usage, i.e. what task is the English used for in the speech. The types of usage included the game’s terminology, other terminology, exclamations, names, quotes, phrases, reading or translating from text and joking or giving references.
4.1. English terminology

The most common form of usage was, quite unsurprisingly, the use of the English gaming terms from the rules of the role-playing game. As role-playing games that have been translated into Finnish are in the minority, all of the participants had played using English rules before. Different games use different rules and different terminology; however, they also share lots of similarities. Therefore, the players were already acquainted with most of the terminology from their earlier experiences. Below is an example on the common use of English terminology:

(3)

*Mikko*: Mulla ois nyt sellainen iso kysymys tähän hahmon siirtoon. Se on se, että mitä tehdään näillä ylimääräisillä *fate points*? (‘fate points’)?

*Seppo*: No montakos ylimääräistä sulla niitä on?

*Mikko*: Neljä.

*Seppo*: Niin, eli varmaan yksi ylimääräinen...

*Matias*: Mut mut, eikös ne mee niihin *hero points* suoraan?

*Seppo*: No niin. Eli tässä on myös niitä *hero points* tässä pelissä.

*Joonas*: Miten tuota, tuleeko näihin *levels* näihin *abilities* vielä vai?

*Seppo*: Joo, mutta ajattelin että keskitytään eka tähän.

*Mikko*: I now have a kind of a major question regarding the transfer of this character. That is, what do we do with these extra *fate points*?

*Seppo*: Well, how many extra ones do you have?

*Mikko*: Four.

*Seppo*: Yes, so there’s probably one extra...

*Matias*: Umm, but, don’t they go to directly to those *hero points*?

*Seppo*: Alright. So, we also have those *hero points* in this game.

*Joonas*: How, umm, do these *abilities* get *levels* as well, or?

*Seppo*: Yes, but I thought we will focus on this first.

(57:24-57:52)

As explained previously, the recorded session dealt with transferring the characters from one game system to another. This explains at least partially why the terminology is so prevalent...
throughout the conversations. However, it continues in the gameplay as well (see example 17). Very similar results on the prevalent use of English terminology in role-playing, were also found by Suominen (2014), hinting that the use of the foreign terminology might be a very common feature of role-play.

However, worth remembering is that since the amount of data is quite limited, no strong generalizations can be made. I would theorize that the players utilize the most easily available language resources. The most commonly used terminology (ability, flaw, skill, hero point etc.) can be seen on the character sheets, giving also a visual cue for the use of English, and most of the terminology is familiar to long-term players anyway. The link between the character sheets and the use of terminology was also seen by Suominen (2014).

In the above example, there is terminology from two game systems, fate points are used by Fate Core and hero points are used by HeroQuest. Joonas is also asking about the rules in creating his character. This type of English-Finnish interaction was very common in the study, it is simply substituting one word for another.

The use of English is quite easy to understand with the game-specific terminology of the fate points and hero points, after all ‘kohtalopisteet’ or ‘sankaripisteet’ are quite clunky and uncommon translations, and not in any general use. However, for level and ability, there are simple Finnish alternatives, ‘taso’ and ‘kyky/ominaisuus’. These terms are also regularly used in translated role-playing games. It is interesting to ponder why Joonas still uses the English terms.

Part of the reason might simply lie in familiarity. I know that I have played vastly more role-playing games with English rules than Finnish ones, and I know that the same applies to him as well. In addition, nearly all computer games are in English as well. Therefore, we are very accustomed to using the English terminology. In fact, we can use the Finnish and English terms quite interchangeably. For example, Seppo is using both ‘kyky’ and ‘ability’ in his speech, explaining the rules to the others as the following example shows:
Seppo: So, in practice, the characters just have one kind of...well, things. And those are these abilities. So, everything the character has, if we want it to be relevant to the game, is an ability. It can be the character’s personality, property, abilities, relationships to others or basically anything at all. Actually, just like we has the aspects in Fate. So, practically the same, exactly the same rules, [that we use to] make these abilities, but in this [game system] we don’t have anything else besides these abilities.

In the last sentence, Seppo has translated the term ‘ability’ as ‘kyky’ and begins to use it. Throughout the recording these terms are used interchangeably, depending on the speaker and the situation. I would argue that most of the time, the speaker does not actively think about his selection between English or Finnish term, the code-mixing just happens subconsciously, as also discovered by Wardhaugh (1992).

What is also very interesting is the way these terms are used and blended into the Finnish speech. In the above examples, Matias, Seppo and Joonas are mostly using Finnish pronunciation, thus mixing the languages and blending the words into the flow of the Finnish speech. This blending is not only done by pronunciation but also by adding Finnish suffixes to the English words. Simplest form of this is the adding of the letter ‘t’ at the end of the word to pluralize it, such as Seppo’s use of ‘levelit’ and ‘abilityt’ in the above examples. However, adding suffixes is by no means the limit of modifying the words.
4.2. Anglicization

Another quite frequently occurring phenomenon was anglicization, i.e. using Finnish in an English way or form. As mentioned previously, most of the terminology was blended into Finnish by adding suffixes and changing the pronunciation. Anglicization goes a step further and is sometimes very hard to distinguish from the Finnish. The range of word change in the speech is quite extensive, from using the basic forms of the English words, and using English pronunciation, all the way to completely changing them into Finnish speech. A good example on using both ends of the spectrum can be seen here:

(5)  
Matias: Vähän mietin tota, että kun mulla on toi 'Excommunicated'.  
Seppo: Niin?  
Matias: Niin että vähän mä mietin sitäkin, että pitäiskö sitä vähän, niinku sillei...eskaloïda ('to escalate')? Että se ois tyyliin 'Hunted by the Inquisition'?  
Seppo: Laita vaan!  
Matias: Koska se vois avata kaikkia mielenkiintoisia juttuja.  
Seppo: Joo, passaa.  

Matias: I was thinking a bit about that, since I have this ‘Excommunicated’.  
Seppo: Yeah?  
Matias: Yeah, so I was thinking about that, that should it be somehow...escalated? To something like ‘Hunted by the Inquisition’?  
Seppo: Yeah, please put it!  
Matias: Because that could open up all kinds of interesting things.  
Seppo: Yes, that’s fine.  

(59:46-1:00:05)

Here Matias is talking about an aspect his character has, ‘Excommunicated’, using English pronunciation. Then he is continuing in Finnish, but apparently struggling to find a proper Finnish term for what he is trying to say. Then he uses the term eskaloitua (to escalate), a clear loan from English that is completely transformed into Finnish speech. Eskaloitua is a (loan)word used in Finnish as well, however, it is used quite rarely. It seems to me that Matias couldn’t think of a proper Finnish term for describing what he wanted to do to the skill and therefore used the English term instead, and by doing do, instantly transmuted it to fit into the Finnish speech.
According to Haugen’s (2002) definition, this could be considered to be a substitution hybrid, with only a part of the original form retained. In the more recent paradigm, this is evidence supporting the theory of superdiversity, that the barriers between languages are very easily crossed or even nonexistent. Another example on a similar situation, where English was used in place of the Finnish terminology comes just a few minutes later:

(6)

Seppo: Tämä, tämä on hyvin erilainen tämän HQ:n (‘HeroQuestin’) systeemi kuin useimmat...Se vaatii vähän, se vaatii vähän, tuota...Mikko: On tässä kuitenkin ihan valideja pointteja (‘valid points’) tässä tullut, että tuota...Seppo: Joo.

Seppo: This, this is very different this HQ’s system from the most ones...It requires a bit of, well...
Mikko: Still, there were some valid points made here, so that...
Seppo: Yes.

Here both Seppo and Mikko are using terminology from English in their speech, albeit in a slightly different way. Systeemi is a very commonly used term in this genre and it comes up many times during the session. In the role-playing context, this is generally used to refer to different role-playing games’ use of different mechanics and rules, the game systems. As mentioned, similar use of the word is prevalent throughout the data.

The use of ‘valideja pointteja’ (referring to valid points) by Mikko is more unusual, as anglicization mainly occurred in the data when using single terms, especially verbs, as in Matias’ speech in the previous example. Here, Mikko has taken a pair of words, a word combination, and converted the whole thing to fit the Finnish grammar and pronunciation. Another example of something similar, a kind of a mistranslation, occurs when Viljami is thinking on how to name his characters new skills. He is trying to do it in Finnish, but is struggling a bit:

(7)

Viljami: Mikä ois suomeksi 'Staying undetected'? Joku....havainnottamana pysyminen... (laughs)
Seppo: ‘Piilossa‘. (laughter)
Viljami: Mutta kun niin, tää steltti on aina ollut vaikee tässä systeemissä. Kun se helposti
jaetaan kahteen osaan, sulla on paikallaan pysyminen ja liikkuminen.

**Seppo:** Hiipiminen ja piileskely erikseen, kyllä. Osaan hiipiä mutta en piileskellä.

**Viljami:** What would be Finnish for ‘**Staying undetected**’? Something like…remaining without observation… *(laughs)*

**Seppo:** ‘Hidden’. *(laughter)*

**Viljami:** But yeah, this **stealth** has always been difficult in this **system**. Because it’s easily divided into two parts, you have the remaining still and moving.

**Seppo:** Sneaking and hiding as separate, yes. I can sneak but I cannot hide.

(53:23-53:49)

Here, the ‘undetected’ is causing Viljami to do an anglicization or a mistranslation, translating it into ‘**havainnottomana**’ (without an observation), which is not a proper word. ‘**Staying undetected**’ can be translated to ‘**pysyä huomaamattomana**’, however, the mistranslation is very easy to make. I would personally think of ‘**to detect**’ as ‘**havaita**’ and ‘**to notice**’ as ‘**huomata**’; this could be the reason for the discrepancy seen here. Another contributing factor to the mistranslation could be the fact that the FateCore system has a skill called ‘**Notice**’. Viljami is also using a nickname for stealth, ‘**steltti**’. In my view, this is most likely due to two factors, stealth is quite difficult to pronounce correctly amidst Finnish speech and the term is also a very common one, outside of roleplaying games as well. Suominen (2014) found out that similar shortening, or nicknaming, of terminology happened when the players were very well acquainted with the terms.

4.3. **Mixed compound words**

Another prevalent example of mixing English and Finnish is in the use of mixed compound words. These are compound words where one part is in English, another in Finnish. most commonly these are referring to some specific terms in the game system, although other uses can also be seen in the data. An example of mixed compound words can be seen below. Before this conversation, participants had used purely Finnish terms of ‘**alakyky**’ and ‘**yläkyky**’, but afterwards they started to mainly use the mixed terms, matching them into Finnish pronunciation and grammar:

(8)

**Joonas:** Kun mä käytän jotain noita juttuja, niin käytänkö mä sitä aina sitä **alaskilliä** vai myöskin sitä **yläskilliä** *(first use of the mixed compound words)*?
Seppo: Kumpaa vaan.
Joonas: Kumpaa vaan?
Seppo: Joo. Eli alaskilllejä (Seppo also adopts the mixed term) varmaan kun ne sopii paremmin, mutta yläskilliäkin voi käyttää.
Joonas: Ok.
Seppo: Joo...Ja just siis Matiaksen kanssa puhuttiin siitä, että...että jos ne on kaikki maagisia kykyjä ja sitten käytetään sitä yläskilliä, niin sitten ne tippuu myös ne alaskillit. Mutta jos käytetään alaskillitia, joka on magiakyky, niin ne muut ei tipu.
Joonas: Joo.
Seppo: Se vaikuttaa vaan niihin...mutta siis mä en...mutta siis että 'Muinaista Verta' niin ei...siis että jännä että se yläkyky (here Seppo changes back to the fully Finnish term) ei välttämättä ole maaginen.

Joonas: When I use some of these things, do I use the subskill or also the high skill?
Seppo: Either one you like.
Joonas: Either one?
Seppo: Yes. So, the subskills probably when they fit the situation better, but you can use the high skill as well.
Joonas: Ok.
Seppo: Yeah...And we just talked with Matias about that...that if they are all magical skills and you use the high skill, then the subskills will drop as well. But if you use a subskill that is a magical skill, the others won't drop.
Joonas: Yeah, ok.
Seppo: It only affects those...but, so I don't...but, that 'Ancient Blood' is not...so, that it's interesting that the high skill is not necessarily magical.

(38:23-39:14)

Here we can see that especially Seppo is using the terms completely interchangeably. He adopts Joonas’ use of alaskill and yläskilli, but later reverts back to the purely Finnish terms. In the course of the session, Seppo uses both forms quite often. The other participants are mostly adopting Joonas’ use of the mixed compound words, only using the Finnish terms a couple of times. This is also a good example on how the use of language changes. A new term is introduced, and as the participants are very familiar with its meaning from past experience, it is easy to adopt and use rapidly, without thinking about it.

I would theorize that Seppo, who has perhaps the most expansive background in role-playing games and who has also used a lot of the translated versions, finds it very easy to use both the Finnish and mixed terms and is therefore using both. Perhaps the rest of the participants are more
used to the English/mixed terminology. One point to be made is also the fact, that as Seppo is the game master, he doesn’t have a character of his own. All the others do, and the character sheets are in English. Therefore, perhaps a part of the reason for using the mixed compound words can be attributed to simply seeing the terms on the sheet. I know that the character sheet affects my use of the language, as I always write down my character’s information in it in the same language used on the sheet. Other participants mixed languages on the sheets, but I would argue that seeing the terminology in English would increase the use of English and mixed terminology.

Worth noting, however, is that the terms alakyky/-skilli and yläky/-skilli are not even the correct terms to use. The game mechanics uses a term called ‘group skill’, under which lie simply skills. However, not all skills are under the group skill, there are also regular, single skills. In fact, these the player-made terms are actually more descriptive of the actual relation between group skill, skills under it, and other, “normal” skills. Below is an example on using the actual correct term, and how Viljami uses it inside the Finnish speech, transforming the term, as well as other skill names, to fit into the Finnish grammatical structure:

(9)

Viljami: Mää vähän petyin viimeksi...kun mulla oli joku pickpocket tai joku semmonen...niin skilleissä taisi se olla...Niin nyt mä vähän huijaan, (Seppo: Ei se...kun niitä saa muuttaa...) teen 'Hämärähommat' gruppiskillin (Seppo: Joo.) ja mä sulautan siihen suota stelttiä ('stealth', note the missing h) ja noticaa ('notice') ja pickpockettia ja tuommoista.

Seppo: Joo, kyllä. Eottomasti.

Viljami: I was a bit disappointed the last time...as I had some pickpocket or something like that...yes, in skills it was, I think...So, now I’m cheating a bit, (Seppo: No, it’s...since you can change them...) I’m making a group skill called ‘Underhanded Activities’ (Seppo: Yeah.) and I’m blending that stealth in there as well as notice and pickpocket and those sorts of things.

Seppo: Yes, ok. Absolutely.

(40:20-40:55)

When Viljami first mentions pickpocket, he is using completely English pronunciation. This was a common feature with all of the participants. Often when the term is by itself or just mentioned, the participants use the “correct” form of pronunciation. Therefore, it is evident that the
participants have the ability to pronounce the words correctly. It is also a decision, albeit likely an unconscious one (see e.g., Wardhaugh, 1992; Piirainen-Marsh, 2010), to alter the pronunciation and grammar to fit into the Finnish speech. Viljami is doing this extensively in the above example, changing group to gruuppi, stealth to steltti and modifying notice, pickpocket and skill to fit into the grammatical structure of his Finnish speech. It has been my experience, that the skill names and the other terminology is quicker and simpler to adopt and modify to fit the flow of the speech, than to try to think and use the Finnish equivalents for the words.

4.4. Skill names

In *HeroQuest*, the players invent the skills their characters will have themselves, giving them a lot of freedom in designing the feel and utility of their character. It is suggested in the rulebook that the skill names should be descriptive and open, rather than simple ones, so that they can be used in a variety of ways, although there is no hard rule about it. For example, ‘Tough Soldier’ would (usually) be a more useful skill than simply ‘Shooting’ and would also help to flesh out the character. For many participants, it seemed easier to invent the names of their skills in English. Some used only English naming, others mixed Finnish and English:

(10)

Seppo: *going through Matias’ character sheet* Tuo ‘Secrets of the Church’ on kyllä aika hyvä.
Matias: Mjoo, mä aattelin ku mulla on ollut täällä tämmöinen 'Keeping Secrets Safe'. Niin se on ollut tosi tylsä, niin mä aattelin, että mä muutan sitä vähän.
Seppo: Joo, ei. Tää 'Secrets of the Church' on paljon parempi. Tosi hyvä....'Hard as Nails' (smiles) Joo.
Matias: Vähän mietin tota, että kun mulla on toi 'Excommunicated'.
(Seppo: Niin?) Niin että vähän mä mietin sitäkin, että pitäiskö sitä vähän, niinku sillei...eskaloita? Että se ois tyyliin 'Hunted by the Inquisition'?
Seppo: Laita vaan!
Matias: Koska se vois avata kaikkia mielenkiintoisia juttuja.
Seppo: Joo, passaa.

Seppo: *going through Matias’ character sheet* That ‘Secrets of the Church’ is actually pretty good.
Matias: Mm, yes, I thought that since I’ve had this ‘Keeping Secrets Safe’. So, that has been
so boring, so I thought that I’ll change it a bit.  
*Seppo:* Yes, no. This *Secrets of the Church* is much better. Very good...*Hard as Nails*.  
(smiles) *Yes.*  
*Matias:* I was thinking a bit about that, since I have that *Excommunicated*.  
(*Seppo:* Yes?) So, I was thinking a bit about it, that should it be somehow, you know...*escalated*? So that it would be something like *Hunted by the Inquisition*?  
*Seppo:* Yes, do it!  
*Matias:* Because that could open up all kinds of interesting things.  
*Seppo:* Yes, ok.  

(59:20-1:00:05)

The example here illustrates how Matias finds it easier to think of the skill names in English. He is changing the old skill names to better fit his character, thinking of ways for the skills to be more fun to play. There might be several reasons for this, but I think one of the biggest ones is, that in many cases, somehow the English descriptions sound cooler. ‘Secrets of the Church’ sounds much more dangerous than ‘Kirkon salaisuudet’. Perhaps it is so because I have grown up in this world of English language, playing computer games, reading books and comics and doing other things in English. This multilingual background surely has an effect on what sounds good and cool in my head. I would theorize that the same is true for the other participants as well.

Another reason for the use of English are the character sheets themselves. At least I found it easier and somehow “proper” to write in English on the English character sheet. Some of the skills are also directly taken from the stunts (in English) in the previous system. However, some players did use a mixed system with them as well, Viljami illustrates the process well in the example below:

(11)  

*Viljami:* Mä otan tuommoisen perinteisen *combo* (‘combination’), et otin tuon stuntin suoraan tänne *skilliksi*. Eli tommoinen ‘Pieksennän sietäminen’! […] *(explains about it in Finnish)* …ja sitten ärsyttäminen. Tää on *tankki* (‘tank’, term used in CRPGs), tää *soak:kaa* (‘soak’ [takes less damage]) sitä!  

*Viljami:* I’ll take this traditional *combo*, that I took that *stunt* directly as a *skill* here. So, something like ‘Withstanding beating’! *(explains about it in Finnish)*...and also aggravation. This is a *tank*, it *soaks* it!  
*Seppo:* Ok, well, you should think about the same thing we talked about with Mikko about
the ‘Bullet Sponge’. That what kind of conflicts can you actually solve with it.

(1:58:23-1:58:44)

Viljami had a stunt called ‘Tough as Nails’, which he is morphing into its Finnish equivalent here. Interestingly, he is transforming the name of the skill from English to Finnish. Viljami and Mikko were the only ones who really mixed the two languages in their character sheets, some skills and markings were in Finnish, some in English. Others used almost purely English, with only few extra notes in Finnish. Perhaps it is again a case of convenience. As I mentioned previously, I found it easier to think of the skill names in English and I also theorized that a big part of the reason for using the English terminology is due to familiarity.

Perhaps Viljami and Mikko were not as familiar with the English terminology as the other participants. Another possibility is that they were more familiar, as in the case of Seppo and his use of the both the Finnish and English terminology interchangeably. The above example also shows how naturally Viljami uses the English terminology. He is not only talking about combos, stunts and skills, but also using terminology originally derived from computer games; tank and soak, terms which are not used in our game at all. This shows, that it is not just the visible cues, i.e. rulebook and character sheets, that make the participant choose to use English instead of Finnish. Viljami has clearly had experience in a variety of pen-and-paper RPGs as well as in computer role-playing-games, CRPGs.

The above terms are widely used especially in massively multiplayer role-playing-games, MMORPGs. In them, tank characters are able to take a lot of damage and survive, to protect the other characters. Viljami’s use of the terms, and the fact that nobody asks about them, illustrates the common background the group possesses.

The character sheets are an important part of the game, all the information about the character is recorded there. They are the most used piece of the rules, usually always in front of the players. Therefore, I believe that they also guide and influence the language use quite a bit (see also
Suominen (2014). The participants themselves also noticed that they are using both English and Finnish to mark their character sheets, starting a conversation earlier about it:

(12)

*Mikko:* Mites tuo, jos haluais tuon ‘Provoke:in’ jotenkin kääntää tänne, niin...?
*Seppo:* Joo, öö, se riippuu siitä että miten sä haluisit sen kääntää. Laitatko sää suomeksi vai englanniksi?
*Mikko:* Vähän sekasin.
(Laughter)
*Seppo:* Tuli mieleen, että sullahan saattais olla hyödyllistä skannata meidän hahmolomakkeet, siis sitä sun tutkimusta varten.
*Matias:* Niin, joo. Ihan totta! Joo, sillaihan tää saa enemmän irti muutenkin
*Seppo:* Joo ja meillä on niitä vielä kaksi kappalein. Mutta kun niissähän on sekaisin suomea ja englantia, niin sehän on mielenkiintoista!

[...]
*Viljami:* Joo, ihan totta. Kun mäkin huomasin kun mä aloin suomeksi ihan varta vasten näitä laittamaan...ja ihan hauskaa...kun tulee helposti...put...putkahtaa ekana englanniksi mieleen kun ne säännöt on ja niitä lukoo ja sitten mietit ja sillai.
*Seppo:* Joo, mä oon välillä miettynyt vähän...Tai siis mä oon vähän sellainen puristi (‘purist’), että mä en vois kirjoittaa kahdella kielellä mun omaa hahmolomaketta. ...(laughter) ...mutta siis tavallaan, miisipä ei?
*Matias:* Mut joo, mä oon siis ihan samaa mieltä. Että mä sit laitan aina jommallaka kummalla sitten ne.
*Seppo:* Ja sitten kyllä ihan periaatteesta, että jos mulle lyödään englanninkieleinen hahmolomake kätteen, niin kyllä mä kirjoitan sen sitten englanniksi.
*Matias:* Niin! Niin mäkin tollei...
*Viljami: (Talks in the background, unclear)...niin on sitten siinä mielessä helpompi niitä skillejä ja muita sellaisia eksisiä...(unclear).
*Matias:* Joo, kyllä.
*Seppo:* Oliko jollain joku kysymys mihin mä en vastannu? Niin se olis provokki. No siis, sehän nyt on ihan kuinka vaan. Miten sä oot niinku aatellu, että se sun hahmos sitä provokkia käyttääis? Että niinku ärssyttämistä vai pelotteluu?

*Mikko:* How’s that, if I wanted to translate that ‘Provoke’ here in some way, umm...?
*Seppo:* Yeah, umm, it depends on how you’d like to translate it. Are you putting it down in Finnish or English?
*Mikko:* A bit mixed.
(Laughter)
*Seppo:* [I] just had a thought that it might be useful to you to scan our character sheets, I mean for your study.
*Matias:* Yeah, ok. That’s true! Yeah, that way something more can be gained anyway.
*Seppo:* Yes, and we even have a pair of them. But since they contain mixed Finnish and English, that’s something interesting!
Viljami: Yeah, right. I also noticed that I’m really trying to put these in Finnish... so it’s quite funny... as it easily... it comes to your mind first in English, because of the rules that you read and think about and so on.

Seppo: Yeah, I’ve also thought about [that] a bit... See, I’m a bit of a purist, in the way that I couldn’t write my character sheet using two languages... (laughter)... but, in a way, why not.

Matias: True, but, I do agree [with that]. That I always do it in one or the other, all those things.

Seppo: And just as a principle, if I am given a character sheet in English, I will also write it in English.

Matias: Yeah! That’s the way I do it also...

Viljami: (talks in background, unclear) ... so, in that sense it’s easier to create the skills and such... (unclear).

Matias: Yeah, true.

Seppo: So, did someone have a question I didn’t answer? Yeah, it was about the provoke. Ok, so it’s in any way you want it to be. How did you think your character would use the provoke? To aggravate of to scare [someone]...

(36:08-37:52)

Here Viljami explains, that he has intentionally tried to think of the skills in Finnish, but finds that making the skills in English is easier and that they “pop into his head first in English”. He ends up using a mixed system, using both languages. The same is true for Mikko as well, although he does not explain his reasons, I would suspect that they are quite similar to the ones Viljami stated. Joonas gave no information here about his style of marking the character sheets and unfortunately the sheets themselves have been lost. Seppo and Matias are writing the skills in the same language as the character sheet is, saying that it would be strange to mix the languages in writing, although in their speech they are constantly doing it.

Perhaps the written form is seen by them as more rigid, the spoken language as more malleable. Perhaps it is simply a case of having more time to think, when they are writing, they have time to reflect and think about what they will put on paper, whereas when speaking, the decision to use one language or another is done quickly and automatically, using the language resources that they have in their head at the moment. This effortless and natural switching between two languages is also something that has been seen in other studies, for example in Piirainen-Marsh (2010). I personally found it easier to create the skills in English. It is hard to say how much the character sheets affected this, as my original skills for the character were in English as well.
However, I am quite sure that if the sheet would have been in Finnish, I would have tried to translate the terminology and skills into Finnish. For me, it would be strange to write down both English and Finnish on the sheets, the feeling is something akin to breaking the fourth wall or the suspension of disbelief, to the characters and the world they are in. Role-playing is a narrative, a story-telling of a sorts, and at least I find it easier to be in the required state of mind if everything on the character sheets matches.

4.5. Subcultural use

One way to look at the language the participants use is to view them as a part of the role-playing subculture. In my experience, usually people who play role-playing games have quite a lot in common. This is not to say that it is a homogenous group, but similarities do exist. In our group, all of us share at least somewhat similar interests and have been exposed to the same sort of language, be it in gaming, movies or other media. At least in the case of the recurring terminology, it can also be said that the role-players have their own jargon that they use, which can be difficult to understand as an outsider.

It is important to also understand that role-playing is not just about playing the game. It is primarily a social activity, a reason to get together and hang out with friends. As such, there are several examples in the data where the conversation is not about the game itself, but about some other shared interest:

(13) Seppo: Onkoulla mitään muuta ulkonäköä kuvaavaa?
Matias: On mulla 'Hulking Physique' (hulking pronounced as Finnish, physique as English)
Seppo: ‘Hulking Physique’? Mm.. (similar pronunciation)
Matias: Eli vallava koko.
Seppo: Joo. Mmm...okei.
Joonas: (small laugh) Heh, mä kuulin vaan että 'Hulkin fysiikka' (from the comic book character Hulk), niin mä [ajattelin] että se on koko ajan komean vihreä! (everyone
43

laughing) Väri vaihtui kun säännöt muuttuivat...
Matias: Paitsi jos se on alkuperäinen, harmaa Hulk.
Joonas: Heh! Niin, jos sillä miettii niin joo.
Matias: Paitsi onks se alkuperäinen se vihree, vai miten se nyt menee?
Seppo: Kyllä se harmaaa on se alkuperäinen. Se muuttuu muistaaksen vihreäksi jostain painoteknisestä syystä.

[...]
Joonas: (noise, unclear) ...[sarjakuva] joka ilmeisesti pohjautuu semmoiseen Old Man Logan -sotilaaseen, joka on semmoinen pos...post-apokalyptinen settingi, jossa tota supervillainit ('supervillain') on tehny liiton ja sitten valloittanut Amerikan ja tappanu kaikki Kapteeni Amerikat ja muut. Ja sitten siellä on vanha Wolverine (comic book character), joka ei suostu käyttää kynsiään. Niin se lähtee sellaiselle quest:ille. Ja Amerikka on niinku...eri alueita hallitsee eri superpahikset ja se itse elää semmoisessa hulklandissa, missä tuota Hulk on siittänyt semmoisen suun sen seurannan kanssa. Semmoisia hillbilly-hulkkeja ('hillbilly'). Ja se tuota päättyy siihen, että se Hillbilly-Hulk on tappanut sen frendejä kun se tulee sieltä quest:iltä ja sitten ne tapaa sen ja se muuttuu Hulkiksi ja se syö sen Wolverinen. Mutta sitten Wolverine tulee ulos sen vatsasta ja tappaa sen! (lots of laughter) Ja mä olin sillai, että Marvel (the publisher), miksi olet tehnyt tämänkin...
Seppo: Kyllä, se on mahtavaa mun mielestä miten...

Seppo: Do you have something else describing the character’s looks?
Matias: I do have ‘Hulking Physique’.
Seppo: ‘Hulking Physique’? Umm...
Matias: So, a huge size.
Seppo: Yes. Umm, ok.
Joonas: (small laugh) Ha, I only heard that ‘Hulk’s physique’, so I thought that it is always handsomely green! (everone laughing) The color changed with the rules...
Matias: Unless it’s the original, grey, Hulk.
Joonas: Yeah, if you think about it that way, yes.
matias: Although, is the original one actually the green one or how did it go?
Seppo: The grey one is the original one. If I remember correctly, it changes to green due to some printing-related reason.

[...]
Joonas: (noise, unclear) ... [a comic] which is apparently based on this Old Man Logan, a soldier, that’s in a post...post-apocalyptic setting, where, umm, supervillains have allied and then conquered all Captain Americas and such. So, then there’s the old Wolverine, who refuses to use his claws. So, he goes on a quest. And America is, like...different areas are controlled by different supervillains and he himself is living in this kind of hulkland, where Hulk has bred himself a sort of a family with his cousin, of hillbilly-hulks. And, well, it ends in that the Hillbilly-Hulk has been killing his friends [Logan’s/Wolverine’s] when he returns from his questing so then they fight and the [Hillbilly] changes into Hulk and he eats Wolverine. But then Wolverine comes out of his stomach and kills him! (lots of laughter) And I was like, Marvel, why did you do this...
Seppo: Yeah, that’s amazing how...

(34:48-38:13)
Regardless of the topic, English is still used in the speech frequently. Joonas talks about supervillains and quests, knowing that the others will understand what he is saying, because they have that shared background. Same goes for Hulk and Wolverine, no explanation is required as we have all read the comics and know the characters. One way to look at this is to view the language as not merely words, used for a need, but rather as windows into the participants’ experiences. The language resources used come from the historical body of experiences each of the participants has, adapted to the current situation and the way a language resource is chosen is a very complex and interwoven process (see Piirainen-Marsh 2010).

Seen that way, it could be argued that each person has a language variant of their own. In this case, all the participants have similar overlapping language variants, based on their previous experiences, which leads to everyone understanding one another easily. If a person from a completely different background would be dropped into this group, I would think that they would struggle to understand everything, even if the words used were familiar, but the way of using them was not. In my experience, most role-players I have met do have at least partly overlapping interests, be it in gaming, literature, hobbies or other things. However, as there is a large variance, in both individuals and in groups, talking about a role-playing subculture is too farfetched. As Suominen (2014) also explains, it might be a better idea to talk about cultures, with a single group forming a sort of subculture of their own. The study of these would also be an interesting subject socio-linguistic research.

4.6. Exclamations

English is also used in a spontaneous way, as sudden exclamations. In general, this was rarer than using mixed terminology or anglicizing the speech. I was actually surprised on how often these were used within the speech. When utilized they were often used to emphasize something, to curse about something or to begin or end the conversation. Underneath are two examples illustrating some of these elements:
Mikko: (explaining about his eraser) ...so if you draw first, like swoosh swoosh, (gesturing with his hands) in a rough way and then you just pull it, swoosh swoosh, and then you can draw on top of it in more detail...
Matias: Yeah, yeah, ok...
Mikko: So, if you use a regular eraser, that [drawing] will just be mushed up and that way this one is a bit better one, as it leaves it nicely...
Matias: (chuckles) Ok...
Mikko: Very nice!
Seppo: Very nice!

In above example, Mikko is using the phrase ‘very nice’, perhaps to emphasize the quality of his eraser. Another possibility is that he is doing this to save face, as Matias seemed to be less than impressed about the eraser. Seppo would then help him and defuse the situation by imitating Mikko’s exclamation. Imitation of sudden exclamations occurred a few times in the study, usually done right after the first one, for example saying ‘Alright! - Alright!’. Somewhat similar imitation also occurred in a study by Piirainen-Marsh and Tainio (2007). However, in that study, the players imitated video game characters, not each other, but as they mostly imitated general or game-specific phrases, something analogous could be happening here as well. Other common uses of exclamations happened when something went wrong, started to work or was otherwise exiting. In the two examples below, Matias is show first to be frustrated and then happy:

Matias: (A device does not function properly, looks at it and tries to figure out why) ...What
the fuck!...Mitähän vittua sä duunaat?...(mumbles angrily at the device in the background, hard to hear due to other foreground noises and speech).

Matias: What the fuck!..What in the fuck are you doing?...

(14:26- 14:44)

(16)

Matias: (from the video camera) Nyt se vörkkii!

Matias: Now it works!

(1:58:02-1:58.05)

There was a clear connection between how exciting (or frustrating) the situation became and the use of exclamations and expletives. The above examples are also interesting in their way of using the language. Matias is firstly using English, only then Finnish in the first one and is transforming the English phrase into pseudo-Finnish in the second one. This further highlights the commonplace use of English. During the actual gameplay, the use of the exclamations became more common, as the situation in the game became more intense and the players got more excited. In the following example, the characters have travelled into the bowels of Vatican City, trying to find ancient relics to help them defeat a vampire lord. We can see many of the previously discussed ways of using English in this example, as well as an exclamation being utilized by Seppo to take the turn to speak:

(17)

Matias: No niin, tulkaapa perässä vaan!
Mikko: Toki!
Viljami: Uuh, Let’s Go!
Seppo: No niin! (laughs)

Viljami: Tässä on nyt joku villi logiikka varmaan...mutta ei meidän tarvi nyt sitä läpikäydä.
Seppo: Okei, okei. Alright! (taking the turn to speak) Tota...pitäiskö nyt kuitenkin heittää [noppaa] että löydättekö te sinne? Siis ilman, että jääte kiinni. Se ‘Secrets of the Church’ ois varmaan se, taas. Otetaanko nyt sillai, että Lu...Lumumba (Matias’ character)...sillai simppelimmin, että se on niinku Lumumbasta kiinni löydättekö te sinne? Siellä ei oo vielä paljon liikkujia tai mitään sitten. Siellä niinku kirjastossa. niin se on niinku Lu...Lumumbasta kiinni löytääkö se sinne. Muistaako se tien ja niin pois päin. Passaisko tää?

Matias: Jees.
Seppo: Alright!

Matias: Haluutko sä käyttää sitä mun ‘Hunted by the Inquisitionia’ tässä?
Seppo: Joo, tottakai! Mitäs se [arvo] olikaan?

Matias: Alright, so just follow me! MikkO: Sure! Viljami: Ugh, Let’s Go! Seppo: Alright! (laughs) Viljami: There must be some wild logic in this...but we don’t need to go through it now. Seppo: Ok, ok. Alright! (taking the turn to speak) Umm...should we still throw [the dice], that can you find your way there? I mean without getting caught. That ‘Secrets of the Church’ would be it, again. Let’s do it like that, that Lu...Lumumba (Matias‘ character)...in a more simple way, that it is up to Lumumb if you can find your way there? There isn’t much traffic there yet or anything. There in the library area. So, it’s up to Lu...Lumumba to see if he can find the way. Remembering where to go and so on. Does this sound reasonable?

Matias: Yes. Seppo: Alright!

Matias: Do you want to use my ‘Hunted by the Inquisition’ with this?

Seppo: Yes, sure! What was it [the value]?

Matias: Nineteen.

Viljami: Hey, I could...umm, assist with my ‘Experiencing the Dead’, so that they could whisper some directions to me.

Seppo: Yes, that’s fine.

Viljami: Plus, as this [the character] has be reading the necrobooks (necromancy), therefore, this is still psyched in that kind of a state, that it can link to those senses...

Seppo: Yes, that’s absolutely ok!

(3:28:30-3:30:09)

Here we can see a wide variety of English being utilized, form exclamations to the skill names and other rule speak. The example shows a common situation in the gameplay, where the situation, the level of excitement, the rules and the previous experiences of the participants all work to create the individual language resources utilized. I was personally surprised on how often simple exclamations, such as ‘alright’, were used by the participants.

If I reflect on my own behavior, the use of the language, in these cases, is instantaneous and subconscious. The rapid choice of the language resources in collaborative play was also witnessed...
by Piirainen-Marsh (2010) as well as use of repetition (Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio, 2009), an example of which is seen earlier in example (14). Turn taking also utilizes the English language resources, at least with Seppo, who is using the English utterance to take the turn twice in the above example. It seems to me, that Viljami’s use of assist is more of a thought through approach, he is thinking about the correct term to use and picking it. This small pause before using the correct term was evident in other data from the gameplay part of the recording, as well.

4.7. Reading from text and translating

Reading from the rulebooks was also a way of using English. As the rulebooks are very commonly in English, all of the participants have become familiar with much of the vocabulary and therefore, the game master could just read the rules from the book, without excessive explanations. In the example below, it is the start of our session. Seppo begins by reading some of the rules in English. After a while, one player arrives late and Seppo changes his speech, instead of reading directly, he is translating much of the information:

Seppo: Mulla on esimerkiksi tässä vähän tämmöistä listaa, että mitä esimerkiksi ne vois olla, mutta pääsääntö on siis, että “if you can solve a problem with it, it’s an ability” (read from the book). Eli jos on joku sellainen asia, millä vois jotkin kuvitella, että hahmo...Jos sellaista sattuis olemaan, Biographical facts, like born in zero gravity, Ivy League pedigree or familiarity with shanty-town customs. Ööö, relationships...allies, contacts...mitä vaan. Joo. Eli ne voi siis olla mitä vain.

Seppo: I have a bit of a list here, on what those could possibly be, but the main rule is, that “if you can solve a problem with it, it’s an ability” (read from the book). So, if there is a
thing, that could somehow be imagined, that the character could make a solution...some problem that could be solved, so that can be an ability. So...But, regardless, examples on what it could be (starts to read). Physicals, umm, Physical traits: strength, endurance, keen eyesight. Mental talents such as quick wittedness, strong memory, mathematical aptitude. Personality like humor, ventriloquism, determination, umm... Physical training, such as rock climbing, football or karate, fields of knowledge, such as astronomy, theology or photography, occupations, possessions, magic sword, giant robot, bulletproof vest, broader resources, such as trust fund, ranch, holding company...Cultural backgrounds, Inuit, Brazilian, Martian, Formless, One from the Outer Depths, Lunar Hoplite (laughs). Fantastic prowess: magic, science fiction gear, amusing gifts. Consult your Narrator for the particular fantastic abilities...Inhuman anatomy, if we would have something like that, facts, like born in zero gravity, Ivy League pedigree or familiarity with shanty-town customs. Umm, relationships...allies, contacts...anything. Yes. So, they can be anything.

(09:40-11:03)

Seppo: [...] (reading and translating on the spot) Fyysisiä ominaisuuksia, Vahva kuin Härkä, tai nopealävien tai jostain persoonallisuuksijuttuja, vihainen tai...tai...mitä ikinä, kunniallinen. Jotain...niinku...Physical Training...mitä, mitä vaan juttuja. Ööö, tietoa...öö, ammatti, omistuksia, siis sillai että vaikka Sikarikas vois olla kyky, tai sit vaihtoehtoisesti vaikka että Taikamiekkia, niin sekin voi olla kyky. Sit myöskin kulttuuritasaut voi olla kykyjä...täällä oli hyviä esimerkkejä, eli vaikka Inuit, Brazilian, Martian, Formless, One from the Outer Depths, Lunar Hoplite...sellaisia, tiedäthän (grins). Sitten just magiajutut ja sen sellaiset ja sitten toi, mikä...Biographical facts...että täällä on vaikka esimerkkinä, että Syntyynyt Painottomassa Tilassa tai vaikka niinku 'Ivy League Pedigree' tai 'Familiarity with Shanty-town Customs'. Mutta siis ihan mitä vaan! Mä en nyt ihan heti osaa sanoa, että onko tässä mitään eroa aspectin luomiseen...

Seppo: [...] (reading and translating on the spot) Physical attributes, Strong as a Bull, or quick-witted, or some personality things, angry or...or...whatever, honorable. Something, like...Physical Training...any...any kinds of stuff. Umm, knowledge...umm, a profession, property, for example Filthy Rich could be an ability or alternatively Magical Sword could also be an ability. Also, cultural background could be abilities...there were some good examples here, such as Inuit, Brazilian, Martian, Formless, One from the Outer Depths, Lunar Hoplite...those guys, you know (grins). Then magical stuff and that sort of things and also, what’s that... Biographical facts...so, there’s examples such as Born In Zero Gravity or also 'Ivy League Pedigree' or 'Familiarity with Shanty-town Customs'. But, yeah, anything at all! I can’t really say right away if there is any difference compared to creating an aspect...

(20:58-22:21)

Seppo is first explaining the rules for abilities by simply reading them out loud from the rule book. When Viljami arrives late, Seppo is able to translate most of the text on the spot. He is still looking
at the book and reading (in English) from it, but on this second read, he is speaking in Finnish. This shows that he is able to switch between the languages very quickly and fluently. However, there are clearly some parts where he has to think about the translation and sometimes he reverts back to the English. In many cases these are things that do not exist (Lunar Hoplite), things where the Finnish equivalent is ambiguous (Ivy League pedigree) or things that are difficult or clumsy to translate (familiarity with shanty town customs). Worth noting is also the fact that he is not translating everything, just giving some examples.

The examples in this chapter show that there are a lot of ways where English interacts and mixes with Finnish. Sometimes it is used in almost every sentence, other times it is more sporadic. One common finding was the finnicization of English, especially in the case of terminology and gaming concepts, adding suffixes and changing the pronunciation to fit the flow of the predominantly Finnish speech. Anglicization also occurred, most notably in some phrases and in the use of certain uncommon (in Finnish) verbs. As the gaming started, the use of English exclamations also increased. Other points included reading from the text and using the language as a way to belong to a specific subcultural group.
5. Discussion

I wished to study Finnish-English interaction, because I had witnessed its increase in the recent years. The way the two languages intertwine, and change fascinated me. My focus was to study the phenomenon as a whole, to see how and why English is mixed into Finnish. The study was done with an autoethnographic method (Anderson, 2006), using recorded material from a single role-playing session with five participants.

I decided to study the phenomena responsible for this effect in the setting of the role-playing game, as this is where I had witnessed much mixing of the languages. As an avid role-player myself, it was also a natural way to use autoethnography as a complete member researcher (Anderson, 2006), being already a member of the gaming group. I also hoped that the familiarity with the other participants would also enable the study to be as close to a real speech situation as possible. I think that this was successful: even though there were a few remarks on the cameras and other equipment, I felt that the participants, myself included, quickly forgot about them and acted naturally.

All in all, the study execution was quite close to what was originally planned. Originally there should have been one more participant, but due to unforeseen circumstances that person was left out. The added use of the backup audio recording proved to be a very good plan, as technical difficulties meant that video data was available only for about two-thirds of the length of the session, not for its entirety. Perhaps one issue in validity of the study is that the session in itself was somewhat special, as our group switched gaming systems. Also, the gaming system itself will have an impact on the use of language (Suominen, 2014). A group of five participants is too small to draw any large-scale generalizations, but as a qualitative research, this was not really an issue. An interesting aspect for future research could be a similar study, but with several different groups and/or different gaming systems.

Still, I think that the study gives quite a complete and representative picture of our role-playing
session and the way the two languages were used in it. I used an autoethnographic method (Anderson 2006) in the study in order to find out the reasons behind the language use. I would say that this was at least partially successful, as I was able to use my own experiences as a lens through which to look at the findings, and gain some further insight into them. Role-playing is also a social activity; therefore, a more sociological research method, instead of a linguistic one, was justified in my opinion. Being a member of the group also enabled me to reflect on the language use and use my past experiences as a tool. However, a limiting factor was the fact that, as much of the language resource selection is done subconsciously and very rapidly (e.g., Piirainen-Marsh, 2010; Wardhaugh, 1992), the “motive” for the code-switch or -mix (e.g., Wardhaugh, 1992; Auer, 1998) can be hard to decipher. In hindsight, it was also very difficult sometimes to tell if an utterance would be considered to be borrowing or code-mixing, in this study I drew the line in a way that I considered most of the language mixing and intertwining to be code-mixing, but perhaps an alternative way of looking at the findings could have been used.

The sheer scale and variance of the phenomenon took me by surprise. I originally thought that it would occur somewhat sporadically, but looking at the findings, we see that it occurred in most of the conversations and in many different varieties, as can be seen from the examples. Most commonly, code-mixing occurred with terminology. The participants took a lot of the terms directly from the English rules and character sheets and simply modified them, by changing the inflection or pronunciation, to fit within the flow of the Finnish speech. Similar results were reported by Suominen (2014) as well, so this might be a common phenomenon related to role-playing and gaming in general. However, in this study the participants also created their own hybrid terms, such as yläskilli, not taken directly from the rules. This, in my view, enabled a clearer structuring of the different statuses of the skills, than the rules offered by the game itself.

Another aspect of language mixing that was quite common was the use of English exclamations, such as very good and alright, the use of which increased as the situation in the game or outside of it got more exiting. English expletives, fuck being the most common, were used several times as well. I suspect that this is due to the influence of anglophone culture, in a similar vein some anglicizations also occurred. Some cases were quite clear, but still the difficulty lies in recognizing
them. The language is a state of constant change (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) and the lines between anglicization, loanwords and borrowed words are very hazy. I used an entirely subjective system, in which if the word used or the word order seemed to be “off” in some way, I marked it as a possible anglicization.

The effect of anglophone culture, as well as specific terminology, could also be seen in the way English was used when explaining about some shared interest, such as computer games or comics. The participants’ interests were at least partially overlapping, and everyone was familiar with the same concepts relating to these interests. Finally, English was also used in reading from the rulebook or character sheets. The written language was also sometimes translated, at least partially, to Finnish on the spot, showing a great deal of proficiency in the language use. All in all, English and Finnish intertwined in a multitude of ways. In fact, more than one way of language mixing or alteration was usually used within a single conversation.

Overall, I think that the study was successful as I believe I was able to gain knowledge and insight into the intertwining of the two languages. The study is quite limited in its scope, only looking at one session of a single group. However, as a social activity, I think that the role-playing setting worked well in creating an authentic situation, where language was used freely. Also, in my experience, the other sessions I have played with the same group would give quite similar results. Therefore, I believe that the study does give a good account of the language intermixing within our particular group. Generalization to include other groups or the general population is impossible, or imprecise at best, and there is certainly room for additional research.

Further research could be about comparing different groups or different gaming systems, or taking the research to a different setting altogether. A possibility would also be to focus on just one particular use of English, the terminology for example. However, I believe that this might not be as fruitful as looking at the whole phenomenon of language intertwining, since as I mentioned, more than a single way was usually used in open conversation.
6. Conclusion

The main goal of the study was to research how Finnish and English intertwine in spoken language, and to see if some insight could be gained of why it happens. I wanted to combine my own experiences and understanding with the findings from the recorded role-playing session. In my opinion, the role-playing setting was a good choice, as it enabled me to use the autoethnographic method as a complete member researcher (Anderson, 2006), and as an authentic situation, I believe the findings are valid.

The findings show that English intertwined into Finnish in a variety of ways and that code-switching and code-mixing (e.g., Hoffer, 2002; Suominen, 2014; Wardhaugh, 1992) occurred regularly and rapidly in the conversations. The amount of language intertwining was a slight surprise, I had thought it would occur regularly, but I did not anticipate it happening in most of the conversations.

The main limiting factor of the study is its scope. As role-playing groups are often quite isolated, by studying only a single group, the results cannot really be generalized beyond it. Furthermore, the autoethnographic method makes the study inherently subjective. However, this is true for all qualitative studies, and the method was successful in showing the complexity of the phenomenon as well as providing insights on why the English was used.

A possible validity issue is the fact that the recorded session was somewhat special, as it involved transferring the characters to a different role-playing system, something that is not normally done in the middle of a campaign. I believe that due to this, especially the use of English terminology was somewhat overrepresented in the recording. However, the session included a lot of other discussion and gameplay as well, so I believe that overall, enough data was gathered to make the findings valid.

Further research could be conducted in a variety of ways. Similar studies focusing on different aspects of the phenomenon, would be useful in deepening our understanding of the complexity
involved. Perhaps the simplest way to continue, would be to study and compare different groups, who would be using the same gaming system, i.e. playing the same game. Previous studies on role-playing and language use (e.g., Suominen, 2014) have been done with the players playing a variety of systems. As the system itself also affects the use of language, it might be a fruitful idea to try to remove one modifier by using the same system. This is something I would might do if making this study again, however, one clear problem I can see with this is that if the system is unfamiliar to the players, this can skew the findings as well.

Another option for further research could be looking at the details of the English-Finnish interaction in more detail. I was more interested in the phenomenon as a whole, but it could also be studied through conversation analysis or similar methods. That way, the elements that make up the multilingual conversation, such as non-verbal cues and the conversational structure, could be studied more closely. With different methods, different aspects of the phenomenon can be studied, another interesting option would be to look at the character sheets more closely and see what insight could be gained from the written language.


CHARACTER NAME: SEDUT PAHAI
PLAYER NAME: 

GAME SETTING / GENRE: WHEN IN ROME

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
Turkulainen syökseli entisessä kyntä vesityksessä. Nelemaa ja polvi.

FLAT 124


ABILITIES

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LINGERING BENEFITS / PENALTIES

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FLAWS

| PELLUSTAMATON TÄTEENIKSI |
| LUDKEA TIEPOIUS |
| KOLHELIA PIKITEJEN JÄMÄN VAAD |

UNASSIGNED ABILITIES

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

HERO POINTS

8