The Anglicism *About* in Informal Written Finnish Discourse

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Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten englannin kielestä lainautunutta anglismia *about* käytetään epävirallisessa kirjoitetussa suomenkielisessä diskurssissa. Huomio kiinnittyy pääasiassa siihen, miten *about* suhteutuu suomenkielisten lähivastineidensa *noin* ja *suunnilleen* käyttötapoihin: eroaako *about* näistä kahdesta syntaktisilta ja semanttisilta ominaisuuksiltaan, ja täyttääkö se näin jonkin aukon suomen kielessä? Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan myös, onko *about* muuttunut syntaktisilta funktioiltaan alkuperäisestä englanninkielisestä käyttötavastaan lainautumisen myötä. Tutkimuksen yleisempänä tavoitteena on valottaa anglismien lainautumisprosessia ja kotoutumista ottamalla yksittäinen anglismi tutkimuksen keskiöön, tarkastelemalla sitä perusteellisesti sekä syntaktisesta että semanttisesta näkökulmasta ja vertailemalla sen käyttöä etenkin sen kohdekielisiin lähivastineisiin.

Tutkimusaineistona toimii suositun suomenkielisen Suomi24-internetsivuston keskustelupalstalta vuodelta 2014 kerätyt 600 viestiä, joissa sanoja *about*, *noin* ja *suunnilleen* käytetään likimääräisyyden ja epävarmuuden ilmaisimina. Sanojen käyttöä analysoidaan lajittelemalla viestit erinäisin kriteerein kategorioihin. Tämän jälkeen eri kategorioiden yleisyyttä tarkastellaan kvantitatiivisesti, ja saatuja tuloksia vertaillaan keskenään. Kategorisoinnissa käytetään kolmenlaisia kriteerejä: (1) sanojen positio lausekkeessa suhteessa määriteltävään elementtiin, (2) sanojen syntaktiset kontekstit, sekä (3) sanojen semanttiset kontekstit. Tämän lisäksi lähempää tarkastelua varten valitaan joukko viestejä, joissa *about* esiintyy jonkin suomenkielisen vastineensa kanssa – näitä viestejä analysoidaan kvalitatiivisella otteella, vertaillen anglismin *about* ja sen vastineiden käyttöä yksittäisillä kirjoittajilla.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että *about* on syntaktisilta ominaisuuksiltaan melko joustava, sillä se voi määrittää sekä numeerisia että ei-numeerisia sanoja, kuten numeraaleja, adjektiiveja ja pronomineja. *Noin* sen sijaan on rajoittunut käytöltään numeeristen ilmausten määrittämiseen, ja *suunnilleen*-sanaa puolestaan käytetään useimmiten ei-numeeristen lausekkeiden yhteydessä. Myös semanttisilta ominaisuuksiltaan *about* eroaa lähivastineistaan. Analyysi osoittaa, että anglismia *about* suositaan arkipäiväisissä konteksteissa kun taas *noin* esiintyy usein teknisemmissä asiayhteyksissä. Lisäksi *about* näyttää välittävän vahvempia epämääräisyyden konnotaatioita kuin *noin*, joka taas assosioituu pikemminkin tarkkuuteen.

Analyysin perusteella voidaan päätellä, että anglismille *about* on kehkeytynyt suomenkielessä omanlaisensa käyttöympäristö, joka eroaa monin paikoin sekä suomenkielisten vastineiden käytöstä että alkuperäisestä englanninkielisestä käytöstä. *About* on assimiloitunut suomen kieleen vahvasti, ja näin ollen sitä voidaankin pitää vakiintuneena anglismina eikä esimerkiksi koodinvaihtona.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
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1. Introduction

English, as a *lingua franca*, has a special status among languages today: it is spoken all over the world as a first, second, or foreign language, and the number of speakers is continuously growing. It has become *the* international language of such fields as technology, economy, media, and culture. Due to its widespread status, it is in contact with a variety of languages the world over on a daily basis. These contact situations cannot be considered homogenous in nature, since all of them are colored by unique features relating to such factors as social, historical, and economical dimensions. Nevertheless, a simplified division can be made between *intense* and *weak* contact settings: in the former case the contact is direct in nature, whereas in the latter type it is indirect, mediated through Internet or television, for instance. The contact between English and Finnish – the focus of this study – is an example of a weak contact setting, since English does not have an official status in Finland, and the contact between the languages is therefore predominantly indirect.

Different contact situations lead to differing outcomes, but usually some change happens in at least one of the languages involved. This change often involves the importation of linguistic elements from one language into another; a phenomenon which is typically referred to as *borrowing*, while the transferred items themselves are called *borrowings* (Matras 2009: 146; for alternative terms, see e.g. Furiassi et al. 2012: 11). One specific type of borrowing are *Anglicisms*, that is, features that are transferred specifically from English into other languages. There are various definitions for Anglicisms, which can be roughly divided into two main types: strict definitions (only specific types of lexical items considered) and open definitions (all linguistic elements included). Furthermore, Anglicisms can be classified in different ways, as in terms of form and level of integration, or in terms of the factors motivating borrowing, for instance.

Due to the lingua franca status of English and its overwhelming spread across the globe, especially via the Internet, there has been an increasing interest in Anglicism research in the past decades. The major focus in research has traditionally been on the examination of

general trends and patterns of how and why Anglicisms are borrowed, and how they are used in the recipient language. These types of studies aim, to name a few goals, to list Anglicisms used in different languages or in different media, and map their uses and functions in the respective areas. While such macro-level studies are doubtlessly important for understanding Anglicisms on a more general level, other approaches are necessary as well. Some of the more recent studies have indeed taken on another kind of approach, where the focus is on the use of *individual* Anglicisms. These studies ask questions such as how a specific Anglicism is used in the recipient language environment, and how its use relates to the original source language usage. The benefit of focusing on specific Anglicisms is that it gives a deeper perspective on what actually happens in the borrowing process: how a borrowed linguistic element changes when it is transferred from one language into another, how it becomes assimilated into the recipient language environment, and how it relates to its possible native near equivalents.

There are at least two ways to approach these questions. Firstly, the focus can be on the comparison between the source and recipient language uses of a specific Anglicism. The need for these kinds of comparative studies in the field of Anglicism research is noted by Andersen (2014). Andersen himself focuses on pragmatic borrowings, that is, elements like interjections and discourse markers, but his approach seems nevertheless applicable to studying other borrowing types as well. According to him (2014: 23), earlier studies on pragmatic borrowings have primarily focused on examining the *occurrence* of borrowed items, but they do not regard their *communicative functions* in neither the recipient nor the source language. Andersen argues that these functions, and the similarities or differences between the source and recipient language uses, should be considered as well. This comparison reveals whether the range of functions of an item have narrowed or broadened when transferred from one language into another (2014: 24).

Secondly, the focus can be directed to the use of an Anglicism in relation to its native near equivalent or equivalents in the recipient language. This approach is exemplified in Peterson and Vaattovaara's (2014) study on *pliis*, an Anglicism used in Finnish discourse. In their study, Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014) compared the uses of *pliis* 'please' and its Finnish near equivalent *kiitos* 'please/thank you'. They discovered that these two words

have come to work in complementary distribution in Finnish discourse in terms of grammatical, social, pragmatic, and semantic dimensions (2014: 264). Both this approach and the one suggested by Andersen (2014) seem to complement each other: combined, they provide a wider perspective on what happens to Anglicisms in the borrowing process.

This study aims to contribute to this research discourse by examining how the Anglicism *about* (as an approximating adverb) has been integrated into Finnish discourse. The study concentrates on how *about* is used in informal written language, and the dataset consists of messages gathered from Suomi24 (Aller Media 2015), a highly popular Finnish online community site. The focus is especially on how the use of *about* relates to two of its Finnish near equivalents, *noin* and *suunnilleen*, but some aspects regarding the possible changes from the source language use are considered as well. In order to provide a broad picture of the use of *about*, both grammatical as well as semantic features are analyzed, using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research questions are:

1) How is *about* used in Finnish discourse in terms of its
   a) grammatical features
   b) semantic features?
2) How does the use of *about* relate to its Finnish near equivalents *noin* and *suunnilleen*?

This paper is structured as follows. First, the main concepts and theoretical approaches to the study of Anglicisms are presented, and the methods used in this particular study are described and justified. These are followed by the actual analysis, which in turn is divided into two larger sections: grammatical and semantic features. The paper ends with a discussion of how the findings of the analysis relate to the theories and earlier studies on Anglicisms, and finally, a summary of the results concludes the paper.

2. Background

2.1. Language contact

Language contact is happening all over the world, and as Thomason (2001: 8) confirms, "there is no evidence that any languages have developed in total isolation from other languages". The term *language contact* itself refers to a situation where two or more languages are, for one reason or another, in contact with each other. In a contact setting, it is not necessary for the speakers to be fluent in both or all of the languages involved, but some communication between the languages must happen in order for it to be called language contact (Thomason 2001: 1).

The reasons for contact vary, depending largely on the language situation in any given place. Different types of settings can be roughly divided into two: *intense* and *weak* contact settings. In many countries multiple languages have an official status, as in Belgium (Dutch, French, and German), Canada (English and French), and Finland (Finnish and Swedish). In others – through, say, migration – there may be large populations of minority language speakers. In these cases, if there is contact between the languages, it is typically *direct* in nature: the speakers of multiple languages inhabit roughly the same geographical area, and therefore the physical proximity and contact are immediate. These settings can be referred to as *intense* contact settings. The opposite types of contact situations are commonly called *weak* contact settings, where contact between two or more languages is mostly *indirect* in nature. Here, language contact is mediated through, for example, television or the Internet, and the speakers of one language become exposed to foreign language through various media products. These contact situations are typically asymmetrical, since direct bilingual communication tends to be more infrequent (see e.g. Zenner, Speelman, and Geeraerts' discussion on English and Dutch, 2015: 333–334).

The division between intense and weak language contact settings is only a mere simplification: all situations are varying and unique, since different regions have their own historical backgrounds, political, social and cultural contexts, among other influencing factors. However, this division still provides us with a workable macro-level

understanding of different language contact types, and helps in framing the topic of this paper.

A prime example of weak contact settings is the widespread use of English around the world. Especially after World War II English began to spread rapidly throughout much of the world. Due to the increasing political status of the USA, English became *the* international language of economy, technology, and culture, among other fields (Pahta 2015: 51). Today, it has a special status among all languages, since it has become the *lingua franca* of our age. Naturally, English is also in intense contact with a variety of languages, particularly as a historical consequence of the periods of colonization. But more recent developments in global communication technology have led to the widespread use of the Internet around the world, rendering the influence of English on the languages of the world in weak or remote contact settings undeniable. As Swann (2007: 14) notes, the majority of English speakers nowadays use it as a foreign language, and the numbers are continuously growing, creating new contact situations. The growing influence of English on other languages is also noted on the website of the Global Anglicism Database (GLAD)[1]. According to the site (GLAD 2016), English affects languages on a global level to such a degree that it is turning into "the donor language *par excellence*" (emphasis in original). In addition, for a long time and in a variety of settings, it has been discussed whether English as a lingua franca has become a threat to the existence of other languages and multilingualism, or, conversely, whether this phenomenon can be seen as an asset (see e.g. House 2010; Phillipson 2008). These points underline the massive linguistic, socio-cultural, and political effects of English on languages worldwide.

2.2. Borrowings and Anglicisms

2.2.1. Definitions

As there are different kinds of language contact settings, similarly there are various linguistic outcomes from these contacts. According to Matras (2009: 146), one typical result of language contact situations is a change in at least one of the languages involved,

[1] This project is further discussed in section 2.2.3.

and this usually involves importing some element(s) from one language system into another. These imported items are commonly called *borrowings*.

There are a variety of definitions given for the term *borrowing*, since defining it is not as straightforward a task as it might initially seem. Although it is evident from the research literature that there is no agreement on what counts as a borrowing, there seems to be a basic dichotomy between open (or general) and strict (or specific) definitions. For instance, Trask (2000: 44) distinguishes between narrow and broad uses of the term: in the narrow sense the term refers to transferred *lexical items*, while in the broad sense it can mean the transfer of *any* linguistic element. This dichotomy is also noted by Furiassi et al. (2012: 11), according to whom the term *borrowing* can be generally used to refer to *any* linguistic features transferred from one language into another, or as a synonym for *loanword*. In addition to the complexity of defining the concept, the phenomenon itself is referred to with multiple terms. Matras (2009: 146), for example, states that "the term 'borrowing' is sometimes criticized", since "it lacks accuracy". He prefers the term *replication* in order to emphasize the fact that borrowing is not about ownership of some sort, but rather a means to succeed in communication. Other commonly used terms include *loanword*, *importation*, *transfer*, and *contact-induced innovation*, among others (Furiassi et al. 2012: 11).

One particular type of borrowing are *Anglicisms*. Since Anglicisms are borrowings as well, a similar division can be made between broad and narrow definitions. According to Görlach (2003:1), an Anglicism is "a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language". This definition, Görlach continues, excludes, for instance, (1) words that are not seen by the general user to have an English origin, (2) words that are considered foreign by the native speakers, and (3) codeswitches. Additionally, if the native equivalent is the dominant form instead of the word adopted from English, Görlach would not regard it as an Anglicism. The Finnish word *kanootti* 'canoe', for instance, can be found in Görlach's *Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (2001: 48): it is not seen as alien by Finns, and it has fully integrated into the Finnish language. A word like *breikki* 'a break', on the other hand, is not an Anglicism according to

Görlach's definition: it is likely considered foreign by native Finnish speakers, and the dominant word is the native *tauko* 'a break'.

While Görlach's definition includes only lexical items, Gottlieb (2005: 163) introduces a more open definition. He criticizes definitions that only look at lexical items, and suggests that Anglicisms can involve *any* linguistic features that are adopted from or motivated by English, and are used in communication in a language other than English. This definition would count both previously mentioned words (*kanootti*, *breikki*), as well as other linguistic elements such as grammatical structures and idioms (e.g. *pitkässä juoksussa* 'in the long run' used in Finnish), as Anglicisms.

The lack of agreement among researchers in terms of definitions is noted by Furiassi et al. (2012: 5) – they conclude that what counts as an Anglicism can be modified based on the scope of one's study. This line of thought seems reasonable: for instance, if the impact of English on another language is studied on a larger scale, it may be useful for research purposes to look at all possible features (e.g. vocabulary, idioms, larger grammatical structures), whereas in the compilation of a dictionary it is justifiable to work with more strict criteria (e.g. lexical items only). However, the motivation behind choosing specific criteria for what is considered as an Anglicism in a study should be discussed, and the existence of varying definitions acknowledged.

With both borrowings in general, and with Anglicisms in particular, there is much discussion on how to distinguish them from *codeswitching*. Simply put, codeswitching refers to "the use of two or more varieties in the same conversation" (Myers-Scotton 2002: 44). This close conceptual relation to borrowings makes it difficult to draw sharp boundaries between the two. Discussing loanwords specifically, Haspelmath (2009: 40) states that the most basic way to distinguish single-word switches from borrowings is to consider how the word can be used in the language on a general level, not from the perspective of a single speaker: if the word can be "conventionally" used as a part of the language, it is a loanword. Another defining factor, he continues, is that the word in question can be used without other codeswitching.

Matras (2009) introduces a similar kind of distinction. According to him (2009: 106), the term codeswitching is commonly used to refer to "spontaneous language mixing", whereas borrowing is used to denote a "diachronic process by which languages enhance their vocabulary". In other words, codeswitching is something momentary, while borrowings are more permanent, and become a part of the receiving language. Matras (2009: 110) himself, however, suggests that it would be useful to view these two phenomena as opposite ends on a continuum that consists of several dimensions:

> […] the distinction between borrowing and codeswitching is not a simple one, but involves a bundle of criteria, each arranged on a continuum. The prototypical, least controversial kind of borrowing thus involves the regular occurrence of a structurally integrated, single lexical item that is used as a default expression, often a designation for a unique referent or a grammatical marker, in a monolingual context. The least controversial codeswitch is an alternational switch at the utterance level, produced by a bilingual consciously and by choice, as a single occurrence, for special stylistic effects. In-between the two we encounter fuzzy ground. (Matras 2009: 113–114)

Matras (2009: 111) further adds that this continuum should not be thought of as linear, but as dynamic in nature. It does not just show how long an item has been used in the recipient language (e.g. an item changing from codeswitching into a borrowed element), but represents a variety of factors that condition the use of a borrowed lexical item.

Pahta and Nurmi (2015: 256), on the other hand, discuss the distinction between codeswitching and Anglicisms. According to them, one commonly used criterion for distinguishing Anglicisms from codeswitches is their phonetic form: codeswitches retain the English phonetic form, while Anglicisms are typically assimilated to the phonetic properties of the recipient language. However, this definition seems in some ways problematic. Firstly, speakers of different languages may have differing phonetic resources, and hence differing accents of English. In some cases, then, it might be difficult to distinguish between words that have the "original" English phonetic form (which might differ from that of the standard accents, such as Received Pronunciation), and those that have integrated phonetically into the recipient language. Secondly, I would argue that some Anglicisms may retain their original phonetic forms when transferred into the

recipient language: for instance, words *bisnes* 'business' and *fine* 'fine'[2] are pronounced by some Finns in roughly the same way in both Finnish and English discourse. Cases like these may cause problems in distinguishing Anglicisms from codeswitches in terms of their phonetic features, especially when examining Anglicisms in languages that have similar phonetic resources to English. In all, using such phonetic criteria seems to be too restricted in some cases, and therefore they may not be applicable to all situations.

2.2.2. Typologies

Borrowings and Anglicisms are commonly classified either in terms of the motivation behind the transferring of elements, or according to the level of integration of the borrowing in the recipient language. A couple examples of these classifications are introduced below.

The reasons for borrowing linguistic elements vary, but according to Matras (2009: 146) motivations most often referred to are lexical *gaps* in the recipient language, and the *prestige* of the source language. The former types of borrowings are typically called *cultural* or *necessary loans*, and these include mainly words that refer to new, sometimes culture-related elements or activities (for instance new technological innovations, food items, sports, or the like). Borrowings motivated by prestige, on the other hand, involve "imitate[d] elements of the speech of a socially more powerful, dominant community in order to gain approval and social status" (Matras 2009: 150). These elements are traditionally called *luxury loans*. One major difference between these two types is that prestige/luxury loans frequently have near equivalents in the recipient language, whereas this is not usually the case with cultural/necessary loans. Myers-Scotton (2002: 41) refers to a similar division between borrowing types, using terms *cultural borrowings* and *core borrowings*. She notes that while cultural borrowings enter the recipient language quite rapidly, core borrowings are transferred more gradually, and typically through codeswitching.

[2] Based on personal experiences, the word *fine* 'fine' is nowadays so commonly used in spoken informal Finnish discourse (without other codeswitching involved, and typically accompanied by the Finnish diminutive *ihan* 'quite', as in "ihan fine" 'quite okay') that it can be regarded an Anglicism.

Winter-Froemel and Onysko (2012), focusing on Anglicisms specifically, highlight the broad criticism presented towards the traditional terms *necessary loans* and *luxury loans*, and suggest the terms *catachrestic* and *non-catachrestic loans* to be used instead (for a discussion on these terms, see Winter-Froemel and Onysko 2012: 46–48). They approach the classification from a more pragmatic point of view, noting that different Anglicisms can evoke differing pragmatic interpretations: some Anglicisms seem to be "marked lexical choices" (non-catachrestic loans), while others lack this effect (catachrestic loans) (Winter-Froemel and Onysko 2012: 43). Although they introduce a new perspective to the classification of Anglicisms, they use a feature prominent in many earlier classifications as the basis: namely, whether or not the Anglicisms have semantic near equivalents in the recipient language. Catachrestic loans do not typically have near equivalents since, as cultural or necessary loans, they commonly refer to new innovations or culture-related elements (Winter-Froemel and Onysko 2012: 49). Non-catachrestic loans, on the other hand, co-exist with their native near equivalents in the recipient language, and this is what gives these Anglicisms their pragmatic effect; in other words, they are marked choices (Winter-Froemel and Onysko 2012: 49). In order to demonstrate this difference, Winter-Froemel and Onysko (2012: 44) present the German Anglicisms *Kids* and *PC* as examples: they note that *Kids* in German discourse can carry associations of "modern, self-determined children" (in comparison to the native, unmarked equivalent *Kinder* 'children'), while *PC* is a pragmatically unmarked word for a computer, as it does not have any native near equivalents in German.

Furiassi et al. (2012), focusing mainly on Anglicisms as well, approach the classification from yet another perspective: they concentrate on the forms Anglicisms take in the recipient language. The main division is made between *direct borrowings* and *indirect borrowings* (Furiassi et al. 2012: 6–8). Direct Anglicisms refer to borrowings that are recognizably English in terms of their orthographic form, whereas indirect Anglicisms are created by using elements of the recipient language, and therefore their English roots are not as evident. Both these main classes can be further divided into more specific groups, but here the discussion will be restricted to direct borrowings, for the subject of this study, *about*, is clearly a direct loan: it mostly occurs in its original orthographic form, as will be shown later on in this paper.

Firstly, direct loans can be subdivided into three groups: (1) *false* or *pseudo-loans*, (2) *hybrids*, and (3) *loanwords* (Furiassi et al. 2012: 6). *False loans* are "word[s] or multi-word unit[s] in the [recipient language] made up of English lexical elements but unknown or used with a conspicuously different meaning in English" (Furiassi et al. 2012: 7). A common example of this is the German word for mobile phone, *das Handy*: the word clearly stems from English, though it is not used in English to refer to a mobile phone. *Hybrids*, as the name implies, are multi-word units that mix English elements with elements from the recipient language. Finally, the category *loanwords* can be further divided into two types: *non-adapted* and *adapted loans*. *Non-adapted loans* mostly retain their original English (orthographic, phonological and/or morphological) form, whereas *adapted loans* are more integrated into the recipient language. For instance, the German Anglicism *Kids* has clearly kept its original orthographic form, while the Finnish Anglicism *enivei* 'anyway' has changed substantially.

2.2.3. Studies on Anglicisms

In the field of language contact research, there is increasing interest in how English influences other languages as it continues to spread. At the moment, there are some studies conducted on the use and features of specific Anglicisms, but most studies seem to concentrate on the use of Anglicisms in more general terms, or in some particular context. These studies ask, for instance, how and to what extent Anglicisms are used in a certain language, medium, or other field of interest[3], and how Anglicisms integrate structurally into the recipient language[4]. In addition, there are some attempts at compiling dictionaries of Anglicisms, such as the previously mentioned dictionary by Görlach (2001). Although such studies and projects undoubtedly provide valuable information about Anglicisms on a more general level, some closer analyses are needed in order to understand how these borrowings actually work in the recipient language. A closer focus can yield a more pragmatically oriented insight into borrowings: what pragmatic or stylistic functions do they have in the recipient language, and how these functions relate to their original uses in English discourse, or to the use of their possible native near equivalents?

[3] On loans in European football lexis, see e.g. Bergh and Ohlander 2012. On loanwords in Nordic languages, see e.g. Graedler 2004.
[4] On gender variation of Anglicisms in German, see e.g. Callies, Onysko and Ogiermann 2012.

The need for more pragmatic – and especially for more comparative – studies is noted by Andersen (2014). In his article, Andersen concentrates on *pragmatic borrowings*, which are "interjections, expletives, discourse markers and focus-marking devices, which are external to propositions but contribute as signals of how an utterance is to be understood in its communicative context" (2014: 22). He states that earlier studies have typically been restricted to examining the *occurrence* of pragmatically borrowed items, but they do not consider the *communicative functions* that these items have in the source and recipient languages. He argues that "the *degree of functional parallelism* of an item" (2014: 18–19; emphasis in original) in the source and recipient language should be considered too. Although Andersen focuses on pragmatic borrowings in his article, this perspective seems relevant when looking at any borrowings that carry pragmatic functions. Peterson (forthcoming), for instance, suggests that it would be useful to expand the definition of pragmatic borrowings to include instances where the borrowing is *motivated* by pragmatic factors. This way items representing other functions and word classes, such as adverbs, could be considered pragmatic borrowings as well.

Andersen suggests that the functions of pragmatic borrowings should be approached from three points of view, namely structural, functional, and sociolinguistic perspectives. Structural perspective includes, for instance, the *placement* and *scope* of the borrowing in an utterance, and its *degree of syntactic integration* (Andersen 2014: 23). Functional perspective, on the other hand, has to do with the pragmatic and semantic functions of the borrowed items. This can be further divided into two main categories: *functional stability* (the functions of an item remain the same in the recipient language) and *functional adaptation* (some change happens in terms of functions, for instance *functional narrowing* or *functional broadening*) (Andersen 2014: 24). Finally, sociolinguistic perspective concerns the demographics of the borrowed item, asking for instance whether the users of an item in the recipient language are similar to those of the source language in terms of such demographic features as age and gender (Andersen 2014: 24). By looking at borrowings from these three points of view, it is possible to examine the "systematic patterns and constraints" affecting the use of these elements, and thus draw conclusions about their pragmatic functions (Andersen 2014: 23). Then, by comparing the structural, functional, and sociolinguistic characteristics of the borrowed items in the source and

recipient languages, we can see what features are – or are not – transferred, and whether the borrowed items have gained some new characteristics in the recipient language. The study presented in this paper looks at some of the perspectives suggested by Andersen – mainly structural and functional aspects – but the discussion is mostly restricted to the recipient language due to the scope of the study.

In more general terms, the increasing interest in the influence of English on other languages has motivated the foundation of a project, the Global Anglicism Database (GLAD) in 2015, the aim of which is "to share and compare strategies and resources for fostering cooperation among scholars interested in linguistic and cultural Anglizication" (GLAD 2016). Construction of the database is still underway as the project is still in its early stages. Nevertheless, as of August 2016 there were already 92 members in the network from around the world, concentrating on the effects of English on a variety of languages, such as Arabic, German, Afrikaans, Japanese, and Finnish. The rapid growth of the project is an indication of the attention globalizing English gathers from researchers around the world.

2.3. English in Finland

2.3.1. Language situation in Finland

As mentioned earlier, Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. In practice, however, Finns are largely monolingual. In 2015, 88.7% of Finns spoke Finnish as their mother tongue, whereas the corresponding number for Swedish was only 5.3% (Official Statistics of Finland 2015). For Finnish students, Swedish is a compulsory subject up until the end of upper secondary school, and later in tertiary education – and the situation is vice versa for Swedish-speaking Finns. Yet, Swedish skills are not in fact necessary for monolingual Finnish speaking citizens, since Finnish is used in practically every sector of the society (Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 21). In addition, Swedish-speaking Finns are mostly fluent in Finnish (Leppänen et al. 2011: 17), and so Finnish mother tongue speakers do not usually need Swedish in any everyday situation. Swedish speakers, however, more often than not require Finnish skills due to the high degree of monolingualism in Finland.

The significance of English in Finland, on the other hand, has greatly increased in recent decades, becoming "the foreign language most desired, needed, studied, and used by Finns" (Leppänen et al. 2011: 20). According to Leppänen and Nikula (2008: 17), English began to spread in Finland in the 1920s, and its status has especially increased after World War II, partly due to Finland beginning to associate itself more with the Western countries and cultures. By the 21st century, in addition to its prominent status as the language of international communication, English has also become a language used in "intranational" relations in Finland (Leppänen et al. 2011: 16).

In 2007, a large-scale survey concerning the use of English in Finland was conducted by the Research Unit for the Study of Variation, Contacts and Change in English (VARIENG), based in the University of Jyväskylä. The aim of the study was to gain a broad view of English in Finland: the questions asked included, for example, how proficient the respondents assess themselves in terms of their English skills, in what situations do they use English, and how they feel about English. The results showed that the majority of Finns (60%) find their English language skills quite good, but it seems that "active" use of English is not that common among Finns – only one fifth of the respondents use English at least once a month (Leppänen et al. 2011: 161). Instead, they are more commonly exposed to English via media and the Internet. The role of media seems to be particularly important: in Finland, the share of television programs originating from North America, shown on publicly available television channels, was as high as 45% in 2014, while the corresponding figure for domestic programs was only 38% (The Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications 2014). This is especially relevant since it is common practice in Finland to use subtitles instead of dubbing when translating foreign programs into Finnish, and therefore most Finns are exposed to spoken English on a daily basis through television.

According to Leppänen and Nikula (2008: 22–24), the contact between Finnish and English is a multi-faceted phenomenon, and any specific contact situation should be thought of as falling onto a continuum, ranging from discourses completely in English to those completely in Finnish. On this continuum, they distinguish three prototypical contact situations. Firstly, there are situations where English is the only language used,

due to either English being the only common language between the participants, or English being the norm (for instance, in some university lectures English is used regardless of the fact that the students and the lecturer are all Finnish speakers). The second prototypical scenario is codeswitching between Finnish and English. In these cases, the norms and the degree of switching may vary depending on the nature of the situation. The third type consists of situations where Finnish is used for the most part, but some English elements are added within the discourse. These added elements are usually single words or phrases, and sometimes their phonological or morphological forms may be altered.

The first of these contact types is uncommon in Finland, for, as discussed above, active use of English among Finns is infrequent. Mixing Finnish and English, on the other hand, is far more common: according to the results of the survey conducted by VARIENG (Leppänen et al. 2011: 139), one quarter of the respondents mix languages often, and this is especially popular among younger people. The reasons for mixing vary, but based on the results it seems that for Finns, "codeswitching is more a means of self-expression than a way to ensure intelligibility" (Leppänen et al. 2011: 137). In addition, more than half of the respondents reported positive feelings towards codeswitching, whereas only a third found the mixing of languages a negative phenomenon.

Since Finns use English in face-to-face communication rarely, it seems clear that the contact between Finnish and English is weak in nature. This situation is similar to Zenner et al.'s (2015: 334) description of the contact between Dutch and English, where the most prominent source of contact is mass media, and bilingual interaction between Dutch and English is infrequent. In weak, asymmetrical language contact settings such as these, linguistic influence typically flows only in one direction – usually, other languages borrow linguistic elements from English, and not the other way around.

2.3.2. Studies on Anglicisms in Finnish

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, an extensive research project on Anglicisms – the *Anglicism Project* – was carried out in Finland by a research team from the University of Jyväskylä (Sajavaara et al. 1978). The general aim of the project was to analyze the effect

of English on Finnish language and culture, and the specific focus was on how Anglicisms came to be used in Finnish, to what extent, how they are used and understood, and how they have integrated into the Finnish language (Sajavaara et al. 1978: 28). After this project, according to Battarbee (2004: 275), there was no "systematic research" on Anglicisms in the Finnish context until the compilation of the *Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (Görlach 2001). The task of collecting Anglicisms for the Finnish part of the dictionary was undertaken by a team from the University of Turku, including Battarbee and three students. The project aimed at a descriptive (not normative or prescriptive) compilation of Finnish Anglicisms; therefore the collection process was mostly subjective in nature, meaning that "the confident evidence of even one contributor was taken as sufficient evidence that the term in question had penetrated the language" (Battarbee 2004: 274).

In all, the nature of research on Anglicisms within the Finnish context seems quite general: it is largely focused on calculating frequencies of Anglicisms in different contexts, and mapping their overall functions. Due to this concentration on more general trends, there are only few studies that examine *specific* Anglicisms in more depth. During the past decade, however, at least two such studies have been conducted: one on *anyway*/*enivei* 'anyway' (Nikula 2007; Nikula and Halonen 2011), and the other one on *pliis* 'please' (Peterson and Vaattovaara 2014)[5].

As a subproject of VARIENG, Nikula (2007) studied the use of the discourse marker *anyway* in Finnish internet discourse by using Finnish online chat rooms, discussion boards, blogs, and online guest books as her data sources. She examined the frequencies of *anyway* and its alternative spellings (such as *enivei* and *eniveis*), and analyzed the textual and interpersonal functions of its use by taking a closer look at some of the occurrences in context. Her results showed that the functions of *anyway*/*enivei* in Finnish include, for instance, the management of transitions and the reduction of seriousness in conversations. In addition, Nikula (2007) noted that *anyway*/*enivei* can index various things, for instance "informality, genre-specific style, bilingual ability, and matters of identity". In a presentation in 2011, Nikula and Halonen proposed that *anyway*/*enivei* is

[5] The Anglicism *pliis* has also been studied by Taavitsainen and Pahta (2012).

now becoming nativized. Some features indicating this include, for example, *anyway*/*enivei* being used in combination with Finnish particles (as in ***no*** *enivei* '**well** anyway'), and the increasing popularity of the nativized spelling form *enivei*, instead of the English form *anyway* (in 2007, the situation was reversed). Furthermore, *anyway*/*enivei* is not used especially in English language environments, and its use is not topic specific (that is, it is used with a variety of subjects) – both these are signs of nativization.

While Nikula (2007) and Nikula and Halonen (2011) concentrate mainly on describing the borrowed discourse marker *anyway*/*enivei* as it is used in Finnish, Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014) approach the Anglicism *pliis* 'please' from a different perspective: they examine the differences between *pliis* 'please' and the native Finnish politeness marker *kiitos* 'please/thank you'. In order to compare these two, they used a grammatical acceptability test, and the aim was to "observe social evaluation patterns" (2014: 247). According to their results, *pliis* and *kiitos* seem to be complementary in their distribution, "grammatically, socially, pragmatically, and also semantically" (2014: 264). They propose that *pliis* is used as a marker of positive politeness, whereas *kiitos* is associated with negative politeness (2014: 265). Moreover, *pliis* carries connotations of "youth", "urbanity" and "globalism" (2014: 266), and thus it clearly differs from the native politeness marker *kiitos*, which is seen as more neutral. Since such norms of usage have developed around *pliis*, Peterson and Vaattovaara suggest that it is "at this point established […] in the Finnish pragmatic system" (2014: 264). Furthermore, Peterson (forthcoming) notes that some pragmatic borrowings adopted into Finnish, such as *pliis*, develop social, semantic, and pragmatic features that distinguish them from both the native near equivalents as well as from their original source language uses.

This type of research provides a deeper perspective of what actually happens when elements are borrowed from one language into another: how they are used in the recipient language, where they are placed in relation to their native near equivalents in terms of their functions and connotations, and whether or not they are becoming nativized. The aim of the present study is to contribute to this research discourse by examining the use of the Anglicism *about* in written, informal, Finnish discourse.

2.4. *About*

2.4.1. Defining *about*

In English, *about* is mainly used as an adverb or a preposition. *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED Online) gives multiple definitions for it, but here only those relevant in terms of the present study are introduced; namely definitions that are concerned with *approximations*, since in Finnish *about* is not used according to the other definitions (Nykopp 2013). As an adverb expressing approximation, *about* can be used in the following ways (OED 2016: A.III.8–A.III.10):

1. With numbers, quantities, and measures: approximately.
2. With general expressions of quantity and quality: very nearly, pretty much; more or less.
   a) Modifying adjectives and quantifiers. *rare* before 19th cent.
   b) Modifying comparatives of equivalence, as *about as well as*, *about as relevant to*, etc.
   c) Modifying superlative adjectives.
3. Modifying verbs: very nearly.

As an approximating preposition, *about* is used as shown below (OED 2016: B.III.8–B.III.9):

4. With times and dates: near, close to, at approximately.
   – In recent (esp. *U.S.*) use, perh. interpreted as the adverb, with *at* or *in* understood.
5. With nouns of amount or quantity: near, close to, not much above or below; nearly, approximately.
   – The distinction between this prepositional use of *about* and the adverbial uses [in the approximating senses] has been slight in recent times.

The definitions of *about* in its uses as a preposition and as an adverb (expressing approximation) are quite similar, and therefore in some cases it might be difficult to draw boundaries between the two uses. This difficulty is noted in the OED, as can be seen from the extra notions in the preposition definitions (4) and (5). In spite of this, it seems that in most approximation cases *about* works as an adverb rather than as a preposition.

In general, the adverb class is characterized as heterogeneous (Quirk et al. 1985: 438), and hence adverbs vary greatly in their use. Nevertheless, one of their main syntactic functions is to modify other words or phrases, which is the principal function of *about* as well. Quirk

et al. (1985: 445–452) list possible modifier functions of adverbs as shown below – due to the diversity of adverbs, however, not all these uses are characteristic of every adverb:

- Modifier of adjective
- Modifier of adverb
- Modifier of particle, prepositional adverb, and preposition
- Modifier of pronoun, predeterminer, and numeral
- Modifier of noun phrase

The diverse nature of adverbs is exemplified in their semantic features as well. Adverbs can be divided into various semantic categories, such as time, place, and manner. The category most interesting in terms of the present study, however, is what Biber et al. (1999: 557) refer to as *stance adverbs*, and particularly their subcategory *epistemic adverbs*. These adverbs are used to "express the speaker's judgement about the certainty, reliability, and limitations of the proposition" (Biber et al. 1999: 854), and so these include adverbs conveying imprecision, like *about* and *approximately* (also referred to as *hedges*).

About has not yet been established in Finnish dictionaries, and thus there is no clear definition for it in its Finnish use. Interestingly, however, at least two dictionaries of colloquial language have entries for it. According to the Finnish slang dictionary *Tsennaaks Stadii, bonjaaks slangii* (Paunonen and Paunonen 2000: 47), *about* means "noin" 'approximately', and it has been used in Finnish from 1990 onwards. The internet dictionary *Urbaani sanakirja* (2008) introduces a similar definition: according to it, *about* means "noin" or "suunnilleen" 'approximately'. As *about* cannot be found in general Finnish dictionaries yet, it seems to be considered colloquial and informal in style, as most Anglicisms typically are (Andersen 2014: 24).

The question of whether *about* is in fact an Anglicism instead of codeswitching is quite complex. This, of course, can be expected due to the various definitions of Anglicisms. For instance, as was discussed in section 2.2.1., Görlach's (2003: 1) definition is quite strict, and some of the defining features of Anglicisms he lists suggest that *about* would not actually be an Anglicism – after all, *about* is probably considered foreign by most Finns, and it definitely is not the dominant form used in Finnish, as will be shown later in the analysis (section 4.1.). Yet, in *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (Görlach 2001:

1) *about* is listed as an Anglicism used in Finnish[6]. Pahta and Nurmi (2015: 256), on the other hand, seem to consider *about* as representing codeswitching. They distinguish Anglicisms from codeswitches on the basis of phonological features, and as the pronunciation of *about* in the Finnish context is relatively close to the original English phonetic form, this would suggest that *about* is indeed codeswitching. In line with this, they present the sentence "sinne on **about** tunnin matka" 'it takes **about** an hour to get there' as an example of codeswitching (2015: 252)[7]. Nevertheless, in this study I hypothesize that *about* has been so strongly embedded into Finnish discourse that it can be considered an Anglicism rather than codeswitching.

2.4.2. Approximation

In Finnish, there are a variety of ways to convey approximation. Probably the most common one is the use of various adverbs and particles, such as *noin* and *suurin piirtein* 'approximately', as modifiers (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 815). Many of these carry the meaning "more or less than", but some refer more specifically to a certain level of fullness, as *melkein* 'almost', *alle* 'under', and *yli* 'over', for instance (Hakulinen et al. 2014: 651). Additionally, a few pronouns (for example *joku* or *jotain* 'some') have an approximating function as well, but their use is mainly restricted to informal language (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 815). Finally, approximation can be conveyed by using particular inflections in numerals, as *-isen* in *viit**isen**kymmentä* 'about fifty' (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 758). *About*, then, is situated somewhere among these various native approximators in Finnish discourse.

In general terms, approximators function as markers of vagueness. Channell (1994: 18) describes these items with the term *vague additives*, meaning words and phrases that add vagueness to an otherwise accurate expression. In a series of tests, focused on English approximators *about*, *around*, *round*, and *approximately* as modifiers of numeral

[6] Note that, as already discussed, the Finnish part of the dictionary was not compiled by Görlach: this task was taken up by a team led by Battarbee (2004), in the University of Jyväskylä, which could explain this particular discrepancy.
[7] The article by Pahta and Nurmi (2015) is from a second edition of an article collection by Nevalainen et al. (2015). The first edition was published already in 2004, and hence the notions (concerning *about*) referred to here may be slightly outdated.

expressions, Channell (1994: 44) found three patterns of how people perceived approximations of numerals. Firstly, her data showed that these approximations are typically understood to mean intervals of numbers: for instance, the phrase "about 50 meters" can be interpreted as implying some value in an interval ranging roughly from, say, 40 to 60 meters. Secondly, the length of the interval depends on the size of the modified number, and so, for example, the interval in the phrase "about 12,000" is perceived as wider than what is understood in the phrase "about 500". Thirdly, she notes that approximations of "discrete items" (books, cars, people, etc.) are frequently seen as conveying wider intervals than approximations of "non-discrete measure nouns" (meters, grams, liters, etc.). Furthermore, Channell (1994: 70–71) asserts that approximations usually involve *round numbers*, that is, such numbers as multiples of 5, 10, or 100, but when *non-round numbers* are used, the length of the interval shortens. Although Channell's discussion focuses specifically on English, these general features are most likely transferable to the Finnish context as well.

In her study, Channell (1994) also compared the uses of the approximators *about*, *around*, *round*, and *approximately*. She notes that all four share a similar constraint: they are "grammatical only when combined with *exact* numbers or measures denoting *exact* quantities" (1994: 51; my emphasis). This means, that none of the approximators in question can modify expressions such as *some* or *a few*, since they are not exact enough (for instance, "about a few books" is considered an ungrammatical clause). Moreover, this restriction also applies to words other than numerals. She demonstrates this by using the clauses "**approximately pink**" and "living standards […] remain **approximately constant**" as examples. In the former (ungrammatical) case, the adjective *pink* is not exact enough, whereas the adjective *constant* refers to a precise concept, and therefore, according to Channell, the clause is acceptable (1994: 52).

Although the objects of approximation need to be exact in a sense, vagueness can be added to a phrase by combining approximators (Channell 1994: 70). These combinations, however, have a few restrictions. In all, there are two possible combination patterns: (1) *around*/*round* followed by *about*, and (2) any of the four approximators modifying a numeral that either contains the vagueness marker *–ish* (as in *four**ish***), or is followed by

the phrase *or x* or *or so* (as in "five **or six**" and "five **or so**") (Channell 1994: 69). Other combinations, such as "approximately about fifty", are considered ungrammatical.

Finally, Channell (1994: 53) concludes that the four approximators she studied (*around, round*, *about*, and *approximately*) do not have distinctive meanings, but they differ from each other in stylistic terms. In formal and technical contexts *approximately* is the preferred approximator, whereas *about* and *around*/*round* are typically used in more informal contexts. This observation of the formality of *approximately* is supported by Biber et al. (1999: 113): they claim that, when numeral approximations are concerned, *approximately* is the preferred approximator specifically in "academic prose", while *about* is "the most common approximating adverb" overall, regardless of the register.

In more general terms, it is important to note here that the term *approximator* (that is, a word approximating another word or phrase) can be understood in different ways. Biber et al. (1999: 557), for instance, describe approximators as words that "typically function as modifiers of numerical or other quantifying expressions". Channell (1994: 17) uses the term in a similar way, to refer exclusively to words that modify numeral expressions. Quirk et al. (1985: 590), on the other hand, use the term *approximator* to refer to downtoners of verbs, such as *almost* and *nearly*. Due to these discrepancies, and in order to make my analysis clearer, the term *approximator* is used in this study to cover all words conveying approximation, irrespective of what word or clause types they modify.

2.5. Research questions

The aim of this study is to see how *about* is used in informal, written Finnish discourse in an online context, and how its use relates to the way its Finnish near equivalents are used. The approach taken in this study resembles the way Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014) studied the Finnish Anglicism *pliis* 'please' (discussed in section 2.3.2.): similarly to their study, the main focus here is on how an Anglicism is used in the recipient language, comparing it to the way its native near equivalents are used. The research questions structuring this study are as follows:

1) How is *about* used in Finnish discourse in terms of its
   a) grammatical features
   b) semantic features?
2) How does the use of *about* relate to its Finnish near equivalents, *noin* and *suunnilleen*?

Grammatical and semantic features were chosen as the main features to study, since these two were deemed crucial for the formation of a broad picture of *about* in the Finnish context. Additionally, as the focus was on written language, it was important that the features studied were analyzable in written language, as these two are. Overall, this approach resemblances what Andersen (2014: 23–24) suggests for the studying of pragmatic borrowings, namely that they should be examined from structural, functional, and sociolinguistic points of view. The structural and functional approaches are comparable to the features labelled as grammatical and semantic in this study. The sociolinguistic perspective is present in this study as well – after all, we are dealing with such sociolinguistic phenomena as language contact and borrowing. Nevertheless, many social factors were left outside the scope of this study (most prominently demographic features), for it was considered that these would require a study of their own, using an altogether different type of data source and different methods.

As for the native near equivalents, *noin* and *suunnilleen* were chosen as the comparison points for a couple of reasons. In order to make valid comparisons, it was considered important that the chosen approximators are, similarly to *about*, indeclinable. This feature helped in the data gathering process as well, for if declinable approximators were used instead (for instance *joku* 'some'), it would have been necessary to collect and examine their uses in all of their various forms (e.g. *joskus* 'sometime', *jossain* 'somewhere'). This was deemed unnecessarily laborious for the purposes of this study, and eventually the indeclinable *noin* and *suunnilleen* were chosen. Another approximator under consideration was *suurin piirtein*, but it was estimated that *noin* and *suunnilleen* are more frequently used in Finnish discourse, which makes them more representable of Finnish approximators.

Prior to looking at the data, the general hypothesis is that *about* differs from *noin* and *suunnilleen* in both grammatical and semantic terms, and, additionally, it has some

distinctive uses when compared to its original English uses as well. It is argued that *about* has been embedded into Finnish discourse to such a degree where it can certainly be considered an Anglicism, rather than codeswitching. Because this study is quite descriptive in nature – that is, the general aim is to *describe* the use of *about* in Finnish – more specific hypotheses are considered unnecessary.

3. Methods

3.1. Data source

The data for this study was gathered from the largest Finnish online community, Suomi24 (Aller Media 2015). The statistics of TNS Metrix (Kantar TNS 2016) show that in 2016 (week 35) the site's weekly reach was 891,000 users, which made it the sixth most popular Finnish website, and the most popular one when it came to Finnish online community and discussion sites. The website is a highly versatile place for online gathering, providing users with a wide variety of possible activities from a dating section to an online flea market, as well as a general, online chat. In addition, there is a highly popular message board which was used as the data source for this study.

The users of the site come from various demographic backgrounds. According to the statistics from 2015 (Aller Media 2016), gender distribution was very equal, with 51% of the users being male and 49% female. In terms of age, most of the users were under the age of 65: 42% were under 35 years old, and 50% were aged between 35 and 64. Both age and gender distributions of the users are therefore rather even, and the site provides a quite comprehensive account of written, informal Finnish discourse in an online context. However, the site does not require registration, and thus there are certainly a considerable amount of unregistered, anonymous users as well. Based on observations during the data gathering process, and on personal experience, the discussion board is used to a large extent by these unregistered users, and therefore it is impossible to get conclusive demographic data on all users. On a more general level, this does not pose a problem for this study, since it can be assumed that the age and gender distributions of the anonymous users are overall fairly similar to those of the registered users. Nevertheless, this is the

main reason why such demographic factors as age and gender are not further considered in this study. In addition, there is no information available about other demographic factors, such as education and place of residence.

Despite the lack of detailed demographic information, there are still multiple reasons for choosing this particular data source. Although naturally occurring, spoken data would have been ideal, since Anglicism are typically used in informal spoken language (Andersen 2014: 24), it was deemed much too complicated to elicit *about* in speech for the purposes of this study. The use of *about* was estimated relatively context and register specific, and therefore collecting a sufficient amount of informal spoken data would have been unnecessarily laborious. The language used in online forums, however, tends to be informal in style. This led to the prediction that *about* would occur frequently enough in this context for a linguistic analysis of its uses in Finnish discourse. Moreover, this data source, being already available in written format, enabled the collection of a larger (and more usable) dataset than would have been possible with spoken data.

3.2. Data collection methods

The actual dataset – a collection of messages written and sent by the site's users – was gathered from Suomi24 by using the search engine Google Search. The site's own search function was not used, as it did not allow any filtering or organizing of the results. The goal was to get an overview of the present-day uses of *about*, and because the site was founded already in 1998 (though under a different name), it was deemed important to limit the search in terms of time – a function that is available in Google Search. Google Search, however, had its own problems as well, which became evident when the overall frequencies of *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen* in Suomi24 were examined. Although some frequencies seemed to remain fairly stable (only gradually increasing), others varied considerably (especially in the case of *suunnilleen*). Due to this, the frequencies provided by Google Search were reckoned too unreliable. For this purpose, then, the corpus of Suomi24 in Korp (Borin et al. 2012) was used instead: here, the frequencies were significantly more stable, increasing only as new material was added. Initially, it was considered that this particular corpus could work as a tool in the data collection process

for the whole study (instead of Google Search), but at the time of the data collection, the corpus was still in its beta stage, and the site did not seem to work properly at times (for instance, there were some problems with the time filtering).

The general aim of the data collection process was to gather a set of messages containing the approximators *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen*. The data collection was conducted in 2015, and the latest complete year at the time (2014 in this case) was chosen as the scope of the study. To ensure an even distribution of messages throughout the year, the data was collected from four months, namely February, May, August, and November. The selection of messages was restricted by a few criteria. When the same message was sent multiple times under different threads, only the first occurrence was included in the final dataset. In the case of *about,* only those instances where it was clearly used **within** Finnish discourse were considered: therefore, messages in which *about* was used in obvious codeswitches, such as "thinking **about** you", or in sentences completely in English, were excluded from the dataset. In terms of *noin*, only occurrences conveying the function 'approximately' were included, and so uses in phrases such as "et saa tehdä **noin**" 'you can't do **that**' were excluded. Finally, in addition to being an indeclinable adverb, *suunnilleen* is also an inflectional form of the word *suunta* 'direction': these uses, as in "he menivät omille **suunnilleen**" 'they went to **their** own **directions**', were left out from the final dataset. All these excluded uses, however, are included when the overall frequencies of *noin*, *about*, and *suunnilleen* in Suomi24 are examined.

The data collection progressed as follows. First, each approximator was used individually as a search key in Google Search[8], after which the time span was set to one month (either February, May, August, or November) from the search tools. The resulting messages were checked, and those that fitted the criteria described above were copied into MS Word and MS Excel files, along with some metadata (the dates and topics of the messages). This was done until 50 messages were gathered from each month (per approximator), and so the final dataset consisted of 600 messages (200 for each individual approximator). Note

[8] In Google Search, the search was limited to Suomi24 by using the following search key (without the square brackets): [approximator site:suomi24.fi]. The word "approximator" was replaced by one of the approximators examined in this study, and so the search key for *about*, for instance, was the following: [about site:suomi24.fi].

that in the analysis section, the dataset is often referred to as three individual datasets, namely *about*-, *noin*-, and *suunnilleen*-datasets – these mean the sets of 200 messages that feature each respective approximator.

3.3. Organizing and analyzing data

The analysis of this study is divided into two main parts. The first part considers the grammatical features of *about* in the Finnish context (research question 1.a., see p. 23), while the second part focuses on its semantic and functional characteristics (question 1.b.). Throughout the analyses, the features of *about* are compared to those of its Finnish near equivalents, *noin* and *suunnilleen* (question 2).

3.3.1. Grammatical features

The grammatical features of the three approximators were studied using quantitative methods. First, the results were grouped based on the approximators' **syntactic position**, that is, whether *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen* were used before or after the modified word(s). There were two groups: premodification and postmodification. Below are examples of these:

- premodification: **about** kolme tuntia (*about three hours)*
- postmodification: kolme tuntia **about** (*about three hours*)

By classifying the results this way, and calculating the frequencies, it was possible to see whether the three approximators are similarly restricted in terms of their possible syntactic positions, or if one is more flexible than the other two.

The next step was to categorize the occurrences based on the **syntactic contexts** of the approximators. This was done by looking at what word classes were modified with which approximator. The analysis was solely focused on the immediate word(s) that *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen* were modifying – meaning those word(s) that were the actual target of the approximation. So, for instance, in an utterance such as "se maksaa about **60 euroa**" 'it costs about **60 euros**', the numeral phrase "60 euros" (and the numeral "60" in particular) is the element being approximated. The approximated clauses were grouped

into seven main categories: these are listed below, accompanied by examples where the modified entities are bolded.

- numerals: about **kymmenen** koiraa (*about **ten** dogs*)
- nouns: noin **tunnin** (*about **an hour***)
- pronouns: about **jokainen** (*about **everyone***)
- adverbs: about **heti** (*about **right away***)
- adjectives: about **älykkäin** (*about **the most intelligent***)
- verbs: se about **tappaa** (*it almost **kills***)
- longer clauses: ihmiset, jotka suunnilleen **päivittää FB:tä joka kerta kun** […] (*people who, like, **update FB every time they** […])*

Some of these groups were further divided into more specific subcategories (e.g. numeral + noun), as will be described later in the analysis (section 4.2.2.). After categorizing all occurrences, the frequencies of the different syntactic contexts in the three datasets were calculated, and the similarities and differences in distributions were analyzed. The general aim of this classification was to see whether there are restrictions as to what word classes the three approximators can modify, and to what extent they resemble each other in this respect. Additionally, the results for *about* were contrasted with the definitions introduced in the OED (2016) (discussed in section 2.4.1.) – differences here could suggest that *about* has either gained new uses or lost some of its original ones (or perhaps both).

3.3.2. Semantic features

In order to examine the semantic and functional dimensions of *about*, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed. First, in the quantitative part, all messages were classified based on the immediate **semantic contexts** of the approximators. There were six groups altogether, as shown and exemplified below:

- TIME: about kuusi **vuotta** sitten (*about six **years** ago*)
- MONEY: about 80 **euroa** (*about 80 **euros***)
- SIZE: about 30 **metriä** (*about 30 **meters***)
- OTHER MEASUREMENTS: about 60 **wattia** (*about 60 **watts***)
- OTHER QUANTITIES: about 150 000 **ihmistä** (*about 150,000 **people***)
- QUALITY AND OTHERS: about **noin** (*about **like that***)

These categories were formed by going through the datasets and finding similarities between individual cases – as such, they are not based on some ready-made semantic categorization, but prompted by my own observations and analyses of the data. The aim was to calculate the frequencies of these contexts in the three datasets, and see with what kinds of phrases (in semantic terms) *about* is used most often, and compare these to the way *noin* and *suunnilleen* are used. Were some distinct patterns to emerge in this quantitative analysis, these could point to semantic or connotational differences between the approximators.

Finally, a collection of messages from the *about*-dataset was selected for further, qualitative analysis. The selection was based on the occurrence of multiple approximators in the messages: a message was chosen for closer analysis if, in addition to *about*, it featured other approximators as well (e.g. *noin*, *suunnilleen*, *suurin piirtein*). Due to the large amount of data, it was necessary to use the search function of MS Word to find suitable messages for this analysis. Therefore, the scope of the search had to be limited to a specific set of approximators, which are listed below:

- *noin*
- *suunnilleen*
- *suurin piirtein*
- *siinä*
- *joku / jotain / joskus / jostain / jossain*
- *sellainen / semmoinen*

These particular words (all having meanings close to "a little more or less than") were chosen, since (apart from *sellainen*/*semmoinen*) all of them are referred to in *Iso suomen kielioppi* (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 651, 815) when adverbs and particles conveying approximation are discussed. The words *sellainen* and *semmoinen*, on the other hand, came up during the analysis, and so they were added to the list as well. In order to make valid comparisons between the approximators, it was deemed important to examine only those words that are as close to *about* as possible in semantic terms. Due to this, words that clearly mean **either** "more than" **or** "less than" (like *alle* 'under' and *yli* 'over', for example) were not considered. In addition, approximations conveyed by inflections, as in *viiti**sen**kymmentä* 'about fifty', were excluded as well.

The purpose of this closer analysis was to examine and compare how *about* and the other approximators are used by the *same* writers in the *same* messages, and see if some preference patterns regarding the choice of a specific approximator emerged. By approaching the dataset this way, such variables as the writers' individual demographic features and the topics of the messages remain constant, and hence variations in use could suggest that (in addition to possible grammatical differences) the approximators have distinctive semantic features and connotations, which make them more likely to appear in some specific contexts. The analysis was not based on any ready-made set of features to look for; instead, the selected messages were read one by one, and all possibly interesting features (mainly in terms of triggering the use of a certain approximator instead of another) were taken note of. The features and patterns found are explained in detail in section 4.3.2.

4. Analysis

4.1. General

The comparison between the overall frequencies of *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen* in Suomi24, demonstrated in Table 1, shows that *noin* is by far the most common approximator of the three.

Table 1. Number of hits with *noin*, *about*, and *suunnilleen* as the search keys, collected from the corpus of Suomi24 in Korp (Borin et al. 2012) in October 2016.

Approximator	**Number of hits**
noin	1,755,810
suunnilleen	93,749
about	70,782
Total	1,920,341

Although the hits for *noin* include occurrences where it is not used as an approximator (as in "se meni **noin**" 'it went **like that**'), the number of hits is still significantly higher compared to the frequencies of *about* and *suunnilleen* – these two are considerably less

popular. Furthermore, the hits for *about* include several instances where it is not used as an Anglicism (for example, cases where it functions as part of codeswitching), and hence it is clearly used the least out of the three. Despite this, the frequency of *about* in Suomi24 is still substantially high, which is why it can be considered a common Anglicism in informal Finnish discourse.

The popularity of *noin* as an approximator is apparent in all three datasets collected for the purposes of this study. Table 2 represents how a set of approximators are distributed in each individual dataset. The aim here is to show which approximators are regularly used together, and on this basis draw conclusions about possible register differences between *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen*.

Table 2. Occurrences of a set of approximators in the three datasets. The approximators here are the same as those used in the close analysis (introduced in section 3.3.2.).

Approximator	***about*-dataset**	***noin*-dataset**	***suunnilleen*-dataset**	**Total**
about	219	1	1	221
noin / n.	47	357	53	457
suunnilleen	2	7	215	224
joku / jotain / joskus / jossain	11	7	5	23
sellainen / semmoinen	3	2	2	7
siinä	2	3	0	5
suurin piirtein	0	4	1	5
Total	284	381	277	942

When analyzing these figures, it is important to bear in mind that each dataset consists of 200 messages that have at least one occurrence of the respective word by default. The number of instances going over 200, then, demonstrates double (or triple) usages: for instance, in the *about*-dataset there are 19 cases where *about* is used more than once in the same message, whereas in the *noin*-dataset the corresponding number is 157. The figures

presented in Table 2 confirm that *noin* is undoubtedly the most common approximator in the dataset as a whole: it occurs altogether 457 times, in comparison to the 221 instances of *about* and 224 of *suunnilleen*. Even in the *about*- and *suunnilleen*-datasets it is more common to use *noin* (or its abbreviation *n.*) than it is to repeat *about* or *suunnilleen* several times in a single message. Additionally, as the distribution of approximators in the *noin*-dataset indicates, *noin* is frequently used multiple times in the same messages.

Both *about* and *suunnilleen* are often used with *noin*, but these two words rarely occur together, as evidenced by Table 2: the *about*-dataset has only one instance of *suunnilleen*, and, similarly, *about* occurs only twice in the *suunnilleen*-dataset. The infrequent use of these two approximators together in the same messages indicates that they belong to different registers. The relatively common use of *about* with other informal approximators (16 cases) differentiates it from *suunnilleen* (7 cases), and suggests that *about* is considered more informal in style than *suunnilleen*. *Noin*, on the other hand, seems stylistically neutral, as its use is considerably frequent throughout the datasets.

Finally, there is some variation in terms of the orthographic form of *about* in the Finnish context. There were altogether 73,758 hits for *about* in its different spelling forms, 96.0% of which were uses in the original English form. Although these hits include several cases where *about* is used within English discourse, the number of hits is still significantly higher when compared to the alternative, nativized spellings, as Table 3 demonstrates. Thus, it can be stated that the English spelling form *about* is currently the most common one used in Finnish discourse.

Table 3. Raw frequencies of different spelling variations of *about*, collected from the corpus of Suomi24 in Korp (Borin et al. 2012) in October 2016.

Spelling form	**Number of hits**
about	70,782
abaut	1,329
öbaut	834
apaut	470
öpaut	343
Total	73,758

The popularity of the original English spelling form in Finnish discourse separates *about* from such Anglicisms as *pliis* and *enivei*, which in turn have clearly been assimilated into Finnish (these were discussed in section 2.3.2.). In the Finnish orthographic system, most phonemes are represented by distinct graphemes (Hakulinen et al. 2004: 41), and in the cases of *pliis* and *enivei*, the orthographic forms have indeed changed from the original English ones (*please* and *anyway*) to correspond with the Finnish system. In addition to the alterations in spelling, some phonetic changes have occurred as well, and these are apparent in the new, nativized spelling forms. For instance, the phoneme /w/ in the original English *anyway* is usually replaced by /v/ in Finnish discourse – a change which is reflected in the orthographic form *enivei* (the grapheme *w* is replaced by *v*). *About*, on the other hand, is mostly used in the original English spelling form although the form closest to its phonetic realization (following the Finnish orthographic system) would be *abaut* or *öbaut*.[9] Nevertheless, the situation may change rapidly, as it did in the case of *enivei*: according to the data of Nikula (2007) and Nikula and Halonen (2011), *enivei* was used most commonly in its English orthographic form *anyway* in 2007, but in 2011 the Finnish

[9] Based on everyday observations, in Finnish discourse the first vowel sound in *about* is commonly pronounced as /ɑ/ instead of /ə/ (the English pronunciation), and so the word is often spelled with *a* (as in *about* or *abaut*). The phoneme /ø/, represented by the letter *ö* in the Finnish orthographic system, is quite close to /ə/, and so the word is sometimes spelled with *ö* (as in *öbaut*).

form *enivei* surpassed it and became the most popular form. Similar development may happen with *about* as well, though only further research at a later time can track changes in the orthographic form. However, since the use of *about* in its English orthographic form is so considerably frequent, it seems unlikely that any of the other spelling variants could seriously challenge it.

4.2. Grammatical features

This section deals with the grammatical features of *about*. First, we will look at the position *about* takes in approximation phrases, and see how this behavior relates to the uses of *noin* and *suunnilleen*. We will then move on to discuss the syntactic contexts of the three approximators: what word classes can they modify, and do they show any differences in this respect? The results will be contrasted with the definitions given for *about* in the OED (2016) (introduced in section 2.4.1.). The analyses of both position and syntactic contexts are mostly quantitative in nature, and the discussion focuses on comparing frequencies. For an overview of all the quantitative results of this study (regarding syntactic positions and contexts as well as semantic contexts), see Appendix 1.

4.2.1. Syntactic position

In the dataset, *about* was used 192 times as a premodifier, and in only eight cases as a postmodifier. The distribution of positions is similar in the *noin*-dataset, as *noin* occurred only three times as a postmodifier. It is therefore clear that these two approximators are mainly used as premodifiers in informal written language. *Suunnilleen*, on the other hand, behaved very differently. Although it mostly occurred as a premodifier (166 instances), overall its use was significantly more varied compared to *about* and *noin*, for there were as many as 33 cases of postmodification.[10] Table 4 illustrates the distributions of positions in the three datasets.

[10] There was also one case where *suunnilleen* was used independently, as an answer to a question.

Table 4. Frequencies of the approximators' syntactic positions. The percentages in clauses show the proportion of uses in the respective datasets.

Syntactic position	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
Premodifier	197 (98.5%)	192 (96.0%)	166 (83.0%)
Postmodifier	3 (1.5%)	8 (4.0%)	33 (16.5%)
Other	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)
Total	200 (100%)	200 (100%)	200 (100%)

The following examples from the datasets demonstrate different modifier positions: examples 1–3 represent premodifier uses, and examples 4–6 postmodifier uses. In the examples, the approximation phrases are underlined and the approximators themselves are in bold. Note that all the examples used throughout this paper are provided in their original written form; this means, for instance, that such errors as misspelled words are left uncorrected.

Example 1	mulla kestää **about** 3-5 min	*it takes me **about** 3-5 minutes*
Example 2	Kävelen **noin** 200 km. kuukaudessa	*I walk **about** 200km. in a month*
Example 3	Hinta on **suunnilleen** sama	*The price is **about** the same.*
Example 4	haluaisin että se kulkisi 60km/h **about**	*I would want it to go **about** 60km/h*
Example 5	Kuinka paljon […] on **noin** läsnäoloja?	***About** how many attendances […]?*
Example 6	parhaillaan 20metriä **suunnilleen**.	***about** 20 meters at best*

It is interesting that *noin* only occurred as a postmodifier in question phrases, as in example 5, whereas *about* was always used as a premodifier in interrogative structures. In this respect, *about* behaved similarly to *suunnilleen*: from the 33 postmodifier uses of *suunnilleen*, only four were in question structures. Although the overall frequencies shown in Table 4 suggest that *about* is very similar to *noin* in terms of syntactic position, these differing preferences regarding question structures imply that *noin* has different positional restrictions compared to both *about* and *suunnilleen*.

In all, these results question Battarbee's (2004: 265) notion that *about* is typically used as a postmodifier in Finnish discourse. The time span of over a decade between Battarbee's article and the present study could be one factor causing this discrepancy – in other words, the use of *about* might have changed in the past years. However, it is more probable that this difference results from the nature of the data used in this study in comparison to the basis of Battarbee's article. As was discussed in section 2.3.2., the Finnish part of the *Dictionary of European Anglicisms* (Görlach 2001) was compiled in a largely subjective manner by a small team (Battarbee 2004: 274). Because *about* was still quite a new Anglicism in the early 2000s, it was arguably mostly found in speech at the time, and therefore the observations referred to by Battarbee are likely based on informal spoken language. The present study, on the other hand, is based on informal, written, online data, and the situation could well be different if spoken data was used instead. Presumably, *about* acts differently in spoken language: for instance, if it is initially omitted from a clause in speech (intentionally or by mistake), it can be added to the end of the utterance as an afterthought, as in "sinne oli vaan 5 kilometriä matkaa… **about**" 'it was only five kilometers there… **about**'. In written discourse, however, text can always be edited, and *about* can be added to the premodifier position if at first left out. Based on personal observations, *about* is indeed frequently used as a postmodifier in spoken language, but the question of whether or not this really is the case is not in the scope of the present study.

4.2.2. Syntactic context

The purpose of this section is to analyze what types of words (in grammatical terms) *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen* are used to modify: do all three approximators work under similar syntactic restrictions, or are some more freely used than others? As was discussed in section 3.3.1., the focus here is solely on the *word classes of the modified words*. Figure 1 demonstrates how these word classes are distributed in the three datasets: each dataset has its own bar, and the different colors represent the frequencies of the word classes in the individual datasets. For instance, the entire bar representing the use of *about* consists

of *all* uses of *about* (100%), and the orange part represents the use of *about* modifying numerals (67.5%).

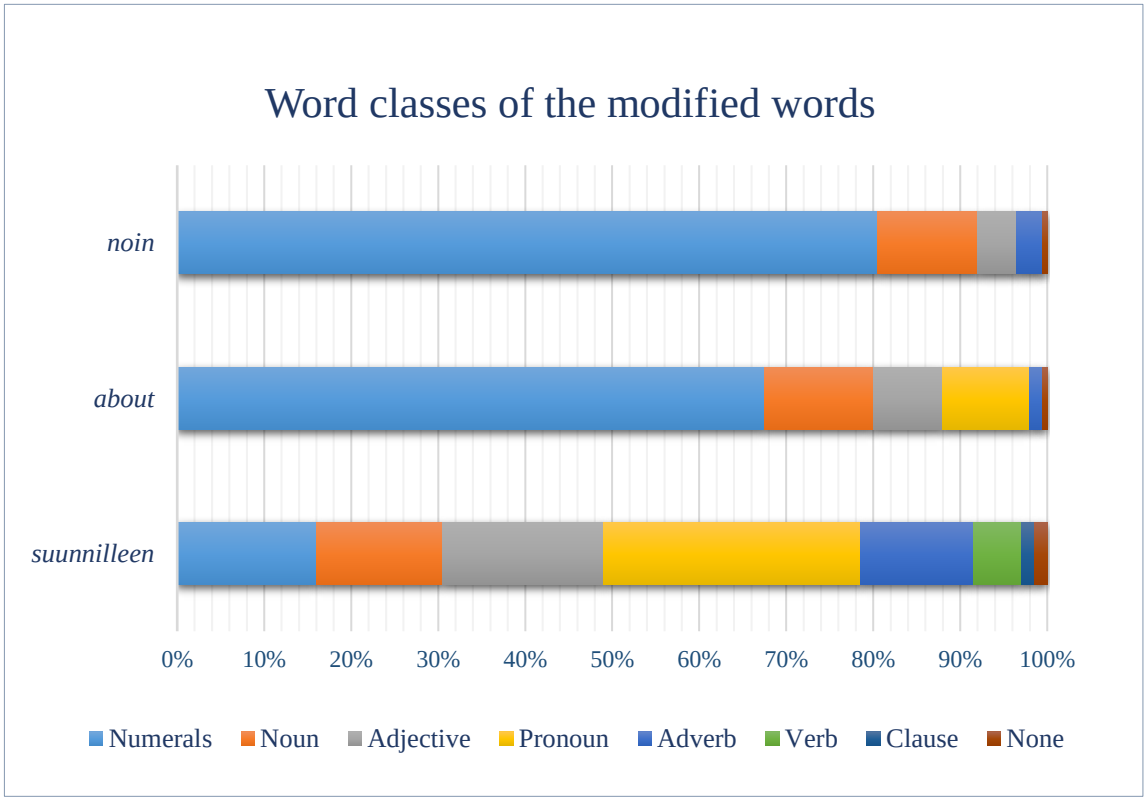


Figure 1. Distribution of the word classes of the modified words.

As Figure 1 shows, there are clear differences between the three approximators, but some similarities are apparent as well: *about* evidently resembles the use of *noin* to a large extent, while *suunnilleen* seems to form a pattern of its own. But, since Figure 1 only represents the distribution of relatively broad categories, some closer analysis is needed in order to draw conclusions. In the following discussion the categories are analyzed in more depth, and some are further divided into smaller groups, thus enabling the detection of detailed patterns. The analysis is structured as follows: each category is dealt with by comparing how frequently the three approximators occur with the word class in question, and, when possible, more elaborate patterns are distinguished. Additionally, in order to see how the Finnish uses of *about* correspond with the English ones, the results are contrasted with the definitions given for *about* in the OED (2016) (introduced in section 2.4.1.).

Numerals

Overall, as Figure 1 shows, numerals are the word class most commonly modified by these approximators: looking at all three datasets combined (altogether 600 messages), these clause types make up 54.7% of all cases examined. Numerals are especially frequent with *noin* (80.5% of the *noin*-dataset), but they are the most common word class modified by *about* as well (67.5%). The situation is radically different when *suunnilleen* is considered: it is used with numerals in only 32 cases, making up 16.0% of the *suunnilleen*-dataset. The differences in frequencies are elaborated in Table 5: here, the occurrences with numerals are further divided into four distinct types, which describe the larger structures of the modified phrases.

Table 5. Frequencies of syntactic patterns containing numerals in the three datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of the individual patterns among all numeral uses in the respective datasets.

Syntactic pattern **"example of use from the dataset"**	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
1. numeral + unit of measurement "noin 200 km" 'about 200 km'	127 (78.9%)	99 (73.3%)	20 (62.5%)
2. numeral + noun "noin 5 lyöntiä" 'about 5 hits'	15 (9.3%)	21 (15.6%)	3 (9.4%)
3. numeral only "about 10 miljardia" 'about 10 billion'	14 (8.7%)	12 (8.9%)	7 (21.9%)
4. others "noin kello 2" 'about 2 o'clock' "suunnilleen alle 30" 'under about 30'	5 (3.1%)	3 (2.2%)	2 (6.3%)
Total	161 (100.0%)	135 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)

As Table 5 shows, when modifying numerals the most common pattern for all three approximators was pattern 1; that is, combining the numeral with a noun referring to a unit of measurement (e.g. meter, kilogram, watt). The second most common pattern, with considerably fewer occurrences, was to combine the numeral with other quantifiable nouns, as in "about 2–3 **kokousta**" 'about 2–3 **meetings**' or "noin 650 000 **koiraa**" 'about 650,000 **dogs**' (pattern 2). This pattern was most frequent in the *about*-dataset: from all

numeral uses of *about*, these cases covered as much as 15.6%, while the corresponding numbers for *noin* and *suunnilleen* were clearly lower, 9.3% and 9.4% respectively. There were a few occurrences of numerals only (pattern 3), but often in these cases some unit of measurement was implied: for instance, in the clause "paino tuolloin siinä about **45**" 'weight then something around **45**', the writer talks about their body weight, and so it is clear that the numeral "45" refers to kilograms. In terms of the last pattern (4), which combines all other numeral clauses (e.g. noun + numeral, adverb + numeral), the frequencies are overall too low to make any valid generalizations, but it can be stated that other combinations are altogether rarer. For instance, combining the approximators with adverbs such as *yli* 'over', *alle* 'under', or *melkein* 'almost' produces mostly awkward sentences, like "about alle 50 euroa" 'about under 50 euros' or "melkein suunnilleen 15 minuuttia" 'almost about 15 minutes'.

In all, then, *noin* and *about* resemble each other in that they both are mostly used to modify numerals. However, the difference between these two lies in the distribution of the detailed patterns, as shown in Table 5. These patterns are more evenly distributed in the *about*-dataset in comparison to the *noin*-dataset: in both cases, the bulk of numeral uses follow pattern 1, but the proportion of the other three patterns combined is larger in the *about*-dataset compared to the *noin*-dataset (26.7% and 21.1% respectively). These patterns are still more equally distributed in the *suunnilleen*-dataset, since patterns 2, 3, and 4 make up as much as 37.5% of all numeral uses. Overall, though, the use of numerals with *suunnilleen* is significantly less common than with the other two approximators.

When these results are contrasted with the definitions of *about* in the OED (2016), it is clear that there is much common ground here. One of the definitions (introduced in section 2.4.1.) states that *about* can be used "with numbers, quantities, and measures" to mean "approximately" (OED 2016: A.III.8). Evidently, then, this use has managed to transfer from English into Finnish, and furthermore, it has become the most common type of use in the Finnish context overall.

Nouns

Noun occurrences were not further categorized based strictly on syntactic features: here, the semantic nature of the nouns and noun phrases was taken into consideration as well. This means that nouns semantically implying a numerical value were distinguished from other noun uses. The difference between these two types becomes evident when comparing some examples from the dataset: examples 7 and 8 demonstrate approximations of nouns implying numerical values, whereas the noun phrases in examples 9 and 10 are not related to quantities of any kind.

Example 7	meillä meni about **tunti**	*it took us about **an hour***
Example 8	noin **kuukausi** sitten	*about **a month** ago*
Example 9	ylettyy suunnilleen **takapuolen alle**	*reaches somewhere **below the bum***
Example 10	roikku […] about **kulhoon asti**	*hung […] almost **in the bowl***

In examples 7 and 8, the nouns “tunti” ‘hour’ and “kuukausi” ‘month’ are both measure nouns, and hence they imply numerical values. For instance, an hour consists of 60 minutes: the estimated time in example 7, then, could be interpreted as ranging from 50 to 70 minutes. Similarly, a month covers around 30 days, in which case the approximated length of time in example 8 could be understood as falling somewhere between, say, 25 to 35 days. Additionally, both these nouns convey the value *one* as well, as in “about [**yksi**] tunti” ‘about [**one**] hour’ and “noin [**yksi**] kuukausi” ‘about [**one**] month’. Therefore, the approximations in examples 7 and 8 could be interpreted as meaning *one or more* hours/months as well.

In examples 9 and 10, on the other hand, the approximated nouns are not linked to any quantities or measurements. In example 9, the writer is not approximating the quantity of bottoms (one or more bottoms): they are saying that the shirt in question *more or less covers the bottom*. Likewise in example 10, the writer is not referring to there being one or more bowls, but is saying that someone’s hair is *almost hanging in one*. Although these latter, non-numerical nouns clearly differ from the former, numerical ones, there is an important similarity between these all: all four examples can be thought of as working on

scales, and this scalarity is what enables these phrases to be approximated. In examples 7 and 8 the scales relate to time, whereas in examples 9 and 10 we are dealing with lengths and distances.

Despite this similarity, the distinction between these two noun types was considered necessary: the numerical nouns are close to numerals, whereas the latter noun type differs considerably from both. Table 6 shows the distribution of the noun types in the datasets, further demonstrating the significance of making such a distinction.

Table 6. Frequencies of syntactic patterns containing nouns in the three datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of the individual patterns among all noun uses in the respective datasets.

Syntactic pattern **"example of use from the dataset"**	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
5. noun (numerical) "about viikossa" 'in about a week'	20 (87.0%)	20 (80.0%)	9 (31.0%)
6. other noun phrases "Bahia Felizin kohdalla suunnilleen" 'around Bahia Feliz'	3 (13.0%)	5 (20.0%)	20 (69.0%)
Total	23 (100.0%)	25 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)

As is evident in Table 6, both *noin* and *about* are mainly used to approximate nouns that imply numerical values (pattern 5), and only few times to modify other noun phrases (pattern 6), whereas with *suunnilleen* the situation is reversed. These figures suggest that both *noin* and *about* are preferred in numerical contexts, and *suunnilleen* is favored when approximating non-numerical phrases. However, although the distribution of the two noun types are almost identical in the *about*- and *noin*-datasets – and hence *about* and *noin* seem to strongly resemble each other in this respect – some differences become evident when clauses falling into the category "other noun phrases" are examined more closely. Consider the following examples from the datasets.

Example 11	**noin** hintoja	***approximate*** *prices*
Example 12	esitetään kirjoissa **noin** aikana	*is presented in books as an* ***approximate*** *time*

Example 13	Lidlissä **about**	*in,* ***like****, Lidl*
Example 14	kirjoitin **about** preesensissä	*I wrote in* ***like*** *present tense*
Example 15 (same as ex. 10)	roikku […] **about** kulhoon asti	*hung […]* ***almost*** *in the bowl*

In examples 11 and 12 *noin* is used as a part of phrases that are fairly established in Finnish discourse – the former one can even be found in a Finnish online dictionary, *Kielitoimiston sanakirja* (2016), spelled with a hyphen as in *noin-hinta* 'approximate price'. In both clauses *noin* seems to have merged with the noun, functioning as a part of the noun (*noin-hinta* 'approximate price', *noin-aika* 'approximate time') rather than as a separate adverb approximator modifying the noun. Conversely, *about* is used with a variety of nouns and noun phrases, as examples 13–15 show, and none of these represent an established phrase in Finnish discourse. These five examples suggest, then, that *noin* is limited in terms of what nouns it can modify (semantically numerical nouns as discussed above, and these few established noun phrases), while *about* is more flexible in this respect, resembling the use of *suunnilleen.*

Finally, it is interesting to note that while the use of *about* as a modifier of numerical nouns (pattern 5) coincides with one of the definitions given in the OED (2016: A.III.8), namely that *about* is used "with numbers, quantities, and measures" to mean "approximately", there is no definition related to the modification of non-numerical nouns (pattern 6). This point can be further demonstrated by considering the translations of the previous *about*-examples 13–15, as shown below.

Example 13	Lidlissä **about**	*in,* ***like****, Lidl*
Example 14	kirjoitin **about** preesensissä	*I wrote in* ***like*** *present tense*
Example 15 (same as ex. 10)	roikku […] **about** kulhoon asti	*hung […]* ***almost*** *in the bowl*

In all three examples, *about* would not be a suitable approximator in the English translations. For instance, the first example would be translated as "in about Lidl", which

is an awkward expression. A more natural way of translating the clause would be to replace *about* with *like*, since the writer is not actually approximating the store "Lidl" per se – they are giving it as an example of a store where you can find a particular item. *Like* would be a suitable translation in example 14 as well, while in example 15 *almost* would likely be the best choice. As these examples show, there is no straight one-to-one correspondence between the English and Finnish uses of *about*. This kind of use of *about* in Finnish, although quite uncommon in the dataset, is a sign of *about* being used in new and innovative ways when compared to its original English uses: it has gained features similar to those of its Finnish near equivalents, such as *suunnilleen* and *tyyliin* 'like'.

Adjectives and pronouns

While the proportion of numerals was highest in the *noin*-dataset and lowest in the *suunnilleen*-dataset, when it comes to adjectives and pronouns the situation is reversed: these two word classes occur most often in the *suunnilleen*-dataset (combined proportion 48.0%), while their use with *noin* is infrequent (4.5%). As for *about*, its use with adjectives and pronouns falls between the former two, making up 18.0% of the *about*-dataset. As with nouns in the preceding subsection, it is useful to divide the adjectives similarly into two types: those that are numerical (meaning, some numeral is part of the adjective), and those that are not. Table 7 illustrates the distribution of these types throughout the three datasets, thus emphasizing the necessity of this division.

Table 7. Frequencies of syntactic patterns containing adjectives in the three datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of the individual patterns among all adjective uses in the respective datasets.

Syntactic pattern **"example of use from the dataset"**	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
7. adjective (numerical) "noin puolitoistavuotias mäyräkoira" 'about a year-and-a-half-old dachshund'	9 (100.0%)	7 (43.8%)	4 (10.8%)
8. adjective "about koko elämäni" 'about my whole life' "suunnilleen samanikäinen" 'about the same age'	0 (0.0%)	9 (56.3%)	33 (89.2%)
Total	9 (100.0%)	16 (100.0%)	37 (100.0%)

As displayed in Table 7, there were nine occurrences of *noin* modifying numerical adjectives (pattern 7), such as "noin **44-vuotias** nainen" 'about a **44-year-old** woman', but there were none of the other type (pattern 8). *Suunnilleen*, on the other hand, is particularly used with these non-numerical adjectives, as in "suunnilleen **samanlainen**" 'about **the same**' and "suunnilleen **ainut** hyvä ominaisuus" 'about the **only** good property', and only occasionally with numerical adjectives. These figures support the findings discussed in relation to numerals and nouns in the previous subsections: *noin* is most capable in modifying numerals and other words conveying numerical values (either explicitly as these adjectives, or implicitly as the nouns), whereas *suunnilleen* is typically used with non-numerical words. These tendencies suggest that *noin* and *suunnilleen* are in a complementary distribution of sorts: each one is used most in contexts where the other is clearly less frequent. Finally, as was the case with numerals and nouns, here too the use of *about* seems to fall somewhere between the other two approximators: it is used with both adjective types quite evenly, as in "about **30v** opettaja" 'about a **30-year-old** teacher' and "about **tervepäinen**" 'more or less **sane**', and so its use is generally speaking fairly flexible. Both these uses correspond with the definitions of *about* in the OED (2016: A.III.8–A.III.9), according to which *about* can be used with numbers, quantities, and measures (pattern 7), but it can also modify adjectives and their superlative forms (pattern 8); both these functions have therefore managed to transfer from English into Finnish.

The two adjective types evidently differ from each other, yet it is noteworthy that they share one prominent feature. Similarly to the noun types discussed in the previous subsection, the common factor between the adjectives is their scalarity. Numeral adjectives naturally work on scales, but other adjectives can be considered scalar as well. For instance, in a phrase such as "suunnilleen **tällainen**" 'about **like this**', the scale in question can be thought of as ranging from *not like this* to *precisely like this*. The approximation of the adjective "tällainen" 'like this', then, positions the described object somewhere between these two ends of the scale. Likewise, the approximated phrase "about **älykkäin**" 'about the most **intelligent**' situates the object of description along a scale ranging from *the least intelligent* to *the most intelligent*.

Turning to pronouns, the differences in frequencies between the three approximators are even more pronounced here, as evidenced in Table 8.

Table 8. Frequencies of syntactic patterns containing pronouns in the three datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of the individual patterns among all pronoun uses in the respective datasets.

Syntactic pattern **"example of use from the dataset"**	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
9. pronoun only "suunnilleen sama" 'about the same'	0 (0.0%)	7 (35.0%)	23 (39.0%)
10. pronoun + other "about tällä viikolla" 'in about this week'	0 (0.0%)	13 (65.0%)	36 (61.0%)
Total	0 (0.0%)	20 (100.0%)	59 (100.0%)

The complete lack of approximated pronouns in the *noin*-dataset highlights the previously established fact that *noin* is mainly used with words that include or imply numerical values. *About*, on the other hand, is frequently used with pronouns, which in fact constitute the third most commonly modified word class in the *about*-dataset (10.0%). Yet, the highest frequencies are once again found in the *suunnilleen*-dataset: pronouns make up as much as 29.5% of all words modified by *suunnilleen*, making them the word class most commonly modified by it. For both *about* and *suunnilleen* it is more common to approximate pronouns that are combined with other words (pattern 10), as in "about **saman verran**" 'about **the same amount**', than it is to modify pronouns only (pattern 9), as in "about **sama**" 'about **the same**'.

The modified pronouns found in the datasets are mostly limited to four different ones: *joka* 'every', *jokainen* 'every/everyone', *kaikki* 'all/everything/everybody', and *sama* 'same'. Similarly to the previously discussed nouns and adjectives, all these pronoun approximations can be thought of as scalar. The pronouns *joka*, *jokainen*, and *kaikki* are all quantifiers, whereas the pronoun *sama* works in a similar way as the non-numerical adjectives – for instance, the phrase "about sama" 'about the same' can be situated on a scale ranging from *not the same* to *precisely the same*. Approximations of all four are noted in the OED (2016: A.III.9.a–b): approximating the pronouns *joka*, *jokainen*, and

kaikki corresponds with the definition of *about* as "modifying adjectives and quantifiers", whereas the modification of *sama* relates to the definition "modifying comparatives of equivalence". Examples of all these pronoun uses are presented below (16–19).

Example 16	about **joka** kuukausi	*about **every** month*
Example 17	about **jokainen** guru	*about **every** guru*
Example 18	laittaa tykkäilyjään about **kaikkeen**	*"likes" about **everything***
Example 19	hinnat about **samaa** tasoa	*prices at about **the same** level*

Although the modified pronouns occurring in the datasets are mostly limited to the four discussed above, there are a couple of others as well. Two of them are exemplified below (20–21).

Example 20	about **tällä** viikolla	*around **this** week*
Example 21	Aikaa […] voit saada about **tämän** päivän	*you may have perhaps **this** day*

These uses of *about* modifying the pronoun *tämä* 'this' (and its inflectional form *tällä* 'in this') do not correspond with any of the definitions provided in the OED (2016). Furthermore, as with some of the noun phrases discussed in the preceding subsection, translating these clauses into English using *about* would not work – instead, words like *around* and *perhaps* would result in more fluent translations. These points lead to the conclusion that, although the uses of *about* modifying pronouns in Finnish correspond largely with the OED definitions, *about* has gained some new uses here as well. These uses resemble the features of some of the native Finnish approximators, such as *suunnilleen*, for in both examples 20 and 21 *suunnilleen* would be an appropriate replacement for *about* in syntactic terms.

Adverbs, verbs, and longer clauses

The previous subsections have shown that *noin* and *suunnilleen* tend to work in complementary distribution in terms of their preferred syntactic contexts, and *about* often falls somewhere between the other two, combining both uses. A similar trend is evident

when it comes to the modification of adverbs, verbs, and longer clause structures, but here *about* is remarkably closer to *noin* than *suunnilleen*. Table 9 demonstrates this.

Table 9. Frequencies of syntactic patterns containing adverbs, verbs, or longer clauses in the three datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of these patterns in the *whole* dataset.

Syntactic pattern **"example of use from the dataset"**	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
11. adverb "suunnilleen noin" 'about like that'	6 (3.0%)	3 (1.5%)	26 (13.0%)
12. verb "kun tiedät suunnilleen" 'when you know, approximately'	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (5.5%)
13. longer clauses "sanoi […] suunnilleen että ei se mitään" 'said […] like it's okay'	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.5%)
Total	6 (3.0%)	3 (1.5%)	40 (20.0%)

We see from Table 9 that *suunnilleen* can be used with all three structures, whereas there are only rare uses of *noin* and *about* as modifiers of adverbs (pattern 11), and no uses at all with verbs (pattern 12) or longer clauses (pattern 13). In this respect, *about* strongly resembles *noin* and differs considerably from *suunnilleen*. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that according to the OED (2016: A.III.10) *about* can in fact be used to modify verbs in English discourse (as in "about **done**") but, according to the dataset used in this study, it seems that this syntactic function has not managed to transfer into Finnish. Based on personal experience of informal Finnish discourse, however, I would argue that in everyday spoken language *about* can actually be used as an approximator of verbs, as well as of longer clauses. It is possible that this use is limited to spoken Finnish for now, having not yet spread into informal written language, but nonetheless, there is currently no empirical evidence of *about* modifying verbs or longer clauses in Finnish discourse.

Summary

The results discussed in this section suggest that, in terms of syntactic contexts, *noin* and *suunnilleen* are in a complementary distribution of sorts. *Suunnilleen* is regularly used in contexts where *noin* cannot be used, as with non-numerical adjectives, pronouns, verbs,

and longer clauses. *Noin*, on the other hand, occurs mostly with numerals and words with explicit or implicit numerical values – uses which are, conversely, infrequent in the *suunnilleen*-dataset (although not absent altogether). The difference between these two, as well as their difference to *about*, becomes especially evident when categorizing the modified words based on whether or not they are numerical, as demonstrated in Table 10.

Table 10. The distribution of the modified words in the datasets based on whether they are numerical or non-numerical.

Object of modification	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
Numerical	191 (95.5%)	162 (81.0%)	45 (22.5%)
Non-numerical	9 (4.5%)	38 (19.0%)	155 (77.5%)
Total	200 (100.0%)	200 (100.0%)	200 (100.0%)

Noin almost exclusively modifies words that are explicitly or implicitly numerical (95.5%), whereas the corresponding proportion in the *suunnilleen*-dataset is significantly lower (22.5%). The use of *about*, on the other hand, falls between these two. *About* is not as restricted as *noin* in its use since it can modify words from various word classes, as the proportion of non-numerical words indicates (19.0%). The majority of the modified words in the *about*-dataset are nevertheless numerical (81.0%), resembling the ratio in the *noin*-dataset. Furthermore, as was shown in the previous subsection, *about* is syntactically not as flexible as *suunnilleen* since it cannot modify verbs and longer clauses. Overall, *about* seems to share syntactic features with both *noin* and *suunnilleen*, functioning as a kind of "all-around approximator" in the Finnish context: though it closely resembles *noin* in use, especially as it is mostly associated with numerical words, *about* can also be used in contexts where *noin*, the most common approximator in Finnish, would not be appropriate.

This section has also provided insight into what syntactic features have been transferred from the original English uses of *about* (as an approximator adverb) into Finnish discourse. The analysis shows that, in syntactic terms, *about* mainly behaves in a similar way in Finnish as it does in English: these common features include, for instance, the

modification of numerals, adjectives, and quantifiers. But, according to the dataset, some of the original approximating functions of *about* are absent from its Finnish use (e.g. *about* as a modifier of verbs), while other features, in turn, are not attested in English (e.g. *about* modifying non-numerical nouns, for instance). Thus, the results suggest that some approximating functions of *about* have not been carried over from English into Finnish, but some new features have emerged in the Finnish context – in Andersen's terms (2014: 24), *about* has gone through both functional narrowing as well as broadening.

4.3. Semantic features

This part of the analysis looks at how *about*, *noin*, and *suunnilleen* are used in terms of their semantic and connotational features: are the three approximators used in similar semantic contexts, or do they have some specific preferred contexts of use due to their distinct functions or connotations? The aim is to further elaborate the differences between the approximators, this time from a semantic point of view, and draw conclusions about the purposes of using *about* instead of its Finnish near equivalents. The analysis is divided into two parts: first, the semantic contexts of the approximators are examined and compared quantitatively, and then a selection of *about*-messages are analyzed qualitatively in more depth.

4.3.1. Semantic context

The distribution of the semantic contexts in the three datasets, illustrated in Figure 2, shows similar tendencies as those discussed in terms of the syntactic contexts in the previous section: here, too, *about* resembles the use of *noin* to a large extent, while *suunnilleen* forms a pattern of its own.

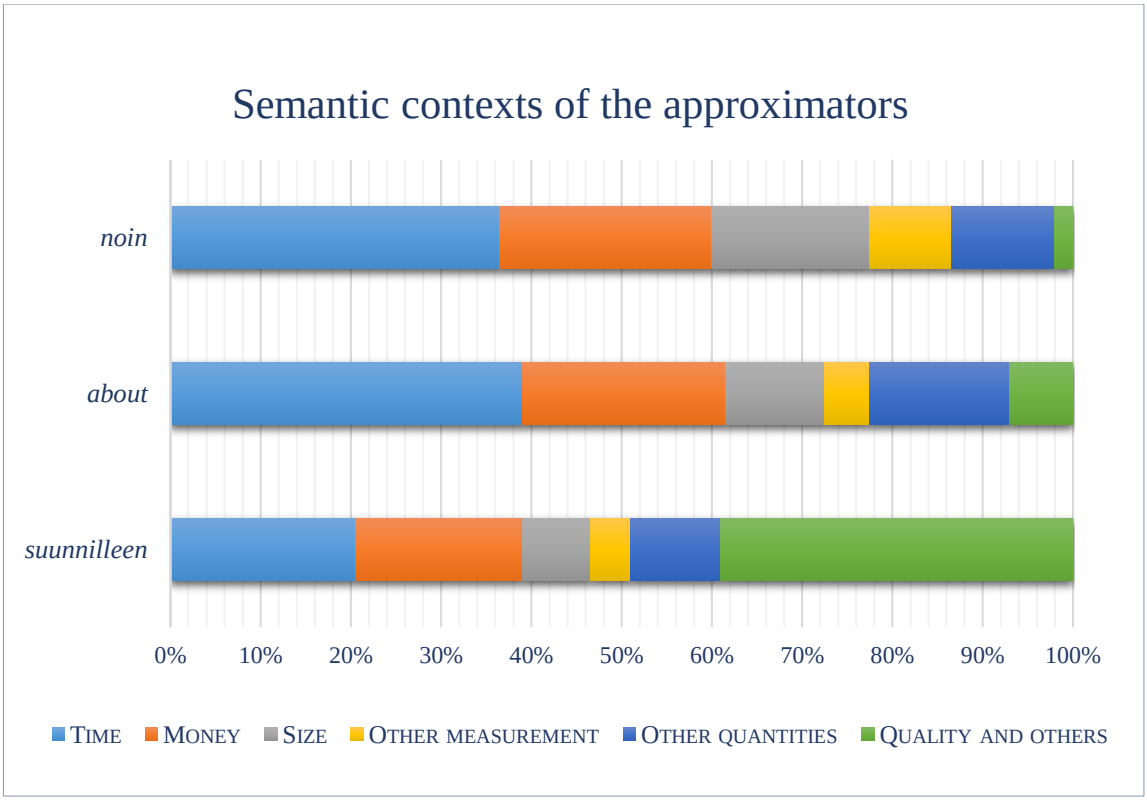


Figure 2. Semantic contexts of *noin*, *about*, and *suunnilleen* in the three datasets.

Figure 2 shows that both *about* and *noin* are mostly used in connection with semantic categories typically involving quantities and measurements (such as TIME and MONEY), whereas *suunnilleen* is most frequent with phrases referring to qualities (QUALITY AND OTHERS). This difference corresponds largely with the results from the syntactic context analysis discussed in the previous section, where it was shown that *noin* is mostly restricted to modifying numerals and other words conveying numerical values (either explicitly or implicitly), while *suunnilleen* is common in contexts where *noin* cannot be used, as with non-numerical adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns. The syntactic flexibility of *about* in comparison to *noin* is evident in the figure to some extent as well: for example, *about* is used more than *noin* in the context QUALITY AND OTHERS, reflecting its ability to modify non-numerical words. It is important to note, however, that the semantic categories themselves do not directly correspond with any of the syntactic categories. This means that not all non-numerical expressions belong automatically to the category QUALITY AND OTHERS; other categories include various phrase types as well, not only those conveying numerical values, as will be shown later on in the analysis.

Although some differences and similarities in the distributions of the semantic contexts are linked to the syntactic restrictions described in the previous section, others cannot be explained solely based on these: why, for example, is *about* used less than *noin* in the contexts SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS, and more with phrases referring to TIME? These differences, among others, will be discussed in the following analysis. The discussion is structured around the semantic categories listed in Figure 2: each section deals with two or three categories by comparing the frequencies of the respective semantic contexts in the three datasets. The general aim is to see whether *noin*, *about*, and *suunnilleen* differ in how readily they are used with certain semantic contexts, and whether this suggests anything about possible connotational differences between the three approximators.

TIME and MONEY

In this study, the semantic context **TIME** covers phrases referring to time measurements (e.g. month, hour, second), year (e.g. 1990), age (e.g. three-year-old, same age), clock time (e.g. 22:00), and other expressions of time (e.g. all the time, all my life). The category **MONEY**, similarly, consists of phrases including various currencies (e.g. euros, bitcoins) as well as other words and clauses that imply monetary values (e.g. price, wage). As was evident in Figure 2 (see p. 50), both *noin* and *about* are used most in temporal contexts, followed by uses in reference to monetary issues. In the *suunnilleen*-dataset, TIME and MONEY contexts were the second and third most common ones respectively. The frequencies of the two contexts in the datasets are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Frequencies of TIME and MONEY related approximated phrases in the datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of these contexts in the respective datasets.

Semantic context	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
TIME	73 (36.5%)	78 (39.0%)	41 (20.5%)
MONEY	47 (23.5%)	45 (22.5%)	37 (18.5%)
Total	120 (60.0%)	123 (61.5%)	78 (39.0%)

Although the proportions of both contexts are very similar in the *noin*- and *about*-datasets, a closer look at the actual clauses reveals some noticeable differences. Consider the following examples (22–27), representing different phrase types found in the datasets. All these examples belong to the TIME category, but a similar trend is evident in terms of the MONEY context as well.

Example 22	sota kestäs noin **20min**	*the war would last about **20 minutes***
Example 23	tänään kävi noin **14.30**	*today* [*they*] *came around **14:30***
Example 24	harmaa tukkanen about **30v**	*grey-haired, about **30 years old***
Example 25	about **koko ajan**	*almost **all the time***
Example 26	about **samanikäiset** jätkät	*guys about **the same age***
Example 27	suunnilleen **saman ikänen** lapsuudenkaveri	*a childhood friend of about **the same age***

Noin is largely restricted to modifying such temporal clauses that involve numerical expressions, as in examples 22 and 23, while other phrase types are nearly absent from the *noin*-dataset. Likewise, *about* mostly occurs in connection with numerical clauses (example 24), but it is used with other phrase types to some extent as well, as demonstrated by examples 25 and 26. *Suunnilleen*, conversely, is mainly used with non-numerical expressions, as in example 27. These differences clearly reflect the syntactic constraints of the approximators described in the previous section.

Though these differences are evidently linked with the syntactic features of the three approximators, it is nevertheless noteworthy that when expressions other than numerals (or words implying numerical values) are used, the tone of the phrase can become vaguer. Take example 24, for instance. Here, a 16-year-old boy is looking for a guy roughly the same age as he is. The approximation "about samanikäiset jätkät" 'guys about the same age' is an ambiguous expression, and begs the question what ages would fit the range intended by the writer: would an 18-year-old be too old, or a 14-year-old too young, for instance? Since the phrase in itself is vague, and hence susceptible to interpretational differences, the writer in fact subsequently defines what he means by the phrase "about

samanikäiset" 'about the same age' – namely one or two years older or younger than he is. If the writer had used a numeral ("about 16-vuotiaat" 'about 16-year-olds') instead, a similar specification could have been considered unnecessary: the number "16" is not a round number, and, as Channel (1994: 71) notes, non-round numbers are usually understood as implying narrower ranges of possible values when compared to round numbers. It could be assumed, then, that when clauses without any numerical values are considered (such as "about the same age"), the interval widens even more.

Since the TIME and MONEY contexts make up the majority of the semantic contexts in the dataset as a whole (53.5% combined), approximations of phrases relating to these contexts seem to be the most common ones on the message board in general. This could indicate that topics concerning temporal and monetary issues are overall more frequently discussed when compared to the other contexts examined in this study, which, in turn, could suggest that there is a connection between these two contexts and the everyday life in Finland. This point is further supported by the significantly lower frequency of approximations of the contexts SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS (18.2% combined). Most people in Finland refer to temporal measurements every day in a variety of situations and social contexts, whereas the same cannot be said about power or speed measurements, for instance – they are more technical, and relatively context specific. However, the high frequency of phrases connected to the TIME and MONEY contexts could also indicate that approximations are generally more frequent in relation to these two contexts, compared to the other categories. These contexts would then be associated with vagueness, while contexts such as SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS would be linked with precision. Although the dataset used in this study does not provide conclusive evidence either way, I would nevertheless argue that contexts such as TIME and MONEY are more closely connected to informal discourse (everyday-like nature, vagueness) when compared to categories such as SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS, which in turn are linked with formal discourse (technical nature, precision).

SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS

About and *suunnilleen* differ from *noin* most in terms of the contexts SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS, as *noin* is associated more closely with these two contexts than the other approximators (see Figure 2 on p. 50). In this study, the category **SIZE** consists of phrases that refer to physical measurement units of size and distance (e.g. meters, kilograms, acres), or to size in more general terms (e.g. the same height), while the context **OTHER MEASUREMENTS** includes phrases featuring various other units, such as calories, watts, horsepower, and megabytes. Examples 28–33 below demonstrate these two contexts.

Example 28	rasvaa noin **15 kg**	*about **15 kg** of fat*
Example 29	noin **30 megabitin** sekuntivauhti	*speed of about **30 megabytes** in a second*
Example 30	about **175cm**	*about **175cm***
Example 31	about **samankokoinen** koira	*a dog about **the same size***
Example 32	suunnilleen **1500kcal**	*about **1500 kcal***
Example 33	suunnilleen **mun pitunen**	*about **my height***

These examples show a similar difference between the three approximators as was discussed in relation to the TIME and MONEY contexts in the previous subsection: *about* and *suunnilleen* are used with a variety of phrases, including those that do not involve numerical values (examples 31 and 33), whereas *noin* is mostly restricted to modifying numerical phrases, as demonstrated by examples 28 and 29. Thus, the syntactic features of the approximators, first elaborated in section 4.2.2., are evident here as well. But, unlike in the case of the contexts TIME and MONEY, here the frequencies vary considerably between all three datasets. This leads to the conclusions that, in addition to the distinctive syntactic features, *noin*, *about*, and *suunnilleen* differ from each other in some other respect as well. The frequencies of phrases connected to the contexts SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENT are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Frequencies of approximated phrases referring to SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS in the datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportion of these contexts in the respective datasets.

Semantic context	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
SIZE	35 (17.5%)	22 (11.0%)	15 (7.5%)
OTHER MEASUREMENTS	18 (9.0%)	10 (5.0%)	9 (4.5%)
Total	53 (26.5%)	32 (16.0%)	24 (12.0%)

As Table 12 shows, *noin* is used with both semantic contexts relatively often (altogether 26.5% of all *noin*-cases), whereas with *about* and *suunnilleen* these are clearly less common (16.0% and 12.0% respectively). One factor causing this difference might be the nature of these contexts. As was discussed in the previous subsection, topics relating to SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS may not be typical everyday subjects in most cases, especially when compared to a topic such as TIME: they are typically more specialized and technical in nature, whereas discussions relating to TIME often work on a more general level. In order to demonstrate this, compare the following examples from the TIME, SIZE, and OTHER MEASUREMENTS categories.

Example 34	punaista lihaa noin **kerran kuukaudessa**	*red meat about **once a month***
Example 35	heräsin about **vartti** sitten	*I woke about **15 minutes** ago*
Example 36	työajoja noin **35 000 km**	*about **35,000km** of work travels*
Example 37	about **6W** riittää	*about **6W** is enough*

Examples 34 and 35, discussing TIME, seem fairly general and strongly related to everyday life (dietary issues, waking up). The other two examples (36 and 37) deal with more specialized topics: the former one discusses the length of work travels (SIZE), and in the latter one the writer talks about the efficiency of lamps (OTHER MEASUREMENTS). Since *noin* is used to a large extent with phrases referring to SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS, and since these contexts are clearly less common in the *about*-dataset, it might be that *noin*

is seen as a more suitable approximator when modifying phrases of a more technical or specialized nature, while *about* carries a more casual or informal connotation. This point relates to the difference between *about* and *approximately* in English discussed by Channell (1994: 53), namely that *approximately* is often used in written, technical contexts, whereas *about* is common in spoken language, and hence it is more informal and general by nature. Furthermore, this finding is connected to the characteristics of Anglicisms on a general level, for they are more typical in informal rather than in formal language use (Andersen 2014: 24).

OTHER QUANTITIES and QUALITY AND OTHERS

In terms of the last two contexts, OTHER QUANTITIES and QUALITY AND OTHERS, the differences between the datasets are again considerable. The **OTHER QUANTITIES** context refers to phrases dealing with various quantities that do not fit into any of the previous categories: these include clauses such as "about 5 henkilöä" 'about five persons' and "noin 50 kertaa" 'about 50 times'. The category **QUALITY AND OTHERS**, on the other hand, is a miscellaneous group consisting of all other cases; mainly meaning phrases that do not have anything to do with quantities. The following examples from the datasets (38–42) demonstrate these two contexts.

Example 38	**vieraita** noin **30-40**	*about **30-40 guests***
Example 39	about **joka tiedekunnassa**	*in about **every faculty***
Example 40	suunnilleen **kaikki suomalaiset naiset**	*nearly **all Finnish women***
Example 41	ainoa about **tervepäinen**	*the only one who's somewhat **sane***
Example 42	suunnilleen **hyväksyttävällä** tavalla	*in a more or less **acceptable** way*

The approximated phrases in examples 38, 39, and 40 are all concerned with quantities of different entities (guests, faculties, Finnish women). These three represent the OTHER QUANTITIES category, which mostly consists of numeral phrases (example 38), though several clauses with quantifier pronouns fall into this category as well (examples 39 and 40). Examples 41 and 42, on the other hand, deal with qualities (sanity, acceptability),

exemplifying the context QUALITY AND OTHERS; a category which, in contrast, mainly includes non-numerical phrases. The frequencies of these contexts, presented in Table 13, correspond largely with the syntactic restrictions discussed in section 4.2.2.

Table 13. Frequencies of approximated phrases relating to OTHER QUANTITIES and QUALITY AND OTHERS in the datasets. The percentages in clauses show the proportions of these contexts in the respective datasets.

Semantic context	***noin***	***about***	***suunnilleen***
OTHER QUANTITIES	23 (11.5%)	31 (15.5%)	20 (10.0%)
QUALITY AND OTHERS	4 (2.0%)	14 (7.0%)	78 (39.0%)
Total	27 (13.5%)	45 (22.5%)	98 (49.0%)

Especially the frequencies of phrases relating to the context QUALITY AND OTHERS strongly reflect the syntactic features of the approximators. As established in section 4.2.2., *noin* is mostly limited to modifying numerical phrases, whereas *suunnilleen* is used to a large extent in contexts where *noin* cannot occur. Because the category QUALITY AND OTHERS principally consists of non-numerical phrases, *suunnilleen* is the preferred approximator here. The syntactic flexibility of *about* is evident in Table 13 as well, but as *about* is typically used to modify numerical phrases, and since it is syntactically not as flexible as *suunnilleen*, the proportion of this semantic context is considerably lower in the *about*-dataset compared to the *suunnilleen*-dataset.

Phrases belonging to the category OTHER QUANTITIES, on the other hand, are most frequent in the *about*-dataset. Here, the differences in frequencies can be attributed to both syntactic and semantic factors. Firstly, as was discussed above, this category consists mostly of numeral phrases, but there are several occurrences of pronoun quantifiers as well. The syntactic flexibility of *about*, then, might be one factor increasing the proportion of this semantic context in the *about*-dataset: while there is no evidence of *noin* modifying any pronouns, five instances of *about* as a modifier of pronouns fall into this category. Differences in syntactic flexibility might also explain why the proportions of this context are almost identical in the *noin*- and *suunnilleen*-datasets, despite the fact that *noin* is

significantly more common with numerical phrases: nearly all uses of *suunnilleen* belonging to this category involved pronoun quantifiers.

But the difference between *noin* and *about* cannot be explained by these syntactic features alone. The number of pronoun uses belonging to the category OTHER QUANTITIES is relatively small in the *about*-dataset, and hence, in both *about*- and *noin*-datasets, this category mostly consists of numeral phrases. It could be assumed, then, that this context would occur most often in the *noin*-dataset, as *noin* is the most common approximator of numerals. However, since this is not the case, as evidenced in Table 13, the semantic nature of the context might be an influencing factor instead, similarly to what was shown in relation to the contexts SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS. In order to demonstrate this, compare the following examples: the first two (examples 43 and 44) belong to the category SIZE, and the latter ones (examples 45 and 46) represent the context OTHER QUANTITIES.

Example 43	noin **7 metrin** antennin	*an antenna about **7 meters** tall*
Example 44	noin **8-12 mm** ruma rako	*an ugly gap of about **8-12 mm***
Example 45	mulla on ollut about **30 mahdollisuutta**	*I have had about **30 chances***
Example 46	"kaveriporukkaan" kuuluu about **6 tyttöä**	*"circle of friends" include about **6 girls***

In examples 43 and 44, the contexts are fairly technical: in the former example, the writer asks about grounding an antenna of a specific length, and in the latter one the writer complains about some flaws in their laminate floor. In examples 45 and 46, on the other hand, the topics are linked more closely to everyday life. The man in example 45 talks about his love life, stating that he has had about 30 chances to start a relationship, while the writer in example 46 describes the kinds of friends they have. As suggested in relation to the SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS contexts, *noin* is the preferred approximator in technical contexts, while *about* is typically associated with more general topics, dealing with issues of everyday life such as relationships, health, school, and working life. This difference might be the reason for the higher frequency of phrases belonging to the category OTHER QUANTITIES in the *about*-dataset, compared to the *noin*-dataset.

Summary

There were two main points that emerged from the semantic context analysis, discussed in this section. Firstly, the results supported some of the conclusions made in the previous section about the syntactic restrictions of the approximators. These features were especially apparent when the uses of *noin* and *suunnilleen* were considered. *Noin* mostly occurred within semantic contexts that somehow related to quantities, whereas its use with phrases referring to qualities and other unquantifiable issues were almost completely absent from the dataset. In the case of *suunnilleen*, on the other hand, the situation was vice versa. This division strongly reflects the syntactic features of these two approximators, since *noin* is mostly limited to modifying numerical phrases, while *suunnilleen*, in contrast, is common in contexts where *noin* cannot be used (as with adjectives and verbs). In some cases the syntactic features of *about* in relation to the other two approximators were apparent as well, as when taking a closer look at the phrase types with which the approximators occurred in the datasets (numerical or non-numerical).

Secondly, the analysis showed that though the syntactic features were evident at times, not all differences between the approximators could be attributed to them. Especially when *about* and *noin* were considered, it became clear that the approximators differed from each other in terms of their preferred *semantic* contexts. *Noin* was most often found in contexts where various measurement units were discussed, relating to such semantic categories as TIME, MONEY, and SIZE. *About* was common within TIME and MONEY contexts as well; however, its use was significantly more infrequent when it came to the more technical contexts, SIZE and OTHER MEASUREMENTS. Furthermore, *about* was more common than *noin* when other, miscellaneous quantities of different entities were discussed, that is, within the context OTHER QUANTITIES. Overall, *about* seems to be associated with topics relating to general, everyday issues, but when it comes to more technical approximations, *noin* is the preferred modifier. The semantic differences between these two approximators will be further elaborated in the following close analysis.

4.3.2. Close analysis

As described in section 3, this qualitative part of the analysis is based on a selection of messages from the *about*-dataset that, in addition to *about*, contained some other approximator(s) as well (for a detailed account of this selection, see section 3.3.2.). In total, 43 messages out of the 200 fit this criterion: Table 14 presents the distribution of the approximators in these selected messages.

Table 14. Raw frequencies of different approximators in the 43 selected *about*-messages.

Approximator	**Frequencies**
about	48
noin / n.	47
joku / jotain / joskus / jossain	11
semmoinen / sellainen	3
suunnilleen	2
tyyliin	2
siinä	2
suurin piirtein	0
Total	115

The purpose of this close analysis is to see whether there are any differences in how a *single* person uses *about* and the native approximators in a *single* message. This way demographic factors such as social, regional, and educational features, as well as topics, remain constant; hence the variation in uses may be attributed to differing semantic, syntactic, stylistic, or connotational features of the approximators. Additionally, closer analysis of a smaller set of messages allows for the exploration of other possible contextual factors motivating the use of *about* – in this study, the focus is on the possible connection between the use of *about* and other English elements. The following analysis is divided into two parts which reflect the main points of interest: first, the effects of codeswitching and other English elements on the use of *about* are considered, after which

some connotational differences between the approximators are explored, specifically the differing levels of vagueness associated with *about* and *noin*. *Noin* is used here as the main comparison point due to its frequent occurrence in the *about*-dataset, and it being the most commonly used approximator in Finnish overall.

About and other elements of English origin

It is interesting to note first of all that the effect of other Anglicisms, English phrases, and codeswitching in triggering the use of *about* – or them having some other connection with the use of *about* – is not prevalent in the dataset. Among the 43 messages, there are only five cases where other, clearly English-based words or phrases are used in addition to *about*, as in the following examples. Here (as well as in the other examples in this and the next subsection), the English elements are marked in bold, and the examples are followed by translations.[11]

(a) […] voin vakuuttaa että riippuvaiset pistää kaikki palkkarahatkin eli (töissä käyvät siis) näihin rahasyöppöihin. (**Including me**)"
([…] *I can affirm that addicts put all their income (meaning working people) into these money-eaters. (**Including me**)*)

(b) Uuden sukupolven Mustang tulee vielä **breikkaamaan** Euroopassakin, kaikki ainekset on kasassa.
(*The new generation Mustang will **break through** in Europe too, all the ingredients are there.*)

It is important to bear in mind, however, that only those messages that featured *about* in them were included in the dataset, and therefore the preceding messages in the discussion threads were not considered. For this reason, it is impossible to explore in this paper whether the previous messages had any English elements in them, and whether or not they had an effect in triggering the use of *about* in the subsequent message; after all, it is likely that previous messages influence the language use of the following writers to some extent. Nonetheless, based on this dataset, the connection between the use of *about* and other English elements in the *same* messages seems insignificant, and this in turn suggests that

[11] Because it was not considered necessary to provide accurate, word-for-word translations for the purposes of the present discussion, the examples in this and the next subsection are translated rather freely: the aim is only to provide the reader with a working understanding on what the writers are discussing.

about mostly occurs in discourses that are completely in Finnish. Furthermore, as discussed in section 2.2.1, Haspelmath (2009: 40) states that one of the defining factors in distinguishing loanwords from codeswitches is that "the word in question can be used without other codeswitching", and thus this finding supports the claim that *about* indeed is an Anglicism in the Finnish context, rather than an example of codeswitching.

The use of *about* as an Anglicism is evident even in those messages that have codeswitching or other English elements in them. Consider the example excerpts below (c–f), taken from a single message by an especially frequent English user.

(c) Tyypilliset noin 180cm pitkät salilla rehkivät **about** 108äolla varustetut amerikkalaiset palikat olleet taas asialla. Just nää jotka kommentoi surmatöihin jotain nokkelaa: **In hell he's still virgin, no one would fuck him**. Ja sit samasta puusta veistetyt palikat kommentoi: **Nice one steve, You nail it**
(*Typical American blockheads are behind this, those who work out at the gym, are about 180cm tall, and have an IQ of* ***about*** *108. Those that comment on killings with something clever:* ***In hell he's still virgin, no one would fuck him***. *And then similar blockheads comment:* ***Nice one steve, You nail it***)

(d) Tästä ulosjäänyt on joko **nerd**, **wierd**, **newb**, **noob**, peter parker, sarjakuvanörtti, pitkä hintelä uimari, koripalloilija, alle 170cm pitkä etuoikeutettu bemarilla ajeleva neitsytpoika.
(*A guy left outside is either a* ***nerd***, ***weird***, ***newb***, ***noob***, *peter parker, comic-book geek, tall and skinny swimmer, basketball player, a tall privileged virgin boy under 170cm tall riding a BMW.*)

(e) Enemmistö ratkaisee ja tulos on mitä on. Joku haluaa puskea pidemmäksi ja näin sai ensimmäinen nuorisoelokuva aiheen kässärille. Ooh, nörttipoika saa koulun kauneimman lopussa, **wax in, wax out**.
(*The majority is what matters and the results are what they are. Someone wants to push further and so the first youth movie got its script. Oh, the geek boy gets the beauty of the school in the end,* ***wax in, wax out***.)

(f) Anna Paquin sijalla 68, ei saatana! Tappakaa itsenne tai menkää thaimaaseen odottamaan tsunamia. **Pliis**!
(*Anna Paquin is 68th, fucking hell! Kill yourselves or go to Thailand and wait for a tsunami.* ***Please****!*)

As the example excerpts show, this particular writer uses English sentences, phrases, and words extensively throughout the message. Some of the English words used have retained their original English spelling form, as "nerd" in (d), while others follow the Finnish

orthographic system, such as the Anglicism "pliis" 'please' in (f). It is particularly interesting that all the longer English clauses the writer uses are quotes in a way: the ones in (c) ("In hell he's still virgin […]", "Nice one steve […]") are meant to imitate American "blockhead" gym-goers, while the one in (e) ("wax in, wax out") is a catchphrase from a famous English-language movie. Furthermore, the cluster of terms "nerd, wierd [*sic*], newb, noob" in (d) is meant by the writer as a demonstration of how American "blockhead" gym-goers would refer to non-athletes. In all these cases the writer seems to attempt to ridicule these "blockheads" by writing from the perspective of an American gym-goer, and the use of this alternative perspective has likely motivated the use of English elements in these cases.

However, other English items in the message – "about" in (c) and "pliis" 'please' in (f) especially – are used in ways that suggest linguistic embedment into Finnish discourse. For one, they are used independently, not as parts of a cluster of English words or in longer English phrases. Moreover, the writer uses these elements "sincerely", as in talking from their own perspective as themselves, and not taking the role of an American "blockhead" as in the earlier cases. Although it is possible that the topic of the message (concentrating on Americans) has had an effect in triggering the use of *about* and *pliis*, both these elements are nevertheless clearly embedded into Finnish discourse itself, and therefore do not function in the same way as the other phrases and words discussed above: they work more as parts of Finnish rather than English discourse.

About and vagueness

The most prominent pattern of usage emerging from the close analysis is the use of *about* to modify vaguer expressions than those modified by *noin*. Here, the varying levels of vagueness are mainly interpreted based on the roundedness and size of the modified numerals (these features were discussed in section 2.4.2), but other longer expressions and wider contexts conveying vagueness are taken into consideration as well.

Firstly, the messages show that *about* is typically used with round numbers, a feature common for all approximators as stated by Channel (1994: 70). But, based on comparisons between phrases modified by *about* and those modified by *noin* (within single messages),

it seems that numerals occurring with *about* are usually more rounded than those used with *noin*. Consider the following excerpts (g–h) from two messages. It is important to keep in mind here, that when discussing intervals implied by the use of round numbers and approximators, we are only dealing with *interpretations*: the lengths of the intervals are not fixed, which is why they are susceptible to interpretational differences.

(g) Työmarkkinatuki ei ole siis 700€ vain **noin 520€**, koska tämän verran käytännössä saat siitä käyttöösi. […] Verojen jälkeen yhdistetyt tulot mitä käteesi jää kaikkeen eivät suinkaan ole 1200€ vaan **about 1000€** […]
(*Labor market support is then not 700€, only **about 520€**, because this is what you basically get from it for use.* […] *After taxes, the combined income with which you will be left is not 1200€ but **about 1000€*** […])

(h) Kesäpaikka karjalassa. Kulutus 1.11 - 30.4 yleensä 0 kWh. Ja kesälläkin **about 20 - 30 euroa** yhteensä. Sähkölaskut pitkälti yli 100 euroa puoli vuosittain elikkä nuo siirrot **noin 2 x 125 euroa** vuosi.
(*Summer cottage in Karjala. Consumption 11/1-4/30 usually 0kWh. And in the summer **about 20-30 euros** altogether. Electric bills way over 100 euros per half a year and so those transmissions are about **2 x 125 euros** per year.*)

All the approximated numerals in these two examples are rounded to either multiples of the nearest five, ten, or thousand, but in both excerpts the numbers modified by *about* (namely "1000" and "20–30") are more rounded than those modified by *noin* ("520" and "125", respectively); in other words, there are less significant figures in the numbers modified by *about*. What makes these numbers vaguer, then, is the widening of the interval of possible values (as discussed in section 2.4.2): for instance, in (g) the approximation of "520€" could imply that the intended value ranges somewhere between, say, 510 and 530 euros, whereas the value approximated as "1000€" could be understood as ranging from 900 to 1100 euros, and hence the latter approximation is clearly the vaguer one of the two.

This pattern of using *about* with vaguer numbers is also evident when the sizes of the modified numerals are considered. Since the growing size of a number is usually linked to the widening of the interpreted interval of possible values, bigger numbers are typically vaguer. Below are a couple of example excerpts from the messages (i–k), demonstrating these differences between *about* and *noin*.

(i) Paikalla oli **about 600 katsojaa**, molemmilla sivurajoilla yht. **Noin 80 henkeä**, 5 tuomaria ja koko tästä porukasta yksi ihminen näkee kentällä tappelun.
(*There were **about 600 spectators**, **about 80 people** altogether on both sidelines, 5 referees, and from the whole lot only one person sees the fight on the field.*)

(j) Alkuun migreeniä hoidettiin lääkkein, mutta myöhemmin, **about 8 vuotta** sitten triptaanit ja mitä muita niitä on ollutkaan, alkoi aiheuttaa sivuvaikutuksia. […] **n. 2 vuotta** sitten kokeilin itse ensimmäistä kertaa kannabista.
(*At the beginning the migraine was treated with medicine but later, **about 8 years** ago triptans and what have you began to cause side effects* […] ***about 2 years** ago I tried cannabis for the first time myself.*)

(k) Jos ollaan metsässä, ja koira saa olla vapaana niin kulkee **about 5 metrin** päässä aina, ja jos menee kauemmaksi niin tulee kutsusta lähelle, muttei koskaan luokse. Koirapuistossa sama homma. Jos yrittää pyytää luokse, niin alkaa suorastaan v****ilemaan. Härnää tulemalla **noin metrin** päähän haukkumaan kun mikäkin idiootti.
(*If we're in the forest, and the dog is not on leash, it always walks **about 5 meters** from me, and if it goes further away, it comes near me when I call it, but never to me. In the dog park it's the same thing. If I try to call it to me, it starts to fuck around. It teases me by coming **about a meter** away to bark like an idiot.*)

In all these cases *about* approximates bigger numbers ("600", "8", and "5") compared to those approximated by *noin* ("80", "2", and "1"). With bigger numbers the intervals widen, which in turn leads to vaguer estimations. In (i), for instance, the approximation "about 600 katsojaa" 'about 600 spectators' could be understood as implying that the actual number of spectators falls somewhere between 500 and 600 people, whereas in the approximation "noin 80 henkeä" 'about 80 people' the interval is narrower, ranging from 70 to 90, for example. Similarly in (k), the approximation of the number "5" is clearly a vaguer estimation than that of "1", since the phrase "about 5 meters" can be interpreted as meaning that the distance is something between 4 and 6 meters, whereas an interval of similar length seems not applicable in the latter case (that is, ranging from 0 to 2 meters).

It is important to point out that in all the examples discussed in this subsection so far, the semantic contexts of *about* and *noin* are similar in each individual excerpt. The first two examples (g–h) deal with MONEY (euros), while the other three (i–k) are concerned with OTHER QUANTITIES ("katsojat" 'spectators' and "henkilöt" 'people'), TIME ("vuosi" 'year'), and SIZE ("metri" 'meter'). Since the length of the interval depends on the nature of the approximated items (meaning, whether the object is a discrete entity, like pages, or

some unit of measurement, such as grams), the similarity of the semantic contexts in these example cases renders the comparisons between the *about*- and *noin*-phrases more valid. There are indeed some messages in the dataset where *noin* is used with the vaguer number, but in most of these cases the semantic contexts are different as well, as in example (l) below.

(l) […] maksuliikenne, kirjanpidot kaikkinensa, **about 2-3 kokousta** vuodessa. hinta noussut, oli **n. 2100e/kk** 3 vuotta sitten)
([…] *payments traffic, bookkeeping altogether,* ***about 2-3 meetings*** *a year. The price has increased, it was* ***about 2100€*** *per month 3 years ago*)

In this case, *noin* is used with a phrase referring to MONEY ("2100€"), whereas *about* is used with another kind of quantity phrase (OTHER QUANTITIES; "about 2-3 kokousta" 'about 2-3 meetings'): in other words, the phrase modified by *about* refers to a discrete entity ("kokous" 'meeting'), while *noin* modifies a phrase containing a unit of measurement (euro). Due to this difference in semantic contexts, these phrases are not similarly comparable as those discussed above.

In addition to combining approximators and round numbers in order to convey vagueness, in some cases the larger context implies that we are dealing with an especially vague estimation. Consider examples (m) and (n) below.

(m) Meillä on toinen rotskuista hännän kanssa semmoset **about 30 cm jos näin äkkiä heittää**, en oo mitannut :D
(*The other one of our rats, tail included, is* ***something like 30cm long if I just quickly guestimate****, I haven't measured :D*)
(n) Byul (**n. 25 cm**) joka on tyttönen, niin kuin myös Dal (samankokoinen kuin Byul) ja Yeolume, jonka **kokoa en tiedä**, mutta **about Dalin ja Byulin kokoinen**.
(*Byul* ***(about 25cm****) who's a girl, like Dal (the same size as Byul) and Yeolume, whose* ***size I don't know****, but* ***about the size of Dal and Byul***.)

Both writers express uncertainty about their estimations. The writer in example (m) states that they just came up with an approximated estimation of their pet rat's size, without having measured it. In example (n), on the other hand, the writer clearly knows the sizes of two of the dolls ("Byul" and "Dal"), and uses the approximator *n.* (abbreviation of *noin*) as a slight hedge. They directly admit not knowing the size of the third doll ("Yeolume"),

but still give a vague estimate, this time by using *about* to approximate. In this case, *about* is evidently used with a vaguer approximation compared to *n.* (or *noin*).

In the next example (o), vagueness is conveyed in the larger context as well, but in a different way:

(o) Tyypilliset **noin 180cm** pitkät salilla rehkivät **about 108äolla** varustetut amerikkalaiset palikat olleet taas asialla.
(*Typical American blockheads are behind this, those who work out at the gym, are **about 180cm** tall, and have **an IQ of about 108***.)

This excerpt comes from the writer who uses English extensively in his message, quoted already in the previous subsection. The message comments on a list of the sexiest women in the world, featured in another website: the writer expresses outrage at the list, blaming and ridiculing the "American blockheads" for voting for the wrong women. In example excerpt (o), the writer mocks these men by describing them as tall but stupid: they are about 180cm tall, but they are blockheads, having an IQ of only 108. As the number is not rounded, the estimation "about 108äo" 'IQ of about 108' seems oddly precise, especially in comparison to the phrase "noin 180cm" 'about 180cm', in which the approximated number is rounded. However, in actuality the *about*-phrase is very vague, but in a different way. In the message, the writer describes a stereotype of these American men, and therefore neither of the estimations are based on reality per se, they are just something the writer makes up on the basis of popular cultural accounts and depictions. What differentiates these phrases in terms of vagueness is that the number "108" (the IQ of the men) is "180" (that is, the tallness of the men) reversed. This notion of their IQ is likely meant as irony: first, the writer seems to genuinely estimate the tallness of these "blockheads", after which the order of the numbers is changed in an attempt at ridiculing them. In fact, IQ of 108 is not actually as bad as the writer implies, as it is near or a bit over the average score, and this further highlights the fact that we are not dealing with an actual estimation here. In this example (o), as well as in the previous two excerpts (m–n), vagueness is conveyed not only by the approximator + numeral structure; it becomes apparent when considering the larger context as well.

The final thing to note in relation to vagueness is the combination of multiple approximators in the same phrase. As discussed in section 2.4.2, by combining multiple approximating expressions, a cumulative effect is created, turning the approximation in question even vaguer (Channell 1994: 70). In the selected messages, there were altogether nine structures where *about* was used together with another approximator. Examples 47–50 below demonstrate these uses.

Example 47	**sellase about** 300€	***something like*** *300€*
Example 48	**joskus about** 2kk sitten	***sometime about*** *2 months ago*
Example 49	**jotain** 560 satoshia **about**	***something like*** *560 satoshi,* ***about***
Example 50	**about noin** 12 cm koroilla	***about*** *12 cm high heels*

There were two cases where *about* was used after the object of modification, as in example 49, and two cases where it was used as the first approximator, as in example 50. Most commonly, however, *about* occurred in the middle position (5 instances) – that is, after another approximator but before the object of approximation, as demonstrated by examples 47 and 48. One reason for favoring *about* in the middle position could be its phonetic form: the word starts with a vowel and ends in a consonant sound, creating a more fluid combination with other approximators if used in the middle position, as all its Finnish near equivalents start with consonant sounds (compare "noin about" to "about noin", or "joku about" to "about joku"). But since *about* is regularly used with vaguer approximations compared to *noin*, it may be considered a vaguer approximator overall, capable of conveying more ambiguity in tone. In this case, *about* could be added after some other approximator that is perceived as not vague enough for the writer's purposes. In addition, *about* may be considered vague enough in itself to not necessitate the use of other approximators in order to convey more vagueness: this could explain why the use of *about* as the first approximator in combinations of multiple approximators is so rare. For instance, consider example 50: by adding *noin* (the approximator with a more accurate connotation) after *about*, the feel of the approximation phrase seems to become more precise rather than vaguer. All in all, it seems that *about* is used by itself as a relatively

vague approximator, or in some cases to add extra vagueness when other, initially used approximators are considered not vague enough.

Although *about* typically conveys a vaguer connotation compared to *noin*, in some cases it is used more neutrally in this respect, as just another approximator. Consider example (p) below.

(p) Tositteita **about 5-6 mapillista** […] Paperisia lippulappuja kuukaudelta tosiaan **noin 100-150 kappaletta**, kun laskee molempien tiliotteiden tapahtumat mukaan, veikkaan että mennään **jossain 200-350 tapahtumassa/kk**.
(***About 5-6 folders*** *worth of receipts* […] ***About 100-150 pieces of paper*** *from a single month, combining both bank statements together, I think there's roughly* ***around 200-350*** *transactions per month.*)

In this excerpt *about*, *noin*, and *jossain* ('somewhere') are all used in the same syntactic and semantic contexts, that is, in relation to quantities of discrete entities. Here, all the approximations are equally vague, but they work slightly differently. In the case of the *noin*- and *jossain*-phrases, both approximations are similarly rounded ("100–150", "200–350"). The numbers approximated by *about*, on the other hand, seem precise at first, but because the writer does not actually have the papers in the mentioned 5–6 folders (they are only estimating how many folders a pile of papers would fill), the approximation is essentially just as vague. The motivation for using *about* in this message, then, might be the adding of color to the language: the writer uses multiple approximators, but none of them occur twice and thus repetition is avoided. It is likely that in some situations *about* is used similarly to the native Finnish approximators, as an additional linguistic resource. These uses – without clear connotational differences – are interesting as they show that *about* does not necessarily carry extra meanings or connotations, derived from the fact that it originates from English; it can be used as just another element in Finnish discourse with which to convey approximation.

Summary

The qualitative close analysis of a specific set of messages, described in this section, enabled the examination of how a single writer uses *about* in a single message. The focus was on the motivations for using *about* (besides the possible social meanings attached to

it), and the way its use relates to other Finnish approximators, especially to *noin*, the most commonly used approximator in Finnish discourse.

Firstly, the analysis showed that the connection between the use of other English elements and *about* was not prevalent. Longer English phrases and words other than *about* were only rarely used in the selected messages, which indicates that *about* is predominantly used in discourses completely in Finnish. This point suggests that the use of other English elements has no, or very little, influence on triggering the use of *about,* and furthermore, it highlights the fact that *about* indeed functions as an Anglicism in Finnish discourse, rather than as an example of codeswitching.

Secondly, the most prominent feature emerging from the close analysis was the vaguer associations attached to *about* in comparison to *noin*. By comparing the uses of these two approximators – especially in messages where both occurred in the same semantic contexts – it became apparent that *about* is often used with numbers that are more rounded than those modified by *noin*. Thus, *about* seems to carry a vaguer connotation as an approximator in comparison to *noin*. Similarly, this feature was evident when phrases with multiple approximators in succession were considered. In these cases, *about* was conventionally used in the middle position, adding extra vagueness to the phrase as a result. Only occasionally was it used in the first position, and in these cases the approximator following *about* seemed to make the estimation more accurate rather than vaguer. This could suggest that *about* in itself is considered an approximator conveying a vague enough connotation. Therefore, it is not commonly supported by some other approximators – it is more likely the approximator that is added when others are seen as not vague enough.

5. Discussion

Due to the considerable level of embeddedness of *about* into Finnish discourse (in syntactic as well as semantic terms), it is clear that its use cannot be regarded as codeswitching – or "spontaneous language mixing", as Matras (2009: 106) describes

codeswitching – but as an Anglicism. This claim is supported by evidence from the close analysis described in the previous section, namely that *about* only rarely occurs with other English elements such as lexical items, phrases, and codeswitching, and hence its main contexts of use are discourses completely in Finnish. According to Haspelmath (2009: 40), the use of an element of one language in another language, without other codeswitching involved, suggests that we are dealing with a loanword, not codeswitching. Since these points support the fact that *about* indeed is an Anglicism in the Finnish context, other questions arise: what kind of Anglicism is it, what motivations could influence its use in Finnish, and how its adoption relates to the way other Anglicisms have been integrated into Finnish, namely *enivei* and *pliis*?

As was discussed in section 2.2.2., Matras (2009: 146) states that the borrowing of linguistic elements from one language into another is most commonly seen as motivated by either lexical gaps in the target language or the prestige status of the source language. These motivations result in cultural or necessary loans in the former case, and prestige or luxury loans in the latter. One essential feature of prestige/luxury loans is that they typically have one or more near equivalents in the recipient language (Matras 2009: 150), and since *about* has a multitude of near equivalents in Finnish, it could be considered a loan of this kind. But, when considering the use of *about* in relation to its near equivalents in Finnish, it can be argued that its use is not motivated solely by social factors (that is, to present an urban, youthful, or cosmopolitan image of oneself through language, for instance): there is a gap in Finnish which *about* seems to fill.

This gap, though, is not lexical in nature, since there are a variety of words and inflections in Finnish that can be used to convey approximation. Instead, this gap can be seen as combining both syntactic and semantic features. While *noin* is the most common approximator in Finnish, its use is syntactically quite limited and, additionally, it might carry too strong connotations of accuracy and formality for some situations. *Suunnilleen*, on the other hand, is very flexible in syntactic terms yet it mostly functions in complementary distribution with *noin*, and is rather formal. There are various informal approximators as well that can carry similar connotations of vagueness and informality as *about* does, such as *joku* and *sellainen*, but most of them are syntactically restricted: for instance, unlike *about*, the pronoun *joku* and its inflectional forms (e.g. *joskus* ‘sometime’,

jossain ‘somewhere’) cannot modify adjectives and other pronouns.[12] Among all these different native approximators, then, *about* seems to have taken its place as an all-around, informal approximator, and thus the gap it fills has more to do with practicality and convenience rather than missing lexical items. It might be that *about* has originally been a luxury or prestige loan in Finnish discourse, conveying mostly social meanings, but during its embedding process into the Finnish context it has taken another kind of syntactic and semantic role as well.

The nature of *about* as an Anglicism in Finnish might be more clearly captured by using the distinction introduced by Winter-Froemel and Onysko (2012), namely that of catachrestic and non-catachrestic loans (discussed in section 2.2.2). In their division, the focus is on the pragmatic features of loan words. Catachrestic loans usually do not have native near equivalents in the recipient language and hence they are unmarked words, whereas non-catachrestic loans are marked choices due to their co-existence with native equivalents, and this co-existence gives them their meaning (Winter-Froemel and Onysko 2012: 49). In the case of *about*, then, the various near equivalents in Finnish, such as *noin* and *suunnilleen*, can be seen as giving *about* its specific characteristics (or markedness), like added vagueness, for instance.

In relation to the other Finnish Anglicisms discussed in this paper – namely *pliis* and *enivei*, studied by Nikula (2007) and Nikula and Halonen (2011), and Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014) – *about* shows similar signs of nativization. Firstly, none of the three occurs particularly with other English elements (words, phrases, codeswitching), and none of them is context-specific – that is, their use is not restricted to particular topics. Secondly, all three seem to differ from both their Finnish near equivalents as well as from their original English uses in social, semantic, grammatical, and/or pragmatic terms. *Pliis*, for example, has come to work in complementary distribution with the native *kiitos* ‘please/thank you’ to mark positive politeness (Peterson and Vaattovaara 2014: 264). *About*, on the other hand, has a distinct mix of syntactic and semantic features that differentiate it from its Finnish near equivalents, as shown in this paper. Although *about*,

[12] The word *tyyliin* ‘like’ (conveying approximation) is likely as flexible as *about* (or even more flexible), but since it seems to resemble more the English *like*, and not the other approximators discussed in this paper, it is left out of the present discussion.

unlike *pliis* and *enivei*, has not gone through orthographic changes in the Finnish context (as shown in section 4.1.), the features described above still suggest that *about* is in the process of becoming – or already is – nativized in the Finnish language.

While the analysis and discussion in this paper mostly revolves around the use of *about* in the Finnish context, with comparisons to its native near equivalents, the relation of *about* as it is used in the Finnish context to its original English use is only narrowly dealt with. Comparison between the source and recipient language uses was limited to the syntactic contexts, where the only reference point used was the definitions given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2016). Nonetheless, this small part of the analysis revealed that the use of *about* in Finnish differs from its original English use in some respects. Most noticeably its range of uses has become narrower, meaning that some original functions have been lost in the borrowing process (most prominently its use as a preposition), but some functional broadening has happened as well – this was evidenced in the dataset by a few phrases where the Finnish *about* could not be translated into English as *about*. It is probable that in spoken Finnish these kinds of innovative uses are even more frequent. Following Andersen's (2014) suggestion in relation to the studying of pragmatic borrowings, it would be fruitful to analyze the uses of *about* in both source and recipient languages in more detail and compare these, especially in terms of their semantic, pragmatic, and social features. This would allow for a wider perspective on how a borrowing can change from its original source language use when it is incorporated into a new language.

In addition, due to the nature of the data source and the scope of this study, some other important perspectives were left out, namely the demographic and social dimension of *about*. No information about the individual writers in Suomi24 was available, and therefore the study had to rely solely on information about the "average user" of the site. In order to achieve an even wider perspective on the use of *about* (or indeed any other Anglicism or language element) in the Finnish context, demographic information about the individual users (such as age, gender, region, and education) would be valuable. Additionally, it would be interesting to analyze what social meanings are attached to *about*: what kind of image people want to give of themselves by using *about*, and how other people perceive them for it, for instance. Finally, from an etymological point of

view, it would be interesting to look at the role the Finnish vernacular approximator *palttiarallaa* has played in the embedding process of *about*, since it is sometimes used in such forms as *apauttiarallaa* or *abauttiarallaa* which seem to incorporate *about*. It might be that *about* has originally been used in Finnish as a part of this vernacular approximator, and gradually it has come to be used on its own – or vice versa.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to see how *about* is used in informal written Finnish discourse in both syntactic and semantic terms. The analysis was mostly structured around comparisons between the uses of *about* and two of its Finnish near equivalents, *noin* and *suunnilleen*, and, when possible, comparisons to the original English use of *about* were made as well. The analysis showed that *about* has gained some individual patterns of usage in the Finnish context, indicating its embeddedness into the Finnish discourse. This, in turn, suggests that we are not dealing with a mere case of codeswitching, but with an established Anglicism.

The patterns of usage found in the analysis can be divided into two broader categories: syntactic and semantic features (for a comprehensive table of all the quantitative results, see Appendix 1). In syntactic terms, though there are some clear preferences in its use, *about* is generally speaking a flexible approximator. It is most typically used as a premodifier of numeral phrases, and in this respect *about* is similar to the native Finnish approximator *noin*. However, due to its flexibility *about* can modify both numerical and non-numerical words from a variety of word classes, such as numerals, nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. This feature greatly differentiates *about* from the syntactically limited *noin*, and brings it closer to the flexibility of *suunnilleen*.

Turning to the semantic perspective, *about* is preferred in contexts revolving around general, everyday topics, while in more technical contexts the preferred approximator is *noin*. This could reflect differences in terms of their registers: since *about* is an Anglicism, its use is mostly restricted to informal registers, while the native *noin* is more formal, though it permits use in informal contexts as well. This difference in formality may be

carried over into the semantic dimension, for, as the close analysis showed, *about* is typically used with vaguer approximations compared to *noin*. The preferred syntactic and semantic contexts of *noin* – that is, it being mostly restricted to modifying numerals, and it being the preferred approximator in technical and formal contexts – may give it a more precise connotation, especially when compared to the informal, everyday-related approximator *about* that carries vague associations.

In all, this study provides a broad picture of how *about* functions in informal written Finnish discourse: how it relates to other Finnish approximators, and how it differs from its original English uses. The features and patterns found in the analysis show that the borrowing of Anglicisms can be a complex phenomenon: in some cases the reasons behind borrowing, and especially the motivations for using these new items in the recipient language instead of possible native near equivalents, cannot be adequately explained by reference to social factors or lexical gaps alone. Initially, these borrowed elements may be transferred from one language into the other due to various social meanings attached to them, but their nature continues to evolve in the recipient language, gradually encompassing new functional and pragmatic features that differentiate them from both the native near equivalents as well as from the original source language uses. Therefore, in order to achieve a sufficiently comprehensive understanding of the structures and rationales behind the borrowing of Anglicisms, and of their integration into the new language, it is crucial to study individual linguistic elements in both the source and recipient languages, as Andersen suggests (2014), as well as compare their uses in the recipient language to their native near equivalents, as argued by Peterson and Vaattovaara (2014).

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Appendix 1: Overview of the results from the quantitative analyses

Categorization		*noin*	*about*	*suunnilleen*
Position	Pre	197 (98.5%)	192 (96.0%)	166 (83.0%)
	Post	3 (1.5%)	8 (4.0%)	33 (16.5%)
	Other	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)
Syntactic context	Numeral	161 (80.5%)	135 (67.5%)	32 (16.0%)
	Noun	23 (11.5%)	25 (12.5%)	29 (14.5%)
	Adjective	9 (4.5%)	16 (8.0%)	37 (18.5%)
	Pronoun	0 (0%)	20 (10.0%)	59 (29.5%)
	Adverb	6 (3.0%)	3 (1.5%)	26 (13.0%)
	Verb	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (5.5%)
	Longer clause	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.5%)
	None	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	3 (1.5%)
Semantic context	TIME	73 (36.5%)	78 (39.0%)	41 (20.5%)
	MONEY	47 (23.5%)	45 (22.5%)	37 (18.5%)
	SIZE	35 (17.5%)	22 (11.0%)	15 (7.5%)
	OTHER MEASUREMENTS	18 (9.0%)	10 (5.0%)	9 (4.5%)
	OTHER QUANTITIES	23 (11.5%)	31 (15.5%)	20 (10.0%)
	QUALITY AND OTHERS	4 (2.0%)	14 (7.0%)	78 (39.0%)