Multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary affordances in foreign language education: from singularity to multiplicity

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Instead of an Abstract—a Rhizome

> "Wurruk is wurruk if ye're paid to do it an' it's pleasure if ye pay to be allowed to do it." (Finley Peter Dunn)

This is not the kind of article I used to write. This is not a conventional, scientific piece of writing carried out in cold blood, with no emotions, highly respecting each and every one of those sacred tenets we preach about to our students and our better selves. It does not follow many, if any. of the golden rules of how a "B1" article is expected to be written.

Rather, this is a rhizome[1] of some themes that continue to intrigue and puzzle me. It is fragmentary, as life is. It is eclectic, as science is. It is personal, as it should be. It highlights bits and pieces—bits and bytes—about what is going on in my mind, with what ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies my conscious and cognisant mind is preoccupied at any moment. Although a dozen other rhizomatic issues had to be omitted, I hope Annikki that you will enjoy this rhizome, because it is what it should be, a rhizomatic spectre of ideational insights, mental representations of Popper's Worlds I, 2 and 3, fuzzy images, soul-forbidding frustrations, empowering nanoseconds of joy, and fluid perceptible foresights of artefacts of the third kind. In a word, this is a kaleidoscope of where we came from, where we are, and, perhaps, in the best of worlds, where we might be heading.

Are Our Values Invaluable or Without Value?

As teacher educators, we have come to pay a lot of attention to epistemology, asking ourselves and others what and how we know, and to ontology, wondering what there is. Axiology, the science of values, is not that often referred to, though it certainly would be worth it. Yet we know that our values—spelt out or not—are embedded in everything we write; they form that backdrop against which we underpin our thinking, our beliefs, and our perceptions. Therefore I would answer beyond any reasonable doubt, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that of course our values are invaluable, priceless, and of capital importance.

The reason why I touch on values here is the European Social Survey findings (e.g, http://www.fsd.uta.fi/aineistot/kvdata/ess.html) reported in *Helsingin Sanomat N*ovember 29, 2004), according to which Finnish values are different from those of or Nordic neighbours and, surprisingly, very close to French people's values—French, out of all the nationalities of Europe! What is more, Finland was seen to share the basic European family of values. What does it imply then if French and Finnish values are seen as being close to each other? What values in particular? It seems that Finns and Frenchmen agree especially on the fact that, in the final analysis, success, riches, or being highly respected are not that important. Instead, what is considered of paramount importance is fair treatment, as well as looking after other people and protecting nature.

In fact, it appears that the European family of basic values consists of Finland, France, Germany, Britain, Portugal and the Netherlands. Peripheral to this basic family, the survey locates Belgium, Denmark and Switzerland, while furthest from the core of this family are Sweden and Norway. What is striking in these research findings the big gap between Finland and the rest of the Nordic countries. For instance, traditions and observing rules are more important to Finns than to Swedes.

Without going further, let's consider this situation from a couple of other viewpoints. I wonder if Lewis (2005, 59) is right in arguing that "Finns are interested in cultural relativism—the way they differ from others and tend to discuss the topic at length, occasionally developing complexes that do not always correspond to reality", When Finland joined the European Union more than ten years ago, people used to say that soon "Finland would be part of Europe". Part of Europe? It seems odd to say that was only in 1995 that Finland started to be part of Europe! To my understanding, inns have lived in Europe for at least 10,000 years, maybe thousands of years longer, depending on what theories we believe. One of my little pleasures is to tease French people about the age of our two respective languages. *Chose étrange,* the Finnish language is much older than the French language, though, I admit, I often stop at this point before French colleagues start comparing written versions of these two languages or what was written in them centuries ago.

> "I think it would be a good idea." (Gandhi, on Western Civilisation)

Can you be more sarcastic than Gandhi? Well, let's change perspectives, though till wondering about Europe and us. Them v. us? Or others *vis-à-vis* us, the Finns? Otherness and Finnishness, or how should I put it? In fact, I am arguing in favour of multiplicity *(moninaisuus),* not otherness *(toiseus),* but allow me to start with someing that caught my eye in 1999 when I came across Kaplinski's (1999) deeply-philosophical article entitled *Toisina Euroopassa* ("As Others in Europe"). In his exquisite way, Kaplinski analyses what being European implies in action, thinking and language. Besides, and this is my point, he also summarises as aptly as anybody could do, what sort of impacts other cultures and civilisations have had on European culture. Let me quote some of his ideas here. In order not to do him an injustice, I am including the same passages as footnotes to give the Finnish-speaking readers the opportunity to enjoy the fluency of Kaplinski himself. This is what he writes:

Language affects human beings' action through culture and thinking. Thinking, such as communication, is a multi-level event. We do not think only by means of language, words and sentences, but also by using all sorts of other signs as well as direct mental images. The code of thinking resembles a multimedia work more than ordinary text; in it are embedded pictures, sounds, moving pictures, hieroglyphs, ideograms as well as some linguistic material. The multilevel nature of thinking reflects the multi-level nature of human life: human beings live and act in many different worlds, as nowadays many philosophers like Karl Popper have stated. Regardless of the number of the worlds we wish to adopt, they still are in complex relationships between themselves. There are worlds, in which we can survive and even communicate with others without language, for instance, by gesturing or through direct action. On the other hand, there are worlds that only exist to us via language, such as philosophy, religion, literature, law and science.[2] (Kaplinski 1999, 70; translated by S. Telia)

And then Kaplinski gets to the point that is important for this article. He speculates on what happens when Finnish-language speakers join the EU and argues that part of our literature is different:

The fact that in the future EU we will also see users of Finno-Ugric languages, may have more significance than is currently expected. In the inner circles of Europe, we are different folks, differing from the European standard. ... I dare to argue that a significant part of Finnish literature differs clearly from the standard average European. [3](Kaplinski 1999, 71; translated by S. Telia)

Let's leave Kaplinski's argument at that and continue with his summary of what has happened when different cultures and civilisations have been brought into Europe:

Finding otherness and accepting it partially have always given important stimuli to European culture. Contacts with the Arabs created scholastics and lyrics; contacts with Red Indians and South Sea inhabitants created Rousseauism; contacts with China created the Enlightenment; contacts with African and Japanese art, impressionism and cubism. Couldn't contacts with Finno-Ugric culture also create something new in Europe?[4] (Kaplinski 1999, 71; translated by S. Telia)

Otherness or multiplicity? Contacts between Finno-Ugric and European culture? In my own interpretation, if we think of what we find good in Finnish society and use those qualities to answer Kaplinski's question, could we not argue that what is created and what will emerge will be (i) the magic power of the reliable, trustworthy and readable word, as well as dealing with technology as a skill in a (ii) critically-eclectic, (iii) intellectually-curious and (iv) cybertextual fashion?' Why all these qualities, empowering or not? Here is a preliminary explanation. First, word and its power, and the respect for knowledge, has been from time immemorial a salient feature of Finnish culture. Just think of Väinämöinen (the "expert"), the hero of our national epic *Kale-*

vala (figure I), and his skill in using mighty words to "sing" the young inexperienced Joukahainen (the "novice") into a swamp.
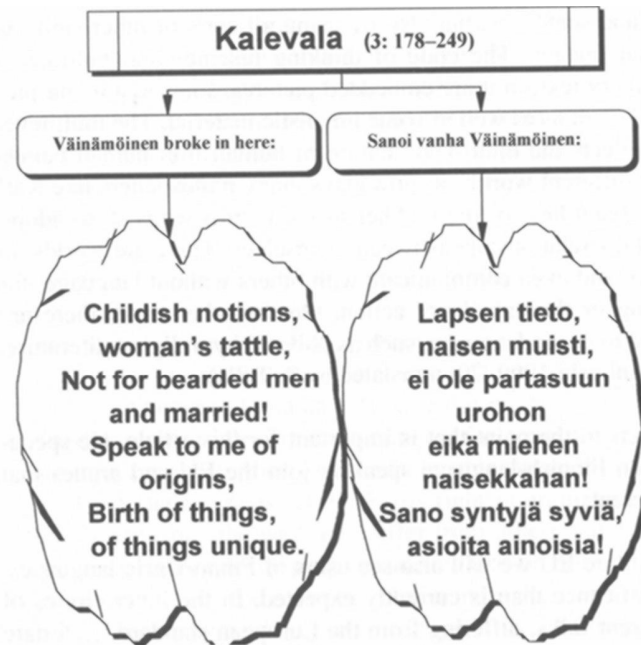

Figure 1. Kalevala and the Origin of Knowledge.

Väinämöinen's words, dating back hundreds or even thousands of years, contain real, eternal knowledge to anybody, but they are exceedingly significant to educators and to teachers; the origin of all knowledge is the birth of knowledge, the way it is constructed, the way it is built. Our contribution to other Europeans?

Second, why critically-eclectic? Because our teaching methods have always been eclectic but in a critical way. No single teaching method has ever been implemented in Finnish schools, as far as 1 know, in its purity, if we exclude the grammar- translation method prior to the 1970s, which, in any case, was not really a teaching method in the modern sense of the word. Admittedly, Finnish teachers have adopted and digested a lot of different influences from, say, suggestopaedic approaches, but in most cases, the result has been a version, a variation or an adaptation to best accommodate Finnish students and teachers in Finnish cultural contexts. Third, why intellectually-curious? Because we Finns have always been curious about technology, science, and nature. Think of Ganivet (1993), for instance, the Spanish consul in Finland, who in 1897 (sic! In 1897) wondered at Finnish enthusiasm for the latest technological innovations in his letters, as follows:

- "Finns seem to find it easy to adopt all new practical inventions fast and efficiently."

- "Bikes have become extremely popular."
- "The phone is almost as common as kitchenware." (Ganivet 1993)

And, fourth, cybertextual? Naturally, because Finland has long been one of the leading countries in implementing cybertextual, hypertextual and other textual innovations, such as mobile technologies (cf. e.g., Telia 2003).

If all these features can be held to characterise us, and through us, partially at least, other Europeans, then we might also be tempted to believe, indirectly, that all these characteristics might also continue to have an impact on us. In this case, all these qualities might "re-cross-feed" our communication culture, and this is the topic in the next chapter.

Is Our Communication Culture Changing?

What this is all about is what communication is all about. Let's quote Bibler on this topic:

> Communication within culture is not 'information exchange', not 'division of labour', nor 'participating in a joint activity' or in 'mutual enjoyment'. It is the co-being and mutual development of two (and many) totally different worlds— different ontologically, spiritually, mentally, physically ... (Bibler 1991, 298.)

As most language teachers know pretty well, the traditional Finnish communication culture differs considerably from those whose languages we teach at school. The question, according to Edward T. Hall's seminal studies (1959; 1976; cf. also e.g., Ulijn & Amant 2000), is the difference between the implicit high-context (HC) cultures and the explicit low-context (LC) cultures. Let me give some characteristics of these two contextual cultures, which form a continuum along which most cultures can be situated, at least roughly.

A low-context culture is characterised by direct and linear communication and by constant and sometimes, it might seem, never-ending use of words, often semantically rather vague. In a low-context culture, oral communication is immediate, constant and a must; you are simply expected to keep talking, if I may exaggerate a little. Though it is dangerous and perhaps misleading to generalise, one might argue that a low-context culture is well represented by the United States.

A high-context culture, on the other hand, is an eastern cultural model, typified by Chinese and Japanese speakers, for instance. Surprisingly, Finnish communication patterns are very close to this eastern model. Some of the typical features in a high-context culture include the following, among other things:

- using indirect, digressive and circular communication
- learning to read between the lines and to rely on the contextual cues
- using as few words as possible, using personal names only if they cannot be avoided
- tolerating and respecting long silences

- waiting politely until the other person has stopped speaking before taking turns.

The differences between these two cultures manifest clearly in both speaking and writing. In business correspondence, for instance, a high-context culture writer, for example a Japanese businessperson, usually starts with something else than the business itself, by commending his American partner on something achieved, thus aiming at creating a long-standing relationship between the two. An American, typically, would start with the price negotiations, which she presupposes to be the main focus. Misunderstandings may arise, as Dellinger (1995) aptly describes: "... the American abroad often has the impression that other people's formal systems are unnecessary, immoral, crazy, backward, or a remnant of some outworn value that America gave up some time ago."

Another salient feature that is often seen to differentiate these two contextual cultures, is the notion of politeness. In a low-context culture, it is thought to be polite to ask questions that in a high-context culture often seem too personal and even offending. Think of an American who gets to know you with a number of well-targeted questions, while two persons coming from high-context cultures might not learn anything from each other for quite some time.

What counts is not only words, but also non-verbal communication and proxemics, the domain and science of distances. Extremely important if you wish your message to be a success. Basically, the distance between two Finns not knowing each other is roughly 80-120 cm[6]. In other words, under normal circumstances another person is not expected to come closer to you. There are exceptions, of course, for special situations. — This "safe and comfortable" distance varies from country to country and is usually shorter in low-context cultures, though it is related to other cultural aspects as well. In some Arabic countries, the proper proxemic distance between an Arab and a foreigner is only 20 cm. That's why an Arab often likes to come so close to you that he can smell you, taste you, "sense" you. And he usually also keeps a very intense eye contact with you all the time. If you do not stare at him in the same way, he may think you are not interested in common business and if you try to keep your comfortable zone of one metre or more from him, he might find it insulting.

In a high-context culture, the person who speaks is not usually interrupted, which leads to a linear exchange of ideas. Foreigners often comment on how Finns observe and listen to the speaker with the utmost gesturelessness, not nodding or saying anything, briefly not showing in any noticeable way that they are paying any attention to what is being said. Foreigners often find it difficult to believe that this is the way in a high-context culture to pay attention, to respect the speaker, to follow the lecturer. In fact, if Finns behave like that, showing what Lewis (2005, 65) calls "ultra-taciturnity". they are paying the speaker a tribute, they are listening most attentively.

Teachers have often found it a problem to teach Finnish students of foreign languages to interrupt another person speaking, quickly albeit politely. Things are changing, I believe. Still, most of the Finnish teachers who teach their students to be bolder to interrupt, to comment, to insert their ideas, seem rather reluctant to be interrupted themselves, which I believe is a sign of the deeply-rooted Finnish communication cul-

ture embedded in us. As Lewis (2005, 67) aptly put it, "[t]he dilemma of the Finns is that they have Western European values cloaked in an Asian communication style", often incompatible.

How about the magic of words in Finnish culture, then? I'm proud of my first name Seppo, as it happens to be a variation of the Finnish word *seppä* (smith), who traditionally was a real magician of the village, forging anything into something useful, something necessary. Our national epic, *Kalevala* is full of episodes demonstrating the magic power of words, as mentioned already. Therefore names are not used in Finnish as often as in other languages. Traditionally, first names are seldom used and if they are, they often indicate that the person mentioned has done something s/he should not have done. A typical case would be: "You should know this, John."

Briefly, teachers might feel somewhat embarrassed or discomfited when teaching students to use first names, to use more direct communication, to make use of small talk, to interrupt one's interlocutor, as all these features are against the traditional Finnish communication patterns. Things are changing, admittedly, and most Finnish language teachers are fully used to teaching Anglo-American greeting manners to our pupils and students. — But perhaps others are changing as well? Sipilä (2004; 2005), an "eyewitness", reminds us that not even British people think they master small talk or very broad smiles. According to Sipilä (2004), British people are given more and more advice on how to behave when facing their bosses and other people they do not know. It seems that even talking about the weather is no longer a fully accepted topic in Britain where the weather used to be a fair compromise between rain and fog, and more and more often it is more advisable simply to talk shop.

The same kind of drastic contradiction between different cultures can be expressed in other terms, as Lewis (1999) has done. He distinguishes data-oriented and dialogue-oriented cultures. According to him, "[i]nteraction between different peoples involves not only methods of communication, but also the process of gathering information" (Lewis 1999, 45). In his terms, Finland is the fifth strongly-reactive country after Japan, China, Taiwan and Singapore/Hong Kong, just before Korea. Sweden, for example, comes 11th, Britain 12th . One of Lewis's smartest conclusions reads as follows:

> Northern Europeans in general love to gather solid information and move steadily forward from this database. The communications and information revolution is a dream come true for data-oriented cultures. It provides them quickly and efficiently with what dialogue-oriented cultures already know. (Lewis 1999, 46)

How very true, as far as Finns are concerned! If you wish to indulge yourself in some other most appetising examples of the differences between us and some southern European cultures, just read Lewis! I'll try to resist the temptation to carry on along these lines, however tempting they are, and change the course towards what logically follows from LC/HC cultures, that is, issues related to realms of multiculturalism and the problems that we are facing in that world of strangers and otherness.

Multiculturalism and the Notions of Sympathy, Empathy and Politeness

Multiculturalism is concerned with otherness, multiplicity and ourselves. Now that Finland is receiving more and more immigrants, refugees, and people from various cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, it is worth asking: is singularity a benefit? Is otherness a threat? Or is otherness a threat when met at a distance or when encountered close by?

During the Days of Educational Sciences *(Kasvatustieteen päivät)* on November 21, 2003, one of the keynote addresses was given by Professor Mikko Lehtonen, a media researcher from the University of Tampere. One of his key arguments was that "a stranger is not a threat until he approaches us". This set me thinking, as 1 had always thought it to be the other way round: a stranger might be a threat as long as he remains at a distance. But why had 1 thought this way, distances being threats, not vicinity or people being closeby? 1 found the solution from an old Arab legend (figure 2).   ).
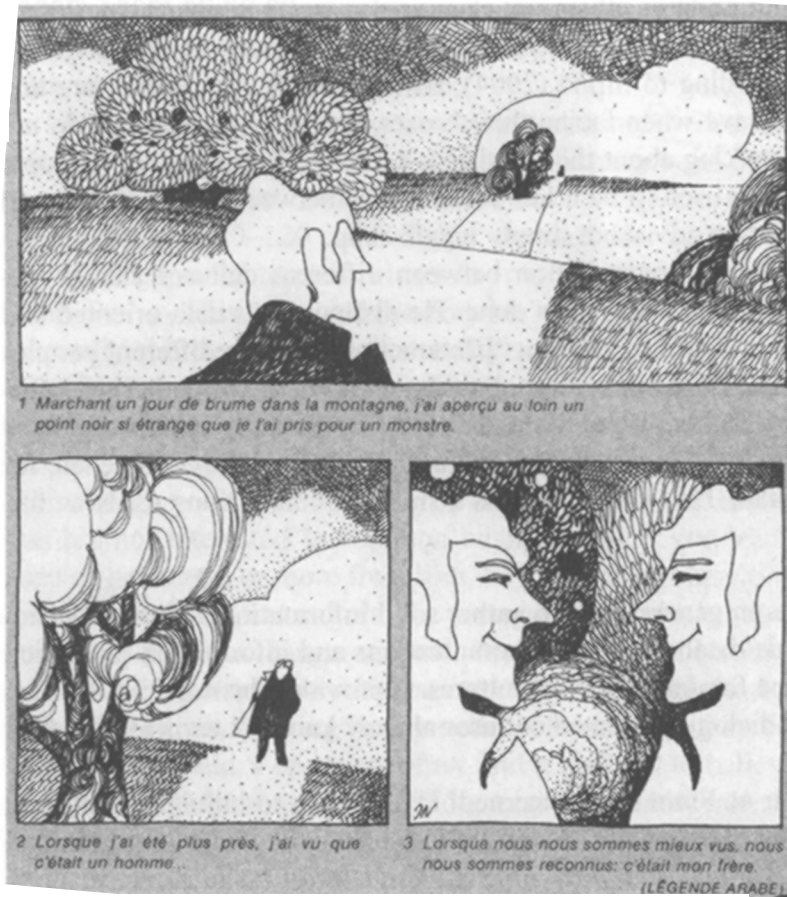

Figure 2. An Arab legend (Sohlberg, Tella, Uomala & Pyysalo 1983,29).

This legend tells about a human being, roaming through a fog in the mountains. From afar, he can see a threatening figure, a monster perhaps? As the two come closer to each other, they realise that each of them is a human being. And when they are finally facing each other, they suddenly realise that they are brothers.

What could be the importance of sympathy and empathy in multicultural education? Let me take an example from sociology. In his fine Farewell Lectures *(Jäähyväisluentoja)* Professor Antti Eskola (1997) analysed these differences extremely perceptively. To Eskola's way of thinking, sympathy can be talked about when somebody has a certain feeling and I myself share that feeling: I enjoy myself with people who enjoy themselves, I feel sorrow with those feeling sorrow. Sympathy means being in harmony with somebody else's feelings; it is genuine feeling of pleasure or sorrow shared with somebody or some people. Eskola goes on to argue that sympathy seemed a fine thing, when he was a student. Sympathy had always been depicted as positive, altruistic and warm in books he had read. But gradually Eskola started to realise that sympathy would not be enough in working life. He gives an example: when an anguished student comes to his office for consultation, it is really no solution if the professor gets anguished him/herself as well. As a university teacher, Eskola realised that what would be asked from him was empathy or the capacity to understand what the student would need just then in order to be able to help him or her. Through empathy, the teacher might be able to give advice or other assistance to the distressed student, approaching in fact Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area through which the student can now pass with the aid of his or her teacher and which she will be capable of mastering on his or her own afterwards. In the final analysis, Eskola concludes that sympathy is something that even a child of nature, unschooled, untrained, can have and achieve if s/he is sensitive enough. Empathy, on the other hand, would call for understanding the real needs of another human being and would also require mastering certain tools, techniques or methods in order to cope with these needs. Sympathy, then, represents immediate social responsiveness, while empathy is mediated through thinking as well as through research methods that enlarge and endorse the process of thinking. (Eskola 1997, 86-87.)

Let me come back to the notion of politeness. It is traditionally thought that empathy is what we need when discussing multicultural issues. Now, Kramsch (1993) has argued that instead of empathy, we need another concept, namely politeness, which is culturally more important in its relativity than empathy, which is a personal feeling. This is how Kramsch analyses her case:

> Learners could develop the 'capacity to participate in another's feelings or ideas' and gain empathy toward members of another culture, but empathy is a personal feeling of solidarity, not a social capacity. When we talk about culture, we are talking about the ability to understand and be understood by others as members of a given discourse community, not as isolated individuals. Rather than the personal term empathy, the correlate social concept of politeness is used here to discuss the ability to see the world from another person's perspective. The notion of politeness stresses the social nature of interpersonal relationships and their cultural relativity: what might be polite behavior to Americans

may have a very different value for the French or Germans, even though they may all be empathic individuals. (Kramsch 1993)

I believe that when talking about multiculturalism, Kramsch's idea of underlining politeness is very appropriate. It is also a link between multiculturalism and the low-vs. high-context cultures. I would also like to argue that politeness is quite often a linguistic phenomenon, rather than any moral disposition toward one's interlocutor. In cases when people we are exchanging ideas with feel we behave in an impolite way, the question may very well be of a linguistic mistake or error, rather than being rude.

Can one single individual's typical "national" features be attributed to his/her nationality? Can we argue that when knowing anyone we would like to classify as a typical Finn, we can attribute his/her features to something that could be called Finnishness? According to Lehtonen, Löytty & Ruuska (2004, 11-12) we cannot act like this, because we are then making a fundamental attribution error, in other words, trying to explain certain behaviour through the speaker's or writer's (what we think are) national features, though in fact his/her behaviour is more probably explained by looking into the situation itself or into the internal logic one's action is grounded in.

Humanism—Just Technology and a Human Being?

We are living in a time of different isms. Perhaps I may sidetrack in my general reasoning in the direction of two of these isms: humanism and transhumanism. By humanism I refer to appreciation of classical values, literature and art, among other things. In this sense, I am proud to say that I am or at least I would like to be (regarded as) a humanist. This then has nothing to do with the Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word: atheism. However, just recently I came across another definition of humanism that really struck me as novel, though deliberately very sharp-tongued. It is in his fine novel "Kentauri" that the Finnish novelist Heimo Susi (2003, 170-171) defines humanism as follows: "There's a lot of humanism here. What is needed is a human being and information technology. And you become a humanist just by saying that you are one" (translated by S. Telia).

Having the (un)fortunate destiny of having tripped over information and communication technologies (ICTs) as early as 1977 and having worked on them ever since, while desperately also trying to continue to develop as a language specialist, I first took this definition by Susi for blasphemy, but then I started to see it as an insight into something that might very well typify our contemporary society. Why not indeed! Many of my language colleagues use ICTs in their everyday lives as intellectual partners, or as empowering mediators, in their work. I realise that this is also what I have been doing when digesting and merging somewhat diverging ingredients into something that I hope will later be called an article in honour of Professor Annikki Koskensalo.

What about transhumanism, then? Further on in this article, I will argue that instead of promoting multi-cultural or multi-disciplinary items, we should go on towards inter- and trans-. So why not start with trans now in connection with humanism, that is, with transhumanism! Is this something even more psychedelic than Susi's human-

ism? And what does it have to do with ICTs? A lot, I would contend (cf., e.g., "Vuoden sanat" in *Suomen Kuvalehti* 7/18.2.2005). It seems that a general definition of transhumanism reads roughly this way: Transhumanism is based on the idea that it is both possible and acceptable to overcome certain conventional biological limitations of humanity by means of technology. Technology itself is not a value *per se* in aiming at this goal; rather, *ipso facto,* the main emphasis should be on developing human beings and the general standard of living in different ways. As Tomperi (2001, 15) put it. transhumanism's *credo* is to desire to make progress and to increase human multiplicity. In addition, technology can encourage us to see things in a different light.

This is how I have initially problematised (Telia 2003; see also Ruokamo & Telia 2005) a similar issue as a cognitive extension:

> But how far does a human being's cognition reach when using information and communication technologies, such as mobile applications? In psychology, this question used to read: How far does a blind person's cognition extend when he or she uses a white cane? Does it extend to the tip of the cane, half-way to the tip or simply to the fingers of the blind person, who sticks to the cane? It is only natural to assume that cognition extends not only to the tip of the cane but to the perceptions that a blind person can receive with the cane and thus directing his or her own behaviour. A mobile application in the hands of a seeing person is bound to be at least as efficient and empowering. Using tools is an integral part of all human action, including cognitive action. (Telia 2003, 10.)

Transhumanism, obviously, has a lot to do with these cognitive extensions. It also seems, and I am delighted to acknowledge it, that I have made in the above quotation the shift from cognition to perceptions, in other words towards the mind at the cost of cognition as such. This kind of development seems to be gaining ground in the area of foreign language education. Very clearly it shows in the argumentation by Watson-Gegeo (2004), who prefers the term 'mind' to 'cognition':

> The shift from cognition to mind in much of the research discourse on cognitive development reflects current understandings about the brain and thinking. First, neuroscience research ... has demonstrated that the body-mind dualism of Western philosophical and mainstream scientific thought, in which cognition rides in a detached fashion above the body and is in some sense distinct from it—an idea still implicit in much educational and SLA research and teaching— is fundamentally mistaken. What we humans understand about the world we understand because we have the kinds of bodies and potential for neural development that we have ... Even our scientific instruments are an extension of our bodily capacities, and built on the assumptions we make about the nature of reality (ontology) and our way(s) of creating knowledge about reality (epistemology), and based on our body's ways of detecting and relating to the world. All cognitive processes are thus embodied. ... Third, mind is a better term than cognition because the latter tends to focus on only parts of the mind, typically ... logical reasoning, language, metacognitive skills, and some forms of categoriza-

rization. Most of our theoretical models of cognitive skills acquisition assume that these higher-order cognitive skills are independent of other mental processes. However, through research on patients who have lost emotional capacity via brain damage, cognitive scientists have shown that without emotional capacity, people cannot make rational judgments, including moral decisions. Emotions are essential to logical reasoning... (Watson-Gegeo 2004, 332)

Watson-Gegeo (2004), basing her reflections on extensive research findings gathered from several different sciences, such as neuroscience, cognitive science, human and child development, first language acquisition and socialisation, cognitive anthropology, and second language acquisition, draws two major conclusions. First, the embodied mind is a better and overarching construct when compared to cognition only. Second, emotions and emotional capacity should always be taken into account, as they are an integral part of human beings' cognitive capability. Interestingly, Watson-Gegeo (2003, 332) also sees research instruments as extensions of our bodily capacities. If I combine her thinking with what I said earlier about transhumanism, I could come to the conclusion that different information and communication technologies and tools really can be considered as "transhumanist" extensions that are likely to empower our mental performances.

A modern cell phone is logically such a transhumanist extension or an extension of our bodily capacities. Perhaps, if I may come back to Susi's postmodern definition of humanism, a human being and a cell phone, then, are an adequate and apposite combination to speak of real old-time humanism as well. Let me give an example of this by illustrating what Shakespeare or Robert Bums could have created, if they had had a modem cell phone with its SMS functionalities at their disposal (figure 3).

What if the great poets had used mobile phones . . .

Dbt thou T ***
R Fre Dbt Tht T
Sun Doth Mve
Dbt Trth 2 B
a Liar
Bt Nvr Dbt I Luv

Doubt thou the
stars are fire;
Doubt that the
sun doth move;
Doubt truth to
be a liar;
But never doubt
I love.

William Shakespeare

O My Luvs Lke a
Rd Rd Rse
Thts Nwly Sprng in
Jne O My Luvs Lke
T Mlode Thts
SwEtly Plyed in Tne

O, my love's like a
red, red rose
That's newly
sprung in June.
O, my love's like
the melodie,
That's sweetly
play'd in tune.

Robert Burns

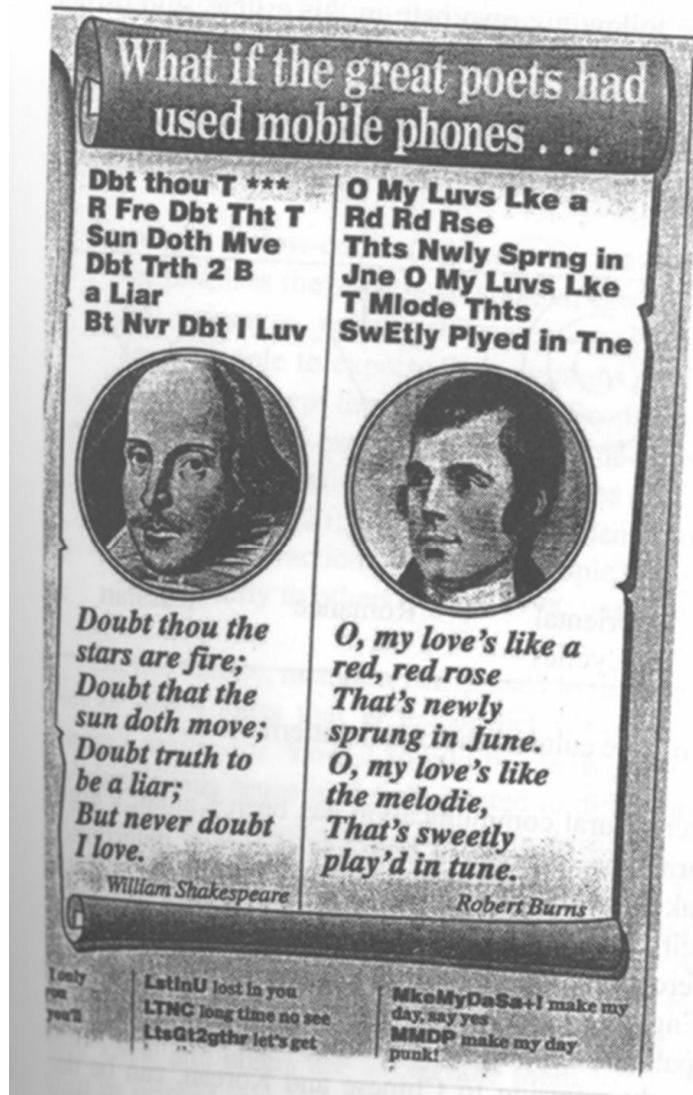| I only | LstInU lost in you | MkeMyDaSa+l make my |
you	LTNC long time no see	day, say yes
you'll	LtsGt2gthr let's get	MMDP make my day
		punk!

Figure 3. What if the great poets had used mobile phones... (the original source of this excellent illustration unidentified).

The title of this chapter read: Humanism—Just Technology and a Human Being? On second or third thoughts, no, that is not the case, at least not beyond a reasonable *t* But "Humanism—a Human Being and Technology", in the positive sense of *techné* (skill) • *logos* (science), then why not indeed? Why not indeed!

Metaphorism *vis-à-vis* Constructivism and Realism

In education. the most significant -ism of the 1990s was probably constructivism, which has by now undergone the shift to socio-constructivism and socio-culturalism. Some of the latest emphases have been analysed by Puolimatka (2002), who con-constructivism with realism, and Lehto (2005), who tries to summarise the pone of constructivism as a global didactic rationale for our basic education. These would be extremely captivating standpoints to comment on, to reflect on. How-

ever, instead of going that way, let me follow my own path in this article, and direct more attention towards metaphorism, while bearing constructivism and realism in mind.

By metaphorism, and in this context, I mean the non-Western (or non-Anglo-American) way of presenting one's argument, approaching what Kaplan (1966) calls Semitic and Oriental (figure 4).
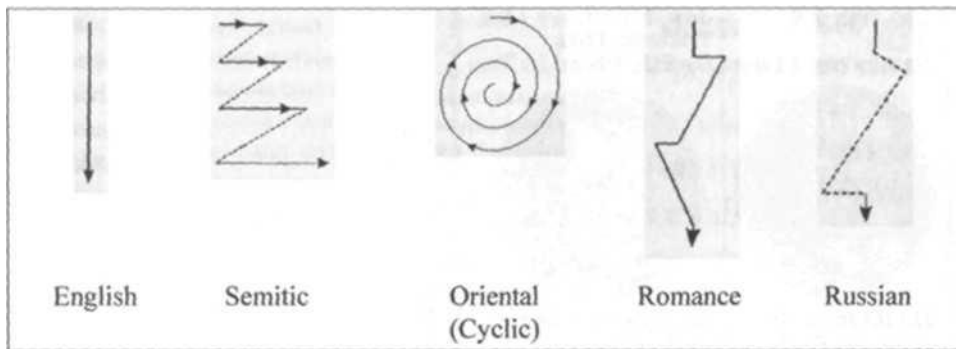

Figure 4. Kaplan's (1966) diagram of five cultural rhetorical patterns.

An influential statement in intercultural communication has been Kaplan's argument (1966) that the structure of formal argumentative essays is culturally determined and influenced. He stated that speakers of different languages have different cultural thought patterns that influence their ways of organising their thinking and writing. Different cultures, then, have different ways of understanding language and writing styles. Kaplan (1966) depicted English (or Anglo-American) direct rhetoric as a straight line, while the rest of his patterns are shaped differently. For instance, the indirect Oriental, cyclic rhetoric, mostly referring to Chinese and Korean, can be depicted as a spiral (figure 4), and marked by the writing approach of "indirection". The Semitic pattern, manifested in the Arabic language, for instance, is characterised by intuitive and affective reasoning. Western writers tend to emphasise logic and rationality, while, in contrast, people in the East are more likely to believe that the truth becomes evident without logical consideration or rationality. The Romance pattern (e.g., the French and Spanish languages) is similar to English, while allowing more freedom to digress and to introduce materials that might at first seem extraneous to the reader or listener. The structure of Russian is "made up of a series of presumably parallel constructions and a number of subordinate structures", often irrelevant to the main statement (Kaplan 1966, 13). The reasoning pattern behind the Russian language, as explained by Chen (1998), is similar to the method of deduction, but it is a time-consuming process for the conversation to come to a conclusion.

Interpreting Kaplan's cultural patterns (1966) easily leads to the idea that second language writers and readers must also be aware of the textual structures in their second language, not only because it is the "good" way, but because it also helps them to attain their goals of academic success. Yet it is to be borne in mind, as Chen (1998)

remarks, that the differences between thinking patterns often cause misunderstanding in the process of intercultural communication, especially in international e-mail exchanges where face-to-face interaction is lacking.

Now. it is time to link the high-/low-context cultures briefly to different cultural rhetorical patterns. It seems that...

> people in low-context cultures tend to use a direct verbal expression style that emphasises the situational context, carries important information in explicit verbal messages, values self-expression, verbal fluency, and eloquent speech, and leads people to express their opinions directly with the intention of persuading others to accept their viewpoints. People in high-context cultures tend to use an indirect verbal expression style that de-emphasises verbal messages, carries important information in contextual cues (e.g., place, time, situation, and relationship), values harmony with the tendency to use ambiguous language and keep silent in interactions, and leads people to talk around the point and avoid saying 'no' directly to others. (Chen 1998; based on Hall 1976.)

In this article, metaphorism is used to refer to the kind of oral or written presentation of one's ideas that is in conflict with what we are accustomed to taking for granted, taking for "how it should be" in Western or Anglo-American writing. Metaphorism in this sense is closely related to different communication cultures in general and to Eastern high-context cultures in particular. Metaphorism is also related to expertise and to the ways an expert presents his/her ideas. Let me sidetrack a bit and remind you of the definition of an expert in the light of socio-constructivism, as seen somewhat ironically by Puolimatka (2002, 70): "An expert 'knows the thing', when she speaks the way that enables others to treat him/her as if s/he knew the thing." Isn't that a sign of modern times? People who really do not know, still behave as if they knew and others are led to take them for experts! If you think that this is bad, then be warned that metaphorism is something that will take this kind of thing much further, and quite in earnest.

Cultural thought patterns are naturally connected to the idea of multiplicity, our increased chances of coming across people from distant countries, from exotic cultures, from faraway civilisations. In this sense, singularity and familiar patterns of bought are no longer the norm; rather, metaphorism is derived from the notion of ultiplicity. otherness. It is associated with strangers, with different ways of thinking and expressing oneself. This also calls for extra intercultural sensitivity when supersing the doctoral theses of those who are geared towards metaphorism in their thinking.

Not many Europeans can master the two modes: English and metaphorical. Normally, the Western pattern dominates: we think linearly, drawing conclusions from what we just said. Metaphorical thinking accepts A and B at the same time. If A and B in a metaphorical relation, then both can be defended, even if they are diametrically opposed, according to the Western logic. It would be easy to see certain back-
I figures in these different modes of thinking, for instance Levi-Strauss, T. W. Lawrence, and Orwell with his "double think". Perhaps the best-known example of

this double thinking in the West is Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) and Jose Ortega y Gasset's (1883 1955) perspectivism, according to which if anything is argued, a completely opposite argument is to be presented as well, so that we can encounter radically different and incommensurable conceptual schemes, dimensions or perspectives (i.e., ultimate ways of looking at the world) between which we must choose, while realising that none of them outdoes its rivals.

In understanding metaphorical thinking, I have been helped enormously by reading Bengt Broms's wonderful novel "Saudisamppanjaa" (2003), in which he describes his working life in the Middle East a couple of decades ago. Broms gives a lot of examples of what he calls Arabic modes of thinking, being capable of defending fiercely two completely opposite viewpoints. In this kind of thinking, C does not logically follow B which is preceded by A. Things—and with them, phenomena manifest themselves in a different light. What in Western scientific writing is usually called the "punainen lanka" (the rigorous logic throughout a book or a publication), is completely different, more or less a seemingly haphazard rhizome of unlinked, unassociated ideas, emerging from unexpected levels of realia. How would you feel if you were to review an article written by someone who uses metaphorical thinking and presents his/her argumentation like that? Or if you were to answer an e-mail written in a metaphorical style?

What about Finnish communication culture? Is it Western rather than metaphorical? Kaplan did not have any Finnish people to talk to when he drew up his graphs, but Professor Anna Mauranen, during the Great Philosophy Event in Tampere on April 2, 2005, was brave enough to draw her idea of Finnish way of scientific writing, and I was bold enough to redraw it for this article (figure 5).
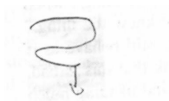

Figure 5. The Finnish way of scientific writing (according to Anna Mauranen; an informal graph drawn by S. Tella).

In Mauranen's interpretation, the Finnish way of presenting things is implicit and, in a way, poetic. In many respects, it resembles the metaphorical mode in the sense that it usually starts with a lengthy description of something that only gradually develops into the main idea and which, to an impatient reader or listener, first seems superfluous or very much off the track. Be this as it may, we also know that quite a few Finnish researchers tend to start from their main idea, without giving any background to the reader at all. The Finnish mode can be called metaphorical in the sense that not everything is spelt out; instead, a lot is left for the reader to interpret. A Finnish writer usually thinks highly of the anonymous reader and considers him/her an expert, while in the Anglo-American scientific writing tradition, the approach is explicit, everything is written out, not much is left to be interpreted. "The reader is busy, lazy and stupid", as the saying goes. - All this is closely related to what we said earlier

about the high- and low-context cultures. Finnish culture is a high-context culture, geared towards metaphorism: not everything needs to be said. The reader is implicitly advised to read between the lines.

Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary (M+I+T) Affordances

Lately, I have been captivated by looking, on the one hand, into multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary research issues and, on the other, into affordances (cf. e.g., Ruokamo & Telia 2005; Ruokamo & Telia [in print]). We are accustomed to using multi- in some terms and inter- in others, such as when we speak of multiculturalism or intercultural communication or intercultural sensitivity. Above, there was also a reference to transhumanism. How are these three prefixes different from one another and how are they connected to affordances? Let me try to explain and at the same time to justify why I believe it is important to see certain differences between multi-, inter- and trans-, sometimes informally referred to as M+I+T research.

As Ruokamo and Telia (in print) have recently argued, multidisciplinary *(multi- = combining or crossing many or multiple)* research interlocks with the parallel, purposive work of many different disciplines and arts. Multidisciplinary teams do not necessarily work in close collaboration, but they take advantage of one another's points of view. In multidisciplinary teams, experts represent several disciplines, but they usually work rather independently of each other. This may lead to a situation, in which the focus of research is covered from various angles of observation, but an integrated or interactive whole might not necessarily be achieved in an ideal way.

Interdisciplinary *(inter- = between, among, in the midst or shared by)* research makes it a point to use the methods of two or more disciplines and arts or concepts within the subject matter of one or more to solve a problem. Interdisciplinary teams are always composed of experts from several disciplines. These kinds of teams work in close contact with one other, and they compare thinking and deductions systematically and regularly. Communication between interdisciplinary teams and team members is usually characterized by frequent use of tools, methods and instruments that tend to encourage information sharing and the discussing of individual results. In interdisciplinary teams, each member is expected to have his or her own area of responsibility, which at its best guarantees that the whole problem area is usually covered better than in multidisciplinary teams.

Transdisciplinary *(trans- = across, beyond, through or so as to change)* research aims consciously to exceed the limits of many different disciplines or arts in a purposive manner in terms of research methodologies, themes, and the research teams themselves. In their communication, interaction and other activities, transdisciplinary teams especially attempt to ensure that the different fields of science and art and their representatives interact synergetically all the time. The interactivity and integration of action are best fulfilled through communal and shared interaction. Transdisciplinary often include experts from neighbouring fields of science or domains of knowledge as well as "laypersons", such as parents. This factor is likely to affect the sharing of roles somewhat differently from interdisciplinary teams, for instance. Briefly, we that in inter- and transdisciplinary teams, their members are more closely inter-

dependent than in multidisciplinary teams, in which individual members are more autonomous. Therefore, especially in transdisciplinary teams, the single members must really commit themselves to the aims and goals of the teams, and to help and support one another on a regular basis.

Let us now briefly look at these different disciplinary issues from the angle of affordances. Here I need to make a diversion to the question of input and intake first. Along with the emergence of SLA (second language acquisition) research in the 1960s, linguistic input was one of the key elements when trying to explain language acquisition and language learning. Something was "put in" first, that is, some language material was fed to learners, then something new was expected to come out as output. There was a time when it was recommended that linguistic input be very limited, especially at the primary school level. In one lesson of English, for instance, it was sometimes recommended that no more than 10 lexical items should be introduced. What followed was that no more than 10 could possibly be learnt either! The concept of input was gradually shifted towards intake, implying that each individual could probably "take in" more linguistic materials, depending on personal, contextual and environmental factors. If more was offered, more could be acquired or learnt, therefore more should also be taught and studied. It was really emancipatory, from the perspective of the didactic teaching-studying-learning process (cf. e.g., Tella & Harjanne 2004). Suggestopaedia took this idea very far indeed, offering in certain versions roughly 2,000 new lexical items in a 3-to-4-hour learning session.

> When one door closes, another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the ones which open for us. (Alexander Graham Bell, inventor 1847-1922)

Now, as a third step, the notion of affordance, first used by Gibson (1979), has made horizons vaster, more challenging but also more tempting as well. To Gibson's way of thinking, an affordance was a reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment. And as van Lier (2000, 252) explicates, "[a]n affordance is a particular property of the environment that is relevant—for good or for ill—to an active, perceiving organism in that environment. An affordance affords further action (but does not cause or trigger it)." In this light, knowledge of language for a human is like knowledge of the jungle for an animal. Affordances are then the linguistic potential that the world and our environment "afford" to us or put at our disposal. It is important to notice that linguistic affordances are there for us to take advantage of, but they do not automatically involve us, unless we wish to behave in a proactive way ourselves. Affordances suggest something to us implicitly, but it depends on us whether we act, react or simply do nothing. A classical example is the door with either a panel to push or a handle to turn, pull or push. Certain objects entice us to afford them, such as door handles. It seems to me that Alexander Bell (see above) refers to affordances when speaking of one door closing, the other opening.

A more technical example of potential affordances would be a modern cell phone. Each of us knows that it contains a myriad of functionalities that we could use if we wished to (and knew how to). We could argue that a cell phone is a jungle of dif-

ferent properties, some of which are connected to speaking and listening (a traditional way of using a phone), others to listening to music, watching TV, taking photos short video clips, recording voice messages, showing the time, organising one's calendar. serving as an alarm clock, measuring the level of decibels around us, and, in increasingly, saving, storing and transferring digital information out of and into the phone self. In this sense, the phone is a(n affordable) jungle. It provides us with different functionalities which only become affordances when a relationship is created be one or any of them and ourselves. Yet we need to be more explicit: it is probably correct to argue that the multiplicity of properties and functionalities embedded in a modern cell phone are not affordances until we use them intentionally or at least are cognisant of their existence and usability. As life is a play of fantasy and imagination, let me just take the next move and divide the construct of affordance into two: dormant and dominant affordances. In that case, dormant affordances would be those prop and functionalities of a cell phone that the users are not aware of, too lazy to fin or reluctant to take advantage of. Dominant affordances, on the other hand, would those properties and functionalities between which and ourselves there is a functional relationship of which we are fully or at least partially conscious and which we know is accessible to us. As a conclusion, this kind of thinking is bound to lead to a new interpretation of learning: learning is no longer processing the linguistic input exclusively or exploiting the linguistic intake at a personal, contextual or environmental level preferably developing, furthering and endorsing increasingly effective ways of dealing; with the surrounding world and its meanings.

As a Conclusion

This was not the kind of article I used to write. It did not aim at a conventional, scientific piece of writing *per se*. It was written in a rhizomatic state of mind, trying to simulate, to some extent at least, the two principles of a rhizome, i.e., connection heterogeneity, combined in a personal fashion. As this article also promoted a certain notion and tolerance of metaphorism—radically against our Western culturally dominant linear logic and thought patterns—I took the liberty of having recourse to other nominally unrelated constructs, such as high- vs. low-context cultures, multiculturalism, sympathy, empathy, politeness as a social construct, transhumanism, as v as M+I+T disciplinary research issues.

Still, in the final analysis, I would be willing to argue that the last of the concepts introduced above, affordance, is likely to help to build a logical (albeit Western) bridge between the diverging yet emergent themes and topics of this piece of writing. The notion of affordance cannot reach its full potential in a monodisciplinary environment. It is only when we become cognisant of the fact that foreign and second language education, both teaching, studying and learning, take place in a multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary environment, in which experts, specialists, colleagues, students, laypersons and other people know how to collaborate in a mutually-communal spirit, that we are capable of fully grasping the new dimensions and horizons open and accessible to us. It is only then that we pull, press or push a door handle, in order

move through one closed door to a new more open environment, from closed systems to open systems, and from singularity to multiplicity in foreign language education.

Notes

[1]   According to Deleuze & Guattari (1987, 7), the creators of the notion of the rhizome, the first and second principles of a rhizome are connection and heterogeneity, implying that any point of a rhizome can and must be connected to anything else. In this spirit, I hope the ideas raised in this article are con-nected and inter locked, and still heterogeneous and rhizomatic enough to create links with the readers' own thinking.

[2]   "Kieli vaikuttaa ihmisen toimintaan kulttuurin ja ajattelun kautta. Ajattelu kuten kommunikaatio on monikerroksinen tapahtuma. Emme ajattele ainoastaan kielen avulla, sanoilla ja lauseilla, vaan myös käyttäen kaikenlaisia muita merkkejä sekä suoria mielikuvia. Ajattelun koodi muistuttaa enemmän multimediateosta kuin tavallista tekstiä: siinä ovat mukana kuvat, äänet, liikkuvat kuvat, hieroglyfit, ideogrammit sekä kielellistäkin materiaalia. Ajattelun monikerroksisuus heijastaa ihmiselämän monikerroksisuutta: ihminen elää ja toimii monessa eri maailmassa, kuten nykyään jo monet filosofit, esimerkiksi Karl Popper, ovat todenneet. Riippumatta siitä, montako sellaista maailmaa halutaan otaksua, ovat ne monimutkaisissa yhteyksissä keskenään. On olemassa maailmoja, joissa tulemme toimeen ja jopa pystymme kommunikoimaan muiden kanssa ilman kieltä, esimerkiksi viittoi lemalla tai suoralla toiminnalla. Toisaalta on maailmoja, jotka ovat meille olemassa vain kielen kautta kuten filosofia, uskonto, kirjallisuus, laki ja tiede." (Kaplinski 1999,70.)

3   "[sillä että] tulevaisuuden EU.ssa on mukana myös suomalais-ugrilaisten kielten käyttäjiä, olla enemmän merkitystä kuin tällä hetkellä otaksutaan. Me olemme Euroopan sisäpiirissä toisenlaista, eurooppalaisesta standardista eroavaa väkeä. ... uskallan väittää, että merkittävä osa suomalaisesta kirjallisuudesta eroaa selvästi standard average europeanista " (Kaplinski 1999, 71.)

[4]   "Toiseuden löytäminen ja osittainen hyväksyminen on aina antanut tärkeitä virikkeitä Euroopan kulttuurille. Kosketus arabeihin synnytti skolastiikan ja lyriikan, kosketus intiaaneihin ja Etelämeren asukkaisiin synnytti rousseaulaisuuden, kosketus Kiinaan synnytti valistuksen, kosketus afrikkalaiseen ja japanilaiseen taiteeseen impressionismin ja kubismin. Eikö voisi kosketus suomalais-ugrilaiseenkin synnyttää Euroopassa jotain uutta?" (Kaplinski 1999, 71.)

5   In 2000,1 formulated this answer to Kaplinski in Finnish like this: "... luotettavan, luottavan ja luettavan sanan mahti samoin kuin kriittisen eklektinen, älyllisen utelias ja kybertekstuaalinen ote tekniikkaan taitona".

[6]   Lewis (2005) gives a half-joking explanation to this personal territory, which he also calls a "space bubble": "I once asked a Finnish peasant how much personal space he felt he had a right to. He was a man who took such questions seriously. so he thought about it for a full minute. Then he took his puukko (woodman's knife) out of its sheath and stretched his right arm out in front of him, holding the

puukko with the blade parallel to the ground. 'That distance,' he replied" (Lewis 2005, 152).

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