



Research Article

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Constructing the perception of ‘annoying’ words and phrases in interaction: An analysis of delegitimisation strategies used in interviews and online discussions in Finnish

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Abstract: This study examines the linguistic metadiscourse on expressions perceived as ‘annoying’ and the strategies used to justify this perception. Two different types of data are examined in which verbal hygiene is practised in interaction: language biography interviews and anonymous online discussions. In the examined datasets, the discussion begins with an explicit question regarding annoying words and phrases. The themes discussed and the delegitimisation strategies adopted by a participant are affected by other participants. In interviews, minor reformulations of the question can be leading, and in online discussions, other writers regulate the debate with counter-arguments, which leads to a wider variety of delegitimisation strategies. The analysis also shows a counter-discourse to verbal hygiene.

Keywords: (de)legitimisation strategies, Finnish, interactional sociolinguistics, metadiscourse, verbal hygiene

1 Introduction

In Finnish, a commonly used metaphor in discussions on linguistic aspects perceived as dislikeable is the verb *ärsyttää* (‘annoy’¹ or ‘irritate’), which describes a physical reaction caused by a conflict faced when confronted with language use that goes against people’s values and ideologies. Lists of ‘annoying’ words and phrases are regularly presented in tabloid headlines, and there is even a book that has been written about these expressions in Finnish (Tammi 2011). Annoying linguistic aspects are often brought up in discussions by non-linguists in online forums (Joronen 2007) or in enquiries regarding language use from experts (Haakana and Mäntynen 2002). In these discussions and previous studies, negative descriptions are typically given using the verb *ärsyttää* ‘to annoy’.

Finnish is a well-described language with a uniform standard that was created in the late nineteenth century through language developers’ conscious effort and a mixing of different dialects (Nordlund and Pallaskallio 2017). The development of literary Finnish was characterised by the standard language ideology, striving for a uniform, unvaried form of language and purist notions of the inferiority of foreign influences (Nordlund 2004). Today, standard Finnish is mainly used only in written form and in very formal spoken

¹ I have chosen to translate the Finnish verb *ärsyttää* as ‘to annoy’ in this context, because the English verb *to annoy* is used in similar discussions (e.g. The Guardian 23 June 2021; and Reader’s Digest, 7 March 2022).

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interactions, but standard language ideology and purism remain strongly represented in the language attitudes of Finnish language users (Mäntynen 2012, Koistinen 2018). Examples of expressions perceived as annoying usually include new and trendy phrases, borrowed foreign words and phrases, as well as profanities.

The topic of what people dislike in language use has been studied earlier in Finnish settings using questionnaires (Paananen 1996, Korhonen and Lappalainen 2013, Koistinen 2018; see also Piippo et al. 2016, 71–2), online discussion data (Joronen 2007), and phone calls made to and recorded by a language programme on the radio (Haakana and Mäntynen 2002). The words and phrases perceived as annoying in the language biography interviews at hand, as well as the distribution of these perceptions according to the social background of the interviewees, were discussed by Priiki (2020). This article focuses on the arguments made regarding the experience of annoyance and how the perception and its justification are generated in interaction with two different types of data.

This study adopts a content-based and direct approach to attitudes, which is typically used in folk linguistics to study people's evaluation of language (Preston 2017). In the data, direct questions about language are asked. Nevertheless, I also consider that attitudes are implicitly present in interaction (Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain 2009). Examining the interaction in both online discussion and interview situation shows that implicit attitudes can play a role even when answering a direct question. Direct and indirect, quantitative and qualitative methods of examining language perceptions can be used together.

I apply van Leeuwen's strategies of (de)legitimisations to the data. Originally, these strategies were analysed in political discourses (e.g. van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999), but the model has been used to analyse verbal hygiene practices by, for example, Koreinik (2011) and Heuman (2020). Koreinik (2011) analysed the legitimisation of a regional variety of the Estonian language in newspaper discourses, and Heuman (2020) studied evaluative remarks on language in online discussion app (Jodel) interactions in Swedish. This dataset differs from the ones used in the mentioned studies using van Leeuwen's model. In the present study, people respond to the question of 'annoying' words and phrases in a collection of language biography interviews and two discussion threads on an anonymous online forum. Van Leeuwen's strategies have not been applied to such data before and not even to data in the Finnish language. In the next section, I present the theoretical foundations of this study, including van Leeuwen's model.

The research questions are as follows. How is verbal hygiene practised in interaction? Are delegitimation strategies different in the interview and online discussion contexts where similar explicit questions about annoying language are asked? If so, is this related to the interaction between participants, and how?

By studying language attitudes emerging in interaction, this study builds on interactional sociolinguistics, folk linguistics, and the literature on language attitudes and metalinguistic perceptions. Preston (1996) referred to such an approach as folk-linguistic discourse analysis. In Section 2, I introduce the theoretical background and central concepts of this study. In Section 3, I describe the data. Section 4 compares the interview and online datasets concerning the themes perceived as annoying. Section 5 analyses, in detail, the delegitimation strategies used in the data. Section 6 highlights some interactional phenomena in the data, and Section 7 discusses and summarises the findings.

2 Language ideologies, attitudes, and *verbal hygiene*

A sociolinguistic study is not just about how people use language but also about what they think, feel, and believe about it. These conceptualisations are referred to as *language ideologies* (Irvine 2012). Silverstein (1979, 193) defined them as explicit beliefs that justify the features of language. These are linked to *indexicality*, which means that particular features of language begin to be associated with, for example, certain social groups (Agha 2007, 17). Language ideologies and attitudes can be studied from a wide range of frameworks (Coupland and Jaworski 2004, 37); thus, the concept of language ideology has been used and defined in slightly different ways in different studies. Here, I understand language ideologies as relatively stable beliefs shared by a community that are expressed and constructed through language use (Blommaert 1999). Through the concept of *language attitude*, I describe more localised evaluative reactions of individual speakers. Considering the Finnish language, explicit language attitudes have been widely studied from a folk linguistics perspective, and

in the Finnish context, studies of language ideologies have often focused on minority languages and multilingualism (Mäntynen et al. 2012).

The traditional approach to studying language attitudes has been to analyse metalinguistic discourse (i.e. how people talk about language; Woolard 1998, 9). Research on metalanguage can be conducted either by asking language users directly about their perceptions of language or forms of language, as is done in the datasets of the present study, or more indirectly by looking at situations involving the evaluation of language, such as language policy making. Since the metalanguage used by nonlinguists is usually different from linguistic descriptions, a broader examination of the context is necessary to determine what the speakers actually mean by their descriptions (ibid.). However, language ideologies can also be more implicit and determined by analysing interactions, for example, in linguistic performances (Rampton 2006, 224–5). Attitudes towards language emerge in interaction with others (Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain 2009), and the explicitness or implicitness of metapragmatic commentation is a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Lehtonen 2016, 19). Even in an explicit discussion of language perceptions – such as the interviews and online discussions in the present study – where the question of annoying language is answered, some attitudes are implicit and even unconscious (Bassili and Brown 2005). While content analysis is useful in determining explicit attitudes, an analysis of interaction using the conversation analysis method helps to identify implicit attitudes (Section 3).

As already mentioned in the Introduction, language ideologies and attitudes have been examined in the Finnish context, as well as in discussions about features that people find annoying. Here, the focus is on the way in which a given language feature is delegitimised and how the participants practise *verbal hygiene*, rather than on ideologies and attitudes. Of course, the arguments put forward by language users are strongly linked to language ideologies. A typical nonlinguist’s view of language is a categorisation of ‘good language’ and ‘ordinary language’; the latter also includes dialects and ‘incorrect’ language (Preston 2017, 381). Seeing standardised written language as the most valuable variety is part of the standard language ideology, which also prefers a non-varying form of language (Milroy 2001, Walsh 2021). Other language ideologies include the notion of *appropriateness*, which refers to the idea that different forms of language are suitable for different situations (Fairclough 1992, Flores and Rosa 2015), and *heteroglossic* ideology (Bakhtin 1981), where language variation, such as code-switching, dialects, and language play, is seen as a resource (e.g. Dufva and Pietikäinen 2009, Jenks and Lee 2016).

Verbal hygiene is a concept presented by Cameron (1995), and it refers to the concrete practice of language ideologies. By practising verbal hygiene, participants aim at ‘cleaning up’ language use by showing a preference for certain forms and disapproval for others. Through indexicality, evaluating features of language linked to specific social groups also regulates the participation of these groups in discussions (Jones 2013). Metalinguistic discourses regarding the feeling of irritation caused by other people’s language use is one form of verbal hygiene, thereby delegitimising the use of certain words and phrases.

In this study, I analyse the justifications given by the participants for their negative feelings by applying the (de)legitimisation strategies presented by van Leeuwen (2008, 105–23). In his model, van Leeuwen presents the following four major categories of (de)legitimisation strategies: references to 1) authorities, 2) value systems or morality, 3) cognitive validity or reason, and 4) narratives or myths (ibid. 105–106). The Finnish language users examined here mostly observe language from aesthetic and moralistic perspectives; however, all four (de)legitimisation strategies are present in the data. In Section 3, I describe the practical application of the model to the classification of the current data.

3 Data and methodology

3.1 Interviews and online discussions

In this article, how people respond to the question on ‘annoying’ words and phrases is examined in language biography interviews recorded during the research project *One Hundred Finnish Linguistic Life Stories*,

conducted at the University of Helsinki from 2017 to 2020 (Priiki et al. 2018, Hippi et al. 2020). The predetermined questions in the interviews include the question *Onko muiden kielenkäytössä pürteitä tai sanoja, jotka ärsyttävät sinua? Jos on, millaisia?* ‘Are there aspects or words in the language used by other people that annoy you? If yes, what are they?’

The responses given to this question in 92 interviews were compared to two discussion threads (90 messages each) entitled *Ärsyttävät sanat ja sanonnat* ‘Annoying words and phrases’ and *Mikä ärsyttää ihmisten kielenkäytössä?* ‘What annoys you in people’s language use?’ on an anonymous online forum called Suomi24.fi.

These two threads were selected for the analysis, since the questions asked resemble the interview question as closely as possible. Spontaneously occurring discussions that include exactly the same question were not found. Of course, the formulation of the question affects the responses (van der Zouwen 2002, 50), and the main difference between the two data sets is that the online forum questions assume that respondents are annoyed by something in the language. The analysis revealed that, despite the formulation of the interview question, some interviewees appear to anticipate an affirmative answer.

In language biography interviews, narratives are constructed dialogically focusing on language acquisition, language use, and language attitudes. Language biographies may be collected as texts written by the studied persons themselves or through surveys and interviews. The present data are a cross-sectional sample of the population living in Finland and speaking Finnish either as their mother tongue or as a second (or third) language. The interviewees come from different social groups and regions, and they represent different linguistic varieties of Finnish and Finland–Swedish,² as well as other minority languages in Finland. In the collected thematic interviews, the questions are related to the interviewees’ residential history, family, events in life, and perception of their own languages and linguistic skills, as well as their stance on different languages and varieties. The interview questions were designed in collaboration with a multidisciplinary research team, and the interview framework was based on previous sociolinguistic studies on Finnish (Hippi et al. 2020, 24). The framework aimed at creating a comprehensive picture of life stages, language use situations, and language perceptions of each interviewee, and the questions were designed to encourage the production of narratives (ibid.). The author of this article was part of the research team.

Interviews are a central data collection method in various fields, which is also true for sociolinguistics. Earlier, interviews could be uncritically regarded as a source of accurate information; however, in recent decades, there has been a growing understanding that an interview is an interactive situation influenced by a variety of factors (Silverman 1997, 248, Atkinson and Silverman 1997, Wengraf 2001). An interview stripped from power relations is an impossibility: the interviewer controls the interview and the researchers its interpretation; however, the interviewee has the power to choose what to say and how to say it (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, 4, Kvale 2007, 483–6). Therefore, neither party is a passive transmitter of information; however, interviews are active, changing situations, even if the format of the questions is fixed and the interviewer attempts to influence its course as little as possible (van der Zouwen 2002, 51–2). Earlier studies have shown that, for example, face-to-face interviews yield more complete responses than mail surveys and that an interviewer’s social background has only a limited effect (ibid. 51). However, interviewers’ behaviour is an important factor affecting responses given (ibid. 52).

The interviews analysed in this study are semi-structured biographic-narrative interviews (for the aspects of this type of interview in general, see Wengraf 2001, 5) and they were video- or audio-recorded. Most of the interviewees were university students participating in a project course. They were trained in the task, but for most of them, this was their first experience as an interviewer and they only conducted one interview. Thus, most interviewees in the data are inexperienced. The interviewees had slightly different practices in, for example, how they formulated the predetermined questions, how they linked the question regarding annoying language to a previous discussion during the interview, and whether they asked follow-up questions. These are typical aspects of an interviewer’s behaviour that can affect the comparability of the data (van der Zouwen 2002, 60–1).

² The interviews were in Finnish or Finland–Swedish, and a few interviews were also conducted in Finnish or Finland–Swedish sign language. All interviews examined in this article are in Finnish.

As Wengraf (2001, 5) indicates, in semi-structured interviews where interviewees are asked to produce narratives, interviewers need to improvise their responses; this makes this a challenging interview genre.

As mentioned earlier, interviews are interactive situations where the actions of both the interviewer and the interviewee influence the manner in which the conversation unfolds. In the current data, the manner in which participants answer questions is affected by the order of the questions presented, as the topics currently discussed can lead to the discussion of other topics. Occasionally, the interviewers explicitly related the question in focus here to topics already discussed. The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee also plays a role. Most often, the participants were not previously known to each other, but the people being interviewed may make a few assumptions regarding the interviewer's language ideologies based on their knowledge that the interviewer is, for example, a young female university student in linguistics; this, of course, may affect their responses, even though the effect of the interviewer's social background appears to generally be a limited one (van der Zouwen 2002, 51). Some assumptions are also embedded in the interview questions, and some may be revealed by the interviewer's reactions to the interviewee's answers.

Although conversation analysis has its origins in the study of everyday interaction, nowadays, it is widely used to study institutional situations (Drew and Heritage 1992). Videotaping the data and analysing interview interactions using the methods of interactional linguistics and conversation analysis help to identify the problems and benefits of the formulation of interview questions and the interviewer's behaviour. As mentioned earlier, the course of a research interview is influenced by a wide range of interactional factors. To a certain extent, these follow the same logic as everyday conversation (Wengraf 2001, 3), and practices that work well in everyday conversation appear to also be most effective in interview situations (van der Zouwen 2002).

Written online conversations, to which the language biography interview data set is compared in this article, are very different from interviews in a communication context. Online discussion forums are a form of asynchronous interaction, thereby differing from chat rooms and instant messaging applications. These are multi-party interactions where responses are often delayed and participants use temporary pseudonyms instead of their real names. Online discussions are open to a wide range of participants, and they are considered as unregulated linguistic spaces that allow heterogenic language use. Despite greater visibility of written nonstandard varieties, social media does not appear to contribute to the acceptance of linguistic variation. On the contrary, in social media contexts, participants – driven by standard language ideology (see Milroy 2001) – often reinforce norms by practising verbal hygiene (Sherman and Švelch 2015, Heuman 2020).

There has been a growing interest in discourse practices in online interaction from the beginning of the twenty-first century. Online discourse forums have been analysed by studying opening posts (Antaki et al. 2005), responses to them (Vayreda and Antaki 2009), and turn-taking practices (Gibson 2009). Furthermore, Finnish asynchronous online discussions have been examined using conversation analytic methods by Virtanen and Kääntä (2018) and Määttä et al. (2020). Asynchronous written online discussions often consist of rather long and complex posts and, as they are usually read by a larger audience than only the active contributors of the discussion, the texts may address an assumed public audience (Virtanen and Kääntä 2018, 152). Sequences in discussions can be organised non-chronologically, but participants still treat them as adjacency pairs, such as a question and an answer (Gibson 2009). Because written discussions lack the cues, such as glances, that face-to-face conversations use to regulate turn-taking, applications often utilise technical means to, for example, mark a message as a reply to someone else's post. Online conversations are today inherently multimodal, using emojis, images, and videos as part of the communication (Thurlow et al. 2020). Unfortunately, images posted in threads are not available in the online data used in this study. The forum and topic in question, however, are old-fashioned in the sense that the debate is text-based.

The two discussion threads examined in this article were taken from the discussion forum Suomi24.fi, which is open for research purposes via the Language Bank of Finland. The forum data are introduced in detail in Lagus et al. (2016). The open and anonymous forum comprises writers and readers, who may be casual browsers or active contributors, and is moderated on the basis of requests for deletion (Lagus et al. 2016, 9). The Suomi24.fi forum has a diverse user base compared to, for example, closed Facebook groups (Harju 2018, 52), where language issues are also discussed.

I refer to the discussion titled ‘Annoying words and phrases’ as Discussion 1 and to the discussion titled ‘What annoys you in people’s language use?’ as Discussion 2. Added to the declarative title, the opening post of Discussion 1 includes the question, ‘Which words make you furious or at least annoy you a lot?’; as examples, the writer provides a list of six expressions. The opening message of Discussion 2 frames the question to spoken language by asking people to ‘List things that annoy you in how people talk’. This opener also provides examples of linguistic aspects that annoy people. These discussions are interactive by nature, as participants form adjacency pairs by answering the opening questions or responding to the directive action. In addition to answering the question and producing the requested lists, participants discuss the aspects mentioned by others, agreeing or disagreeing with their perceptions.

3.2 Processing the data

The question about annoying features was asked in 92 of the examined 103 interviews. Annoying aspects were discussed in connection with other questions as well; however, to strengthen the comparability of the data, the analysis here is limited to the answers to this question only. When a particular phenomenon being annoying is discussed in the context of another question, this topic inevitably influences the interpretation. The examined parts – that is, the interview question regarding annoying language in each of the 92 interviews, the interviewee’s answer to it, and any follow-up questions by the interviewer – form a data set of ca 5,220 words of transcribed text.

The two discussion threads, to which the interview data set was compared, were found by searching with words *ärsyttävä* – ‘annoying’, *sana* – ‘word’, and *kieli* – ‘language’. To create a sample of approximately the same size as the interview data set, the first 90 posts of each discussion thread were saved. The size of the sample from Discussion 1 is ca 2,290 words, and the sample from Discussion 2 is ca 4,370 words. Discussion 1 was opened in January 2015, and the last of the examined messages was sent in February 2016, which is over a year later. Discussion 2 was livelier: it was opened in June 2013 and the first 90 messages were sent in just 11 days. Most of the replies are short, with the average length being 37 words.

The data are processed using content analysis, which identifies patterns in a systematic manner by focusing on the language and content, as well as the contextual meaning of a piece of text (Riffe et al. 2019, 20–35). Content analysis refers to a group of analytic approaches with different emphases, ranging from the simple counting of words to intensive processes of interpretation (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). The analysis conducted for this study begins with the form of content analysis which is characterised as *conventional* (see id. 1279–81). The data are examined to determine which linguistic features are explicitly mentioned as annoying in the interviews and online discussions and to determine the relative frequency of these mentions. In the analysis, each response to the interview question, a turn of speech, and each message posted to the examined online discussions function as a content unit. Keywords are identified from these units and categorised under recurring themes. The keywords are different levels of language-related expressions, such as metapragmatic references to words, phrases, varieties of language, or ways of speaking. For example, the mentions of words *niinku* (‘like’), *tota* (‘well’), and *elikkä* (‘so’) are categorised under the category ‘filler words’.³ The analysis is not, however, purely conceptual in the sense that I had to identify when the mention was a metapragmatic observation and not, for example, a pragmatic marker as part of the interaction. Some content units (online forum messages or response turns) are labelled under several categories, since longer messages and responses include mentions that fall into more than one theme.

The analysis is then continued using *directed* content analysis (see Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1281–3), where units are labelled according to van Leeuwen’s (2008, 105–23) (de)legitimation strategies. Because

³ These words are used in interaction as markers of, for example, hesitation, planning, transitions or focusing. Finnish non-linguists typically group them and refer to them as *täytesanat* ‘filler words’. I adopt this description because it allows me to treat these words as a group, as language users do.

describing something as annoying is a moral judgement by itself, units in which there is no other justification for the perception are labelled in the category of ‘moral evaluation’. In van Leeuwen’s model, the strategy of authorisation is divided into personal, expert, role model, and impersonal authority, authority of tradition, and conformity. Only the latter three are found in the examined data. In this coding, impersonal authority refers to rules concerning language use that are learned at school or home, and authority of tradition refers to established practices regarding how one should use language in a specific context. I distinguish them from the authority of conformity, which refers to the use of the widespread nature of the phenomenon as a justification, since in these data, these strategies are used in different ways (Section 5). The strategy of rationalisation is divided into two subcategories, as done by van Leeuwen (2008, 113–7): instrumental and theoretical rationalisation. Instrumental legitimisation invokes the practicality of a phenomenon, while theoretical legitimisation appeals to its logicity. Van Leeuwen’s mythopoesis refers to myths and storytelling as argumentative strategies. Here, cases in which the interviewees or online discussion participants justify their perception by reporting some interconnected events linked to a specific time, place, or experience are coded as narratives.

4 What is perceived as ‘annoying’ in the data?

Considering the aspects that are mentioned as annoying, the data sets examined here do not differ much from earlier observations, either in the Finnish context or internationally, even though different topics are emphasised in each of the data sets. Typically, linguistic aspects that annoy people include swearing, loan words, ‘filler words’, slang, newly coined expressions, and nonstandard forms of grammar or word use (e.g. Andersson and Trudgill 1990, Battistella 2005). As Cameron (1995, 25) notes, trivial issues are subject to verbal hygiene and the aim of disapproving these practices is to create order and uniformity. As in online interactions examined by Heuman (2020), Jones (2013), and Sherman and Švelch (2015), the standard language ideology (see Milroy 2001) is observable in the present data in both data sets, and a considerable number of interviewees and participants in online discussions show a preference for uniform standard language.

The issues raised in the online discussions and interview responses are summarised under the following 13 themes:

1. Buzzwords or neologisms – for example, *haasteellinen* (‘challenging’, often used instead of ‘difficult’ which has acquired a negative tone) or *halpuutus*, a coinage by a grocery store chain meaning ‘price reduction’.
2. Nonstandard expressions and spelling – for example, the choice of verb in expression *pistää merkille* instead of *panna merkille* (‘note’) (Hurta 2003), writing compound words apart, or spelling *enää* (‘still’) as *enään*.
3. Swearing, particularly the common Finnish expletive *vittu* (‘cunt’).
4. Filler words – for example, *niinku* (‘like’) and *tota* (‘well’).
5. Loans and calques – for example, *debatti* (‘debate’), *silmäkarkki* (‘eye candy’), or generic second-person use.
6. Colloquialisms, slang, and mundane style – for example, using the word *päikkärit* instead *päiväunet* (‘nap’) or *tissit* (‘tits’) instead of *rinnat* (‘breast’).
7. Illogical derivation, inflection, or structure – for example, inflecting the name *Thaimaa* (‘Thailand’) in illative as *Thaimaaseen* instead of *Thaimaahan* (‘to Thailand’; Maamies 1996) or using the partitive form *ketä* instead of the nominative for the word *kuka* (‘who’; Paunonen 2008, 38).
8. Dialects in general or certain dialectal expressions – for example, slowness of Rauma dialect or the expression *nysse tullee* (‘bus is coming’) in Tampere dialect.
9. Technical or political jargon or sports slang – for example, *kestävyysvaje* (‘sustainability gap’) or using the ice hockey term *taklata* (‘check’) in an abstract implication.
10. Aspects related to speech and pronunciation – for example, creaky voice or pronouncing the name *Spielberg* as if it were Finnish.
11. Language of the media in general – for example, stating that the language of the media is worse than before.

12. The feeling of annoyance is more related to the content of the expression – for example, rude language.
13. Youth language in general – for example, stating that it is impossible to understand what young people say.

Figure 1 illustrates the themes perceived as annoying in the data sets examined and how frequently they are mentioned. It shows that, although similar aspects are discussed in different parts of the data, the emphasis is on different themes.

Discussion 1 includes a high number of mentions of so-called ‘buzzwords’ and neologisms. In addition, participants discuss ‘filler words’, loanwords, everyday colloquialisms, and expressions belonging to special language, such as those related to political debates or sports. This selection of topics is probably due to the fact that the opening message answers its own question by listing the expressions *eli*, *elikkä*, *elikäs* (‘so’); *itse asiassa* (‘in fact’); *oikeesti* (‘really’); *kännykkä* (‘mobile phone’); *hali* (‘hug’); and *yläfemma*, *ylävitonen* (‘high five’). Of these, *eli* with its variants, *itse asiassa*, and *oikeesti* are seen as ‘filler words’, *kännykkä* and *hali* are everyday colloquialisms, and *yläfemma* or *ylävitonen* is a calque from the English expression ‘high five’. The participants of this discussion continue with similar themes. They give many examples of expressions they find annoying, as the lists written by others activate them to remember words and phrases.

Discussion 2, in turn, begins with a title formed as a question and a call to list annoying things about speech. In this discussion, too, the opening post includes an example of an ‘annoying’ aspect: here, it is the pronunciation of the loanword *broileri* (‘chicken, broiler’) without the final vowel ‘i’, which belongs to the form in which this loan word is accepted in standard Finnish (*Kielitoimiston sanakirja*, s.v. *broileri*). The opening leads the discussion to examine non-standard inflection forms and also spelling, even though the opener refers to the spoken language where, for example, writing compound words apart would not play a role. As a result of the opening message focusing on spoken interaction, the participants of this discussion also focus on issues of speech, such as pronunciation, although, according to earlier studies, these are not very common sources of irritation for Finnish speakers (compare with Haakana and Mäntynen 2002, Joronen 2007, Korhonen and Lappalainen 2013, Piippo et al. 2016, Koistinen 2018).

In the interview material, swearing is by far the most common phenomenon that annoys people (see also Priiki 2020). Interestingly, this is not mentioned at all in Discussion 1. In Discussion 2, a few participants mentioned swearing. In the examined interviews, the participants discuss the interviewee’s life, family relations, and languages they use, and these topics affect which aspects are annoying for the interviewee in the

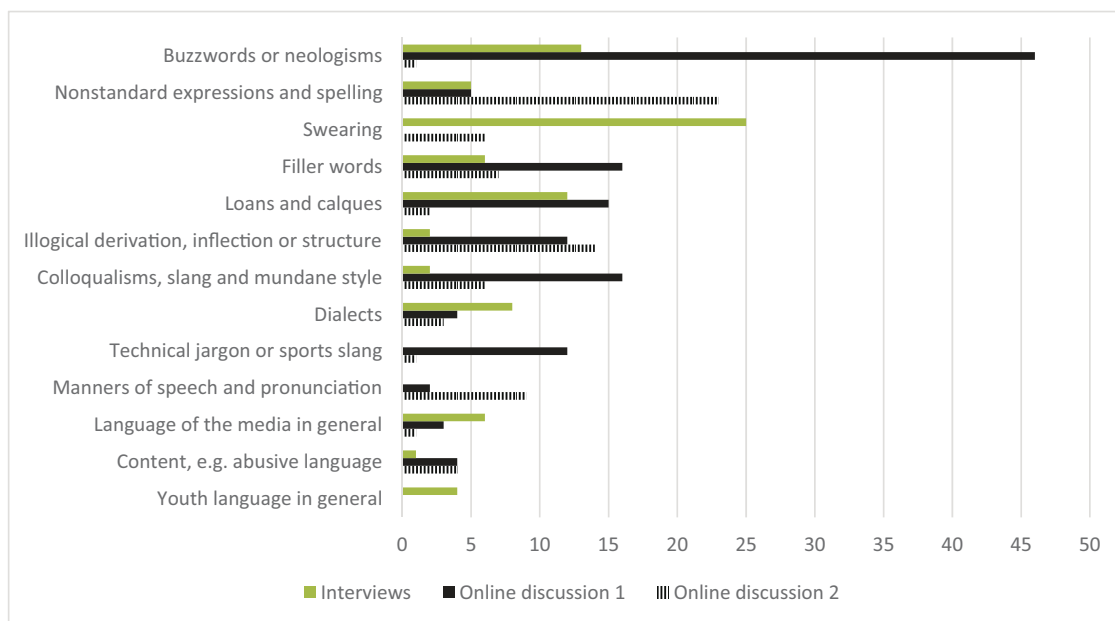


Figure 1: The frequency of themes mentioned in the interviews and online discussions.

interview situation: it is possible that swearing is mentioned often because the interviewees have been thinking about their parents’ advice on language use, for instance. In online discussions, the irritating aspects are presented as lists of example words or phrases; in interviews, these aspects are discussed at a more general level. Interviewees may, for example, say that they are annoyed by the excessive use of English or by language used in media today, without being able to pinpoint certain expressions, while online discussion participants present examples without explaining why they perceive them as annoying. In an interview, respondents of the question do not receive the same stimulation from examples provided by others as in an online conversation, making it difficult for them to recall annoying expressions in an interview situation. Indeed, some interviewees report that some words do annoy them, but they do not remember them at that moment.

5 Delegitimisation strategies used in the data

Figure 2 presents the distribution of (de)legitimisation strategies in the data.

As mentioned earlier, perceiving an aspect of language as ‘annoying’ is a moral judgement; thus, arguments in which no other justification is given are labelled in the category of ‘moral evaluation’. This is the most commonly applied strategy in the data, especially used in Discussion 1 and the interviews. This is probably because in these parts of the data, people discuss phenomena that Finns usually find annoying (Section 4). Thus, when something more atypical is presented as annoying, more varied delegitimation strategies are required. The strategies used are linked to what is being discussed and to how interactive the discussion is. In Discussion 1, as well as in the interview data, the participants do not often question others’ beliefs. In Discussion 2, there is more interaction, and the linguistic practices under discussion are defended. In this case, the (de)legitimisation strategies are more varied, as different strategies are used for defending and opposing arguments, and there is a greater variety of perspectives from which to justify one’s own opinion. In the following subsections, I present the strategies adopted in the data in more detail and with examples.

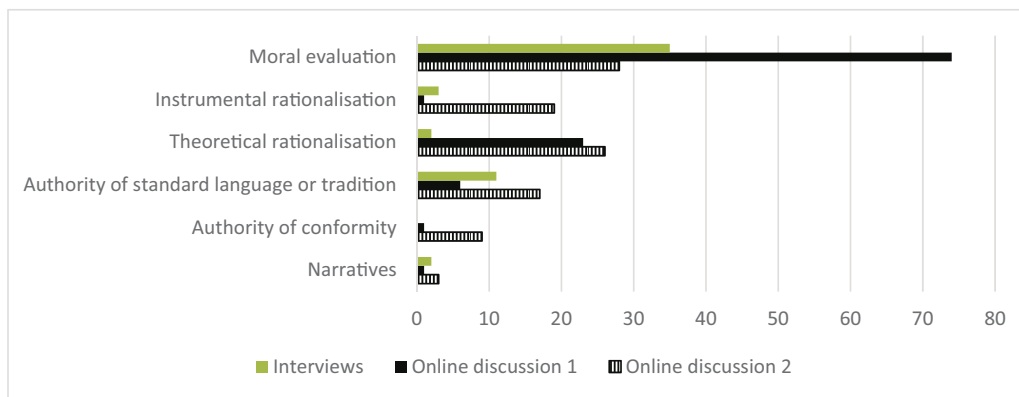


Figure 2: The distribution of (de)legitimisation strategies used in the data.

5.1 Moral evaluation

Delegitimising by moral evaluation includes claims that a particular use of language is bad, stupid – or annoying. People delegitimising language use to place themselves morally above others by stating that although a particular practice may be widespread or accepted by an authority, they would not use it themselves based on their values. Note that, in this dataset, the questions under consideration are about annoyance, not what kind of language is perceived as ‘good’ or ‘bad’.

In example 1, a 28-year-old woman justifies her feeling of annoyance with physical sensations: in addition to irritation, her ears ache and she gets an unpleasant feeling when she hears swearing. In the interviews, swearing is the most frequently mentioned annoying aspect and is typically delegitimised by moral evaluation.

(1)⁴ LN1989

- | | | |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 I | Ärsyttääkö sya- sua koskaan (.) muiden ihmisten
(.) kielenkäytössä (.) jotkut sanat tai puhettavat,
(1.2) tai tällaset asiat. (0.5)
[Tuleeko miälee. | Do you ever get annoyed by (.) other people's
(.) language use (.) some words or ways of
speaking (1.2) or things like that? (0.5)
[Does ((anything)) come to mind? |
| 2 LN1989 | [Ärsyttää. Mutta mitkä ni hh h h Kyllä siis kyllä
mua välillä ärsyttää tosi paljo jos joku puhuu
jotenki siis esimerkiks se että.hhh (1.4) et jos jo-
jos kuulee että joku kiroilee tosi paljon niin kyllä
se silti niinku särkee (.) korvaan jotenki niinku i-
tuntuu inhottavalta | [(It) does annoy. But what ((are they)) hh h h h
Yes, I sometimes get really annoyed if someone
talks like, for example, the fact that.hhh (1.4)
that if ((you)) hear someone swearing a lot so
yes it still hurts (.) in the ear somehow like d-
feels disgusting |

In this dataset, different aspects of language cause different levels of reactions. Example 2 from Discussion 1 illustrates well what most of this thread is like: messages list examples of annoying words and phrases without explaining them in detail.

(2)⁵ Discussion 1

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15 | Itseä ärsyttää jokseenkin sanat: teini, ruma,
seksikäs, murkkuikä, yömyssy
Myös se kun homo-sanaa käytetään
epäloogisissa lauseissa ja nimityksissä | Words that somewhat annoy me: 'teenager', 'ugly', 'sexy',
'puberty' ((a colloquial word)), 'nightcap'
Also when the word <i>homo</i> ('gay') is used in illogical
phrases and denominations |
| 16 | MONTAKIN ERITOTEN •TÄLLÄNEN• •NS•
PASKA SUOMI ÄRSYTTÄÄ | MANY PEOPLE ARE ANNOYED BY •THIS KIND• OF •SO-
CALLED• SHITTY FINNISH |
| 17 | •Sä•-passiivin käyttö saa •mut• raivon par-
taalle. Kun •sä• •meet• ja •näät•... | The use of the passive 'you' makes •me• furious. 'When
•you• •go• and •see•... |

The words listed in message 15 of example 2 are common everyday colloquialisms, which are not usually mentioned in the lists of 'annoying' words. The degree of annoyance for them is, in the writer's opinion, only 'somewhat annoying'. Only in the case of the word *homo* 'gay' do they give a reason other than an emotional reaction. I address the appeal to logic in the next subsection. Message 16, in contrast, shows the difficulty of interpreting online discussions: it is probably intended to be an example of annoying language (the message refers to itself as 'shitty Finnish'), but the negative assessment may be directed at faltering spelling, the use of capital letters or word choice. Message 16, on the other hand, relies on the description of an emotional reaction stronger than annoyance. The Finnish generic *you*, which is a rather typical source of irritation (Joronen 2007, 45), drives the writer 'to the brink of rage'.

The examples in this section illustrate how describing language as annoying is a well-established way of talking about it, and in both interviews and online discussions, appealing to an emotional reaction is usually accepted as a sufficient strategy for delegitimising both phenomena that are often perceived as annoying and those that are rarely disliked. Other participants in online discussions or interviewers rarely ask follow-up questions regarding why a phenomenon is annoying, considering the feeling to be a sufficient justification. The examples presented above also show that different aspects of language that discussions seek to delegitimise evoke different strengths and qualities of emotion.

⁴ Conversation transcription symbols are explained in Appendix 1.

⁵ In translations of the examples, I mark the words treated as linguistic material in italics, even though the original text does not use it, if a mere translation is not sufficient to understand the message. Online texts include nonstandard orthography, which I mark with dot symbols (as •deviation•) both in the original text and in the translation.

5.2 Rationalisation

Delegitimation by rationalisation involves invoking either the instrumental value of language or the common knowledge of what is reasonable and logical. An example of rationalisation in the data has already been shown above in example 2, where the writer of message 15 delegitimises the use of the word *homo* ‘gay’ as a term of abuse because they consider it illogical. This falls into theoretical rationalisation, as it claims that words should have a logical, unvaried meaning.

Instrumental rationalisation refers to the goals and effects that certain linguistic practices have as reasons for delegitimising them. Loanwords or strong dialects annoy the discourse participants because they are sometimes difficult to understand, and filler words distract the listener from the main point. In the data, the strategy of instrumental rationalisation is typically associated with demanding clarity of the message. Successful communication is, then, seen as the most essential function of language.

In example 3, the interviewee, who is a 24-year-old woman, first answers the question about annoying features that loanwords taken directly from English, and a spoken variety, the slang of Helsinki region ‘grate on her ear’. This variety of language is commonly given a negative stigma (Paunonen 2000, 42–4). As a further justification for the annoying nature of slang, N1993 mentions that it is difficult to understand. The example shows how different strategies are combined, as already done in example 2.

(3) N1993

1 I	No (.) onko muiden kielenkäytössä (.) piirteitä tai sanoja jotka ärsyttää sinua	Well (.) are there any features or words in other people’s language (.) that annoy you?
2 N1993	(2.5) No (.) ei nyt niin <hirveesti> että onhan sielä aina >jotain semmosia mitkä vähän< särähtää korvaan mutta (.) etenki ne englanti-lainat suoraan. (.) Ja (.) esimerkiks nää jotkut öh niin sanottu <stadin slangi> (.) niin (.) se- se särähtää korvaan k- Ja sit se on viel just semmone et ku ei sitä ehk niin hyvin <ymmärräkkään> niin mikä siinä voi sitten häiritä (.) etenki	(2.5) Well (.) not so <terribly much> but there are always >some things that are a bit< grating to the ear but (.) especially the direct English loans. (.) And (.) for example these some erm the so-called <Stadi ((the slang name for Helsinki)) slang> (.) so (.) it- it grates ((my)) ear- And then it is just like that it is not so well <understood> what can disturb in it then (.) especially

In the current data, online Discussion 2, in particular, deals with grammatical errors. A typical strategy for delegitimising incorrect grammar is theoretical rationalisation, which appeals to logical reasoning or to ‘the ways things are’. Grammar is seen as a system that should be logical and symmetrical, even though natural languages always contain certain irregularity. This reflects the standard ideology aiming at reducing language variation (Milroy 2001, Walsh 2021). The admiration of a logical system was evident in the development of the Finnish written language in the nineteenth century: some language developers at the time proposed forms that did not appear in the vernacular to make the paradigms systematic (Nordlund 2004, 300).

Before example 4, the participants of Discussion 2 debated the correct inflection of the proper name *Thaimaa* (‘Thailand’). The non-standard illative form *Thaimaaseen* (resulting from the analogy to other names, such as the lake *Saimaa*) is relatively widely used instead of the correct form *Thaimaahan* (Maamies 1996), which annoys some people (Joronen 2007, 42). Message 32 introduces another name into the debate. *Sörnäinen* refers to a district of Helsinki; its illative form in standard Finnish is *Sörnäisiin*, which, as the writer of message 32 indicates, appears as a plural form. Many Finnish place names ending in *-nen* have such inflections (Salonen 2009). The writer legitimises the more logical singular form *Sörnäiseen* by appealing to the fact that there is only one district with this name.

(4) Discussion 2

31	•Mä• luulen että suurin osa ei vaan tajua sen lop- puosan olevan ihan suomenkielinen maa-sana, kun alkuosa on niin eksoottisen kuuloisen. Toisaalta en	•I• think most people just don’t realise that the ending is the word <i>maa</i> ‘land’ in Finnish, because the first part sounds so exotic
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- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ole kuullut Swasimaata taivutettavan samalla tavoin... että tiedä siitä sitten | On the other hand, I haven't heard <i>Swasimaa</i> 'Swaziland' pronounced the same way... so I don't know |
| 32 Mutta minä kyllä menen •Sörnäiseen• enkä Sörnäisiin. Ainakin omasta mielestäni. Miksi yksi paikka muuttuu useammaksi paikaksi, kun joku menee sinne? Mihin kohtaan kakkos-Sörnäinen sijoittuu Helsingin kartalla jonkun astuessa ykkös-Sörnäisen rajan sisäpuolelle, vai riippuuko tämä havaitusjasta, vai onko niitä peräti useampi kuin kaksi? “•Thaimaaseen•” on outo vain kielen sisäisten tottumusten viitekehyksessä, mutta tämä on outo ihan peruslogiikan kannalta | But I'm going to • <i>Sörnäiseen</i> • 'to Sörnäinen' and not <i>Sörnäisiin</i> 'to Sörnäinen'. At least in my opinion. Why does one place become several places when someone goes there? Where on the map of Helsinki does the second Sörnäinen lie when someone steps inside the boundary of the first Sörnäinen, or does it depend on the observer, or is there more than two? “• <i>Thaimaaseen</i> •” 'to Thailand' is only odd in the context of linguistic habits, but this is odd in terms of basic logic |
| 33 Sanoisin että voi johtua tuosta Sörnä-i-nen nimestä, siis koska tuo ii on tuossa niin on helpompaa laittaa ii myös taivutettuun muotoon, jolloin se muuttuu monikoksi. Jos paikan nimi olisi •Sörnänen•, sekaannusta ei luultavasti syntyisi | I'd say it might be because of that <i>Sörnä-i-nen</i> name, so since that <i>ii</i> is there it's easier to put <i>ii</i> in the inflected form as well, making it plural. If the name of the place was • <i>Sörnänen</i> •, the confusion would probably not arise |

In this subsection, I have shown that the strategy of rationalisation in the data delegitimises both whole language varieties (e.g. by appealing to their obscurity) and the meanings and inflections of individual words. Rationalisation is generally used to support moral delegitimation, but illogicality or instrumental weakness can also be a reason in itself to delegitimise a feature of the language, as if for the common good.

5.3 Authority

As mentioned, the data contain instances where the delegitimation of a linguistic feature is justified by referring to impersonal authority, tradition, or conformity. A typical impersonal authority found in both the interviews and online discussions is school education. Language users base their understanding of what constitutes legitimate language use on the norms of language they have learned in school.

As Sherman and Švelch (2015) indicate, the forms perceived as correct do not always correspond to the current recommendations provided by an official institution. This is evident in the present data: in example 5, M1954a, a man in his sixties, refers to the rule about the Finnish construction *tulee tehdyksi* ~ *tulee tehtyä* 'get done'. In this construction, the Finnish Language Office preferred the variant in which the translative case is used (*tehdyksi*) until 1973, but then the variant with the partitive case (*tulee tehtyä*) was accepted in standard Finnish (Kielitoimiston ohjepankki: Passiivimaisia rakenteita: *tuli tehtyä* ~ *tehdyksi*).

(5) M1954a

- | | | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 I | No oot sä huomannu <u>m</u> uiden kielenkäytössä >semmosia< <u>p</u> iirteitä >tapoja< tai jotain <u>s</u> anoja jotka sua <u>ä</u> rsyttää | Well, have you noticed in <u>o</u> ther people's language >some< features >ways< or some <u>w</u> ords that annoy you? |
| 2 M1954a | Ärsyttää. | Annoy? |
| 3 I | Mm. | Mm. |
| 4 M1954a | Eh. | Noh. |
| 5 I | .hh (0.8) Et ne oli lähinnä tohon (.) ku sä mainitsit tost et kirjallises kieles[ne yhdysnavirheet mut onks et puheessa ei oo mitään semmosia jotka- | .hh (0.8) So they were mainly for that (.) when you mentioned that in the written language.[the hyphenation errors but is there nothing in the speech that- |

6 M1954a	[Nii (.) joo. E-eei mun mielestä ku mä teen ne samat virheet kum muutkin (.)hh rikkoen omia sääntöjäni jotka ovat siis kie- jotka mä oon oppinu koulussa että esimerkiks tää.hh tää tota noin hhh <tulee tehtyä>	[Yeah right. No-o, I think, I make the same mistakes as everyone else (.)hh breaking my own rules that are- that I have learned at school for example this.hh this well erm hhh <‘get done’> ((with partitive))
7 I	Joo.	Yeah.
8 M1954a	Kaikki sanoo näin. <i>Mä sain sen tehtyä. Mä sain sen hankittua mä sain sen maalattua mä sain sen korjattua,</i>	Everyone says like this. <i>Mä sain sen tehtyä. Mä sain sen hankittua mä sain sen maalattua mä sain sen korjattua</i> ‘I got it done. I got it bought I got it painted I got it fixed’ ((forms with partitive))
9 I	Joo.	Yeah
10 M1954a	Kun se pitäis laittaa maalatuksi tehdyksi korjatuksi vertaa <u>valmis</u> valmiiksi	When it should be <i>maalatuksi tehdyksi korjatuksi</i> ((forms with translative case)) compare <i>valmis</i> ((‘complete’ in nominative)) <i>valmiiksi</i> ((in translative))
11 I	Joo	Yeah
12 M1954a	.hh Niin tää- tätähän syntiä tekee kaikki. Uutistenlukijat telkkarissa kaikki kaikkihan tekee minä myös (.) sen et sanoo tulee tehtyä ku pitäis sanoo tulee tehdyksi. Tää on >sem-mone< (.) mun <u>p</u> intymäni joka <u>ä</u> rsyttää mua niin <u>h</u> elkkaristi ku mä kuulen sen - -	So this- this is how everyone sins. The newsreaders in TV everybody does it, I do it too (.) saying <i>tulee tehtyä</i> when you should say <i>tulee tehdyksi</i> . This is like (.) my fixation that annoys me like hell when I hear it - -

In this example, M1954a first gives a negative answer to the interviewer’s question (turn 4). However, the interviewer brings up an issue mentioned by M1954a earlier in the conversation (the hyphenation), in an attempt to activate an answer in the interviewee’s mind. M1954a still denies this, explaining that even he is unable to follow the ideal of good language that he has in mind (‘my own rules that I have learned at school’). As an example of this ideal language, he gives the structure mentioned above. M1954a still considers the partitive form incorrect in this structure because it was viewed as such in his school days, even though the standard has changed. He also refers to the spoken language, although the Finnish standard language is generally only used in writing and denies the authority of conformity (‘everybody does it’) by stating that being widely used does not make the form acceptable. Despite first responding that he is not really annoyed, in turn 12, he admits that the ‘incorrect’ version annoys him ‘like hell’.

Authority is not only referred to when discussing standard language, but questions about legitimate forms of language are also raised considering dialects. In the interview data, some people are annoyed by others that use a regional variety ‘incorrectly’. In example 6, the interviewer asks a question that is followed by a pause of several seconds. The interviewee, M1957, a man about 60 years of age, does not answer right away. The delay prompts the interviewer to provide examples of potentially annoying aspects: she mentions slang and colloquialisms. Even after this, the interviewee thinks for several seconds, begins with a negation (*no ei see* ‘well, not that’), delays, and hesitates. Ultimately, he produces a response (turn 2) stating that he gets annoyed if slang or dialect is used by someone who ‘doesn’t master it’. Hesitation indicates that he finds it difficult to formulate his ideas or that he is unsure about the relevance of the answer.

(6) M1957

1 I	No tota onks <u>m</u> uitten kiälenkäytös jotai sem-mosii sanoi mitkä <u>ä</u> rsyttää (.) sua. (2.9) Vaikka (.) (joku) <slangi?> (0.7) tai puhekiäli. (3.6)	Well, are there any words in <u>o</u> ther people’s language use that annoy (.) you? (2.9) Let’s say (.) some <slang> (0.7) or colloquial variety?
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2 M1957	No ei see- (3.9) Juu. (.) No ehkä se tota mm tämmönen.mh (2.7) ää mm sl ^u ngin tai murteiden käyttö jollei niitä osaa	Well, not that (3.9). Yeah (.) Well perhaps this erm like (2.) erm using slang or dialects if you don't know how
3 I	Mm	Hmm
4 M1957	.hhh h h Eli e- j- jostai syystä haluaa esittää jotaki käyttää tstä [ku ei se (.)	.hh h h I mean you for some reason want to pretend something use it [when it doesn't (.)
5 I	[Mm	[Hmm.
6 M1957	S- se murre ei mee tota (.) >sillai< (.) >kyl se< (.) Vaikkei sitä murretta itekkään- ois niinku viarasta murretta [niin kyl vaikkei sitä itekään tunnen nii.hh	The dialect does not go erm (.) >like that< (.) >it is< (.) Even though you don't – it was an unfamiliar dialect [so even though you don't know it yourself so.hh
7 I	[Mm	[Hmm
8 M1957	Kyl sen huomaa siitä nuotista ja (0.7) ja (.) tämmösestä rytmyksestä et meneekse oikeiv vai ei vai onk se haetaak siiv vaan jotain [tämmöstä että tota	You notice from the tone (0.7) and (.) like the rhythm if it goes right or not or are ((they)) trying to [something like this so erm
9 I	[Joo nii eli tää •Turkkusee• [esimerkiks.	[Yes so it is like this •Turkkusee• ((‘to Turku’)) [for example.
10 M1957	[•Turkkusee•.	[•Turkkusee•.
11 I	Nii	Yes

After the interviewee's explanation, the interviewer produces a kind of candidate understanding (see Antaki 2012) of what she thinks M1957 means by the misuse of dialect. M1957 mentions the non-standard illative form *Turkkusee* ('to Turku'), which is a widespread dialect imitation but not used in actual dialect (Mielikäinen 2005, 105), earlier in the interview when they discussed Finnish dialects. The authority for determining the correctness of a regional variety is probably a representative of the oldest, 'original' and 'purest' dialects possible. This reflects the traditions of Finnish dialect research (Aarikka 2023, 155–6, 440–2).

The authority of tradition and impersonal authority are not always easily distinguishable in the data, where language change is often seen as something to be resisted. Although both dialects and official standards change, language users tend to see older forms as better. Authority of tradition also invokes the idea of established practices of how language should be used in a specific context, for example, in a workplace. Language users, both in interviews and on the discussion board, agree that negatively perceived linguistic phenomena, such as swearing, are more problematic at work than during leisure time. In example 7, the writer of message 13 is annoyed by the particle *elikkä* 'so' used by a shop assistant. Message 14 verbalises the rule of situational variation: 'you should talk properly at the checkout, no matter what you do between friends'.

(7) Discussion 2

13	Hieman •nypii•, kun kauan kassa •sanooo• laskun loppusummaksi “elikkä siis kaksitoista •kuusimymmentä•”. Viimeksi Porissa Lidlissä eilen	It •grates• on me when a cashier •tells• the sum <i>elikkä siis kaksitoista •kuusimymmentä•</i> ((‘so then twelve •sixty•’)). Last time in Pori in Lidl yesterday
14	Jos on virkatehtävissä pitäisi puhua oikein kaupan kassallakin, tehköt kavereiden kesken mitä tahansa	If you're on duty, you should talk properly at the checkout, no matter what you do between friends
15	Välimerkkien väärä •käyttö•, tai niiden puute, isojen alkukirjainten käyttö, •hulimaton Suomen Kieli• ja se kun HUUDETAAN kännykkään julkisella paikalla!	The incorrect •use• of punctuation marks, or lack of them, the use of capital letters, •sloppy Finnish Language• and when people SHOUT into their mobile phones in public!
16	•hulimaton Suomen Kieli•? Minua ärsyttää huolimaton suomen kieli.	•Sloppy Finnish Language•? I am annoyed by sloppy Finnish language

Example 7 shows also how, in online discussions, some participants intend to restrict the participation of others by delegitimising language use. Message 15 is written with several orthographic errors, which is ironic because the writer says that they are annoyed by the sloppiness in language and the incorrect use of capital letters, simultaneously revealing the same aspects in their own writing. In message 16, another participant corrects the orthography. If a writer makes typos in their own post, their opinion will be invalidated on the grounds that they cannot demonstrate their knowledge of standard language rules. This is not surprising, since good control of linguistic norms and orthography is connected to morals, intelligence, and higher education (Niedzielski and Preston 2010, 224). This kind of practices may limit the participation of L2 speakers or people with low education levels in the discussion.

Anonymous public online forums, such as the discussions examined here, have a wide audience of potential readers, and the participants may aim to entertain this audience (Virtanen and Kääntä 2018, 152, see also Marwick and Boyd 2011). Offensive language is the downside of online anonymity and freedom of expression (Kim and Herring 2018), and the so-called ‘trolling’ – which is deceptive and aggressive behaviour intending to provoke other online users – has become an inescapable part of online communication (Ortiz 2020). Therefore, it is occasionally difficult to tell how seriously the participants in these discussions are taking the debate and how reliable the information they provide is. Some messages might be deliberately written carelessly to create an ironic impression, with an intention to provoke or entertain others. Considering message 15 of example 7, shown above, the non-ironic nature of the message is supported by the impression that the same participant returns later in the thread by blaming their malfunctioning keyboard for typos.

5.4 Narratives

Van Leeuwen’s fourth (de)legitimising strategy, mythopoesis, refers to storytelling; this seems to be quite infrequent in discussions on annoying linguistic phenomena. Even though the interviews were designed to encourage the interviewees to tell stories about their linguistic experiences (Hippi et al. 2020, 24), the question about annoying features does not often prompt narratives as responses. Instead, the interviewees describe their perceptions on a general level. However, a few instances in which a participant shares an incident of unsuccessful language used as a cautionary tale are found both in the interviews and in the online discussions.

In example 8, the interviewee, a woman about 30 years of age, answers that she is annoyed by swearing and filler words in general. Then, she gives an illustrative description of a situation in which she is sitting on a train, hears other people talking, and starts counting the number of fillers. N1988 brings the story to life with a direct quote on her own thoughts (turn 8).

(8) N1988

1 I	Jos mietit yleisesti (.) n- nyt muiden ihmisten kielenkäyttöä (.) ni onks jotain sanoja tai piirteitä (.) jotka ärsyttää sua. ihan noin niinku (.) muutev vaa ärsyttää sua	If you think about other people’s language in general (.) whether there are any words or features (.) that annoy you? Just like that (.) annoy you?
2 N1988	Kiroilu	Swearing
3 I	Joo	Yeah
4 N1988	↑Kiroilu (.) ja sit < täytesanat>.	Swearing (.) and then <filler words>.
5 I	Okei.	Okay.
6 N1988	>Täytesanat< et sitä (0.8) varsinki jos niinku (0.6).hh menee kuuntelee jotain luen- luentoja tai muuten vaa (.) kuuntelee (0.8) vaik- jostai- jossai junassa ku (.) joku puhuu jollekki toiselle ni täytesanat on kans semmosii jot- jot- jotk- jotka joskus alkaa ärsyttää?	>Fillers< so that (0.8) especially if ((you)) are (0.6) listening to some lectures or just listen to (0.8) on some train when (.) someone is talking to someone else so filler words are also something that sometimes start to annoy

7 I	Joo.	Yeah.
8 N1988	Ni sit mä alan lu- laskemaa että, (.) No nii sielt tuli jo (.) kolmattakymmettä kertaa <että> (.) tai <joo> tai <niin>	Then I start counting like (.) Well there was already (.) thirty times <että> (('that')) or <joo> (('yeah')) or <niin> (('so'))
9 I	Nii just	That's right
10 N1988	Et silleen	That's all

Storytelling is not common in online discussions either, but a few examples were found. In example 7, the writer of message 13 links their feelings of annoyance to the time and place of 'in Pori in Lidl yesterday'. A longer and more detailed narrative is found later in the same thread (Discussion 2). There, a participant is annoyed by the use of the distal demonstrative pronoun to refer to themselves. Using this pronoun to refer to someone present in the situation is generally considered somewhat impolite by Finnish speakers (Priiki 2015, 44–6). The writer uses the story as an example of rude language.

(9) Discussion 2

56	Tai no yhden asian keksin: tøykeys. Taannoin olin esimerkiksi yhdessä tilanteessa, missä oli paljon minulle tuntemattomia ja joku keksi kailottaa kovaan ääneen kaverilleen, että: "Hei, kuka TOI on?!" Minulle tyyppi oli täysin tuntematon, mutta jotenkin oli silti kiusallista, että joku kuuluvaan ääneen - ja varmasti siten että minäkin kuulin - spekuloi kaverilleen, että kuka minä olisin, että "hei kuka toi?" ... Hoh hoijaa. Teki mieli huutaa sille vielä lujempaa ja oikein rääkäistä, että: "No tule kysymään, mutta älä huutele siinä mun korvien vieressä!". - -	Well, I can think of one thing: rudeness. For example, the other day I was in a situation where there were a lot of strangers and someone came up with the idea of shouting loudly to his friend, "Hey, who's THAT?!" To me, the guy was a complete stranger, but somehow it was still embarrassing that someone loudly - and certainly so that I could hear - speculated to his friend that who was I, that "hey who's that?" ... Hoo hoo. I felt like shouting even louder and telling him, "Well, come and ask, but don't shout next to my ears!"
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In general, it is rude to talk about strangers so loudly that they can hear. In the discussion that follows message 56 in Discussion 2, it is clear that the writer draws attention to the word *toi* 'that' in particular. For example, after the story, they invoke common knowledge and tradition by writing, 'But of course, all educated people know anyway that people are not spoken of in the style *toi*'.

Narratives are, therefore, a rare delegitimation strategy in this dataset, but they can be used as cautionary examples to illustrate what kind of language use is meant and what consequences it may cause.

5.5 Counter-reactions to verbal hygiene

All examples presented above show strategies of delegitimising rather than legitimising language use; that is, people use them to justify disapproval. As I have already mentioned, especially in online discussion 2, there is a genuine debate, though, where some participants also defend the linguistic features disapproved of by others. It can be seen in this discussion that rather than seeking consensus by explaining their arguments in an understandable manner, many messages are intended to pick on and verbally beat the other participants (about online discussion culture and 'trolling', e.g. Kim and Herring 2018, Ortiz 2020). This kind of behaviour typical of anonymous online interactions is questioned on a meta-level. A comment in the thread explicitly directs the participants to focus on answering the question rather than mocking others: "Instead of giving your assessment, why don't you tell us what you think about the original issue, but comment negatively on the opinion of others?" (Discussion 2, message 69).

Discussion 2 contains many counter-reactions to annoyance expressed by others. In Discussion 1, though, only one message explicitly condemns the debate; this is presented as example 10. Message 12 in example 10 addresses other participants in the debate, questioning the annoying nature of the words listed in previous

messages and stating that most of them are part of ‘normal’ language use, making use of legitimisation by the authority of conformity.

(10) Discussion 1

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | muija, eukko, akka
salijanari
tunnettuus
•ihqu•
daisarit | ‘missus’, ‘old hag’, ‘old crone’
‘bodybuilder’ ((a slang word))
‘awareness’ ((a neologism))
•‘lovely’• ((a slang word))
‘tits’ ((a slang word)) |
| 12 | Kyllä ootte tiukkapipoista porukkaa
Aika moni noista oli ihan normaaleja sanoja.
Miten yleensäkin pystytte elämään? | Yes, you are a tight-lipped bunch
Quite a few of those were just normal words. How do you manage to live in general? |
| 13 | Aikuisten oikeesti
Vajakki | ((Lit.)) ‘really for grown-ups’ ((a buzz phrase))
‘Retarded’ ((a slang word)) |

Message 12 does not elicit explicit reactions and the discussion continues with listings, similar to message 11. However, message 13, following the questioning post, is ambiguous, as it is technically marked as a reply to the previous message. It is possible to interpret the two phrases it contains as an address to the writer of message 12 (meaning ‘Really, retard?’). On the other hand, in message 13, the writer may simply continue listing annoying words by stating that they are annoyed by the expressions *aikuisten oikeesti* and *vajakki*.

The resistance found in the examined Finnish online discussions is contrary to what Heuman (2020, 10) reports from Swedish discussions on the Jodel app. In example 11, counter-arguments are presented by asking rhetorical questions and quoting and echoing others’ messages. The discussion continues with the same theme presented in example 4 (in Section 5.2), the incorrect inflection of the word *Thaimaa* ‘Thailand’ in the illative (about this, see Maamies 1996). This aspect is widely debated in Discussion 2, where the nonstandard inflection form is also defended.

(11) Discussion 2

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 37 | “Se kun ihmiset sanovat menevänsä Thaimaaseen eivätkä Thaimaahan. Jotenkin tuntuu, että jos vaikka omena tippuu puusta niin et sinä sano, että se tippui maaseen vaan maahan.” | When people say they’re going • <i>Thaimaaseen</i> • ((‘to Thailand’)) instead of <i>Thaimaahan</i> . Somehow it appears that if an apple falls from a tree, you don’t say it fell • <i>maaseen</i> •, you say it fell <i>maahan</i> ((‘on the ground’)). ((Quotes the entire message 29.)) |
| | Laittaako kalastaja verkkonsa Saimaaseen vai • <i>Saimaahan</i> •? | Does a fisherman put his net <i>Saimaaseen</i> or • <i>Saimaahan</i> • ((‘in the lake Saimaa’))? |
| 38 | Englanninkielinen vastine Thailand ei sitten anna mitään vinkkiä? | The English equivalent <i>Thailand</i> then gives no clue? |
| 39 | “Se kun ihmiset sanovat menevänsä Thaimaaseen eivätkä Thaimaahan.”
Se kun ihmiset sanovat menevänsä Espooseen eivätkä • <i>Espoohon</i> •
Se kun ihmiset sanovat menevänsä Saimaaseen eivätkä • <i>Saimaahan</i> • | ((Quotes the beginning of message 29))
When people say they’re going to <i>Espooseen</i> instead of • <i>Espoohon</i> • ((‘to the city Espoo’))
When people say they’re going to <i>Saimaaseen</i> instead of • <i>Saimaahan</i> • ((‘to the lake Saimaa’)) |

The difficulty for Finns in inflecting the word *Thaimaa* (‘Thailand’) is that because it is a name, many people do not perceive it as a compound word with the word *maa* ‘land’ at the end. When understood as a simple word, it is inflected by adding the same type of illative ending as other place names ending in a long vowel, such as Lake *Saimaa* and the city of *Espoo*, which are mentioned as analogies in example 11. The writer who raised the issue in Discussion 2 mentions the inflection of the word *maa* (‘land’) in their post; this is quoted in the beginning of message 37. Those who defend the nonstandard inflection refer to the analogy of other

names (e.g. *Saimaaseen* and *Espooseen*). The rhetorical question presented in message 37 is a response to message 29, which is evident from the quote given in the message. The question is not answered, but prompts a counterargument in the form of another rhetoric question (message 38). The next message again quotes the beginning of the message that initiates the discussion regarding the form *Thaimaaseen* and echoes the same structure, providing analogies to defend the non-standard inflection.

In interviews, the interviewer's role is not to assume a position on whether they agree or disagree with the interviewee, and in these data, the interviewers stick to this fact. However, in a few interviews, the interviewees themselves offer counter-arguments to their experience of irritation and reflect on different aspects of the phenomena. In example 12, N1957b – a woman about 60 years of age – begins a long explanation after her negative answer.

(12) N1957b

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 I | No onko (1.0) mhh sun mielestä muiden kielenkäytössä sellasia.hh <u>asioita</u> .h mitkä ärsyttää sua (että), | Well, are there (1.0) umh do you think there are in the language use of others such.hh things.h that annoy you (that)? |
| 2 N1957b | (1.5) ↑Ei > oikeistan kosk(h)a must < ihmiset saa käyttää kieltä niin ku [ne haluaa sehän om mein < kaikkien> | (1.5) ↑Not >really bec(h)ause I think< people are free to use the language [as they wish it belongs to <all of us> |
| 3 I | [.hhh | [.hhh |
| 4 I | >Joo< | >Yes< |
| 5 N1957b | Miten me voidaan sanoa että eii. toki en tykkää rumasta <kielenkäytöstä > se on ainoo enkä vihapuheesta..hh Mut sehä on se kiälen sisältö siinä vihapuheessa..hhh | How could we say no? Of course, I don't like ugly < language use > it's the only one and hate speech..hh But that's the content of the language in the hate speech..hhh |
| 6 I | M- mitä sä tarkoitat sillä <u>rumalla</u> kielenkäytöllä. | W- what do you mean by that <u>ugly</u> language? |
| 7 N1957b | Esimeks kiroiluua. En tykkää siitä ja ja loukkaavasta (.) kiälenkäytöstä mihin ki- kiroilu voi myös liittyä..hh Niim mut et toki kyllä mä-mäkin kiroilen kun s- nin ku sanoin se p- pruma sana tuli englanniks mutta.hh tarpeen tullen. Mut et ei semmost jokapäivästä ninkun nin kun.hh et koko aika kiroaa nim m- mut et eihän yleensä aikuiset tee sitä että se on <u>nuarten</u> (.) tapa (1.3) < protestoida > ympär(h)öiv(h)ää m(h) aailmaa hh h.hh ja yhteisk(h)unt(h)aa. h h | For example swearing. I don't like it and the abusive (.) language that s- swearing can also be associated with..hh So but surely I- I swear too when- like I said that ugly word came in English but.hh when necessary. But not every day like.hh so that you would swear all the time, b- but that's not usually <u>done</u> by adults so it is a <u>young</u> people (.) habit (1.3) to <protest> against the w(h)orld and hh h.hh society ar(h)ound ((them)) h h |
| 8 I | hh.hh Joo? | hh.hh Yes? |

First, she explains that the perceived 'ugliness' is related to the content of talk and not to the linguistic forms themselves. In contrast, she understands the reasons why young people swear, even if she does not like it. Similarly to M1954a (in example 5 in Section 5.2), she admits that the annoying phenomenon belongs to her own language, appealing to the authority of conformity. She also understands swearing as having a function among young people, which legitimises it by instrumental rationalisation. Her interpretation of the reasons for young people swearing is marked with laughter, which marks the subject as a somewhat extraordinary and contradictory one (see Haakana 2001).

Both the online discussions and the interview data show counter-reactions to verbal hygiene practices. Online, it is a genuine debate with disagreements, while in interviews, people reflect on different aspects of the phenomenon that annoys them and show an understanding of its causes and functions. Different strategies are used to legitimise phenomena from those used to delegitimise them: in their counter-arguments, people appeal to the authority of conformity or to instrumental rationalisation.

6 Constructing the perception of ‘annoying’ in interaction

In this section, I highlight some phenomena regarding the interaction between the participants in the data examined, focusing on how other participants influence what is mentioned as annoying and how perceptions are justified. As mentioned, the interviewers were allowed to reformulate the questions. Occasionally, rephrasing or follow-up questions they present can be leading. These reveal what the interviewers assume the answer is going to be – they assume that the interviewee would perceive some linguistic features as annoying and what sort of phenomena these could be. In addition, although the question is formulated as polar in the interview frame, the interviewers do not necessarily accept a negative answer without explanation but ask follow-up questions with suggestions.

In example 5 (in Section 5.3), after a negative answer, the interviewer focuses the question on speech, as they had previously discussed errors in written language earlier in the interview. The formulation affects the answer: the interviewee refers to speech as an action (‘everybody says like this’), even though he is describing a rule aimed mainly for written language. In addition, in example 6 (in Section 5.3), the interviewer suggests two phenomena (‘Lets say some slang or colloquial variety’) as possible sources of irritation, when the interviewee does not provide an answer to the question right away. It is typical in a conversation that not getting a response leads the speaker to modify their turn (Pomerantz 1985). In both examples, the interviewees take up suggestions. Thus, it becomes valid to ask whether these answers would have occurred to them without the interviewers’ modifications of the question.

In the data, as many as 14 interviewers rephrased the structured interview question to refer to the spoken language. In these cases, the responses mention linguistic aspects that occur both in spoken and written interaction. This affects the results obtained from the interviews, explaining, at least partly, why swearing and dialect use are perceived as annoying in the interviews more often than in online discussions (Figure 1 in Section 4). The aspects restricted to written language, such as spelling mistakes or writing compound words apart, are only given as a response to the examined question in interviews in which the interviewer does not focus on the spoken language. In online discussions, too, the opening message of Discussion 2 frames the question in the spoken language. Nevertheless, the answers also deal with aspects specific to written language. In online discussions, the link between the question and its responses is weaker, and some people participating in the discussion may not even have read the opening message.

In contrast, a lively debate generates different arguments and examples, which help understand what is really irritating about a certain mentioned phenomenon and what the perception tells about nonlinguists’ language regards. In example 13, the writer raises three linguistic phenomena, stating that ‘of course,’ they are annoyed by adding the letter ‘n’ to the word *enää* (‘still’) and using the pronoun form *ketä* in a nonstandard way as a nominative form instead of *kuka* (‘who’). These are typical sources of irritation originating from dialects (see Section 4 in this article, Koistinen 2018, 21, 25, Joronen 2007, 42).

(13) Discussion 2

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 19 | Sitten tietysti ärsyttävät: •enään•, ketättely ja kiel-
tosanan poisjättäminen kieltolauseesta | Then, of course, ((there are these things that))
annoy ((me)): •enään•, using <i>ketä</i> and the omission
of the negation verb |
| 20 | “Sitten tietysti ärsyttävät: enään, ketättely ja kiel-
tosanan poisjättäminen kieltolauseesta.”
“Ketättely” ei minua turkulaisena häiritse ollen-
kaan, enemmän häiritsee murteesta valittajat.
Kieltosanan poisjätto taas voi aiheuttaa sekaan-
nusta, joten se on ei-suositeltavaa. Mutta •ENÄÄN•
saa minut lähes raivon partaalle!!!!!!****%&
□##AAARRRGH | ((Quote of the end paragraph of message 19.))

Since I am from Turku, using <i>ketä</i> doesn’t bother
me at all; it’s the people complaining about the
dialect that bother me more. The omission of the
negation word, in turn, can cause confusion, so it
is not recommended. But •ENÄÄN• makes me
almost furious!!!!!!****%&□##AAARRRGH |
| 21 | Ja olla-verbin pois jättäminen
Ketättely on sieltä ja syvältä. Kieltosanan pois
jättäminen voi olla tyylikeinona hyvä eikä | The omission of the verb <i>olla</i> ((‘to be’))
Using <i>ketä</i> sucks. Omitting the negation verb can
be good as a stylistic device and does not |

välttämättä aiheuta tulkintaongelmia: “•Täällä ketään ole.” Tuossa “ketä” on oikeassa käytössä. Kukaan (ei “ketään”) ei täysissä tolkuissaan sanoisi “Täällä ei kukaan ole.” kun ajatuksena on, että paikassa ei ole sillä hetkellä yhtään ihmistä

necessarily cause problems of interpretation: •*Täällä ketään ole* (‘There is no one here’; the verb form *ei* missing). In that one, *ketä* is the correct usage. No one (not *ketään*) in their full senses would say *Täällä ei kukaan ole* (‘There is no one here’ with an atypical word order), when the idea is that there are no people in the place at that moment

Message 20 is a response that defends the pronoun *ketä* ‘who’ as belonging to certain dialects. This is true, as the use of the partitive form as a nominative is originally a dialectal feature that has spread to slang and colloquial speech (Paunonen 2008, 38). The omission of the negative is characterised by this writer as ‘not recommendable’ rather than annoying. The writer of message 20 agrees with the previous writer only about the word *enään*, which provokes in them an even stronger emotional reaction, bringing them ‘to the brink of rage’. Message 21, again, clarifies that the word *ketä* is not delegitimised as such but when it is used in a clausal function that is perceived as incorrect, giving examples of its use. A debate on a discussion board can, therefore, provide a more in-depth understanding of the rationale behind an annoying phenomenon than interview questions.

In an interview situation, the interviewer decides when a relevant answer has been given to a question (Ten Have 2004). The interviewer is expected to react to the answers in some manner or another (*ibid.*). In Finnish, they usually acknowledge the response by saying *joo* (‘yes’). They could ask follow-up questions to get more in-depth information, but in these data, they usually do not. This is probably because the list of questions is long, and the interviewers are under pressure to finish it. They may not consider the question of annoying language to be among the most important ones. If the same question were presented in a group interview, other participants might challenge the perceptions expressed so that more arguments were put forward.

7 Discussion and conclusions

In this article, I have examined a form of verbal hygiene practised by Finnish language users, delegitimising the use of certain words and phrases by perceiving them as ‘annoying’. I have compared two types of data to demonstrate how context-dependent the phenomenon of this kind of verbal hygiene is. As already indicated in a previous study of the language biography interview data (Priiki 2020), numerous interviewees with different social backgrounds were annoyed by swearing and by language that they considered inappropriate in some manner or another. However, in the discussion on the annoying aspects of the Finnish language in the media, it is the trendy expressions, loanwords, and certain repeated colloquialisms and typical orthographic errors that receive most attention. Similar aspects are common sources of irritation in other languages as well (e.g. Andersson and Trudgill 1990, Battistella 2005).

In this article, I was particularly interested in the reasons for perceiving certain phenomena as annoying. The four main categories of (de)legitimation strategies introduced by van Leeuwen (2008, 105–23) – that is authorities, moral evaluation, rationalisation, and narratives – were found in the data but their frequency of use varied considerably. In all parts of the data, people appealed to a subjective sense of irritation, which falls in the category of moral evaluation as a delegitimation strategy. It is perhaps a little surprising that so few other justifications for perceiving something as annoying were provided in the language biography interviews, as the aim of the interviews was to get people to reflect broadly on the different aspects of language, to produce also narratives, and, thus, to obtain insights into their language ideologies. One reason is probably the low number of follow-up questions: very few of interviewers ask ‘why’ after the interviewee answers the question regarding annoying linguistic aspects. Another reason is that the most common aspect mentioned in the interviews as annoying was swearing, which is typically judged on aesthetic grounds. On the other hand, online debaters either do not usually ask for arguments, but present counter-arguments if they do not think a delegitimation strategy is sufficient. This results in a wider diversity of strategies.

The two examined online discussions differ greatly in terms of what topics they cover and how they discuss them. Discussion 2 is more argumentative, which causes participants having to justify their opinions in a more varied manner. The strategy of referring to authority of conformity, which in this case implied that an expression should not be judged as 'annoying' because it is widely used and, thus, rather 'normal', is used in arguments that challenge the views of another participant. Compared to previous research on, for example, Swedish online interactions (Heuman 2020), the data studied here show a stronger counter-discourse. In interviews and online discussions, delegitimised aspects are also defended and the entire metadiscourse on 'annoying language' is criticised. This kind of counter-discourse is particularly strong in Discussion 2, in which numerous commonly used expressions are considered annoying; this generates a backlash. Discussion 1, in turn, mainly consists of lists of buzzwords. The perception of annoyance is shared between the participants and does not provoke the same kind of counter-discourse. In online discussions, people give examples of 'correct' and 'incorrect' uses as well as analogies with which they legitimise other word forms. In the interviews, in turn, examples do not come to mind among the interviewees; they describe more general aspects. In this sense, the different sets of data complement each other.

Pointing out the behaviour of the interviewers could be seen as a criticism of the language biography interview data used, because although the interviewers were trained during the project course, they were still inexperienced students conducting their first interviews. They produced quite a lot of variation in the data which makes it difficult to draw reliable quantitative conclusions from the data. The analysis of the interview interaction reveals that even small reformulations and suggestions from an interviewer can lead to responses. Interviewers also did not always utilise follow-up questions when they could have elicited more justifications for the perception of annoyance. This sort of lack of flexibility is typical among inexperienced interviewers (Wengraf 2001, 23). The findings confirm the importance of videotaping the interviews and utilising approaches from interactional linguistics to examine them (van der Zouwen 2002, 26).

The discussion forum data were created without the influence of the researcher and are, therefore, free from the shortcomings of the interview standardisation described earlier. The weakness of online data is that no background information is available regarding the anonymous participants. Since provocativeness (trolling) is common online, the authenticity of the perceptions expressed in online discussions can be questioned. A few participants may express extreme opinions only to get others to react to them. The analysed messages are short and cryptic and make use of jokes and puns, thereby making the arguments and reasoning behind the claims harder to reach. According to Harju (2018, 60–1), it was evident that for the users of the examined Suomi24.fi forum, it is important to have fun and be verbally witty.

Interviews are a traditional way of collecting data about language attitudes with direct questions. Online datasets have been mostly used just to collect implicit attitudes, but in the data examined here, nonlinguists ask each other questions about annoying language use. Another direct method of collecting layman's perceptions of language use is written survey studies, which may be considered a less interactive means of responding to similar questions that were presented in the two types of data examined here. Written surveys can provide metadata of the respondent's social background and avoid problems caused by the interviewer's behaviour. When setting up questions, it is also worth focusing on asking for reasons, as people often do not say why and on what grounds a phenomenon in the language annoys them without motivation. Counter-discourses on verbal hygiene are evident in the online debate, which tends to be argumentative, but some interviewees are also able to reflect on them. Examining justifications and delegitimation strategies provides deeper insights into how verbal hygiene is practised and helps to see the links between the disapproval of a particular linguistic feature and the underlying linguistic ideologies.

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Data

Interviews from the project One hundred Finnish linguistic life stories. The data is housed at the University of Helsinki Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian studies and will also be stored at the Language Bank of Finland.

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Appendix 1

Transcription symbols

.	lowering intonation
,	level intonation
?	rising intonation
↑	a word uttered with a higher pitch than the context
.hh	inhale
h h h	laughter
(.)	a short pause of under 0.5 s
(1.6)	a pause with its length
<u>word</u>	a word uttered with emphasis
(word)	a word uttered in a whisper
[word	a part of speech uttered overlapping the other participant's turn
<word>	a part of speech uttered slower than the context
>word<	a part of speech uttered faster than the context
•word•	a non-standard or incorrect form
((word))	a remark or clarification added by the author
- -	turn cut off or words omitted