Academic and lay researchers' discussions in a Citizen Sociolinguistic project – How is linguistic knowledge handled and challenged

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Societal awareness of linguistic variation and change (LANGAWARE 2023-25)

**https://research.tuni.fi/arkisuomet/**

In this presentation

- A brief overview of the co-research design of the Arkisuomet (Langaware) project
    - Zoom and face-to-face contexts
- How do co-researchers (high schoolers) respond to the input provided by the academic researchers in Zoom break out rooms?
    - Focus on language theories: dynamic vs. ideal language
    - Co-construction of the conversation and views on linguistic theories

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Aims of the project

➤ Perceptual **inclusive** approach to the study of linguistic variation and change

➤ Contributing to scientific & societal development (language ideological structures)

➤ How do the L1 & L2 Finnish speakers make sense of variation of Finnish in their everyday life-worlds?

➤ Stretching from Folk linguistics to **Citizen Sociolinguistics** (Svendsen & Goodchild 2023; Purschke 2021)

Linguists

Non-linguists

Working for understanding

Exploratory co-research
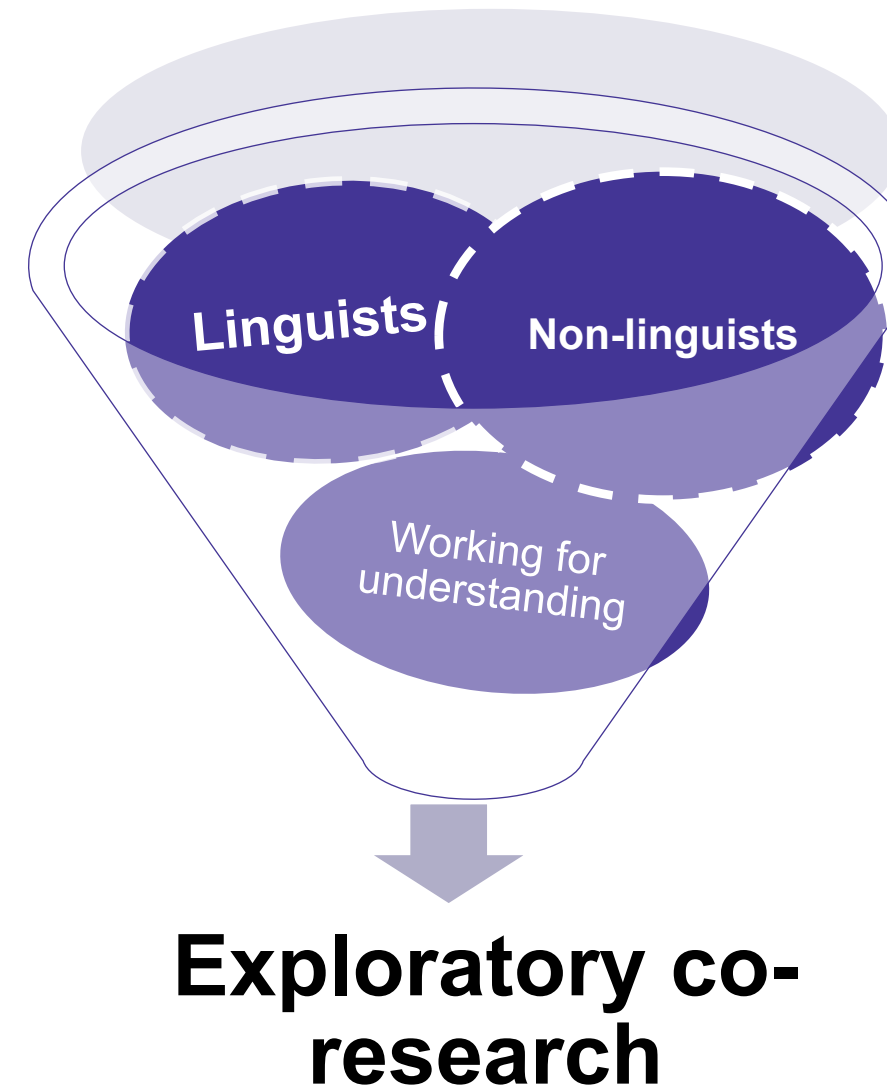
Addressing the holistic system of 'Language regard'
(Preston 2010, 2011, 2013; see also Woolard and Schieffelin 1994; Irvine 1989)

Tampereen yliopisto
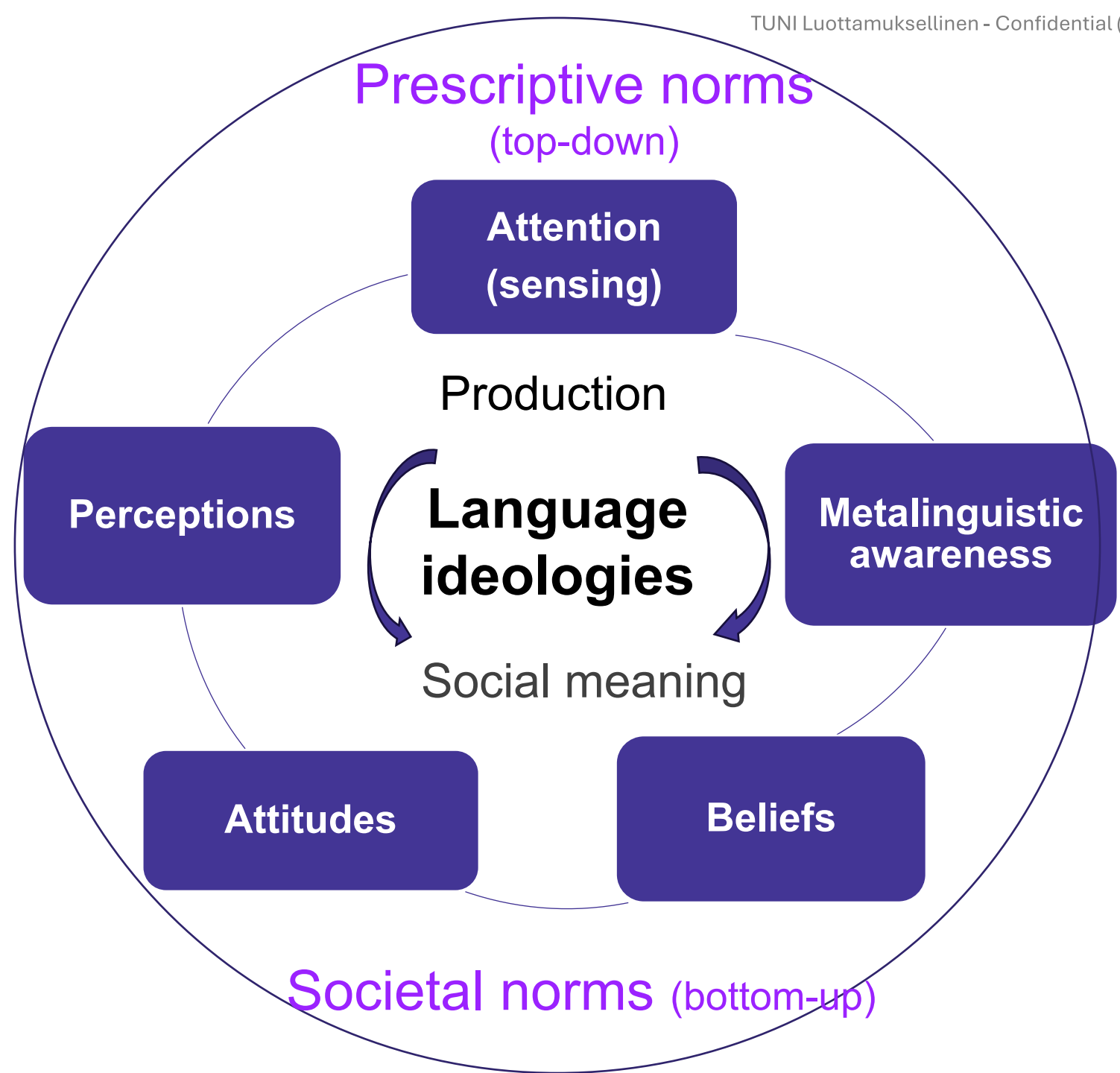
Co-research in innovative learning environments
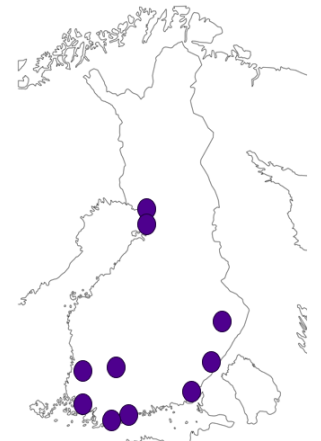
Our focus today

Adult Education Center course:
Co-researching language experiences

Pilot study & Workshop

- **Input:** research knowledge
- Discussions
- Encouraging reflections (oral and written)
- Building on choices of co-researchers

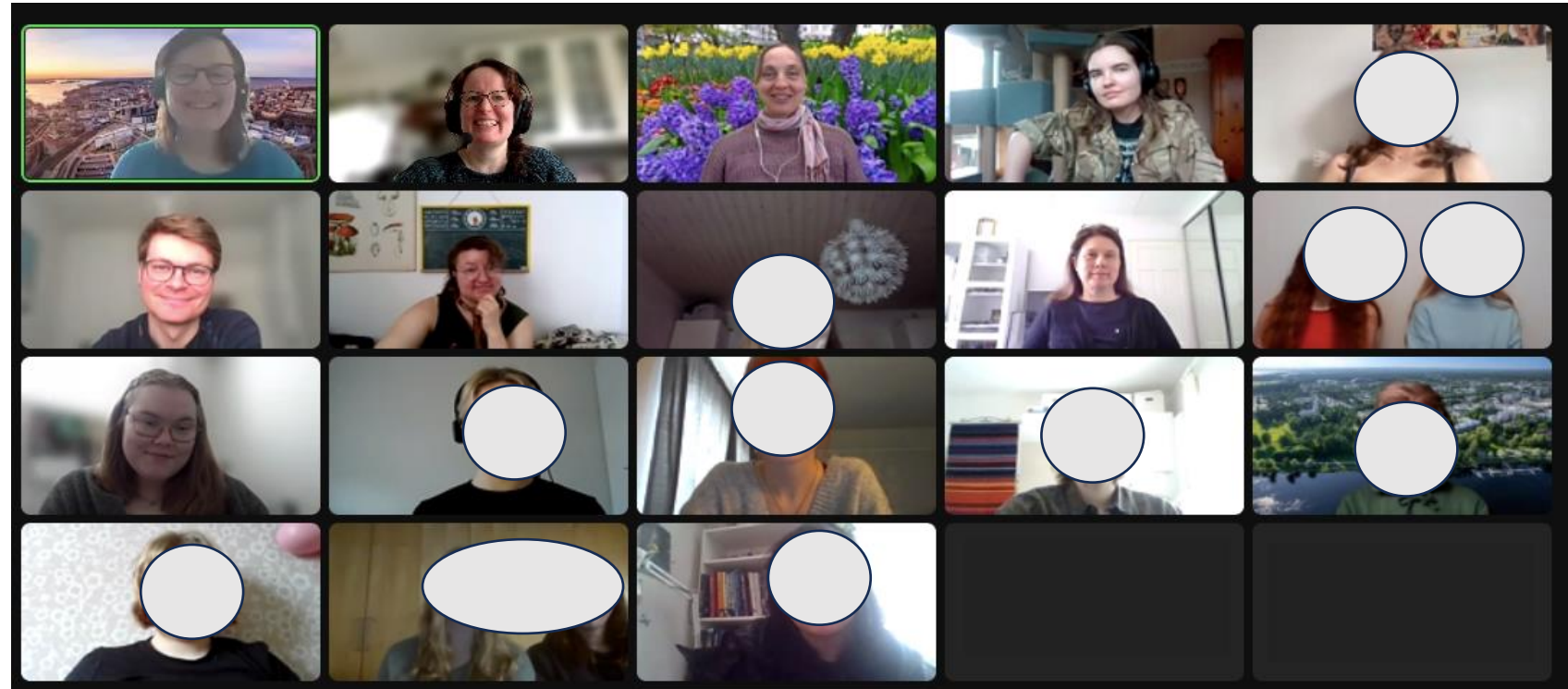**Online Linguistics Work Practice Program (WPP) for high-schoolers**

17 high schoolers from 10 towns in Finland

Data

- Zoom recordings of small-group discussions in break out rooms (after the general introduction session)

What kind of input did we present in the introduction session?

Some linguistic input before break out rooms

A folk theory of language

Ideaalikieli-ajattelu

Ideal language

THE LANGUAGE
|
Good language
:
Ordinary language
/   \
Dialects   "Errors"

Preston, D.R. (2018): 381
Folk lingustics and language awareness.
The Routledge Handbook of Language Awareness

A "linguistic" theory of language

THE LANGUAGE
/ | | \
Dialect #1   Dialect #2   Dialect #3   etc...
/   \
Idiolect #1   Idiolect #2   etc...

Dynamic language regard

Dynaaminen kielinäkemys

→ red color: presented in Finnish

Language as a structural system

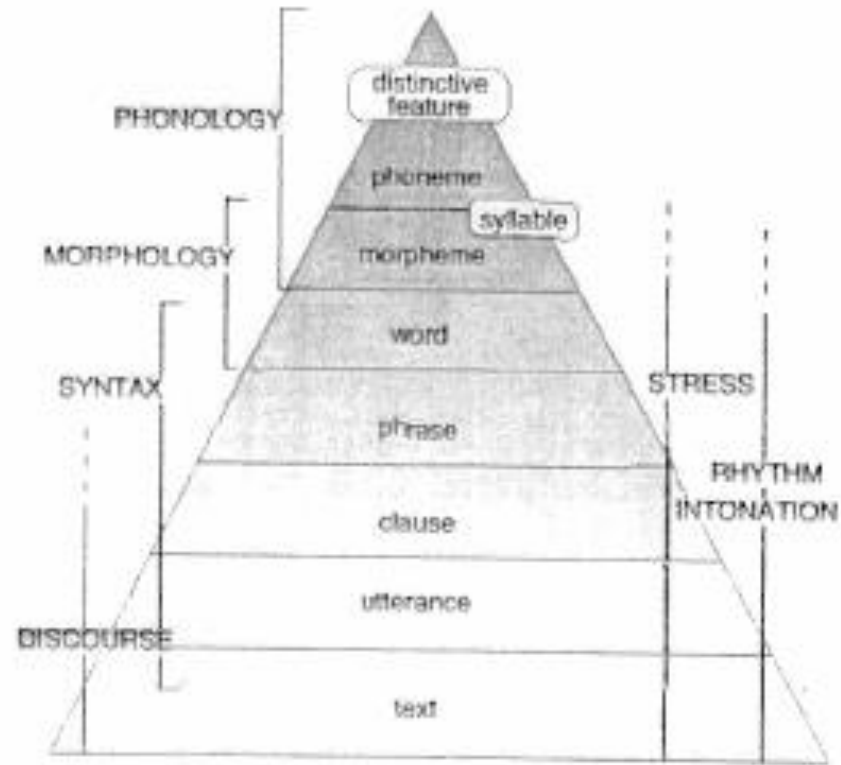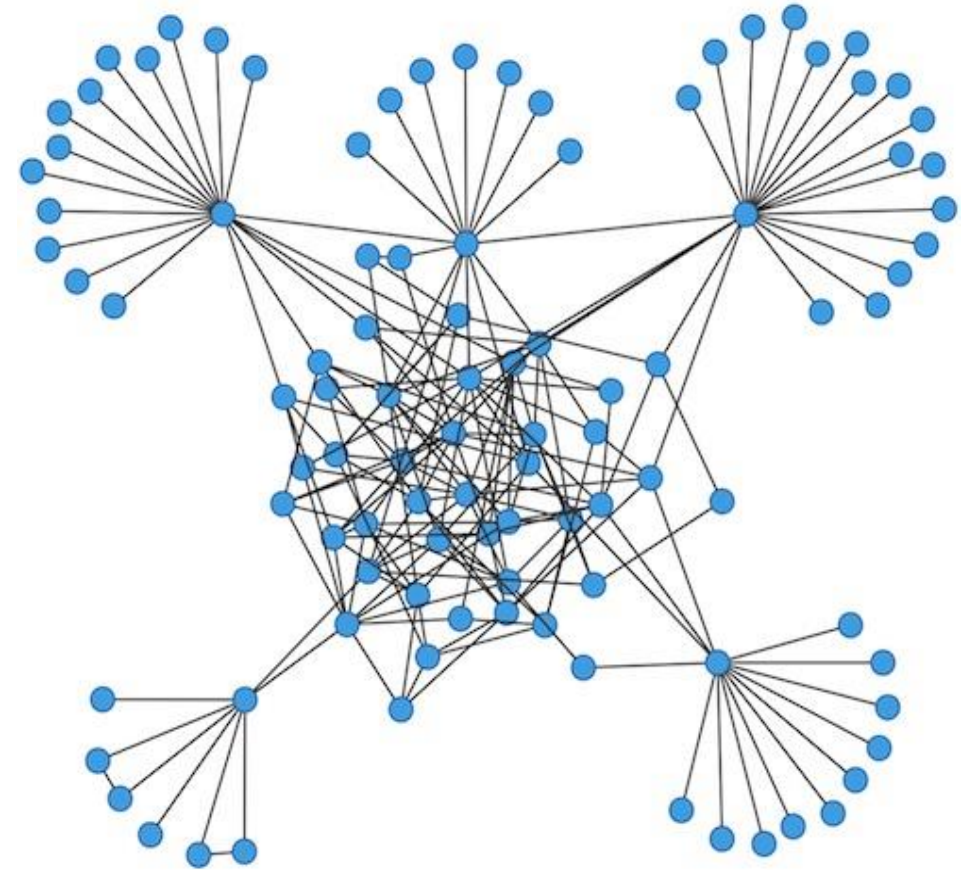ks. Linell 1998

Language as a dynamic system

Figure 2.1 Units of language (van Lier, 1995)

Language as pure
"written language bias"
"ideology of monolingualism"

Language as constructed and renewed in interaction

Questions for the random small groups (break-out rooms)

→

Groups: getting to know each other & chewing on the input material

1) Who and where are you from? What made you want to join this course?

2) What (possibly new) thoughts on language arise?

- Ideal language vs. dynamic language theory?
- Do you recognize tensions in your own idea of language?
- Insights?
- Questions? Puzzlings?

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In this group (1)

- Active participation
- Difficulties to recall contents
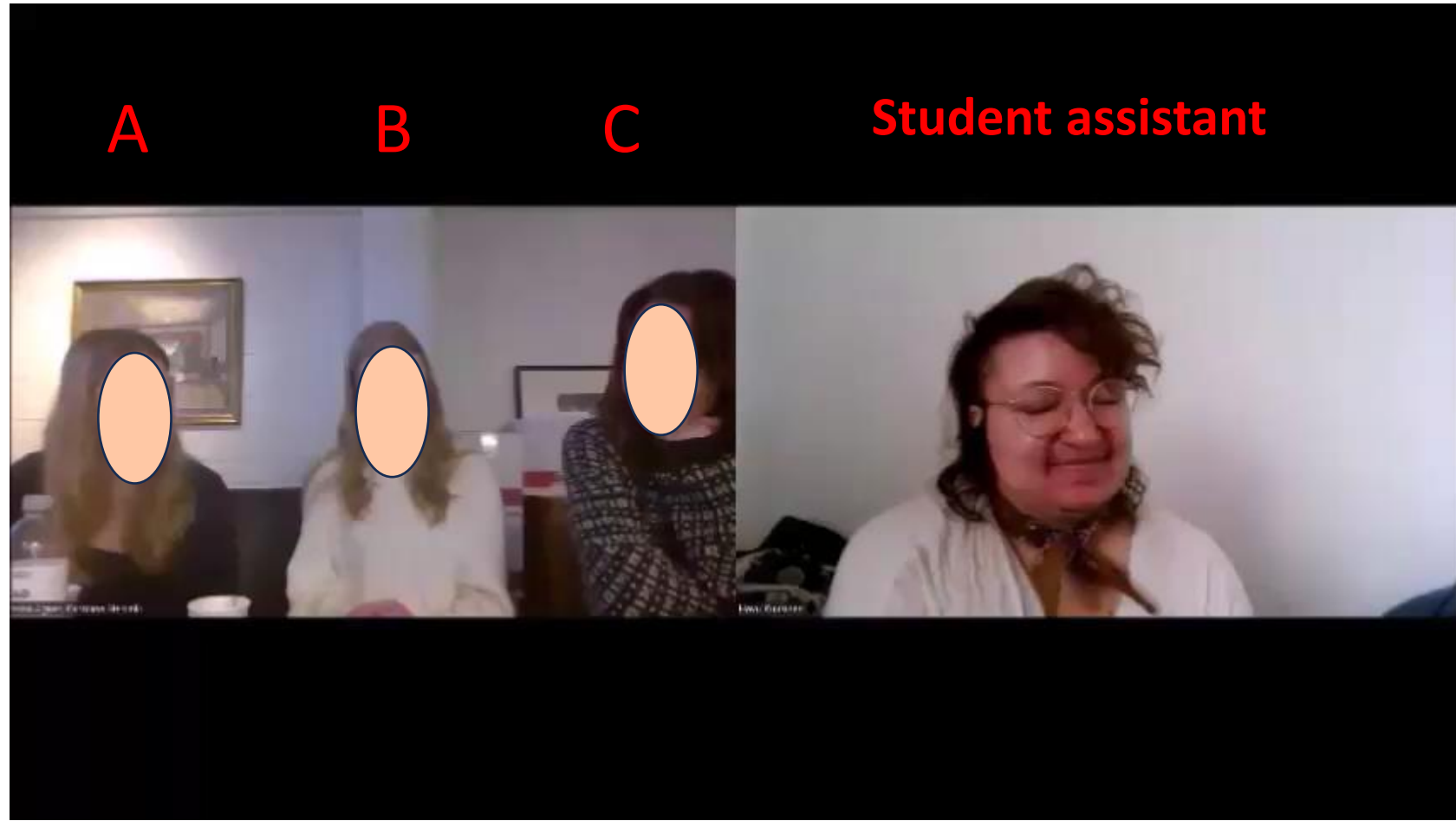- Student assistant explains approaches

Reactions to the question:

A: rejects straight away "I don't remember"

B: softens her inability to answer by humorous stance (laughter)

C: offers an interpretation of the material

Question concerning
Ideal language vs. Dynamic theory of language

In the group (2)
all are in favour
of dynamic language
theory (regard it as
more natural)

"strict rules are unnecessary"

In the group 3
all support
(more or less)
Ideal language
theory

"I don't appreciate that much the informal language"

Critical points

How are the theories understood?

What's the role of the facilitators?

Co-construction of views

Group pressure?

Discussion on input (theories of language)

- How did the high schoolers make sense of the alternative approaches to language?
  - Some had difficulties to remember, despite the support of the fascilitator
  - How they understood input? Not everyone dealt with the question at all (support was crucial)
  - Ideal language: appreciation of standard language
  - Dynamic understanding of language: freedom to use language without restrictions, language as changing

→ More research e.g. on their own definitions on scientific input & epistemic roles

Thank you for your attention! Kiitos!

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