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Negotiating membership and participation across languages in performative community arts

This article examines multilingual English–Finnish interaction in a community art group, comprising dancers with varying cultural backgrounds, linguistic competences and physical abilities. The group is defined as an artistic / English as a lingua franca community of practice. The study avails of the authors' ethnographic participant observation in the community and transcribed audiovisual data. Through conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis, the study centers on the negotiation of a role-playing exercise: how language choices reflect identity and enable participation, how individual and social motives and foci of attention contribute to the process of co-creation, and how the discussants merge reality and fiction in transitioning into the world of art. Besides aspects of membership and participation, the analysis uncovers ambiguities that emerge in the collaboration of participants with asymmetric language skills and diverse backgrounds. It also addresses the potential of community art to create an inclusive environment with artistic value.

Keywords: multilingualism, English language, community art, social inclusion, conversation analysis

Asiasanat: monikielisyys, englannin kieli, yhteisötaide, sosiaalinen osallisuus, keskustelun-analyysi

1 Introduction

The focus of the present study is on multilingual interaction, with English as the primary lingua franca, in the context of a community art group in Joensuu, Finland. In addition to linguistic aspects, we examine the social and individual processes of co-imagining and negotiating an artistic performance during one of the first rehearsals of the group. Able Art Group II (AAGII) convened for one year in 2017, rehearsing for a collectively created contemporary dance performance, and it comprised dancers with Finnish and migrant backgrounds as well as with varying linguistic competences and physical abilities. It was, in other words, a diverse group of people meeting regularly in an intercultural, creative space. The group was gathered together and led by a professional artist, Minnamaria “Minni” Hirvonen, and the members frequently engaged in the negotiation and co-creation of dance choreographies and exercises. English and Finnish were the primary languages of the rehearsals, but as a result of the participants’ varying language skills and proficiencies, code-switching, translation, and other multilingual practices and language contact phenomena were commonplace.

The group’s interaction was also affected by the broad diversity and marginalized status of many of the participants. Creating art with marginalized groups is gaining traction in Finland, partly due to institutional subsidies given to projects promoting wellbeing, integration and participation. Finnish art professionals commonly use the term community art in these types of contexts. It covers a broad variety of meanings and practices, combining the traditions of community art and participatory art (see Roponen-Lunnas 2013). The interface of art and the margins has been the subject of several research projects. Studies have focused on, for example, immigrants (Vanhanen 2017), children (Kantonen 2005, 2007), elderly people (Koponen et al. 2018) and disabled people (Yang 2015). Our shared interest with these studies is in the implementation of artistic methods among diverse, marginalized citizens and the impact that community art has on the participants’ experiences of agency and inclusion.

In linguistics, social inclusion research is often concerned with the challenges faced by minority and immigrant communities and their experiences of integrating in and engaging with the majority language culture (see Piller & Takahashi 2011). The present paper also deals with the subjects of social inclusion and participation, but on a smaller scale and from a reverse perspective: although the community in question included immigrants (i.e. persons who had moved to Finland more or less permanently) as well as local Finns, its joint enterprise was the creation of a dance performance rather than Finnish language acquisition and cultural integration. Hence English was selected, for pragmatic reasons, as the primary

means of communication. The immigrant members of the group had varying levels of proficiency in Finnish, from a beginner to a fluent speaker. To many of the Finnish members, however, participating in this “international” dance ensemble was an opportunity to use and refresh their English. Besides a positive and welcome experience, this was also a challenge to one of the Finns, whose low English proficiency emerged as a social disadvantage. We will therefore examine how multilingual interaction is utilized to negotiate memberships and how – and whether – it enables the social inclusion and creative participation of all members of the group. The study also contributes to the English as a lingua franca (ELF) conversation by examining how ELF functions in a situation where the diversity extends beyond first languages to widely different levels of education, socioeconomic positions, sociocultural backgrounds, and hence, experience as ELF speakers (see, e.g. Guido 2008).

Ortega (2018a, 2018b) draws attention to the need for a “social justice turn” in multilingualism research, including second language acquisition and ELF. English is the primary lingua franca of the world at present, but knowledge of English, like multilingualism in general, is gradient and inequitable. It is interlinked with “other socially constructed hierarchies of race and ethnicity, class and wealth, gender and sexual orientations, religion, and so on” (Ortega 2018b: 3). We will add to the list physical and mental disability, illness, and old age, which tend to limit an individual’s social and economic opportunities and hence also their access to, e.g. higher education, travel, and international work environments and leisure activities, all associated with a functional competence in English.

2 Communicating the imaginary through community art

Besides language, art is also a form of communication and social interaction (see, e.g. Wolff 1981; Zolberg 1990). Community art utilizes various art forms to strengthen participants’ skills, abilities, wellbeing and self-understanding (see, e.g. Laitinen 2017; Vanhanen 2017; Young et al. 2016; Sederholm 2005). As stated by Kantonen (2005: 51), community art is about “creating together, a dialogue, where the different collaborative parties engage through art in a conversation on some topic, mutually regarded as important” [our translation]. In our analysis, we examine the manifestations of art in the process of negotiation and therefore introduce some of its relevant aspects here.

Spoken communication is always multimodal, entwining verbal and non-verbal layers, where embodied expressions, gestures and motions have a significant role in the processes of meaning making and interpretations (Haddington & Käätä 2011: 24). In the context of dance and performance art, the role of non-verbal communication often dominates the other forms. The body itself carries a specific form of knowledge, which is tied to

movement (Hämäläinen 2007: 57). Participants' expressions are affected by their intuitive and tacit bodily knowledge (ibid.), interpretation of the gestures, expressions and movements of others in the space, the goals of a specific scene or exercise, and art as creative activity. Creativity is commonly defined as an ability to produce a novel work or product, appropriate for its purpose (see Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein 2004). According to Root-Bernstein and Root-Bernstein (2004: 141), dimensions of observing, imagining, abstracting and transforming are essential parts of the creative process. At its most difficult but critical phase, subjective observations, images, patterns, and bodily feelings are translated into cogent products or forms. This is a turning point, where the creator's intuitive and imagistic processes begin to evolve into a form of symbolic communication.

In art, the core criterion of a cogent product or form is novelty (see Luhmann 2000: 199, 303; Logrén 2015: 232–233), which directs our search for the unforeseeable and unconventional. Instead of explicit answers, artistic communication involves ambiguous questioning and suggestions, a process of looking for alternative and imaginary realities. According to Luhmann (2000: 142–143), the work of art “establishes a reality of its own that differs from ordinary reality. [...] Art splits the world into a real world and an imaginary world in a manner that resembles, and yet differs from, the use of symbols in language”, having its own “freedoms and limitations” of expression (ibid.). In community art, these imaginary worlds result from the participants' interaction with each other.

As a community of practice (Wenger 1998: 72–85), a community art group shares an artistic goal, leading to mutual engagement and a willingness for the participants to understand each other. In this process, the participants utilize their cognitive and social skills and competences. Art is used for example to strengthen empathy skills in community art and art education (Kantonen 2005; Ziff et al. 2017). The exercises and informal discussions in AAGII over the year were incremental to learning about other participants and being able to adopt their perspectives. Empathy was also promoted by the shared goal, the final performance, which aimed to raise awareness of societal inequalities, prejudice, and hate, as well as to offer solace and hope.

3 Multilingual interaction with asymmetric resources

In terms of linguistic resources, AAGII consisted of individuals of different L1 backgrounds using English as their primary shared language. We see English as a lingua franca (ELF) not as superordinate but as part of the multilingual resources available to the speakers, in line with current ELF theorization (Jenkins 2015: 75). Besides English, ELF speakers utilize their other linguistic resources both overtly, through code-switching (CS) or other types of

language alternation, and covertly, through structural or semantic transfer (Cogo 2018). Numerous studies show that using code-switching in ELF is highly functional and strategic. Mauranen (2014: 234–239) divides the typical functions into interactive/social and cognitive ones. Detailed functional types are also identified by, e.g. Cogo (2009, 2018), Hülmbauer & Seidlhofer (2013) and Pietikäinen (2014, 2017).

In the present paper, the focus is on the social and interactional dimensions of CS. Rather than the insertion of L1 words and expressions in an ELF matrix, we are examining conversational code-switching as a means by which the participants seek membership and belonging in the community or offer each other access to it (e.g. Li Wei 2005). The participants' linguistic resources can be conceptualized at the levels of membership categories on the one hand (Sacks 1995: 40–48; Schegloff 2007; Day 2013) and participation frameworks on the other (Goffman 1981). The former here concern particularly linguistic memberships – how speakers position themselves or other participants as speakers of English or Finnish – but other categories emerge in the analysis as well. The latter refer to the situated frameworks of conversation and relate to Lave and Wenger's (1991) notions of full and peripheral participation. While ELF interaction enables those members of the group with functional English language skills to actively take part in the events and follow or contribute to the discussion, deficient skills leave one in the periphery or potentially outside of this participation framework (also Skårup 2004). The same applies to Finnish language skills, which are asymmetrically distributed: when the conversation switches to Finnish, some members of the group are sidelined. Conversational CS can be also used as a means of excluding participants (Cogo 2012), but in the present case it is primarily intended to bridge these two communicatively central participation frameworks (also Virkkula-Räisänen 2010). As pointed out by Lave and Wenger (1991: 49–54), participation is essentially a social practice and involves the situated negotiation of roles and many aspects of interaction, such as agency, relations, meaning, and subjective and intersubjective understanding. These aspects are evident in the negotiation of participation in the exercise below.

CS is in this case motivated by individuals' language skills rather than community-based multilingualism. In continental Europe, where all present participants are from, English is usually learned as a school subject and acquired to varying levels of proficiency. In Finland, too, rural residents, the elderly, and those with lower levels of education and occupation have lower than average English skills (Leppänen et al. 2011: 95–97), despite the generally high percentage of English speakers in the country. This has been found to result in feelings of shame, inadequacy, and exclusion from full social participation and certain public discourses (Leppänen et al. 2011: 98; Pitkänen-Huhta & Hujo 2012).

The central means of bridging the language divide is translation, including interpretation, mediation and brokering (for the practical application of these terms, see Section 5). Kolehmainen et al. (2015: 372–373) use translation as an umbrella term and point out that bilinguals frequently engage in varying types of small-scale translatorial action, which they may not necessarily even recognize as translation (see also Wilton 2009). In ELF studies, translation is rarely a focal point (see, however, Virkkula-Räsänen 2010; Cogo 2012), although it emerges as a frequent means of clarifying specific words or expressions. In AAGII, ad hoc translation is a common function of CS.

4 Aims, methods and data

This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork, which we conducted through participant observation in AAGII from November 2016 to December 2017. AAGII can be defined as a community of practice that was formed during the one-year rehearsal period. All dancers can hence be considered full members of the community, the researchers included (e.g. DeWalt & DeWalt 2010). The first Able Art Group was formed in 2013 by Minni Hirvonen, whose aim was to introduce performative community art in Joensuu for people with limited possibilities to join dance and drama groups. Grants and stipends provided the funding. The first ensemble included disabled Finnish participants and rehearsed for a collectively created performance in 2014. Plans for a second group for participants with migrant backgrounds began in 2015. In order to enhance the societal impact of AAG, Minni also started looking for academic collaborators and found the present authors: an English linguist and a sociologist of art. Our personal research interests in the group led us to join forces with Minni to launch the project *Investigative and enabling art* to generate further links between art, science, and the local community.

AAGII finally began to take shape a year later. Inez (L1 Spanish, also fluent in Finnish) joined the group in December 2016, and Paula (L1 Spanish) and Lena (L1 Serbian) soon after. Three Finnish members, long-term acquaintances of Minni's and physically or visually impaired, joined the group early on. They were familiar with the first group but not members of it. Two of these participants, Veli and Reijo, appear in the conversation below. During the open rehearsal period in the spring of 2017 there were five to twelve participants at each rehearsal, some attending just a few times. The final performing group, committed to preparing a one-hour performance called *Vallan kahva* ('A grip on power') for November 2017, consisted of nine dancers and a circus artist.

The first rehearsals revealed differences in the participants' English language competence: Reijo, a physically disabled artist, clearly had trouble expressing himself in

English. As some members of the group were beginning stage Finnish speakers, it was evident that interpreting and mediation would be required throughout the rehearsal process. Acting as default interpreters was not in the researchers' interest, as this would interfere with observing the group's interaction. Being a full member of the community however also entails participating in the interaction.

Research data were collected at the rehearsals with the consent of the participants through audiovisual recordings, photos, notes, fieldwork diaries, and interviews. The present study is based primarily on a transcribed audiovisual recording (see Appendix for the transcription symbols). The names of the participants (apart from Minni and the researchers) have been pseudonymized. However, as the subject of study is a performing group, advertised online, the participants' identities cannot be fully concealed. They know and accept this. The first draft of this article was e-mailed to or discussed with the participants appearing in the analysis and they agreed to its publication.

In this article, we focus on conversations that involve the planning and associated negotiations of a role-playing exercise on the theme of racism. The exercise took place during one of the first rehearsals on 21 January 2017, and it is a typical example of the multilingual and multimodal communication during the early stage of the formation of the community. It also illustrates various pragmatic and performing arts related mechanisms in the negotiation of a dance exercise, which entails creative, imaginative role-play and possible interpersonal tensions. Our foci of interest are 1) the functions of the language choices made in negotiating the exercise and dealing with the linguistic asymmetry of the group members, 2) the social and individual motives and ambiguities that emerge in the negotiation, and 3) the formation of the fictional role-play scene of the exercise and the transitional elements that it contains. Extract 2 includes a longer sequence, which is presented in full in order to examine the diversity of pragmatic and cross-linguistic events and the varied aspects of content and meaning brought into the context of the exercise.

The main framework for the analysis of multilingual interaction is conversation analysis (CA), which has been used in multilingual ELF research by, e.g. Pietikäinen (2017). Being ethnographers participating in the interaction, we utilize our personal knowledge of the situation and contextualize it as artistic negotiation in addition to analyzing the observed interaction, hence subscribing to "applied" rather than "pure" CA (Ten Have 1999: 10). Another aspect of CA concerns the concept of speaker identities, which are viewed as "social constructionist and non-essentialist", i.e. the interaction displays "multiple categories", which the speakers "move in and out of" (Antaki 2013: 1). As pointed out in Section 3, the identity category we are specifically interested in is linguistic membership, as expressed by speakers themselves or their interlocutors. Linguistic membership categories (LMC) are accessed by

using membership categorization analysis (Sacks 1995) with a linguistic focus. LMCs are studied in multilingualism research by, e.g. Egbert (2004) and Cashman (2005). The method of membership categorization analysis as such has been used in ELF research as well, primarily to investigate national and cultural memberships and other social categories (e.g. Jenks 2016; Ikkänen 2019) rather than linguistic ones.

A socio-cognitive concept of pragmatics relevant in the present setting is that of personal salience: “a result of the attentional processing of communication in a particular situation” (Kecskes 2010: 59). Along with attention, private experience, and egocentrism, salience is an individual conversational trait, while social traits include intention, actual situational experience, cooperation, and relevance (ibid.: 58). Although planning the exercise below is a social activity, individual participants direct their attention to different aspects of it, which impacts the negotiation in unpredictable ways.

5 Negotiating the role-play

During the previous rehearsal, Minni had asked Lena to plan an exercise for the next meeting. Its theme arose from a newspaper article in *Helsingin Sanomat*, discussing the rise of racism in Finland and elsewhere. Discussing and speaking out on societal issues is part of the AAG concept, and defending tolerance in society is an important value to the participants. The exercise was thus aimed to deconstruct racism and intolerance. Lena has a professional background in community drama, hence Minni wanted to utilize her expertise. Lena suggested that the participants use scarves as representations of intolerance. We will here focus on the discussions taking place during the preparation and planning of the exercise.

5.1 Negotiating linguistic membership

The first situation takes place towards the second half of the rehearsal, after coffee, a chat, a warm-up, and a few other dance exercises, which required multilingual negotiations in smaller groups. Inez, Reijo and Heli danced together. As Minni briefly introduces the next exercise in English, Inez takes the initiative to make sure that Reijo is following.

Extract 1. Perfect English (21 Jan/Video 2: 1:37)

1 I: ((goes over to R)) ↑ymmärsitkö?
did you understand?

Inez mediates to Reijo in Finnish what Minni said.

3 M: kiitoksia Inez
thank you Inez

- 4 I: ↑joo (.) nada
yeah_Fi (.) (it's) nothing_Sp
- 5 M: ((chuckles)) but I know (.) she (.) he ↑ca::n ((points to R))
- 6 I: [he know- (.) he knows English]
- 7 M: [really understa:nd but he's a-] just a (.) m- making
- 8 R: perfect English ((laughs))
- 9 M: =perfect
- 10 I: yes
- 11 M: is it ↑really (.) ↓like this? ((laughs))
- [...]
- 20 R: mä en (.) mikä (sana se on)
I don't (.) what (word is it)
- 21 I: e::h ↑vocabulary (.) vocabulary or
- 22 R: (**)
- 23 I: or words
- 24 R: yes I understand but (.)
- 25 ((gestures the difficulty of expressing himself))
- 26 M: ((walks by)) you [don't can't put the words out]
- 27 R: [((talks quietly))]
((gestures picking words out of the air))
- 28 M: [ye:s]
- 29 I: [yeah you] have to: (.) practice (.) that's it
- 30 R: ((nods))

In Extract 1, the speakers carry out membership work to establish Reijo's position in the linguistic categories. Inez assumes the role of a language broker (see Skårup 2004) to include Reijo and ensure his participation in the rehearsal (l. 1), explaining what is about to happen next. Minni, who is an old friend and colleague of Reijo's, acknowledges the help by thanking Inez (l. 3). Minni then switches back to English (l. 5) but not for communicative purposes. Rather, she chooses English in order to integrate Reijo in the English-speaking participation framework and give him the opportunity to display a linguistic membership in this category. Secondly, Minni is pointing out to Inez that Reijo is not altogether helpless and understands the language: unlike Inez, Minni categorizes him as an English speaker.

Inez readily agrees with this notion (l. 6), and Reijo confirms his LMC as well as Minni's observation with a jokey, ironic comment *perfect English* (l. 8). Minni echoes his response, showing that she understood the joke. She then asks Reijo to do his own membership work and explain himself to Inez, leaving the discussion for a moment. He

however runs into trouble and switches to Finnish for a word-search (l. 20). After Inez's suggestions, he continues in English (l. 24), using gestures as a complementary means of expression. It is clear that Reijo is striving to speak English in order to feel included in the default English language participation framework, but he is also somewhat frustrated by his inability to get his message across. Minni rejoins the conversation: she verbalizes his gestures and co-constructs the sentence with him, offering an interpretation of what he is trying to say (l. 26). Reijo's response is inaudible, but Inez encourages his efforts: *you have to practice, that's it*. By saying this, she also assigns Reijo in the role of a learner, or a peripheral participant. This may imply that he is not a full member of the English LMC, but it may also allow him to feel that he is not expected to perform to the same level as the others, and that this is understood and accepted. Reijo concurs with a nod.

While Lena distributes scarves to the participants, Reijo moves closer to Anna and asks her to clarify what is happening. The conversation indicates that he is genuinely having trouble keeping track of the English-language instructions and conversations during the rehearsals. He is also actively seeking assistance to feel included in the group.

5.2 Negotiating the imaginary: social and individual aspects

Lena now takes charge of the rehearsal and explains the philosophy behind the exercise: imagining what a day in the life of a discriminated person might feel like. The focus of the interaction shifts away from the participants' personal concerns to the forthcoming jointly negotiated task. Lena points out that discriminated person can be "anybody different", a person of color, disabled or an LGBT person, for example. The exercise is, in other words, a role-play on social exclusion. This brings into the situation another, fictional level of membership, where one of the participants is cast as "other". The rest improvise various characters and play out, silently through embodied action and movement, how their attitudes and prejudices gradually make the discriminated person become invisible, as he disappears under the scarves the others throw on him. The participants later discuss their emotional responses to the exercise and different aspects of exclusion, including their own experiences.

By her verbal and non-verbal demonstration, Lena creates a frame, which the participants can fill with their own imagination and creativity. Being a role-play, the exercise allows the participants to explore their selfhood and hidden biases in a secure way without shame or embarrassment (see Bowman 2010: 127). The scarves also function as transitional tools, helping the participants use their imagination in creating the characters, but they have no special cultural meaning as such. Lena instructs the dancers to use their bodies expressively and play with different kinds of gestures and tempos.

After her introduction, Lena addresses Reijo in English and asks him if he could play the person discriminated against. This marks the beginning of the joint negotiation of the exercise. Lena directing her question to Reijo seems to be largely a practical matter: the “other” in the exercise needs to sit down, and Reijo is a convenient choice, as he uses a wheelchair. Rather unintentionally, therefore, his disability becomes a central aspect of the negotiation. Against the backdrop of the newspaper article, the “other” in this scene is likely to be imagined as a person of color, an asylum seeker, or a member of an ethnic minority, and this is what the later discussion also reveals. The overlapping of the real and the imaginary is however evident in the negotiation, along with the shifts across the two worlds.

As Reijo does not respond to Lena, Heli and Minni translate her ideas to Reijo: *istut puistossa [...] luet kirjaa* ‘you’re sitting in a park [...] reading a book’. Throughout the following extract, Reijo is positioned in the middle of the group, the others forming a circle around him.

Inez draws attention to Reijo’s potential discomfort in his role.

Extract 2a. Gypsy music (21 Jan/Video 2: 10:54)

- 1 I: I have a ↓question
 2 L: [yeah]
 3 I: [is] too intense for Reijo for example
 4 if we (.) are (.) now (.) looking (.)
 5 L: yeah
 6 I: him
 7 L: yeah [(.) that’s]
 8 I: [with hate] with hate (.)
 9 is it maybe too intense ↑for him?
 10 L: th- yeah (.) [tell Reijo]
 11 ((gestures to R))
 12 I: [Reijo] onko- onko (.) liian
 is it- is it (.) too
 13 R: eli (.)
 so
 14 I: mm
 15 R: mä tavallaan niinku luen jotakin ja (.) [sitten]
 I’m kind of like reading something and (.) then
 16 M: [mm]
 17 nii ja sua rupee [kaikki jotenki (..) dissaamaa]
 yeah and everybody starts like mocking you
 18 I: [ja (..) mutta mikä sä] (..)
 and (..) but what (do) you

- 19 R: saank mä sanoo Minnille ↓yhen jutun
can I say something to Minni
- 20 M: saat
yes

Reijo's disability leads Inez to suspect that he may find the fictional "othering" a distressing experience and she conveys her concern to Lena. Foregrounding the disability category causes hesitation in entering the imaginary world of art, where Reijo is just a person reading a book on a bench. Lena legitimizes Inez's concern (lines 5–10) and addresses Reijo: *tell [us] Reijo*. Inez switches into Finnish and self-translates her question. As Reijo has sat in near-complete silence throughout the English language conversation, Inez decides to prioritize his full inclusion in the participation framework and his membership in the Finnish linguistic category over the English one.

Reijo picks up the turn, but instead of answering the question, he returns to the previous Finnish language exchange about reading in the park (l. 15) in order to stay on track about the exercise and his role in it. Minni, as his friend and the primary leader of the rehearsals, starts to reply, while Inez tries to clarify her original question. Reijo has something else in his mind, however, and he asks Minni for the floor. The transition from the real world to the fictional scene is halted further. Kecskes (2010: 50) makes the pertinent point that communication is not always a smooth process. Speakers are not automatically oriented towards, e.g. communicative cooperation or contextual salience but have "their own agendas, with their specific mechanisms of saliency (based on prior experiences), and their individual language production systems" (op. cit.: 53). Extract 2a is a perfect example of this, as Reijo brings his own agenda and experiences into the discussion rather than observing the shared communicative context at hand – primarily because he has not been able to follow it.

Extract 2b.

- 21 R: eiku mä tähän (.) liittyyen (.)
no I just related to this
- 22 se oli joku intuitio ↑varmaa (.)
it was some kind of an intuition maybe
- 23 jos joku halua transleitata sitte ku tämä on (.)
if somebody wants to translate_En after this is
- 24 M: mm
- 25 R: mä (.) kuuntelin viime yönä yhen kappaleen (.)
I (.) listened to this song last night
- 26 ei kenenk- ääm (..) ei kenenkään lähimmäinen (.)
nobody's (..) nobody's neighbor
- 27 se on näitä suomalaist- tai mustalaisten biisejä
it's one of these Finnish- or gypsy songs

- 28 mä oon vähä ite tämän ↑näkönen
I look at bit like this myself
- 29 M: mm
- 30 R: niin niin (.) se jotenkin tuntu
so so (.) it just somehow felt
- 31 et se liittyy niinku tähän
that it was like related to this
- 32 M: tähän [nytte]
this now
- 33 R: [ne] sanat sisältö
 the lyrics content
- 34 M: joo joo
 yeah yeah
- 35 V: joo
 yeah
- 36 M: vau
 wow

As the conversation now switches completely into Finnish, it is Lena and Paula who become the peripheral participants. Reijo is aware of this, asking if somebody would like to translate his Finnish language story afterwards (l. 23). In addition to recognizing the communicative problem, he is offering a possible solution and thus excusing his use of Finnish. Interestingly, he uses the English nonce loan *transleitata* ‘translate’. This may be seen as brief reminder of his claim to the English LMC: the loanword enables him to mix his language resources in display of group solidarity (e.g. Cogo 2009: 267–269). He is also bridging to the English language participation framework so that Lena and Paula might catch his suggestion (personal communication).

Reijo’s narrative (l. 25–33) is about a Finnish Romani song *Ei kenenkään lähimmäinen* ‘Nobody’s neighbor’, which he had listened to recently. The lyrics of the song recall the harsh treatment that the Romani minority has been subject to. The song has a meaningful connection to the theme of discrimination in the exercise, not to mention that Reijo himself feels an affinity to the Romani people on account of his appearance. This carries connotations of his own marginalized status as well. Minni and Veli are impressed by the extension of the discussion to a Finnish minority culture and validate Reijo’s personal experience in the context of the exercise (l. 32–38). Reijo’s act of sharing the song also brings new elements into the emergent imaginary world: he uses his private experience in a creative way, personalizing the man sitting on the bench with certain details. Consequently, the overlapping of fiction and reality is redefined: it is possible to interpret his decision to tell the story as offering an alternative way of seeing him as a minority representative and not simply as a disabled person.

Extract 2c.

- 37 L: ↑what he said?
- 38 V: [jännä]
curious
- 39 R: ["kun päivä] kun päivä päätty" (.)
"when the day when the day ends"
- 40 "kun yksin [jään (.) en löydä suojaa mä päälle pään"]
"when I'm alone (.) I can't find shelter above my head"
- 41 H: [he was listening to this gypsy song last] night
- 42 L: okay
- 43 H: [nobody's next of kin]
- 44 R: ["vain mustan taivaan"]
"just the black sky"
- 45 L: ahah
- 46 R: gypsies
- 47 P: nobody's ↑what?
- 48 H: next of ↑kin (.)
- 49 R: [(*) the gypsies]
- 50 H: [it's not] exactly the same as lähimmäinen but
neighbor
- 51 (..)
- 52 V: lähimmäinen yes that's hm
neighbor
- 53 H: yeah
- 54 (...)

At this point (l. 37), Lena makes an opening move to rejoin the discussion, asking what Reijo's story was about. Those members of the group who speak both Finnish and English have to react to this. While Reijo carries on citing the lyrics, Heli takes the mediator role and starts paraphrasing the story in English. The title of the song is central here, but it turns out that the word *lähimmäinen*, 'neighbor' or 'fellow human being' is difficult to translate. Heli's first choice is *next of kin*, probably because of the association between *lähi* 'near' and *next*. The unfamiliar term results in non-understanding, and Paula initiates a repair sequence (*nobody's what?* l. 47–52). Heli tries to repair the situation by repeating the expression, but she is uncertain about its accuracy, as indicated by the rising intonation and a follow-up explanation *it's not exactly the same*. Veli joins in the discussion.

The rest of Reijo's story is not actually translated, because Heli, Inez and Veli get stuck on the lexical issue. It is clearly an interesting, salient discovery to them that *lähimmäinen* is such a culturally specific term. In the meantime, Reijo has recognized the

word *gypsy* and repeats it in English to join the ELF participation framework. The others are by this stage focused on the translation problem, however.

Extract 2d.

- 55 A: no entäs haittaako sua jos [sun pää- päälle]
well does it bother you if your head- on you
- 56 I: [close (.) close to]
- 57 ((I & H continue talking about *neighbor* in a low voice until #))
- 58 A: päähän laitetaan jotain
your head is covered
- 59 vai haluatko että kasvot jää näkyviin?
or do you want your face to remain visible
- 60 R: ((taps his hair gently)) ei se oo niin tärkätty
it's not starched enough
- 61 [((laughs))]
- 62 L: [not (.) you don't have to]
- 63 A: okei päähä ei [laiteta (.) joo]
okay nothing on your head (.) yeah
- 64 R: ((smiles and waves his hand: I'm kidding))
- 65 [((laughs))]
- 66 L: but just like that piece what he's doing
- 67 like reading a book # is is is something to be
- 68 the natural thing [and enjoyable]
- 69 R: [hei mistäs mä saan] sen kirjan
hey where do I get the book
- 70 pliis eiksois
please_En wouldn't it
- 71 M: sä voit olla pantomiimi (.) pa- pantomiimina eikö vaa
you can be pantomime (.) as a pantomime right
- 72 (..)
- 73 L: just pretend
- 74 M: yeah [just pretend]

In Extract 2d, the negotiation evolves into parallel discussions through different personal initiatives, which lead into CS. Anna switches to Finnish (l. 55) to show support to Inez's original concern and asks a related empathetically motivated question from Reijo in Finnish, leading to a humorous response. Again, the formation of the fictional character is affected by the concern for Reijo's wellbeing, which is prioritized over Lena's instructions. Lena understands the Finnish question though and confirms to Reijo in English that he need not be covered completely (l. 62). She then decides that the topics initiated by Inez and Reijo have now been dealt with and returns to picturing the frame for the exercise (l. 66–68).

Another switch to Finnish occurs, as Reijo picks up on her word *book* and returns to discussing his role (l. 69–70). Minni responds and suggests a solution (l. 71), which Lena rephrases in English (*just pretend*), which Minni repeats. The latter exchange is indicative of the language acquisitional potential of the conversations: repetition is often used to test out or memorize English expressions, not just to confirm them (see also Paulasto forthc.).

Extract 2d shows that the fictional world is constructed gradually through subtle suggestions and questions. By negotiating the details of Reijo's character, he and Anna co-create not only the character but the fictional scene as well. Small elements such as the position of the scarves and the imaginary book are the joint result of envisaging the fictional world. These details are also mediators, which help the participants process the inner meaning of the exercise.

Extract 2e.

75 I: [jotain muuta mä kysyin] jos
something else I asked

76 onko se liian inten[siivistä koska meidän tarvii katsoa]
is it too intense because we have to look at

77 M: [do you need some music?]

78 L: [YES

79 M: okay]

80 I: [(**)]

81 L: [do you have something like]

82 I: [(***)] että
that

83 R: [ahaa]

84 I: [että ei ole] liian intensiivinen sinulle?
that it's not too intense for you?

85 R: it's good [it's good]

86 I: [että että se on] vain (harjoitus)
that that it is just an exercise

87 ((L & M talking in the background from #))

88 R: # I don't (.) no no no

89 I: (*) että tiedän (.) se voi olla tosi: voimakas
that I know (.) it can be really powerful

In the final extract, Inez returns to her original question to Reijo, switching to Finnish (l. 75). Minni's attention is however directed to the common goal, i.e. moving on with the exercise, and she shows artistic support to Lena (l. 77), engaging with her in English: choosing the right kind of music is significant for the atmosphere of the scene. Between Inez

and Reijo, the misalignment of linguistic categorizations recurs (l. 82–89): Inez continues to prioritize Reijo's Finnish-speaker category, speaking to him in Finnish, while Reijo chooses to identify as an English speaker, replying in English. Reijo also feels comfortable speaking to Inez in English, as he sees her (i.e. categorizes her) as a fellow non-native speaker (personal communication). The shared non-nativeness has been found to decrease ELF-speakers' self-conscious monitoring and allow for creative, idiosyncratic language use (e.g. Cogo 2010). Reijo also dismisses Inez's concern (*it's good*, l. 85). In other words, he rejects being categorized as a non-English speaker *and* as a person in need of special care and consideration. Through the ownership of his role, Reijo also indicates a commitment to the creative exercise and the common objectives of the group, signaling an affirmation of his membership.

6 Discussion and conclusion

Negotiation is highly multi-layered in the present joint enterprise of the community. It involves the practical realization of the role-play, its imaginary setting, and the participants' roles in it. There are furthermore competing priorities as regards individuals' foci of attention, their situated choices of language, and the assignment of linguistic memberships. Despite the occasional tensions, non-understandings and misalignments, the participants remain empathetic and respectful of each other's different experiences and the atmosphere of the negotiation is kind and supportive of the artistic goal.

Conversational code-switching serves two primary functions in the conversations above. Firstly, it reflects the speakers' preferences in categorizing the linguistic memberships of others or themselves, as in Extract 1, where Inez and Minni categorize Reijo differently: Inez prioritizes the Finnish-speaker category and Minni the English one. By choosing either English or Finnish, participants assign speaker identities, and having an English speaker identity is significant for a sense of social membership and inclusion, when the community in question is an ELF community of practice. Reijo's efforts confirm this. The significance of conversational CS for ethnic or linguistic identity has been discussed a great deal in the context of immigrant and minority languages (e.g. Cashman 2005; DeFina 2007), but ELF, too, can function as an emblem of community membership, albeit the affiliation is less essential and constitutive. In other conversational contexts during AAGII rehearsals, a knowledge of Finnish, in the form of lexical code-switching for example (Paulasto *forthc.*), performs a similar aspirational role for participants with migrant backgrounds: the wish to integrate is mutual.

Secondly, CS is used to keep everyone on board in the creative process, as the participants express their thoughts on the fictional world of the exercise. In the present rehearsal, Lena and Paula are viewed as emergent Finnish speakers and peripheral to the Finnish participation framework: a slightly ambiguous stance. They are expected to need Finnish to English translation, yet Lena occasionally participates in the Finnish language conversation using English. On other occasions, she falls outside the conversation and needs to ask to be included. Reijo's linguistic memberships are more ambiguous still, but the free associations and collaborativeness of the creative process sometimes require his full inclusion through Finnish. Hence brokering, mediation and self-translation are needed, and their need is estimated from one moment to the next. The collaborative efforts enable the participants to bring their individual experiences and personally salient contributions into the whole. These are all relevant for co-imagining and realizing the joint enterprise, the role-play, and thus meeting the artistic goal. As Kecskes (2010: 58) points out, the individual and social traits in communication are "inseparable, mutually supportive, and interactive".

Community art is aimed to enhance participants' sense of agency and inclusion. When the participants have asymmetric language skills and diverse backgrounds, there are numerous layers of inequality affecting their experiences. Linguistic analysis can shed light on the junctions and imbalances emerging in the processes of co-creation and show how the discussants deal with issues of membership and participation, and what is the role of art itself. The focus in the present study was on Reijo and his struggle to integrate with the group. By defining his own linguistic memberships and drawing from his experiences in envisioning his character in the exercise, he affirms his agency in the community and in the artistic process. However, the linguistic hierarchies of participating in the ELF interaction remain, and they must be re-negotiated repeatedly throughout the rehearsal process. ELF research would benefit from further investigations of asymmetric communication in diverse social settings to uncover how multilingual speakers deal with these asymmetries in interaction and how – or whether – they use their linguistic resources to complement each other.

As our final comment, we will point out that the instrumentalist features of AAGII, such as strengthening the participants' creative and social skills (see Bardy 2007: 28; Haapala & Pulliainen 1998: 108, 120–123), do not decrease the artistic ambitions of the group, nor is the art just a decoration or a tool for gaining the social objectives. An ambitious artistic goal, a novel dance performance, is parallel with the social and empowering purposes of the creative process. This can be seen in the way the participants take into consideration each other's wellbeing and social and linguistic inclusion, while also minding the integrity of the shared goal. In a community art context, ethically sustainable art can be artistically valuable.

This is challenging, however, and needs continuous reflection so that a balance can be maintained between the needs of individual participants and the group as a community.

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Appendix: Transcription symbols

- [] simultaneous speech
- (.) micropause, length indicated by dots
- e:: lengthened vowel
- = latching between utterances
- a- cut-off word
- yeah speaker emphasis
- YES loud voice
- ↓ falling intonation
- ↑ rising intonation
- () uncertain transcription
- (**) unclear speech, with approximate number of syllables
- (()) description of events or gestures
- _Sp language of the expression (Fi=Finnish, En=English, Sp=Spanish)