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Finnish Culture and Language Endangered

Language ideological debates on English in the Finnish press from 1995 to 2007

by

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FINNISH CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ENDANGERED – LANGUAGE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATES ON ENGLISH IN THE FINNISH PRESS FROM 1995 TO 2007

Sirpa Leppänen and Päivi Pahta

[A] INTRODUCTION

In Finland, foreign languages have frequently been at the focus of impassioned public debates – this is evinced in many of the chapters in this volume. In this attitudinal climate English is no exception. In the press, for example, this anxiety manifests itself in frequent avalanches of worry, suspicion and irritation. In these, English is typically depicted as a clear and present danger that can seriously disrupt the purity of the Finnish language and culture. What often seems to lie behind these concerns is a deep-rooted language ideology of the national language/s as a key defining the nation-state and determining national and cultural identity and integrity.

In this chapter we hope to anatomize these discourses of danger about the English language, in order to show the role English has in the hierarchical valorization of languages in Finland. The public discourse we focus on here is newspapers – an institutional discourse arena whose representations of language ideologies can be consequential in the wider society. It is a particularly visible and influential societal forum where the voices, arguments and attitudes of the civil society are expressed, and where “the polity gets involved in shaping policies” (Blommaert, 1999, p. 8). Language ideological issues and debates on the allegedly dangerous impact of English on the

Finnish culture and language are at the core of our chapter. More specifically, we look at recurrent themes and topics in the language ideological debates on the dangerousness of English, uncovering some of the recurrent patterns and instalments in these debates. In our discussion of the findings we hope to show how the concerns voiced about English in public intertwine with a worry about the end of the nation, the nation-state and national culture in an inevitable but reluctant transition towards late modernity. As we will show in detail, these issues and debates also bring into focus questions of purity – the foreign language is repeatedly pictured as a force threatening to tarnish the purity of not only the Finnish language and culture, but also that of the nation-state, national identity and even Finns' minds.

In our analysis we draw on a database consisting of newspaper genres which typically provide a point of entry to language ideological views and debates by a range of social actors: editorials representing the authoritative voice of the newspaper, and letters-to-the-editor in the voice of the reading public. The data was collected within the time span of 12 years extending from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s from *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading national newspaper. As a time period in the unwinding of language ideological debates in Finland, this was a particularly interesting one. During this period Finland underwent a series of major political, economic, cultural and linguistic changes which had an impact on the language situation in different societal domains. One of these changes was joining the EU in 1995. For the society as well as for many Finns, this represented a major turning point in the ways in which Finland defined its identity and political role in Europe, marked by a new openness to and allegiance with western Europe. As an event, it generated a great deal of discussion of the implications of the political Europeanization for Finnish society, culture and language/s. At the same time, in the 1990s and early 2000s, processes of economic, political and cultural globalization contributed to the increase of the popularity, visibility, uses and significance of English in such key societal domains as education, media, work and everyday life (see Leppänen & Nikula, 2007, 2008; Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003, 2008; Leppänen et al., 2011).

[A] LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATES

Language ideologies refer to cultural or subcultural systems of morally and politically loaded ideas and beliefs about what a language is, how it works and how it should work, which are widely accepted in particular communities and which can have consequences for the way in which languages are used and judged, as well as for social and linguistic relationships (Woolard, 1998; Irvine, 1989). They are indexical of social groups, in other words, the ways in which language ideological notions are formulated can index ways in which a particular social community sees itself and its language, as well as its relationships to and view of other communities and their language/s (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Blackledge, 2002, p. 199).

Language ideologies are seldom unified, unchangeable or straightforward – on the contrary, they are multiple, mutable, conflicting and contestable. (Blackledge, 2005, p. 32; Milani, 2010). As shown in recent research, language ideologies are always linked to relations, particular historical moments and the power and political arrangements in societies (Blackledge, 2005; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2002; Blommaert, 1999; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Gal, 1998; Gal & Woolard, 1995; Kroskrity, 1998; Woolard, 1998). They contribute to the production and reproduction of social difference, whereby some languages and varieties are taken to have greater worth than other languages and varieties (Blackledge, 2005, p. 33). According to Blackledge and Pavlenko (2002), language ideologies continue to act as gate-keeping practices to create, maintain and reinforce boundaries between people in a broad range of contexts, including community, nation, nation-state, state and global levels.

Language ideologies are formulated, expressed and debated in a range of discourses: they occur in institutional discourses of for example the media, education, politics, advertising, the economy,

academic texts and the law (Blackledge, 2005, p. 44). They are also part of many non-institutional, everyday contexts of language use on occasions where it becomes expedient and necessary to establish a shared normative framework for communication and interaction, and to regulate and discipline language use (Leppänen & Piirainen-Marsh, 2009).

As suggested by previous research on language ideological debates (see e.g. Gal, 2006; Blackledge, 2010), particularly persistent touching stones in them are that monolingualism is taken to be the natural state of human life, and that languages are seen as homogeneous to the extent that they are taken to be expressions of the distinct spirit of a particular group (Gal, 2006, p. 15). Very often, multilingual societies which apparently tolerate or promote heterogeneity in fact undervalue or appear to ignore the linguistic diversity of their populace. A liberal orientation to equality of opportunity for all may mask an ideological drive towards homogeneity, a drive which potentially marginalises or excludes those who either refuse, or are unwilling, to conform (Blackledge, 2005, pp. 34–5). As suggested by Blackledge (2010, p. 305), one implication of this kind of view is that “ideally the nation should be monolingual, with adherence to another language often (mis)read as a lack of loyalty to the national identity”. A similar point is also made by Verschueren and Blommaert (1998, p. 207) in their analysis of the European newspaper press which, according to their analysis, operates on the basis of a theory which “revolves around the impossibility of heterogeneous communities and the naturalness of homogeneous communities”. In this ideology of homogeneity, “language is the essence of identity” (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 128): language is taken to express and encapsulate the cultural identity of the nation.

[A] ENGLISH IN THE CHANGING SOCIOLINGUISTIC TERRAIN OF FINLAND

From the late 1990s onwards, Finns were explicitly facing a situation where older notions of the nation and the nation-state which were in principle (Finnish–Swedish) bilingual, but in practice largely (Finnish) monolingual, were challenged by the spread of English in many discourse domains within the society itself. In just 20 years English has become the foreign language par excellence that practically every young Finn studies at some point during their schooling, that is visible in its linguistic landscape and mediascapes, and that is increasingly used in various domains of the globalized Finnish society, media and everyday life at work, at home and in leisure time.

With the increase in the use and importance of English in global communication all over the world during the past 60 years, the overall presence of English has also dramatically increased in Finnish society at large. Research accumulating over the past 25 years indicates that the role of English in Finland has undergone a complex and rapidly accelerating change, involving several key domains of society (e.g. Sajavaara, 1983; Haarmann, 1989; Haarman & Holman, 2001; Battarbee, 2002; Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Hiidenmaa, 2003; Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003, 2008; Pahta & Taavitsainen, 2004, 2011; Kankaanranta, 2005; Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2005; Moore & Varantola, 2005; Leppänen, 2007; Nikula, 2007; Leppänen & Nikula, 2007; Leppänen, Nikula & Kääntä, 2008; Leppänen et al., 2011). This sociolinguistic change is interlinked with extensive societal and cultural changes taking place since World War II, including a whole-scale modernization of the society, rapid urbanization, technologization and internationalization. An important factor contributing to the status of English was the educational reform in the early 1970s, introducing the comprehensive school, where studying a foreign language became compulsory for everyone: as a consequence, every age group of Finns began to learn a foreign language at the age of nine. From the very beginning, for most pupils the first foreign language has been English, although other languages have also been made available, particularly in urban schools. For example, according to recent statistics most students start studying English from grade three (in 2008, 91 per cent of grade three students study English as their first foreign language, with corresponding figures of 1.2 per

cent for German, 0.8 percent for French and 0.2 percent for Russian) (SUKOL, 2010). During the past 15 years in particular, English has also gained position not only as an object of education but as a medium of education on all levels of education from day nurseries to polytechnics and universities. Largely as a result of learning English in formal contexts, according to the latest statistics, circa 60 per cent of all Finns speak English fluently in everyday communicative situations; the percentage is considerably higher among the younger generations (Eurobarometer, 2006; Leppänen et al., 2011). With increasing internationalization, English has become an essential part of the professional life of a steadily growing number of Finns in various fields requiring communication with speakers of other languages – in politics and government, science and education, business, communication and media, transportation, tourism, sports, culture or entertainment. The mobility of many Finns has increased: politicians, businessmen and students, for example, have been catapulted into international contexts in which they had to cope with linguistically and pragmatically demanding communicative situations and settings, often ridden with acute feelings of communicative anxiety and inadequacy. Parallel to these developments, immigration to Finland has also increased, leading to more visible linguistic diversity, particularly in the big cities. Transnational economic and political interdependencies increasing demographic mobility and flexible cross-border migration and the politics of Europeanization, an important aspect of internationalization in the frame of political, economic and cultural integration within the EU, have also contributed to the use of English in several public spheres. Like the rest of the globalized world, Finland is also affected by transcultural flows and lifestyle trends where English has a key role; various kinds of youth and sub-cultures as well as sports are cases in point. Those Finns who are not actively involved in international affairs or in English-intensive life-styles, are also heavily exposed to English through the mass media, thus being passive consumers (and learners) of English. The fact that English is accessible enough to be intelligible to the majority of the population also makes it possible to use it in intranational functions in communicative contexts traditionally reserved for the domestic

languages. The use of English in commercial advertising and naming practices is one of the trends visible in the linguistic landscape; the prominence of English in posters, billboards, electric displays and shop signs is now one of the most noticeable manifestations of the position that English has gained in Finnish society.

As witnessed by the data in our study, the presence and impact of English has caught the attention of laymen. Interestingly enough, the results of a recent nation-wide survey of Finns' attitudes to English shows, however, that the great majority of Finns have no real concerns about this, but regard English as a useful and pleasant language which every Finn in principle should be able to use (Leppänen et al., 2011). Broadly speaking, the survey respondents' views on the current situation are thus at odds with the public language ideological debates under investigation in this chapter. In the same way, the general opinion Finns have about English also seems to be at odds with what has been suggested, for example, in the recent language policy program put forward by the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland (Hakulinen et al., 2009). According to this program, in a number of societal domains, including science, academic publishing and higher education, the Finnish language is now in competition with English. Thus it is argued that active protective measures are needed to enforce the right of Finnish citizens (stipulated by the Finnish language law) to use and be served in their own language (*ibid*, pp. 11–2). Here one can see a dichotomy: while the general public expresses permissive attitudes to English, language policy makers – perhaps partly due to their awareness of such attitudes – see a genuine, and harmful, process of change under way. Finns, they believe, need to be aware of the situation and to take measures in all domains of society to protect, promote, and actively prefer their own language over English. Something of this concern that Finns are not being sufficiently aware of the danger lurking in the spread and popularity of English may, in fact, also ignite the opinions and attitudes voiced in the public forum of the press.

[A] LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN EDITORIALS AND LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR

Editorials and letters-to-the-editor provide a window into the ways in which public newspaper discourse constitutes and is constitutive of language ideologies (Blackledge, 2005, p. 89). An examination of items representing these two genres published in 1995–2007 in the leading Finnish daily newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, shows that language issues are a recurrent theme, inciting expressions of opinion from people representing various walks of life, including both language professionals and ordinary people. The focus of the writings varies, so that opinions are expressed on topics ranging from the importance of education and competence in foreign languages, typically for various practical reasons affecting the economic or intellectual future of subjects from individuals to the entire nation, to concerns about and annoyance with the poor language skills, in Finnish or any other languages, of particular social groups using language in public contexts. Several writers express their concern about the narrowing of Finns' foreign language skills repertoire, as the numbers of students studying European languages like French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian in Finnish schools are very low. A great number of writings have sparked from the underlying ongoing changes in the sociolinguistic situation of the country. The nature, quality and status of Finnish, the majority mother tongue, receives a lot of attention, with writers expressing their worries or anger over its decline, brought about by uneducated, uncultured, negligent or careless language users misusing, abusing or under-using it. On the other hand, its importance, beauty, richness, expressive capacity and versatility, and its closeness to every Finns' heart are frequently emphasized. The dual role of Swedish as a part of the cultural heritage on the one hand and as a compulsory school subject – almost a cultural burden – on the other is a common topic (see also Salo, this volume). As expected, however, the majority of opinions are concerned with the role of English, so much so that often English in one way or another also figures in writings primarily

dealing with other languages, often providing a point of comparison or contrast. The attitudes towards English expressed in the writings vary from positive, advocating the importance of English skills in the globalized economy, through pragmatic, accepting English as a self-evident means of participation in today's world, to negative, portraying English as a threat or danger to other languages and cultures, in this case notably Finnish.

Our focus in the rest of this chapter is on textual occurrences and formulations of English as a danger: on points in which – following the dictionary definition (OED) – English makes the Finnish society or some of its parts liable or exposed to harm, injury, evil, risk or peril. More specifically, we will show what specific types of danger English is perceived to present to the Finnish language situation, society and culture, to what or whom these dangers are particularly imminent, what kinds of arguments are used to establish the dangerousness of English, and why – in response to what kind of historical situations – the issue of the dangerousness of English is raised in the opinion writings.

Hence, our analysis is necessarily slanted in that it only pays attention to 'alarmist' views of English and excludes the 'celebrationist' views by not paying attention textual occurrences and formulations in which English is depicted as something positive, advantageous and helpful. In our opinion, this kind of bias is, however, justified: when English is perceived as a danger, it brings into focus the sociolinguistic crisis Finland has been undergoing from the 1990s onwards during which the modernist notion of a nation and a nation-state defined by its national language/s has had to give way to a more heterogeneous, late modern sociolinguistic reality brought about Europeanization, internationalization and globalization of the society.

The data we draw on consists of editorials and letters-to-the-editor discussing language issues, published in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading national daily in Finland.¹ The data comes from two focus periods within a 12-year time span: from 1995–1999 and 2005–2007. The material contains 106 separate texts and amounts to just over 30,000 words of running text (see Table 1 below). In

order to identify the loci where the English language was mentioned in the editorials and letters-to-the-editor, we analyzed the electronically-stored data with a corpus tool called AntConc,² using a truncated form of the Finnish lexeme for ‘English’ (*englanti*) as a search term. The passages identified by the systematic computerized search were then subjected to a discourse analytic examination, where passages portraying English as a danger were selected for a closer scrutiny. In analyzing these passages, we aimed at investigating the linguistic and rhetorical ways in which the writers – ranging from experts to voices of the general public – construct their particular scenarios about the dangerousness of English: in what way, in which context and historical situation and to whom the danger is perceived to manifest, and what effects it is argued to have.

Table 1. Editorials and letters-to-the-editor discussing language issues in *Helsingin Sanomat* in 1995–1999 and 2005–2007

Period	Texts	Words
1995–1999	66	19,645
2005–2007	40	11,222
Total	106	30,867

[A] DANGEROUS ENGLISH

In order to diagnose the danger that English is seen to pose in the scenarios painted in editorials and letters-to-the-editor in *Helsingin Sanomat*, we discuss the discourses of endangerment using the following questions:

- As what kind of danger is English seen and how it is verbalized?
- To whom is it argued to be a danger and how are these parties characterized?

[B] What kind of danger is English?

[C] English as an intruder

In our data, English is often portrayed as an intruder which does not belong in Finland. As an intruder, English overshadows, undermines or displaces the indigenous native language. Often, the intrusion of English into the Finnish territory is portrayed as non-patriotic, and its users as disloyal, in betrayal of true Finnishness. This view is illustrated in example 1, an extract of a letter-to-the-editor criticizing the use of English by the Finnish coast guard – a state authority. The writer expresses his surprise at the English name “frontier guard” that is painted on the patrol boats instead of the Finnish and Swedish names of the institution. He expresses his concern over the lack of “healthy patriotism” in the “officials in charge of state security” and worries that the use of English gives an impression to Finns that Finland is not a sovereign country, but needs to resort to the help of others, specifically “NATO or the British”, to guard its frontiers.³

Example 1

Our coast guards English?

We drove past the coast guard station in Haapasaari on August 4th, and to my big surprise I noticed that all patrol boats had “frontier guard” written on them. No Finnish or Swedish text was in sight.

In an ordinary Finn this sort of internationalization raises a whole bunch of questions. Even though our business life has adopted a lot of English terminology, one would expect officials in charge of state security to show healthy patriotism emphasizing the profile of Finnishness with elegance.

The valuing of our official languages is an important part of our Finnish identity. English is not yet officially our third language.

Now “frontier guard” on a Finnish coast guard patrol boat gives to us Finns an impression that Finland is not an entirely independent, sovereign state, but Nato or the British have come to guard our borders. (Letter-to-the-editor, 9 August 1996.)

As an intruder, English is also seen as an agent creating linguistic homelessness, especially when it is used as a medium of education in content-and-language-integrated-learning (CLIL) environments. Such views as these were inspired by the passing of a law in 1991 which made CLIL instruction possible in Finnish schools – for many, this innovation represented a step towards a deliberate succumbing to English as a language of education, and towards displacing teaching in L1. Against this background, “linguistic homelessness” most likely means that English was seen to possess the power to sever the connection between identity and the L1, leading to lack of belonging and of shared heritage. Example 2 represents a case in point; this is the voice of an expert – a professor of Finnish. For him/her the impact of the introduction of English as the language of instruction in some subjects is so serious that s/he categorically asserts that there simply is “no need for it”:

Example 2

NN, professor of Finnish language says in *Helsingin Sanomat* on August 18th that there is no need for English-language teaching in Finnish schools. According to him/her, it creates linguistic homelessness. (Letter-to-the-editor, 1 September 1996.)

[C] English as a destructive natural force

The power that English is believed to have over other languages and cultures is often emphasized by comparing it to an uncontrollable natural force, springing from the technological and economic supremacy of the Anglo-American world. For example, the impact of English is seen as overwhelming as a flood or as inevitable as global warming sweeping over the native language. In the middle of this ‘natural’ disaster Finnish is, in contrast, seen as an undeveloped, defenceless

victim at the mercy of the overpowering, external force. Two editorials from the late 1990s illustrate this view as follows:

Example 3

Loan words have flooded into the language for the past 6000 years, as long as we know, and they will keep flooding in [--] Words come and they are adapted into our language and that's it. [--] But the real danger to the Finnish language comes precisely from the prevailing technically advanced culture, and at the moment that is the Anglo-American culture.

(Editorial, 18 January 1998.)

Example 4

The valuing of Anglo-American culture is leading to the receding of Finnish in front of English in various functions. The business world, especially commercial advertising, has opened the flood gates. [--] The process is slow but it advances as inevitably as the greenhouse effect. (Editorial, 30 June 1996.)

Interestingly, this kind of metaphorical views of English as a cause or factor in an 'ecological' catastrophe are not unknown in more scholarly discussions either. For example, linguistic diversity has been seen as a particular type of biocultural diversity which is susceptible to sweeping external forces which can radically reduce the vitality of small, indigeneous, traditional and local languages (see e.g. Terralingua, <<http://www.terralingua.org/html/home.html>>, date accessed 7 September 2011).

[C] English as a violent actor

In the same way as some scholars have seen English as a killer language (see e.g. Phillipson, 2004; McArthur, 1998), in our data English also is likened to a violent actor which has the capacity to burden and suffocate – and even kill the Finnish language. It is seen a supreme and malicious force

of cultural hegemony, spreading the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-American culture, oppressing “our language”. The damage caused by English is, however, at least partly aided by Finns themselves who are claimed to willingly subject themselves to its harmful effects. Examples 5–8 all illustrate such a conceptualization of English:

Example 5

Almost as big a burden to the Finnish language [as compulsory Swedish] is the second language of the bilingual world, English (Letter-to-the-editor, 30 December 1998).

Example 6

To prevent the threat one might consider giving English the position that Latin used to have by the side of the Finnish language. Then it would not cause pressure to oppress our language [--] (Letter-to-the-editor, 7 June 2005.)

Example 7

[--] the real danger to the Finnish language comes precisely from the prevailing technically advanced culture, and at the moment that is the Anglo-American culture. We suffocate our language ourselves. (Editorial, 18 January 1998.)

Example 8

English is the globally shared language of ICT professionals, regardless of their nationality. This is all well and good, but because of the growing significance of ICT, the increased use of English will be the death of Finnish. (Letter-to-the-editor, 16 October 1996.)

[C] English as morally wrong

English is also a morally wrong choice; this has already become clear in the examples discussed above. Its use is seen as non-patriotic, it undermines Finnish national identity and leads Finns to abandon their own language and culture. Its advocacy and use can even be compared to heresy:

Example 9

The article describes the problem as a value-free choice between English and the mother tongue and indirectly labels as heretics those who use English in their teaching (Letter-to-the-editor, 4 May 2005).

However, it is not only the Finns whose moral values are called into question, but also the English language itself is believed to be in some way morally dubious. Because of its omnipresence, it is argued, it can seduce and trick people into thinking that they can actually speak it, when, in reality, they cannot, for it is a complex language whose nuances are difficult to master:

Example 10

There is trap lurking in English. There are many who fall into it, thinking that they know how to speak the language, because it is heard everywhere. On the level of nuances, however, English is an extremely difficult language. (Letter-to-the-editor, 21 October 2005.)

[C] English by Finns – Bad, very bad

When Finns do use English, they sound awful – this seems to be a very typical evaluation voiced by many commentators. The English as used by Finns is regarded as either bad or very bad. Typical lamentations include that Finns' English is vulgar, uneducated, ridiculous and ugly. In addition, as was already suggested above, its use is a non-patriotic act jeopardizing the consistency and authenticity of genuine national identity. An interesting variation in this theme is also that it is suggested that the badness of English spoken by Finns is actually caused by Swedish: this is because “the obligatory status of Swedish as a school subject [--] takes up the limited resources which should be used in learning more important things [including English] required by the

changed world” (letter-to-the-editor, 15 February 1998). Another letter to the editor on 20 January 1996 spells the badness of Finns’ English out by establishing it as multiply problematic:

Example 11

My British friend told me that the litanies of swearwords learnt from Yankee movies by some loud-mouths first startled him and then made him laugh, because when they are sloppily mixed with Finnish in a thick accent, they sound so ridiculous (Letter-to-the-editor, 1 January 1996).

This evaluation is mediated to readers via the point of view of an English native speaker, with whom the Finnish writer, however, seems to agree full-heartedly. What is put forward here is that Finns do bad things to English, because they are the bad kind of Finns (“loud mouths”) who have picked up their English from a bad source (from “Yankee movies”), learnt a bad register (“litanies of swearwords”), and pronounce these English items in a bad way (in a “thick accent”), by sloppily mixing it with Finnish. It could even be argued that such comments as in example 11 imply that the way in which the English used by Finns is evaluated as bad is an example of distinction work (Bourdieu, 1984): their ‘bad’ English distinguishes the speakers as a particular social group or class. The social class such categorized is clearly a lower one of people who have not learnt their English at school, but through popular culture, and, instead for higher aspirations, use it for vulgar and mundane purposes. The danger implicitly suggested in this kind of scenario seems to be that the lower classes, with their subversive lower class English, trespass on social and cultural territory which, in principle, they are seen not to have any right to – the territory of native-speaker(-like) educated English.

Also code switching and loan words trigger alarm and resentment. As phenomena they are often taken to be concrete examples of the ways in which the English language is destroying the Finnish language. Such language practices are considered as a facile and superficial fashion striving for internationalisation totally lacking creativity and originality. Furthermore, as they are taken to

contribute to the emergence of an ugly and unacceptable mongrel language, they actually are argued to violate not one, but two languages, Finnish and English. Example 12 represents a typical comment:

Example 12

Finland *goes* English

I have observed with great admiration the fluent combining of English and Finnish when major cultural events have been named. What exceptional creativity and originality these skilfully used words demonstrate. *Down by the*⁴ *Laituri* [‘Pier’], how exquisite. [In the] *Art goes* *Kapakassa* [‘to the bar’] today *Classic Sunday* (HS August 31st), how international it sounds. What I would like to suggest is that the same policy be applied on an even higher societal level. *Down by the* *Hallituksen Iltakoulu* [‘the Government evening session’].

[President] *Ahtisaari goes* *Maakunnat* [‘the provinces’]. Let no one, *never*, be allowed to say that we Finns wouldn’t be part of the internationalizing and unifying world. Let us throw our national language, culture and currency into the trash at the threshold of this new and illustrious era.’ *N.N. goes* *hulluksi* [‘crazy’]. (Letter-to-the-editor, 8 September 1997.)

In this letter-to-the editor the writer imitates, repeats and exaggerates code switching practices that he has come across in the media. With the help of these strategies he constructs an ironic and parodic account of these practices and thus conveys an explicit condemnation of them as fundamentally dangerous. Thus, he is really suggesting that code switching will lead to ruin – to the opposite of “exceptional creativity and originality”, skill and exquisiteness.

What is also often at the core of language ideological assertions of this particular type is that, again, Finns are taken to be partly responsible for the crime of destroying their own language. Accordingly, the writer here lays the blame on “us Finns” who are destroying “our national language, culture and currency”. It is thus the actions of those Finns ignorant, careless or superficial enough to make such a decision to use mixed language which are being targeted. Again one can read a great deal indirect,

metonymic social criticism here: modern Finns who do code switch are being negatively evaluated because of their ideologically corrupt language practices. In addition, this example also illustrates how language practices are assigned a great deal of symbolic power: language ideological assumptions are not only speaking of people's views of language per se, but also of their attitudes to more general social changes and practices. In this particular example, the way in which the writer lumps together Finnish "language, culture and currency" as equally lost causes shows how the language practices s/he resents are actually a part of the equally problematic social and economic changes, following from Finland's joining of the EU.

[C] Finns' English as excessive and, therefore, wrong

Besides assertions of Finns' English as fundamentally bad and wrong, it is also seen as excessive and superfluous in a variety of ways – and therefore dangerous. Firstly, there are complaints that there simply is too much of English in the Finnish linguistic and media landscapes and that English is thus force-fed to Finns. Secondly, it is deplored that English is too popular, too easy, too fashionable and too modern. In short, thanks to its attractiveness, it actually seduces Finns into learning and using it too much. In this task, it is claimed, it is aided by Finns' poor self-esteem which causes them to underestimate their own language and culture.

In addition, it is also complained that too good a competence in English makes it difficult for Finns to spot misunderstandings in communication – it is thus implied that a good proficiency in English in reality hampers successful communication (Letter-to-the-editor, 23 August 2007). In example 13 the writer compares the language situation in Finland to that in Germany, and complains that the situation in Finland is worse, because English (or what appears to be English) is used too much and without any real purpose. S/he complains that English is, in fact, too popular and that it is used because for Finns, contrary to Finnish, it appears as a fashionable and modern language.

Example 13

The situation in Finland is worse. English is used in every situation: in spoken youth language the most common swearword is *fuck*⁵ and in advertisements everything is *cool* or *new*.

Companies pick an English name for themselves, *tradenoms* graduate from vocational schools and rural communities develop international survival *strategies* for themselves. What is wrong with Finnish or Finnish words? Not everything that is new or youthful needs to be in English, being fashionable can also be expressed in Finnish (Letter-to-the-editor, 14 July 1999.)

As was seen in connection with the previous example, in complaints of this type writers often cite and repeat the uses of English that they claim are allegedly overused by Finns. It seems that often the mere repetition of the offending practices is enough to convey to readers a sense of their ridiculousness; no detailed evaluation is therefore deemed necessary. Also example 14 is an illustration of this strategy: here the writer begins his/her letter-to-the-editor by a categorical statement that Finns have actually rejected their own language, and then proceeds to build up his/her exposition on this by weaving English loan words within his own text without actually commenting on them in detail:

Example 14

[Finns'] low self-esteem explains the [low] status of Finnish

XX made a very good point in the letters-to-the-editor section (May 9th) about the rejection of the Finnish language. Also I have observed with sadness the same development for years in my main work as a secretary and in my second job as a Finnish translator. An *abstract* (via *email*, for example) needs to be sent to a conference by a speaker. In the conference *the presentation of posters* is naturally in order, and the *sessions* are chaired by *moderators*, and sometimes even by the *speakers*. In the course of the event participants agree upon *missions* and *visions*, and work in *workshops*.

The *primary* goal is of course a *consensus*. The “right” concepts need to be mastered, even when the event is arranged in Finland. This was just one example out of many. [--] The reason for the underestimation of the Finnish language may be Finns’ low self-esteem (probably because of this such words are called ‘civilised’ terms), laziness, or a *laissez-faire* attitude, or, at its worst, all three of them.

“When everyone else talks about *posters* and *abstracts*, how do I dare to speak of them by using the corresponding Finnish terms.”

Finnish is a beautiful, nuanced, and infinitely rich language, but if it is not appreciated, it is difficult to protect it. (Letter-to-the-editor, 13 May 2007.)

Example 14 also illustrates that from the 1990s to the early 2000s nothing much has changed in language attitudes: in the 2000s, English continues to be a source of great deal of irritation to many Finns. In this example, the particular domain the writer is concerned with is conference register. In his/her view, it is full of terminology uncritically borrowed from English. Interestingly, s/he does not directly brand them as inappropriate or incorrect, but, like many other writers, uses more indirect strategies to do so. On the one hand, s/he implies that this happens because of social pressure by including a fabricated citation of someone who actually uses such terminology, also suggesting that it would be socially unacceptable to use Finnish terminology instead of the English one. On the other hand, by describing Finnish as “beautiful, nuanced and infinitely rich” language, s/he is also, indirectly, suggesting that the English terminology (over)used by Finns is the opposite – ugly, poor in nuances and expressive potential. In this way, like the writer of example 13 who claimed that Finns falsely believe English to be a fashionable and modern language, s/he also presents a succinct evaluation of the two languages.

[B] To whom or what is English seen as posing a danger?

According to our data, English is seen by Finns as posing a danger to practically everything and everyone in Finland.

[C] Danger to the native language

Firstly, English is a serious threat to the Finnish language, its purity, integrity and beauty (see example 15 below). A particular worry here is that English is gradually taking over communicative functions previously served by Finnish, thus reducing its functional range and causing it to regress (see example 16 below), to become underdeveloped or to prove inadequate, especially with regard to its conceptual apparatus (see example 17 below). The vulnerability of the Finnish language in the face of this threat is often underlined by characterizing it as a small language of a small nation which needs to be actively protected, because it is seen as vital for the small nation and its freedom and independence. A recurrent additional theme in this danger scenario is that English is seen to jeopardize the teaching of the native language.

Example 15

The English language is a certain threat to the Finnish language. It has a sort of ruling position in the world, which gives it considerable influence in Finland, too. (Letter-to-the-editor, 7 June 2005.)

Example 16

In those fields where [English] so totally dominates, the functional range of the mother tongue naturally becomes more narrow. [Finnish] regresses and in the long run will only be suitable in less important functions. (Editorial, 1 January 1998.)

Example 17

The most important preconditions for the life of a small nation are freedom and a language of its own. [--] The language of a small nation needs to be especially cherished and it must be consciously developed in all education, because with the increasing internationalization the language selected for use in for example research is ever more frequently some other language than Finnish. If Finnish is not used in theoretical and scientific discussion, concepts remain undeveloped and the production of texts becomes muddled. (Letter-to-the-editor, 3 March 1999.)

In professional registers, English jargon is seen as a more specific threat to the Finnish language. For example, triggered by the rapid development of ICTs in Finland in the 1980s and 1990s, a great deal of anxiety surfaced in public as the evolving field turned to English as a quick solution to the lack of exact terminology with which to describe and describe the technologies. In several writings, including both those by language professionals and laymen, computing is highlighted as an area of expertise where the language of the professionals has, for this reason, become incomprehensible to the layman:

Example 18

[--] in some fields of computing Finnish terminology is in danger of becoming overshadowed by English terminology [--] (Letter-to-the-editor, 9 April 1998).

Example 19

XX has commented on the language by ICT people (HS October 16th) [--] he argues that there is a communicative gap between the ICT people and the laymen. In his opinion, this gap would go away if topics related to ICT were talked about using the everyday language. (Letter-to-the-editor, 28 October 1996.)

However, Finnish is not the only language English threatens. It is also seen as a danger to the Swedish language in Finland, and also Swedish-speaking Finns are argued to be concerned about its

supremacy. Although Swedish is in public debates often placed in the role of the language of the elite and regarded with suspicion and resentment (see Salo, this volume), in relation to English it is seen to occupy a similarly endangered position. Example 20 illustrates this; with the help of expert opinions by linguists, it argues that the two national languages are both falling victims to English:

Example 20

XX and YY noted (HS May 22nd) that internationalization should not mean the killing of small languages. [--] The Finnish language is not the only one under threat. In the world, ca 6900 different languages are spoken. About 90 per cent of people speak the hundred “biggest” languages. The rest of the 6800 languages in the world are under the threat of extinction during the next hundred years, argue Suzanne Romaine and Daniel Nettle, both researchers in Oxford. [--] English language skills are needed, but the Finnish and Swedish languages should not be sacrifices for the English language. (Letter-to-the-editor, 29 May 2005.)

Analogously, English is also seen to endanger *skandinaviska* – the Scandinavian variety used in many Nordic meetings and seminars (see Martin, this volume) – thus placing pan-Nordic culture and co-operation in a vulnerable position and robbing Nordic citizens of the expression of Nordic solidarity and identity.

Example 21

Our neighbourly relations to other Nordic countries will be hit as well. They will lose their unique character if we shift to English. (Letter-to-the-editor, 31 August 2005.)

An interesting point, however, is that not many commentators express much worry about the possibility that English may pose a threat to European multilingualism, thus perhaps replicating a traditional Finnish notion that Europe is a different and far-away reality with which Finns have had difficulty to identify themselves. A notable exception to this is the following:

Example 22

Mr XX, 60, who directs the main office of the translation section of the EU commission in Brussels, worries about the vitality of multilingualism within the Union. More and more officials speak English, but not as their mother tongue. (Letter-to-the-editor, 25 October 2005.)

[C] Danger to national identity

Besides the languages of Finland, English is also argued to endanger other aspects of Finnishness which are seen as crucial to the identity of the nation state and its citizens. Here, English is often portrayed as a mischievous agent working on behalf of the Anglo-American hegemonic culture, aiming to disruption and destruction of the integrity of the Finnish national language and culture. In such comments, the uniqueness and richness of Finnish culture and the need to cherish and protect it are often strongly emphasized. A typical opinion is illustrated by example 23 – it argues that English endangers not only the Finnish language and culture, but also our know-how:

Example 23

The admiration of English can be dangerous not only to our language and culture but also to Finnish know-how. (Letter-to-the-editor, 9 April 1998.)

[C] Danger to social equality

English also endangers the democratic structure of the society: it is believed that the fact that some people manage to acquire a good proficiency in English enforces social inequality and difference. Those who are proficient in English are seen to form a new privileged elite and those who are not, a new marginalized underclass. Example 24, an editorial, depicts a scene in which the adoption of English as the lingua franca in some domains and services is seen to espouse social inequality and unequal opportunities to access knowledge:

Example 24

Language does not change and develop via the official channels only

One question occupying people all over Europe is what is the role of the native language has in science and economy. Will the citizens' equality and equal access to information be possible if in some fields we only operate in English? Along with international success, will one outcome of this be the shrivelling of the native-language culture and general knowledge? (Editorial, 27 July 2006.)

Interestingly, this anxiety also surfaced in the national survey on Finns' attitudes about English (Leppänen et al., 2011). According to its findings it appeared that while the ignorance of the English language and inability to use it are not directly linked to social exclusion or relegation to the fringes of society, they do indicate a certain uninvolvedness in an urban, international and multicultural society in which work is becoming increasingly globalized and in which the capacity to use English is a valued skill.

In addition to threatening the Finnish society at large, some groups are singled out in the writings. One of these groups is the children. The popularity of English, witnessed in the alleged widespread enthusiasm for English-language immersion education, creates a danger, as children want to have English as their mother tongue. It is also interesting that the primary importance of learning the mother tongue through formal education is emphasized, whereas English, the foreign language, is seen as something that can be acquired in informal learning contexts through channels like TV, commercials and the internet. It is thus implied, that learning English is easy and requires no formal instruction, whereas learning the first language is difficult because it needs to be learnt well. English is thus not important – it can be picked up without any real effort – but Finnish is, because it is taken by many writers as the foundation necessary for thinking, for culture and for identity.

Example 25 formulates these views as follows:

Example 25

Also the National Board of Education is finally beginning to understand what the results of the over-enthusiasm about immersion and other languages, especially English, can be. It is a

really serious matter, if children prefer to have English as their mother tongue. It is understandable that parents wish that their children have a good foundation in their lives. However, in language learning it is important to see to it that Finnish is learnt properly first. English is acquired almost without an effort via TV, commercials, internet, etc. (Letter-to-the-editor, 5 September 1998.)

[C] English as a danger to the development of competences

The use of English as a medium of instruction in immersion and content-and-language-integrated learning environments, addressed in the previous example, seems to be one of the topic causing the most worry in the writings in the 1990s, in particular. What seems particularly disconcerting for many is that the development of the learners' proficiency in Finnish may be at risk because all responsibility for the teaching of the mother tongue is left to the parents. According to the writer of our next example, for instance, learning in English will lead to the loss of concepts in the native language. Learning in one language – even when it takes place in certain specific lessons only – can thus lead to the loss of the students' native language:

Example 26

The impact of English-medium instruction on the mother tongue triggers a variety of opinions. People are not worried about language mixing, but very extensive instruction in the foreign language can be harmful: some students complain that they have to search for mother tongue expressions even when they have revived English-medium instruction for only for a year. (Editorial, 1 January 1998.)

According to some writers, English also poses a threat to deep and nuanced thinking. The lack of terminology and concepts in Finnish leads to situation where the Finns' cognitive skills are endangered:

Example 27

As a professional lexicographer I know, too, that fluent Finnish terminology does not emerge on its own and that in some fields it is in danger by being displaced by English terminology. Despite this I myself and many others wish to speak and write about things, also about topics related to ICT, primarily in our own language. The admiration for English fanned up by XX can be dangerous, not only for our language and culture, but also for the Finnish know-how. Hopefully not all university teachers will succumb with him, but are smart enough to turn to terminology experts.

[--] Good language skills and awareness is of course needed, but professional competencies not improved by the removal of the tools for thinking which are based on the mother tongue.

(Letter-to-the-editor, 9 April 1998.)

An even more harmful impact of English-medium instruction is that it is taken to risk the development of Finnish children's cognitive skills. In example 28 the writer utilizes a familiar Finnish idiom of "losing the child with the bathwater" and coins a new metaphor, "the net of semi-lingualism", to drive home the point that the outcome of English-medium instruction is hazardous. You may end up losing the child, that is, failing to educate him/her properly, and causing the child to lose something essential: his/her right to a full competence in his/her mother tongue. In addition, the writer resorts to the by now familiar strategy of critique and questioning what s/he considers an excessive use of English by mimicking English(-like) terminology as part of his/her otherwise Finnish message (e.g. "alarmisti"; "defenssiaktiiviteettejä"; "intensifioitava"; "happy ending") to emphasize the silliness and absurdity of such uses of English by Finns. Besides arguing that English-medium instruction can be harmful to the development of the child's native language proficiency, the writer also suggests that such pedagogic practice also produces imperfect English. In sum, the whole of the enterprise of English-medium instruction is futile and harmful, endangering the child's development, his/her native language, and his/her proficiency in English.

Example 28

The situation in Finland is of course quite different from that in India, but we also need to be careful that the child does not slip into to the sewer with the language bathwater or get caught in the *net* of semi-lingualism. I wish by no means to be an *alarmist*, but the *defence activities* of the mother tongue *competence* need to be *intensified*, or the *story* of our internationalization remains without its *happy ending*. (Letter-to-the-editor, 31 March 1999.)

[A] CONCLUSION

In our analysis we have shown how English was multiply conceptualized as a danger, how various social groups, entities and phenomena were seen as endangered by it, and how its dangerousness was seen to arise from a range of factors. Table 2 summarizes the findings:

Table 2. Ideological constructions of English as a danger in Finland

English is a danger because it is:	
An intruder	- English as something that does not belong to Finland
A destructive natural force	- English as a flood - English as global warming - English as a cause of erosion
A violent actor	- English suffocates Finnish - English is a cause of regression - English erodes Finns' cognitive abilities - English is a source of anxiety and worry - English as a killer language
A supreme force	- English is an oppressor of "our language"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English is an expression of the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon language and culture - English is a threat to independence and sovereignty
A moral wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of English undermines Finnishness - Use of English as heresy - Use of English as non-patriotic treason - English as a cause of the abandonment of Finnish culture - English as a cause for linguistic homelessness
Bad, very bad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English is unimportant, ugly, valueless, superficial and falsely fashionable - English spoken by Finns is consistently bad - English spoken by Finns is bad, because of compulsory Swedish - English spoken by Finns is ridiculous, vulgar, low class - Code mixing as bad - English is violated by Finns: lacks creativity and originality - Use of English is superficial internationalization
Excessive, therefore wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English is too popular - English is too easy - English is excessive - English is unnecessary - English is fashionable in the wrong way - English is youthful and modern in the wrong way
English is a danger to... everyone and everything:	
To language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English endangers the Finnish language, its integrity and beauty, and communicative functions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English endangers the teaching of mother tongue - English endangers Finland Swedish
To national culture and identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English endangers Finnish culture - English endangers Finnish know-how - English endangers national freedom, sovereignty and patriotism
To society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English endangers equality - English endangers the social structure, by creating and enforcing social difference: Finns' English is bad because it is too widely used in a vulgar way
To social groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English is attractive to too many Finns - English puts children at risk
To the development of competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English hampers the development of proficiency in Finnish - English endangers Finns' cognitive skills - Finns' use of English produces imperfect English
To other countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English robs Nordic citizens of the expression of Nordic solidarity - English endangers Nordic culture and cooperation - English threatens European multilingualism

As Table 2 indicates, the dangerousness of English in our data is constructed with the help of a range of metaphors which liken its impact on Finland, Finnish and Finns to a range of destructive, disruptive, harmful and violent actors, phenomena and entities. Similarly, the impact of English is argued to be pervasive, seductive, corruptive and harmful to individuals and social groups, their minds and language practices, It can even do damage to the fabric, purity and integrity of Finnish society and culture. In all of these conceptualizations there is, as Gal (2006, p. 15) has suggested as typical of language ideologies on the whole, a “characteristic persistence that monolingualism is

taken to be the natural state of human life, that languages are seen as homogeneous to the extent that they are taken to be expressions of the distinct spirit of a particular group”.

However, as our analysis has shown, as a social index English is quite complex and ambiguous, for it can be seen to communicate both an elite status and a high social class, as well as vulgarity and a low social class of its speakers. It is depicted as very difficult, and too easy; complex and nuanced, as well as ugly, poor in nuances and superficial. In a way, it could be argued that the debates actually constitute several Englishes. Firstly, there are at least two ‘good’ and ‘correct’ Englishes: one which is the exclusive property of native speakers, and another which is the exclusive property of non-native speakers who index their non-nativeness through a non-native accent. Analogously, there are at least two ‘bad’ Englishes: the English that is like a natural force which has the capacity to crush the Finnish language, society, culture, nation and the nation-state. Another bad English is the one mutilated in a vulgar and profane way by low class non-native speakers who have in principle no right to usurp to possess the language in the first place.

Language ideological debates can be triggered by and resonate with a range of events, actions, experiences or discourses which have in common that they in some way are objectionable to writers, be they journalists or lay people. Firstly, there are major societal changes or political decisions, as reported on in the media, which explicitly offer textual and political material for writers to comment on or criticize. During the time period covered in our data such events included Finland joining the EU in 1995 – which gave rise to anxiety over whether the national language and Finns’ linguistic rights would be marginalized because of the fact that EU was seen to operate in “Euro English”. For example, in 1998 a piece of news in *Helsingin Sanomat* (1998) reported on that the Ministry of Environmental Affairs was planning to send a formal query to the EU commission as to why the so called Natura forms (forms used for registering nature reserves) were not available in Finnish or Swedish. On this issue a government official was reported on arguing that “this issue is, in principle, important. Finland is a member state in the EU and we have a right to work in our own mother

tongue”. On the other hand, the English used in EU was also ridiculed as corrupted and low quality, compared to native-speaker English/es: for example in a letter to the editor (23 March 1995), a language professional argues that “The English spoken in Brussels makes Oxford and Cambridge smile, with pity”. So, although the English imposed on the Finnish state and citizens were seen as menacing the national languages, it was also taken to be inferior and ludicrous, because it does not belong to Europeans, and, therefore, they are in principle incapable of managing in English without making both themselves and the language ridiculous.

Another major political issue stimulating language ideological debates during the time period under investigation was clearly the government decision to strengthen the role of content-and-language integrated education in Finnish primary and secondary schools. As was already shown above, in the 1990s this was, in fact, one of the topics that ignited debate the most and also gave rise to extensive danger scenarios ranging from threats of corruption of Finns’ minds, to the deterioration of the educational system, and eventually the languages of Finland. Also experiences that individuals have had with English in public places, with the media, or in their private lives sometimes gave rise to language ideological debates. In such texts, it was often apparent how language – especially the first language – was felt to be a private and personal issue about which people have very strong feelings. In this kind of framework English tends to be seen as a hostile agent threatening the very core of one’s identity.

Secondly, it is not surprising that in many of the conceptualisations of English as a danger one can detect the impact of national history and of discursive frameworks for telling the grand narrative of Finnish history. In particular, the colonial past of the country, the fact that it has been a part of two empires – Sweden (from the 11th century to 1808–1809) and Russia (1808–1917) still seem to give some of the language ideological debates direction and shape. The resentment against the Swedish language apparent in our data in arguments against Swedish as an obligatory school subject and as a factor which jeopardizes Finns’ capacity to learn other languages, can partly derive from the

cultural suspicion that some members of the Finnish majority have had against the Swedish influence in Finland, and what they see as the Swedish speaking elite in Finland. Even more importantly, the relationship Finland has had with Russia and the USSR, seems to have a great deal to do with some of the ways in which the dangerousness of English is argued for. For instance, an editorial, while discussing the Irish society and culture – also manages to suggest, through a comparison between Finland and Ireland, that despite difficult times and a sensitive geopolitical position, Finland has nevertheless managed to retain its culture and language:

Example 29

Finland and Ireland have a lot in common

One of the curiosities in this world is that Finns should feel at home in Ireland, at the other edge of Europe, a long way away on this nearly treeless island with the roaring Atlantic Ocean, endless rain and green grass. This is so, despite the fact that in principle Finns and Irish knew nothing of each other a few years ago when both were struggling against their own isolation while also deriving much of their power from it. There are lot of similarities. A big neighbour keen on getting supremacy, a religious borderland, poverty, the protection of one's own culture based on storytelling even during difficult times, a strange small language, similar drinking habits – the list is endless. (Editorial, 4 October 1998.)

On an even more general level, the dangerousness of English often seems to be constructed with the help of a very specific historical-ideological narrative depicting the Finnish nation-state, culture and language as under attack and which dates back to late 19th and early 20th century political battles for national independence, and to the establishment and solidification of the nation-state in the 20th century. To illustrate this narrative, consider *The Attack* ('Hyökkäys') (1905), a painting by Eetu Isto which is a very well known, iconic representation of the image of Finland in danger. In the painting, the Russian double-headed eagle is attacking the maiden symbolizing Finland, tearing her

law book. In the battle for independence, the painting became the symbol of protest against russification.



Image 1. The Attack (1905) by Eetu Isto

It could be argued that this picture also captures something crucial of the current national imagery, in other words, of the ways in which Finns have long looked at forces, powers and influences external to its borders as menacing the integrity and sovereignty of the nation, culture, the nation-state and even the minds of its citizens.

As was shown above, in the language ideological debates about English this view was clearly visible. In this debate English was cast into the role of the Other – both the malicious attacker and the corruptive seducer. From this perspective, the language ideological debates about English are thus not simply indexical – pointing to and expressing assumptions about English in relation to and opposed to Finnish, about Finns as speakers of English and Finnish, and about the significance of the ‘national’ language. Importantly, the debates and views they foreground are also iconic – they

offer an image of what are taken to be the essential ingredients of nation, nation-state, language and culture (see also Gal, 1998, 2002).

As in many other nation states, in Finland language has always had a central role in the definition of the nation. A well known formulation of this ideology can be found in the writings of the Finnish ‘national’ philosopher, J.V. Snellmann, who was strongly influenced by for example Herder’s ideas⁶. In 1844, Snellman wrote that

It is often thought that it does not matter which sound or language you use, they just express the same thoughts. But human beings do not only express their thoughts in their words, but they also believe, feel, know and desire in their words, their thoughts, the whole of their rational being moves and lives in a language. How could the spirit of a nation express itself in any other language except in its own? [transl. by SL]

It is largely thanks to Snellman that in Finland national identity has for long been seen as crucially dependent on what were coined as the national language/s (see also Mantila, 2006). In this ideology language was seen as capturing and expressing the fundamental essence of a nation.

Finally, on the basis of the language ideological debates analysed in this chapter, it could be argued that the Snellmanian notion of language as the essence of the nation is still very much alive and well in Finland. Why it is still doing well in the early 2000s, has a lot to do with the fact that in the era of globalization and internationalization which also Finland has recently entered, English has become an easily available symbol of the anxieties associated with globalization and internationalization.

These anxieties – the sense of menace imposed by the global language, included – are, however, not unique to Finland only. They are typical of what for example Ulrich Beck (1992) has referred to as the crisis in societies which are moving from an era of “first modernity” to late modernity. This crisis entails an uneasy, jagged transition from thinking about and operating in the world in terms of national societies limited to geographical territory, national container states, nation-state concerns and national identities towards a world of new mobile economics, challenges of national identities,

radical individualization, labour-market challenges of the old life span, citizens without countries, and the rise of political failures of nation-state politics and unaccountability of global patterns (Beck, 1992, 2002). In periods of crisis like the ones depicted by Beck, language ideologies which fall back on national language as the essence of a nation and nation-state have a certain appeal of keeping the inevitable changes, at least for some time and for some people, at bay.

[A] NOTES

¹ Circulation 470,657 in 1995 and 419,791 in 2007.

² A freeware concordance programme created by Laurence Anthony, available for download at <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html>, date accessed 7 September 2011.

³ The original Finnish texts have been translated to English by the authors. The extracts in Finnish are listed at the end of this chapter.

⁴ The italics are added here by us to indicate the actual English expressions used in the otherwise Finnish text.

⁵ Again, the words indicated by italics mark the original English used in the original Finnish text.

⁶ In his *Philosophical Writings*, Herder argued “For every distinct community is a *nation* having its own national culture as it has its own language.” (Herder, 2002, p. 284).

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[A] LIST OF THE DATA EXAMPLES IN FINNISH

Example 1

Merivartijamme englantilaisia?

Ajoimme 4.8. Haapasaaren merivartioaseman ohi ja hämmästykseni oli suuri, kun huomasin, että kaikkiin merivartioaluksiin oli kirjoitettu “frontier guard”. Mitään suomen- tai ruotsinkielistä tekstiä ei näkynyt.

Tavallisessa suomalaisessa tällainen kansainvälistyminen herättää koko joukon kysymyksiä. Vaikka liike-elämämme onkin omaksunut paljon englanninkielistä terminologiaa, odottaisi valtion turvallisuudesta vastuussa olevilta virkamiehiltä tervettä isänmaallisuutta suomalaisuuden profiilia tyylikkäästi korostaen.

Virallisten kieliemme arvostus on tärkeä osa suomalaista identiteettiämme. Englanti ei vielä ole virallinen kolmas kieleemme.

Nyt “frontier guard” suomalaisessa merivartioaluksessa antaa maastamme meille suomalaisille sellaisen lässähtäneen vaikutelman, että Suomi ei olisikaan täysin itsenäinen, suvereeni valtio, vaan rajojamme ovatkin tulleet valvomaan Naton joukot tai britit. (Mielipide, 9.8.1996.)

Example 2

Suomen kielen professori NN sanoo Helsingin Sanomissa 18.8. että Suomessa ei tarvita englanninkielistä kouluopetusta. Se luo hänen mielestään kielellistä kodittomuutta. (Mielipide, 2.9.1996.)

Example 3

Lainasanoja on tulvinut kieleen viimeisen kuuden tuhannen vuoden ajan, sen ajan, josta jotain tiedetään, ja tulvii vastakin. [--] Sanat tulevat ja ne mukautetaan omaan kieleen ja thats it. [--] Varsinainen uhka suomen kielelle sen sijaan tulee juuri tuosta teknisesti etevästä kulttuurista, joka tällä hetkellä on angloamerikkalainen. (Pääkirjoitus, 18.1.1998.)

Example 4

Angloamerikkalaisen kulttuurin arvostus on johtamassa siihen, että suomi väistyy englannin tieltä erilaisten käyttötilanteiden kielenä. Sulun on avannut talouselämä, erityisesti kaupallinen mainonta. [--] Prosessi on hidas, mutta se etenee yhtä vääjäämättä kuin kasvihuoneilmiö. (Pääkirjoitus, 30.6.1996.)

Example 5

Lähes yhtä suuri rasitus suomen kielelle [kuin pakkoruotsi] on kaksikielisen maailmanosan varsinainen kakkoskieli englanti (Mielipide, 30.12.1998).

Example 6

Uhan välttämiseksi voitaneen ajatella englannin kielelle vanhan latinan asemaa suomen kielen rinnalle. Silloin se ei aiheuttaisi paineita kieleemme sortamisen suuntaan, vaan loisi selvän kahdennetun jaon kielten välille. (Mielipide, 7.6.2005.)

Example 7

Varsinainen uhka suomen kielelle sen sijaan tulee juuri tuosta teknisesti etevästä kulttuurista, joka tällä hetkellä on angloamerikkalainen. Me tukahdutamme kieleemme itse. (Pääkirjoitus, 18.1.1998.)

Example 8

Englannin kieli on yleismaailmallinen atk-ammattilaisten yhteinen kieli kansallisuudesta riippumatta. Hyvä niin, mutta atk:n kasvavan merkityksen vuoksi laajeneva englannin käyttö on suomen kielen surma. (Mielipide, 16.10.1996 – kaupunginvaltuustoehdokas.)

Example 9

Kirjoitus tyytyy kuvailemaan ongelmaa vapaana arvovalintana englanti vastaan äidinkieli ja epäsuorasti leimaa englantia opetuskielenä käyttävät jotenkin harhaoppineiksi (Mielipide, 4.5.2005).

Example 10

Englannissa vaanii myös ansa. Moni lankeaa siihen, että luulee osaavansa kieltä, koska sitä kuulee kaikkialla. Nyanssien tasolla englanti on kuitenkin erittäin vaikea. (Mielipide, 21.10.2005.)

Example 11

Brittiläinen ystäväni kertoi joidenkin rääväsuiden jenkkileffoista oppimat kiroslitaniat saavan ensin hätkähtämään ja sitten nauramaan, sillä paksulla aksentilla suomenkielen seassa solkotettuina ne kuullostavat niin naurettavilta. Pidetään kieleemme kauniina! (Mielipide, 20.1.1996.)

Example 12

Suomi goes englanniksi

Olen ihastuneena seurannut englannin ja suomen kielen sujuvaa yhdistämistä suurten kulttuuritapahtumien nimeämisessä. Mitä poikkeuksellista luovuutta ja omaperäisyyttä osoittavatkaan nuo taidokkaasti kiteytetyt sanat. Down by the Laituri, kuinka hienoa. Art goes Kapakassa tänään Classic Sunday (HS 31.8.), kuinka kansainväliseltä se kuulostaakaan. Ehdotankin saman linjan jatkamista entistä suuremmassa yhteiskunnallisessa mittakaavassa. Down by the Hallituksen Iltakoulu. Ahtisaari goes Maakunnat. Älköön kukaan, never, pääskö sanomaan että me

suomalaiset emme olisi osa kansainvälistyvää ja yhdistyvää maailmaa. Heittäkäämme kansallinen kieli, kulttuuri ja valuutta historian romukoppaan tämän uuden ja uljaan ajan kynnyksellä. “N.N. goes hulluksi.” (Mielipide, 8.9.1997.)

Example 13

Tilanne Suomessa on pahempi. Englantia käytetään joka yhteydessä: nuorison puhekielessä yleisin kirosana on fuck ja mainoksissa kaikki on cool tai new. Yritykset muokkaavat nimensä englanninkieliseen asuun, ammattikoulusta valmistuu tradenomeja ja maaseutukunnat kehittävät itselleen kansainvälisiä selviytymisstrategioita. Mitä vikaa on suomessa tai suomenkielisissä sanoissa? Ei kaiken uuden ja nuorekkaan tarvitse olla englanniksi, muodikkautta voi ilmentää suomeksikin. (Mielipide, 14.7.1999.)

Example 14

Huono itsetunto selittää kielen aseman

XX kirjoitti Helsingin Sanomien mielipidesivulla (9.5.) täyttä asiaa suomen kielen heitteillejätöstä. Olen itsekin surullisena seurannut samaa kehitystä jo vuosikaudet sekä päätyössäni sihteerinä että sivutyössäni suomentajana. Konferenssia varten puhujan on lähetettävä abstrakti (vaikka emaililla). Itse konferenssissa postereiden presentaatio tietenkin kuuluu asiaan, ja sessioissa puhetta johtavat moderaattorit, joskus on ihan vain speakerit. Tapahtuman kuluessa sovitaan missioista ja visioista ja työskennellään workshopeissa. Primääritavoitteena on tietenkin konsensus. “Oikeat” käsitteet pitää hallita, vaikka kyse olisi Suomessa toteutettavasta suomenkielisestä tapahtumasta. Tämä oli vain yksi esimerkki lukuisista. [--] Syy suomen kielen väheksymiseen lienee suomalaisten huono itsetunto (siksi kai vierasperäisiä käsitteitä sanotaankin sivistyssanoiksi), laiskuus tai välinpitämättömyys – pahimmillaan kaikki kolme yhdessä. “Kun kaikki muut puhuvat postereista ja abstrakteista, enhän minäkään kehtaa puhua julisteista enkä luentotiivistelmistä.” Suomi on kaunis,

vivahteikas ja loppumattoman rikas kieli, mutta jos sitä ei arvosta, sitä on vaikea vaalia. (Mielipide, 13.5.2007.)

Example 15

Englannin kieli on tietty uhka suomen kielelle. Sillä on eräänlainen mahtiasema maailmassa, mikä antaa sille huomattavan painoarvon myös Suomessa. (Mielipide, 7.6.2005.)

Example 16

Niillä aloilla, joita [englannin] kieli näin totaalisesti hallitsee, äidinkielen käyttöala luonnollisesti kapenee. Se taantuu ja kelpaa ennen pitkää vain toisarvoisiin tehtäviin. (Pääkirjoitus, 18.1.1998.)

Example 17

Pienen kansakunnan tärkeimmät elämän edellytykset ovat vapaus ja oma kieli. [--] Pienen kansan kieltä on vaalittava erityisesti ja sitä on kehitettävä tietoisesti kaikessa koulutuksessa, sillä kansainvälistymisen lisääntyessä mm. tutkimusten kieleksi valikoituu yhä useammin muu kuin suomi. Jos teoreettista ja tieteellistä pohdintaa ei harjoiteta suomeksi, jäävät käsitteet kehittymättä ja selkeän tekstin tuottaminen vaikeutuu. (Mielipide, 3.3.1999.)

Example 18

[--] suomenkielinen termistö [--] muun muassa tietotekniikan eräillä alueilla uhkaa jäädä englanninkielisen varjoon (Mielipide, 9.4.1998).

Example 19

XX on puuttunut (HS 16.10.) atk-väen kielenkäyttöön. [--] hän tuo esille atk-ihmisten ja maallikoiden välisen ymmärryskatkon, joka hänen mukaansa poistuisi, jos atk-asioista puhuttaisiin jokapäiväisellä kielellä. (Mielipide, 28.10.1996.)

Example 20

XX ja YY totesivat (HS 22.5.), ettei kansainvälistyminen saisi olla pieniä kieliä tappavaa. [--] Uhan alla ei ole ainoastaan suomen kieli. Maailmassa puhutaan noin 6900 eri kieltä. Noin 90 prosenttia ihmisistä puhuu sataa "suurinta" kieltä. Loput 6800 maailman kielistä ovat uhan alla kadota seuraavan sadan vuoden aikana, näin väittävät Oxfordissa toimivat tutkijat Suzanne Romaine ja Daniel Nettle. [--] Englannin kielen taitoa tarvitaan, mutta suomen tai ruotsin kieltä ei saa uhrata englannin kielen eteen. (Mielipide, 29.5.2005.)

Example 21

Samoin käy myös pohjoismaisten naapurisuhteitten. Ne menettävät erikoisluonteensa, jos siirrytään englannin kielen käyttöön. (Mielipide, 31.8.2005.)

Example 22

EU:n komission käännöstöimen pääosastoa Brysselissä johtava Juhani Lönnroth, 60, kantaa huolta monikielisyyden säilymisestä unionissa. Yhä useampi virkamies puhuu englantia, mutta ei äidinkielenään. (Mielipide, 21.10.2005.)

Example 23

englannin ihannointi voi olla vaarallista, ei vain kielemme ja kulttuurimme kannalta, vaan myös suomalaisen osaamisen kannalta (Mielipide, 9.4.1998).

Example 24

Kieli ei muutu ja kehity pelkästään virallisia teitä

Kaikkialla Euroopassa pohditaan, mikä on oman kielen asema tieteessä ja taloudessa. Toteutuuko kansalaisten yhdenvertaisuus ja tiedonsaanti, jos joillakin aloilla toimitaan vain englanniksi? Onko kansainvälisen menestyksen rinnalla odotettavissa omakielisen kulttuurin ja yleissivistyksen kutistuminen? (Pääkirjoitus, 27.7.2006.)

Example 25

[--] Opetushallituksessakin aletaan tajuta, mitä voi olla seurauksena, kun innostutaan liiaksi kielikylyivistä ja muista kielistä, lähinnä englannista. On jo vakavaa, jos lapset haluavat äidinkielekseen pikemmin englannin. On ymmärrettävää, että vanhemmat haluavat antaa lapsilleen mahdollisimman hyvät lähtökohdat. Kielten opiskelussa on kuitenkin syytä pitää huolta siitä, että suomi opitaan ensin kunnolla. Englanti tulee miltei itsestään tv:n, mainosten, internetin ym. kautta. (Mieli-pide, 5.9.1998.)

Example 26

Vieraskielisen opetuksen vaikutuksesta äidinkieleen ollaan monta mieltä. Kielten sekoittumista ei juuri pelätä, mutta hyvin kattavasta vieraskielisestä opetuksesta voi kuitenkin olla haittaa: jotkut oppilaat valittivat, että äidinkieliä ilmauksia saa joskus hakea jo vuodenkin kestäneen vieraskielisen opetuksen jälkeen. (Mieli-pide, 27.1.1998.)

Example 27

[--] Sanastotyön ammattilaisena minäkin tiedän, ettei sujuva suomenkielinen termistö synny itsestään ja että se muun muassa tietotekniikan eräillä alueilla uhkaa jäädä englanninkielisen varjoon. Silti minä ja monet muut suomalaiset haluamme puhua ja kirjoittaa asioista, myös

tietoliikenneasioista, ensisijaisesti omalla kielellämme. Halmeen lietsoma englannin ihannointi voi olla vaarallista, ei vain kielemme ja kulttuurimme kannalta, vaan myös suomalaisen osaamisen kannalta. Toivottavasti kaikki korkeakoulujemme opettajat eivät alistu hänen kanssaan, vaan hoksaavat tarvittaessa kääntyä esimerkiksi terminologian asiantuntijoiden puoleen. [--] Hyvää kielitaitoa ja -tajuuta tarvitaan ilman muuta, mutta ammatillista osaamista ei edistä se, että otetaan äidinkieleen perustuvat ajattelun välineet pois. (Mielipide, 9.4.1998.)

Example 28

Tilanne Suomessa on tietysti aivan toinen kuin Intiassa, mutta mekin saamme pitää varamme, ettei vain lapsi pääsisi livahtamaan viemäriin kielikylypyveden mukana tai takertumaan puolikielisyysnettiin. En toki halua olla alarmisti, mutta äidinkielen kompetenssin defenssiaktiiviteettejä olisi kyllä intensifioitava, tai kansainvälistymisemme stoori jää happy endittä. (Mielipide, 31.3.1999.)

Example 29

Suomella ja Irlannilla paljon yhteistä

Maailman menon kummallisuuksiin kuuluu, että suomalainen tuntee olonsa kotoisaksi juuri

Irlannissa, Euroopan toisella äärellä, kaukana pauhaavan

Atlantin, loputtoman sateen ja vihreän nurmikon liki puuttomalla saarella. Näin siitä huolimatta,

että suomalaiset ja irlantilaiset eivät pääsääntöisesti tienneet toisistaan mitään vielä muutama vuosi sitten, kun molemmat kamppailivat omaa eristyneisyyttään vastaan ja imivät siitä samalla voimansa.

Yhdistäviä tekijöitä on paljon. Suuri ylivaltaan pyrkivä naapuri, uskontojen rajamaa, köyhyys,

tarinan kertomiseen nojaava oman kulttuurin suojele vaikeinakin aikoina, kummallinen pieni kieli,

samanlaiset juopottelutavat – listaa riittää loputtomiin. (Pääkirjoitus, 4.10.1998.)