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How languages shapes the way we think in the context of the Erasmus mobility

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Abstract

This thesis explores whether people who participate in the European mobility program of Erasmus are capable of developing a bias due to the practice of different languages on a daily life basis. The research is also based on the three pillars that the Erasmus programme is built around: mobility, cooperation and support to policy development.

A semi- structure interview with participants to this educational program will allow one to get deeper into the personal experience of the attendants and to assess the Sapir-Whorf empirical basis.

Findings suggested that the theories used were able to match the correspondent answer to the interviews given. Thanks to the latter, also more details about how multilingualism modify the structure of thinking and perceiving themselves, in the context of the time spent abroad.

In conclusion, living in a foreign country is a great opportunity to broaden people's mind, so significantly that this experience is able to change people's personality and viewpoint.

Key words: European Identity, Erasmus plus, Mobility, Language, Integration, Cooperation, Development.

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1. Introduction

Student mobility is a component of European integration, which, through initiatives such as the Erasmus + encourages collaboration across Nations. This project aim turns around “sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship¹”. This is the ideal place for multilingualism to bring out all of its hidden qualities, especially in an environment full of cultural and linguistic diversity. Examples include the capacity to perceive a different reality, communicate with other people and subsequently build a meaning out of these two. By focusing on real life experiences, the thesis approaches European integration as a process that takes place via ordinary human interactions, rather than abstract policy purposes.

European integration, apart from its political and economic extension, also stimulates an identity building activity, in which language plays a critical role. Additionally to this, the European Union’s motto defines the future of Europe based on *unity in diversity*,² recognising the plurality of linguistics as the main principle.

Linguistic identity, on the other hand, operates across various dimensions: Individual, as emotional expression and self perception. Social, characterised by inclusion or exclusion. Cultural, as it carries shared memories and traditions. Least but not last Political, reflecting integration strategies and institutional power.

Mobility intensifies the interactions between these fields, especially in the context of the Erasmus mobility, characterised by an intentional experience of integration. Despite its ultimate goals of strengthening integration and promoting social networks³, students may confront the non aligning side in between policy and practice, leading to a gap of communication barriers, English functions as lingua franca, linguistic hierarchies and so on.

¹ European Commission, “What’s the object of the Erasmus programme?”.

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme/objectives-features>

² European Commission, European Union’s motto “unity in diversity”.

<https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/27389-unity-in-diversity>

³ European Commission, Priorities of the Erasmus plus Programme.

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

The path towards the integration can lead to multiple shades of difficulty, as the main crucial points of research, this thesis will focus on describing all the most common impediments encountered on the journey.

In this specific thesis, the processes of multilingualism would be discussed through the lens of sociological theories of language like Sapir-Whorf concepts, which go beyond the simple habit of observation into a deeper dig on how language switching affects our comprehension. It also claims that the structure of a language affects how a speaker sees and classifies events and a particular interest is given to the way in which various grammar patterns influence the sensations felt in a common conversation.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

This Master's thesis explores whether the multicultural environment can influence the personal perception of participants to the Erasmus plus programme. Focusing on their experience, this research considers whether it will potentially influence their point of view and create a personal bias and difficulties in the integration process, especially regarding the context of speaking a different language rather than the mother tongue.

Consequently, my primary research question is:

- *How does the experience of multilingualism during Erasmus mobility reshape student's perceptions of themselves?*

To explore this question further, I will address the following subquestions:

- *Do effectively the Erasmus+ policies accomplish their goals?*
- *To what extent does multilingualism during the Erasmus experience contribute to the construction of the European identity?*

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 European integration theory

In order to understand European integration, it is essential to focus on the micro level of the individuals' social interactions⁴. Over time, these exchanges generate changes in values, policies, structures and final goals/outcomes⁵. Integration is defined as “the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institution possesses or demands jurisdiction over pre-existing national states”⁶. Integration is first and foremost a process: both neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists are more concerned with the process of integration than with the political system to which that integration leads⁷.

On the one hand, European integration strategies have been successful in developing institutional cooperation and legal frameworks, on the other side, these latter face various obstacles on the creation of a common European demos. The meaning of integration does not immediately result in a feeling of collective identity among people, since the main creation of identity involves daily social contact, mutual understanding, and shared decision-making processes. This gap emphasises the need for implementation at the human levels rather than only the institutional level.

In this context, Erasmus+ may be seen as a supplementary kind of integration working at a micro-social level. Erasmus+ provides individuals from different countries and languages to stay in touch with each other for a long term, in the context of an international setting. These experiences are key elements for establishing a shared European identity because language influences how people perceive group membership and social bonds.

Social linguistic theory demonstrates how projects such as Erasmus+ potentially help define a European identity in a manner that official legislation cannot. Participants' perspectives of themselves and others are changed as a result of regular multilingual interaction. The use of numerous languages in social situations enables people to go beyond national boundaries to engage in more inclusive, global forms of identity. In this view, European identity comes from

⁴ Zito, A. R. and Schout, A., 'Learning theory reconsidered: EU integration theories and learning', in *Learning and Governance in the EU Policy Making Process* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 1–21.

⁵ Zito, A. R. and Schout, A., 'Learning theory reconsidered: EU integration theories and learning', in *Learning and Governance in the EU Policy Making Process* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 1–21.

⁶ Wiener, A., *European Integration Theory*, Oxford University Press, (2019).

Haas, E. B., *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950–1957* (Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 16.

Singh, R., Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Problems and Prospects. *Pakistan Horizon*, (2010), 63(4), 51–66.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24711032>

⁷ Wiener, A., *European Integration Theory*, Oxford University Press, (2019).

linguistic and social practices that promote common experiences, reciprocal acknowledgement, and a feeling of belonging across national borders, rather than being imposed by policy.

2.2 Cultural linguistics

Cultural Linguistics offers a significant foundation for comprehending integration as a cognitive and linguistic process within the setting of the Erasmus experience⁸. Erasmus students are in a new cultural setting where they have to use a foreign language every day to talk to people. Consequently, they interact with new cultural frameworks that shape their understanding of social conventions, relationships, and their own status within the host community. The language not only helps them to communicate, but it also impacts how they think, make sense of things, and feel like they belong. Integration may be viewed as a process in which learning a new language gradually changes how individuals perceive and interact with the host culture.

Cultural Linguistics is a discipline that studies how language interacts with cultural conceptualisations. It specifically explores the characteristics of languages that reflect culturally established understanding of human experience. Cultural Linguistics has incorporated insights from several other disciplines, in particular, the idea of *cultural cognition*, which has provided an understanding of how ‘cognition’ and ‘culture’⁹ connect to language as form of active engagement, emerging from the interactions between people over time and different context¹⁰.

Cultural cognition varies among speakers within a speech community, representing a form of mental activity that is heterogeneously distributed¹¹. Speakers exhibit a range of variations and differences in how they access and internalise cultural understanding. Additionally, it is fluid, as it continually redefines over generations and through interactions with different speech communities. This perspective on cultural cognition contrasts sharply with the simplified idea of “culture” that is associated with *linguistic relativity*.

⁸ Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*, (2017) p. 59, 83-92.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2016.06.002>.

⁹ Kirchhoff, M. D., Enaction: Toward a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science. *Philosophical Psychology*, (2013) 26(1), 163–167.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09515089.2012.681864>

¹⁰ Stephen J. C. and F. Vallée-Tourangeau, Cognition beyond the Brain: Computation, Interactivity and Human Artifice, *Springer*, (2017).

¹¹ Hutchins, E., Cognition in the Wild, *MIT Press*, (1995).

Language plays a significant role in shaping how we relate to a specific culture and how we interpret society. It allows individuals to engage with one another, creating a platform to express and interpret each one's experiences. On the contrary, numerous elements of how language is structured are influenced by the ways in which culture shapes thought.

2.3 Linguistic Relativity Theory

Linguistic relativity presents an hypothesis regarding the relationship between thought and language. First advanced by Franz Uri Boas, and later elaborated by Edward Sapir and then by Benjamin Whorf, it describes how the structure of a language determines a language speaker's perception and categorization of experience.¹² Basically, the way we speak changes the way we perceive reality. Is also commonly defined as “the claim that the words your language gives you determine and limit what it is possible for you to think”¹³.

If these various authors believed that various languages affect how we comprehend an event in different ways, and that the words we choose reflect the principles of our societies¹⁴. The main viewpoint shows that the human mind isn't limited by the language of the thinker, instead, it is purely an extension of mindfulness and the act of observing. Boas¹⁵ emphasised the importance of linguistic knowledge in the practice of ethnology and ethnography. Culture may influence the structure of language when necessary, but morphological characteristics of a language cannot dictate culture.

Another central argument is that language is not just a tool for communication, it shapes how people perceive and interpret reality¹⁶. This also includes the fact that the language habits of a community guide how its members see, interpret, and organise the world. Following this subject, Sapir perceived language as a particular act of "inventory"¹⁷ of a community's physical and social setting, showing what is important in its cultural life.

Another information given from these authors is the abolition of the concept that culture and language structure perpetually remain the same, pointing out that changes in culture as well as modifications in grammar don't always happen at the same time. Sapir's most essential argument was that language acts like a guide to social reality. The patterns that are built into

¹²Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*, 59, 83-92., (2017)

¹³ Leavitt, J., Linguistic relativity: Precursors and transformations., Sharifian F., ed., In *The Routledge handbook of language and culture*, pp. 18-30, (2014).

¹⁴ Lucy, John A. Linguistic relativity. *Annual review of anthropology* 26.1 , 291-312(, 1997) .

¹⁵ Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*, 59, 83-92, (2017).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ ibid.

a language affect how speakers categorise experiences, make sense of circumstances, and create meaning. Based on Sapir's thought, "vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people and changes to the meaning, loss of old words, the creation and borrowing of new ones are all dependent on the history of culture itself".¹⁸

We define and structure the universe based on patterns ingrained in our native language, which serve as a collective, sometimes unacknowledged harmony within a speech community¹⁹. Whorf tries to prove that various languages use distinct systems of thought by looking at the Hopi language²⁰. This means that languages may enable different ways of looking at the world. But his study also makes us think about how language affects us in general: does it strictly define how we think, or does it only guide how we usually categorise and understand things?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Development of European identity in Erasmus students

The Erasmus+ program has a big impact on both the European identity and the personal growth of its members. Multiple studies show that students don't see European identity as taking the place of their national identity, instead, it develops alongside their other identities.²¹ People who took part in Erasmus are more prone to say that European identity is based on ideals like tolerance, being open to other cultures, and feeling like they belong in all of Europe²².

This identity is both cognitive, since students learn about European cultures, political systems, and ways of life, and affective, because they build emotional connections with the people and communities they meet while they are abroad.²³

¹⁸ Sapir, E., *Language: An introduction to the study of speech*. Courier Corporation., p. 59.,(2004).

¹⁹ Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*, 59, 83-92, (2017).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jaworska, J. A. , Bringing Europe to Students: sociolinguistic factors influencing the development of European identity in Erasmus students. *Annual Review of Education, Communication & Language Sciences*, 18, 4–25., (2021)

²² Jaworska, J. A. , Bringing Europe to Students: sociolinguistic factors influencing the development of European identity in Erasmus students. *Annual Review of Education, Communication & Language Sciences*, 18, 4–25., (2021)

²³ Duchesne, S., & Frognier, A. P., Is there a European identity?., *Public opinion and internationalized governance*, 2, 193-226. , (1995)

Multilingualism is a key through which Erasmus helps people build their own identity. The research indicates that students' linguistic abilities affect the way they develop social attitudes and the intensity of their interactions with different cultures²⁴.

English is widely used as a common language for people from different countries to talk to each other²⁵. This lets students make friends across borders. At the same time, knowing the language of the host nation makes it easier to connect with people in the area, which helps with inclusion outside the Erasmus network. Participants in most cases report that living and studying abroad has made them self-sufficient, confident, and able to get along with people from various cultures²⁶. The program pushes students to go out of their comfort zones, make friends from other countries, and work together with people from all over the world. These social interactions not only reinforce European identity but also cultivate characteristics such as openness, resilience, and empathy.

3.2 The impact of the Erasmus experience

The main results throughout the entire study are distinguished by the number of findings concerning student alterations in their personal perspectives and personality. But first of all, it is critical to understand what motivates a person to leave his or her own nation for another. According to the experts, your personality may influence whether or not you choose to relocate. People with a certain personality are more likely to transfer respect to others for a variety of practical reasons, including school, work, and family.

People that are naturally interested, adventurous, and open are more likely to migrate.²⁷ As much as extroverts and people with low emotional stability tend to move more: the first because in search of an active social life and exciting fresh environments, the second because dissatisfied or emotionally sensitive to their environment, in which they feel unhappy.²⁸

The experience abroad is often a good way to pursue important goals for future academic and career opportunities. Due to the fact that in a lot of cases the student is affiliated to a

²⁴ Shore, C., & Black, A., Citizens' Europe and the construction of European identity. In *The anthropology of Europe*, pp. 275-298. Routledge., (2021)

²⁵ Mocanu, V., English as a lingua franca and European identity—parallelisms in their development. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 11(1), 25-41., (2022)

²⁶ Jaworska, J. A. , Bringing Europe to Students: sociolinguistic factors influencing the development of European identity in Erasmus students. *Annual Review of Education, Communication & Language Sciences*, 18, 4–25., (2021)

²⁷ Jokela, M., Personality traits and reasons for residential mobility: Longitudinal data from United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 180, 110978. , (2021)

²⁸ Ibid.

company, with which it is possible to practise both theory and practise, to facilitate the learning of new competences.²⁹

The Erasmus programme inevitably brings changes to the participant's life and personality traits. In fact, in almost every case, the experience guarantees that some characteristics of personality are altered.³⁰ their system of values, together with the self confidence and the feeling of independence are very much influenced.³¹

Overall, the experience abroad is seen as a “path to adulthood”³², mainly because it pushes students to initiatives and decision making. While testing their ability, students are given the possibility of facing independence, psychological challenges and testing their responsibilities, due to being in a foreign country on their own.

In terms of personality attributes, researches have indicated that travelling abroad strengthened self-confidence and modified the level of mental stability. Cultural sensitivity, open-mindedness, and social initiative are the most noticeable attributes among students following their return home.³³

3.3 Gains of the Erasmus Programme

Based on the statistical data from the assessments and evaluations, it is clear that this exchange student programme has been popular over the years and demand has grown³⁴. Along with this, the number of partnerships the University has with other institutions has also gone up, as have the number of students and academic staff. The number of pupils that leave, how well they do in school, and how often they go to class are all good examples of statistical values.³⁵

²⁹ Dolga, L., Filipescu, H., Popescu-Mitroi, M. M., & Mazilescu, C. A., Erasmus mobility impact on professional training and personal development of students beneficiaries. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 1006-1013., (2015).

³⁰ Engel, C., The impact of Erasmus mobility on the professional career: Empirical results of international studies on temporary student and teaching staff mobility. Belgeo. *Revue Belge de Géographie*, 4 pp. 351-363, 10.4000/belgeo.6399 , (2010)

³¹ Dolga, L., Filipescu, H., Popescu-Mitroi, M. M., & Mazilescu, C. A., Erasmus mobility impact on professional training and personal development of students beneficiaries. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 1006-1013., (2015).

³² Raikou, N. , Erasmus student mobility and Emerging Adulthood: implications on students' development. *Educational Journal of the University of Patras UNESCO Chair*. , 10, (2020).

³³ Tracy-Ventura, N., Dewaele, J.-M., Koylu, Z. and McManus, K., Personality changes after the “year abroad”? A mixed-methods study. *Study Abroad Research in Second Language Acquisition and International Education*, 1(1), pp. 107–127. , (2016) , doi:10.1075/sar.1.1.05tra.

³⁴ Ekti, M., An evaluation regarding the gains of Erasmus program in terms of language and science. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 1800-1809., (2013)

³⁵ Ibid.

From a broad perspective, it seems that living in the nation where the target language is spoken is the most effective method for learning a new language. However, despite the fact that, in some cases, the results demonstrated that students did not gain any direct advantages from the initiative with this awareness, they did strengthen themselves in terms of scientific discipline by learning how to study systematically in the foreign university with the help of the course and exam options provided to them.³⁶

Not only does the system they participated in while overseas make students assess and evaluate the knowledge they already have, but it also compels them to fill up gaps in their knowledge. It is evident that the students reported an increase in self-confidence as a result of their enhanced foreign language skills.³⁷

Moreover, the same students mentioned that they were able to understand courses more quickly, which contributed to their ability to apply their knowledge and solve problems and it is considered a crucial component of scientific rigour³⁸. In light of all this, the Erasmus program offers its participants several indirect benefits, such as exposure to other educational systems and language fields, and the chance to take a step toward becoming scientifically inclined, whether they realise it or not.

One of the most encountered feelings after the experience is the broadening of the mind of the participants and the change of perspectives. According to Engel “reflections on student’s Erasmus experience typically say that it was an amazing experience that changed their life forever and helped them find a new European identity”³⁹. Taking part in an Erasmus mobility program helped students learn more and improve their skills while also making the move to adulthood easier.

3.4 Improvements of the Erasmus Programme

If this mobility creates multiple positive opportunities to broader ones thought and perception, on the other hand, is it undeniable that other negative side effects are taking

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Sigalas, E., The role of personal benefits in public support for the EU: Learning from the Erasmus students. *West European Politics*, 33(6), 1341-1361. (2010)

³⁸ Dolga, L., Filipescu, H., Popescu-Mitroi, M. M., & Mazilescu, C. A., Erasmus mobility impact on professional training and personal development of students beneficiaries. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 1006-1013. (2015)

³⁹ Engel, C., The impact of Erasmus mobility on the professional career: Empirical results of international studies on temporary student and teaching staff mobility. *Belgeo. Revue Belge de Géographie*, 4 pp. 351-363, 10.4000/belgeo.6399, (2010),

place. After deeper research, is it evident that some countries are beneficiaries of this mobility program more than others.

When looking at the number of European nations that received benefits from the exchange student program in the same year, Turkey is placed quite at the high end, 30th among 31 countries,⁴⁰ according to statistics presented on the National Agency's website. Even while the number of students leaving the country increased by a factor of 3.4 to 4%,⁴¹ It was not due to students studying abroad but rather to students switching to other universities. As a result of not offering any rigorous language programs in English, French, German, or Spanish, the rates are rather low.

Among these pupils, is it also noticeable the discrepancy of gender equality. Thanks to the survey, we were able to establish that 46.5 percent of participants are female and 53.5⁴² are male. While both male and female students gained more benefits from this Exchange Program in the past, now, male students seem to receive greater educational benefits than female students. In fact, male professors represent the majority of the 1,520 academic staff members who have benefited from the Erasmus Exchange Program.⁴³

Another factor that we can take into consideration is the multiple amount of new input given during the time spent abroad, that could possibly lead students to go wild into the experience, neglecting the main reason for studies. Forsey, Broomhall, and Davis⁴⁴ discussed that academic achievement during foreign exchanges can be interruptions with students prioritising fun, travel, or making new friends. As a result of an amount of pressure and fatigue during university studies, students tend to see the erasmus as a tool to escape from a short amount of time from their duties. In these cases, the study is not perceived as a priority, but rather an incentive of getting what is requested from the University within the least effort.

Inconsistent proof also represents a problem, particularly when it comes to policy goals of building European identity and helping people appreciate other European cultures. Sigalas casts doubt on the efficacy of short-term mobility programs like Erasmus in promoting

⁴⁰ Ekti, M. , An evaluation regarding to the gains of Erasmus program in terms of language and science., *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 1800-1809., (2013)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid .

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Forsey, M., Broomhall, S., & Davis, J. . Broadening the mind? Australian student reflections on the experience of overseas study., *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(2), 128-139.(2012)

European identity⁴⁵. He interrogates the ability of foreign experiences, asserting that no transformations can be expected within a single year. A different study by the same author questions whether the mobility can really help young people support the EU⁴⁶. The data collected shows that the program doesn't meet the European Commission's expectations on the subject. Other studies reflect similar results, indicating that the Erasmus experience does not seem to make students more supportive of the EU and its values.⁴⁷

The mobility program's aims, as stated in the name, are also to improve their movements in response to participant suggestions. Because these are the primary beneficiaries of the program, when it was offered to them to share new types of improvements, these claimed the fact that the majority of students do not get enough assistance in obtaining housing during their stays. Students express the need to have more assistance in finding a secure location to stay, but the Erasmus Office is unable to handle this issue on its own due to a lack of Higher Education Council standards⁴⁸.

4. Methodology

This research examines the influence of language on individuals' perceptions of their surroundings. The major purpose is to find out how speaking other languages could change the way you think, feel, and act. Each language offers a unique perspective on the world. If someone knows more than one language, this might produce a bias, which is a separation and the formation of a second identity that can lead to divergent paths in personal growth.

Semi-structured interviews are the best way to acquire useful information⁴⁹. A group of 7 people would be interviewed for provide a range of information and data. Qualitative research gives us a full picture of what the subjects went through. When you use critical discourse and conversation analysis in interviews, it's easy to link data to bigger societal concepts. The interviewer must be able to speak at least two languages fluently and live in a place where they have to speak both of them on a daily basis. I will also look at people from

⁴⁵ Sigalas, E., Cross-border mobility and European identity: The effectiveness of intergroup contact during the ERASMUS year abroad., *European Union Politics*, 11(2), 241-265. (2010).

⁴⁶ Sigalas, E., The role of personal benefits in public support for the EU: Learning from the Erasmus students, *West European Politics*, 33(6), 1341-1361.(2010)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dökü M., The Problems of Erasmus Students Studying at Akdeniz University, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 70, 567-573, (2013)

⁴⁹ Creswell., J., Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches, p.172., (2007)

different backgrounds, with no age restriction, the only requirement is not to have applied to at least on Erasmus + programme enrollment.

Every participant must sign a consent form⁵⁰, in order to not create ethical issues during the data collection. Since the research protects the anonymity of the participants, they will be previously given explanations about the thesis's purpose and the nature of the study. Is it stated in the consent form that the participation in the interviews are voluntary. The participants are given information about the duration of the interview, aside from the possibility, at any moment, to withdraw in cases of uncomfortability. The participant can choose if replying or not to any questions without giving reasons and informed that everything talked during the session of the interview will be strictly confidential. The names of participants will be hidden and all the recording and transcript of the registrations will be deleted at the end of the thesis submission. Ultimately the interviews are given their consent in case the thesis could be uploaded in an academic journal or other publications.

This is how sample:s have been found: It was because of the submission of a post on social media sites like Facebook that it was able to choose the individuals to do interviews with⁵¹. All of the fundamental facts on the research project were included in my article, and an invitation was extended to individuals from a variety of backgrounds to submit their applications at no cost and to take part in the interview, if they so desired. In addition to this, I promptly informed the supervisor of the Erasmus students at Lund University, who was able to assist me in gaining awareness of the Erasmus students, who contacted me to participate in this study. Every interview has begun with the participant getting in touch with me and contacting me to discuss the possibility of meeting in person.

The Orkanen library at Malmö University was the location where the majority of the interview took place. In an effort to achieve the highest possible level of tranquillity, I was successful in reserving the private classroom. Except for one interview, which was conducted in a café at a more peaceful time of the evening, there were no further interviews conducted. Throughout the course of the interview, I made an effort to make the atmosphere as pleasant as possible by providing the individuals being interviewed with food in an effort to create a more chilled atmosphere. All of the individuals who were interviewed had a strong desire to be of assistance, and they participated with a great deal of enthusiasm and support, providing a great deal of information during the whole of the discussions. All of the participants seemed

⁵⁰ Ibid, P. 174

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 157

to be at ease and calm during the conversation, despite the fact that some of them were more energetic than others.

It was possible for me to get a diverse range of participants belonging to a variety of European nations as well as countries that are also located outside of Europe. Two of them were from Italy, and one of them was from Slovakia, and the interview was conducted exclusively in Italian language. Because she was accepted to Lund University, one of them was allowed to take part in an Erasmus experience, despite the fact that she was originally from India. Hungary, Sweden and France were the countries of origin for the other individuals that were interviewed. There were only two males among them, and the remaining were all females. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 28. Two of the Erasmus experiences took place exclusively in Sweden, two in Poland, two in Italy and one in Portugal.

5. Thematic Analysis

The following paragraph aims to summarise the information acquired during the interviews , with all its different facets, and subsequently connecting them to the three main questions that were initially established in the chapter 1.1, Aim and research questions:

- How does the experience of multilingualism during Erasmus mobility reshape student's perceptions of themselves?
- Do effectively the Erasmus+ policies accomplish their goals?
- To what extent does multilingualism during the Erasmus experience contribute to the construction of the European identity?

Thematic 1: Reshape student's perceptions of themselves.

The Erasmus project had a visible influence on the personal baggage of everyone who participated. During their time abroad, the students had to deal with a variety of events and potential inconveniences. According to what the interviewer indicated, the majority of them have personally experienced increased self-esteem and the desire to become more autonomous in their everyday life achievements.

Some became fearless when they were timid previously, some who were introverted and had difficulty socialising became extroverted, and also the opposite. The use of a second language creates a bias inside the individual and allows them to build some kind of alter ego.

"I can say that I'm much more shy in English or in Swedish than in Italian. In Italian I'm much more open, I speak a lot more, even if I make bigger mistakes than in English, But English is more the professional language that I don't have so much. I mean, I have good memories with English, obviously, but it's also the language of professional life that isn't that easy every time. So that's why I think there's a difference, because the connection between the language and the environment where you learned it is different."

For some of them the participation was a real starting point

" For various situations, this was a click for me. This opened my eyes and I said, "wow", I can travel, I can meet people, wow, beautiful, I can do it, I feel proud to do it."

This inevitably leads to a personality transformation and an improvement in self-esteem.

"And it's honestly helped me a lot just to become more confident in myself. Earlier if someone was to describe me, they would say that I'm a very shy person. But now they'd be like, oh, she can talk to anyone"

Most participants felt that their personalities had altered, particularly depending on which language they were speaking in a given setting.

"In English, I feel more confident compared to Italian, maybe because, I don't know, since it's not my language, I feel more free to say what I want"

The Swedish participants rise up and provide conflicting information, as previously proposed. Swedish is known for having the greatest foundation and education when it comes to the English language. People study the language as kids and how to practically become proficient in it, almost becoming bilingual. This is also due to the lack of translation in American/English television shows and films that children are exposed to from a young age.

"In terms of like identity or something like this. No I don't. I feel like it's the same to me. Like speaking English for me is like speaking Swedish. I also think in English and things like this. So I don't feel like I I'm more so a social creature where. I like to adjust based on the group that I'm hanging out with"

The participants additionally experienced an imbalance in the emphasis of the languages: they see themselves as more linked to something in the context of their home languages. On the other hand, in the case of second languages such as English, people see themselves as being able to engage with the scenario from a distance and with less emphasis. Emotional distance also matters. Speaking in a non-native language might induce a feeling of detachment, resulting in a flatter or more controlled tone.

“In my native language, the discussions about my emotional status, for example, I can't face them. Instead, I manage to have a coherent speech in English. How I perceive my emotional sphere. Also, when it comes to debates, I don't know, also academically, in English, I feel more courageous to have debates”

Another theme is the implication of the voice tone. In multiple interviews the participants made it clear that whenever they changed language also their voice presented a difference in the speech tone. This featured variations in tone, rhythm, pace, and level of expressiveness may be explained by how languages are learnt and utilised.

Some people reported speaking calmly or carefully in a foreign language, whilst others reported speaking more dynamically or confidently.

“I also thought about the vocal level, from my experience when I speak in English I have a high pitch, when I speak in Italian I have a low pitch. Because when I speak in English I use my throat when I speak in English, while when I speak in Italian I use my mouth. So they are really different muscles. “

A second language often requires extra mental work, which can slow down speaking and reduce vocal diversity, especially at lower levels of fluency.

“I feel like when I'm talking in English, it's way more high pitched. And in French, it's way more low pitch. And even when I was in group projects, sometimes I just answered the phone and I was talking in French and people were like, oh my god, that's your voice. And I was like, yeah, yeah, that's a completely different voice”

Thematic 2: Construction of the European identity

All of the experiences examined indicate that all of the individuals either discovered or reaffirmed their feeling of belonging to the European identity. Especially for those who have

had minimal contact with any non EU residents, such as those from the United Kingdom. In a few circumstances, it has been shown that there are several benefits to being a member of the EU, such as allowing individuals to freely travel throughout the Schengen area and the ability to remain for an extended period of time without having to worry about a visa.

"I just talked about Europe with my friend from the UK but because they left the European Union and she told me how difficult it was to get a visa and how difficult it was to get here basically. So only for the negative side basically."

Difficulties of enrolling in the Erasmus programme are also showing up if the person comes from a not EU country

"Also people from the UK, I have to say they faced the biggest difficulties they had to face, all the bureaucracy behind Erasmus, which was not a requirement for us because we were legally more free compared to the time of residency abroad, the visa, all the documents we didn't have to do, instead they had to and also the level of contributions we received. I have to say that this last experience really made me feel lucky to live in a country of the European Union because it gives me freedom, it gives me a sense of freedom".

Bureaucracy and legal documents can contribute to slow down the process of enrollment

"It was very noticeable that the UK people had it more difficult to do it, because they are not in the EU. In terms of even such a thing as either having a visa or residency permit or rights to stay in the country. And things like this. It was a lot more advanced for them."

Meeting individuals from the same European Union and recognising the differences in the backgrounds of other cultures, even if they were relatively similar, had a significant impact on their perceptions of their own and other cultures.

"it has strengthened my perception of being European citizen, because it has opened up a new vision, it has given me a real idea of my opportunities in the future, as I am now doing studies abroad, where I don't have a limit, a national barrier, but where I feel free to work and have a life in any other state belonging to the European Union."

People's understanding of the existence of different cultures grows as a result of the many opportunities for cultural exchange, that vary from trading cuisine recipes and demonstrating their own traditional meals to sharing cultural practices and traditions

"I think it's very hard to go on such an experience and not feel European. Because we were in a group of 20 people, everybody is from a different European country and then you go on these trips. Like we went to Vienna, Bratislava, Prague and all these trips together to different countries, we had these shared experiences. And then we would go to some friend's apartment and have dinner. And they would serve dinner the kind of dishes that they would do in their home country"

Cultural diversity inside of a well established group usually enhance the open mindedness

"My company while I was at Erasmus was extremely diverse, also with people not in the European Union, but always in the Schengen area. I have to say that it was a wonderful moment, a period of sharing of different cultures, but at the same time similar. They share the honour, the pleasure of living in a continent where there is the possibility to travel freely and not feel restricted in this kind of international experience. I have to say that all the people I talked to and stayed in touch with enjoyed it."

Even while the experience may have an impact on one's sense of belonging to Europe, it is often difficult to empathise with and feel a part of it. Perhaps over the years he felt confined to his little world, which may symbolise an individual town, state, or nation. Even after spending time abroad and interacting with individuals from other countries, it might be difficult to consider oneself as part of a larger family like Europe

"I don't think about being European, first I think about being French in Sweden"

This experience can also lead to a sense of nationalism: when you live abroad, you may start to exaggerate or romanticize the small details of your home country, even the things you once took for granted.

"It's like you're French before everything else. Which makes sense, it's super nice to have this national pride. Especially since I'm here, I felt like I've never been so nationalistic. "

This feeling is often described as patriotism, a strong sense of pride and attachment to your country, especially while living outside it

"It has also made me more attached to the idea of being an Italian citizen, because always linking to the slogan of the European Union, Unity in Diversity, it is nice to share a conviviality of different cultures, but it is also very nice to be part of your own culture, to be proud of it, because it is a piece of the puzzle, and in any case, any piece must be cherished, must be celebrated."

Some people feel proud to consider themselves part of Europe.

"I like to think about myself as European. I like this. I mean, I don't really think about myself, but I like this idea of thinking more about ourselves as Europeans and not as like from the individual countries.

The experience made the participants open their view of social inclusivity between the same countries that are part of the union.

"I didn't expect it. I, as a young person, have the same problems as a young person in Italy, or in Spain, or in Sweden. Or even if, let's say, the political things you see on TV or read in the newspaper. We all have the same problems. The important thing is if we have the ability to perhaps take our ego and put it under, I don't know, take inspiration from others, as they do with me."

Some others experienced embarrassment when having to say from which country they are coming from. In this case they prefer to say that they come from Europe, more than their home nation.

"When we had a circle of introductions, so name, age, country, I remember that when I was about to say that I come from Slovakia, I felt a little, I don't know, shy, embarrassed, a little. But now I don't feel like that. So, after, I don't know, three years that have passed, I can say that I come from Slovakia without thinking about what this person thinks about me."

Thematic 3: Effectiveness of Erasmus+ policies and their goals

Throughout the interview, it was clear that all of the applicants were aware of the overall goals of the Erasmus programme, even if they did not make an effort to seek out particular purposes and knowledge on all that goes into the establishment of the programme.

"I think that what the project wants to do is an exchange between two or more cultures. And, basically, to make the inclusion of everyone, also, let's say, on education, but also, perhaps, the other thing depends on which point of Erasmus one speaks. I think, because, perhaps, there is a difference, I don't know."

People are prone to go on an experience without fully understanding it and this is the most intriguing aspect of this educational program.

"The policies or the main goal of Erasmus? If you ask me I don't have an exact answer. I can tell you what I gathered. In my opinion, the Erasmus Plus means connecting people at the European level, making them study for free, making them know the world. Maybe giving you the opportunity to do an internship at the university, maybe you find a job there".

The fact that it was created in order to travel throughout Europe is enough to inspire young people to take the risk and go on their adventure.

“Like the main goals of the Erasmus and why they found this board. I'm guessing it's mostly to encourage international experiences and to kind of contribute to the feeling of being European and not. Kind of like the whole European Union feeling of you can move freely, you can work freely, you can study wherever.”

Most of the challenges experienced by participants are not related to the bureaucracy of enrolling in the Erasmus project, but rather to the efficacy of what they might benefit from. We are discussing the efficacy of what they may learn from it, as well as the overall lack of structure among the universities that participate in it. It has been determined that there is a difficulty with the credit assessment for each course completed abroad from the originating institution.

“The main idea is that you study like the higher education institutions are so connected that you can basically just go to another country for a semester and learn something there. And then the whole thing can be if the whole of the like all of the classes that you do can just be accepted in your home university. Like that is that doesn't like that part doesn't work. Like in theory, it should. And with all the credit system and the bachelor and master, but there are still differences between universities within multiple countries that it's really hard to find”.

All universities in Europe demonstrated varying levels of significance in credits and outcomes. This creates an issue after the experience abroad is over and all course notes are provided, since they must be evaluated and have the exact same relevance that the original institution requires. This might include a lack of credits or a misvaluation of notes given overseas, as well as the need to continue studying for a certain period of time even after the course is completed.

“So like basically when you do an Erasmus plus semester, you kind of end up losing that semester, which is fine because you gain a lot of experiences. But often you can't really continue with your studies in the same like like you have to like probably take an extra semester to finish your studies, which is like it's not a huge problem. “

This topic allows for all of the adjustments that might be created to make the Erasmus programme better based on the input we analysed. This might be caused by including a wide range of information about the programme and its long-term goals, rather than focusing just on the living abroad experiences.

“We don't...even in school we don't talk about Europe. I learned here, like this year, that France was one of the founders of the European Union. We don't talk about that. We just talk about France, what we did in the past, World War II. So maybe that would be also another improvement”

However, its purpose would be enhanced if it included space for the core aims as well, as intercultural interchange and learning.

"I mean, that also gives you the opportunity to learn a little bit more about that culture, which I think is important, because when international students go to another country, they definitely learn. They do a little bit of research just to know about the other country. So it would be nice just to kind of like understand"

6. Discussion

Drawing on the findings from the preceding chapter, it became obvious that the personality of the interviewees changes after being exposed to a new environment provided by the Erasmus project. The experience has such a profound influence on the person that its whole life is marked by a shift in the way things are going from this moment on forth. Most of the individuals believed their whole personality had altered, while others just sensed a few aspects of it. These findings both confirm and nuance the arguments made about the cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity.

In terms of linguistic relativity⁵², we can say that people's perceptions of themselves have changed, but if we only follow the sense of "language shapes thought," I believe I would need more time and deeper context during the interview to truly see if the change in language shapes the interviewer's long-term thoughts. So far, we just have the participants' first perceptions that their personality has changed, but this is only the surface level of what we may study.

From what came out of the interviews, most of the people that before the experience felt shy, not really confident and restricted to their usual background. The change from the native language to English, had effectively changed their way of thinking and perceiving themselves and how they interact in the context they live in. They described becoming more open, communicative and willing to engage with others after the Erasmus programme. Living in a multicultural environment and regularly using English forced many to push themselves outside of their comfort zones. This helped them cope with unaccustomed social circumstances. It not only made English a useful tool for communicating with others, but it also impacted how thanks to the constant surrounding of a foreign language, they were able to adapt and adjust to new situations in ways they would not have been able to otherwise. They began to perceive things from other angles and got more comfortable with uncertainty.

⁵² Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*.(2017).

Based on the main authors of Cultural linguistics⁵³ theory, various languages affect how we comprehend an event in different ways. It seemed like participants were learning and changing at the same time, and the experience had an important effect on them also in the long term period of a few years. In fact, after interviewing the participants months or years after their experience, they themselves notice how persistence is still the changes that this experience brought with it, indicating how the experience created long-term shifts in self-perception. Further research would be necessary to fully understand whether these changes remain stable over time. If we want to follow Edward Sapir⁵⁴'s central argument, English in this case is not just a tool for communication, it shapes how people perceive and interpret reality. Situations that before the experience seemed too uncomfortable or intimidating, gradually became familiar.

It is also crucial to note that throughout the interview, one participant did not experience a change in personality due to the participant's already excellent proficiency in English at a native level. When asked about expected changes in his current personality, the Swedish participant firmly denied that biases occurred. According to his explanation, he has been exposed to English from a young age via films, television programs, and the educational system. Thanks to these tools, his English level increased significantly, allowing him to maintain consistency in every element of his personal nature when he switches from his original native language to the other. Based on this information, the only flaw in the linguistic puzzle that he identified was the variation in his level of English depending on the level of the person with whom he was conversing.

In terms of Erasmus Plus principles and aspirations, all of the interviews revealed a strong sense of Europeanness that strengthened as participants interacted with individuals from different countries other than their own. The Erasmus program's aims of strengthening European identity, encouraging inclusivity, promoting active citizenship involvement, and fostering relationships were all met⁵⁵. The majority of the respondents demonstrated that they had formed bonds and maintained long-distance relationships with persons they met during the Erasmus programme, which provided them with long- and short-term advantages. The collective effort and time spent with individuals from varied cultures and origins broadens the interviewee's feeling of belonging in Europe⁵⁶.

⁵³ Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*, 59, 83-92, (2017).

⁵⁴ Sharifian, F., Cultural linguistics and linguistic relativity. *Language Sciences*, 59, 83-92, (2017)

⁵⁵ European Commission, Erasmus Programme Guide, Priorities of the Erasmus Programme <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

⁵⁶ Wiener, A. , *European integration theory.*, Oxford University Press., (2019)

To some level, the encounter reinforces their patriotic side, increasing the pride they have for their own country. Some of the participants felt compelled to uphold their home nation, including its customs, food, and culture, even if they were not physically there and they never experienced a strong bond to it. They were proud of their own nation and wanted to promote it.

Others, on the other hand, did not feel proud of their own nation; instead, they felt embarrassed of being from a certain country associated with popular clichés. The Indian participant, for example, declared unequivocally that when it came time to reveal their nationality, she felt guilty since she was aware of the negative stereotypes associated with India and did not consider herself as being linked to it in any way.

As previously stated, the majority of the Erasmus Plus goals and objectives were met. What the participants were upset about had nothing to do with the policies of the European Erasmus programme, but rather with the fact that most of the time, choosing to have this experience entails accepting the responsibility that it will most likely involve losing time doing so. It turned out that the majority of those who participated in the program required to study more once it was over.

This was caused by the fact that universities in Europe use various methods to judge notes and evaluations, making it difficult to be credited once back in the home country and having all of these grades acknowledged. In many instances, this resulted in the student having to extend his studies in order to get the grades that the original institution required.

7. Conclusion

To summarise, this qualitative research study was able to achieve a positive conclusion and respond to the initial questions posed. All of the questions suggested to target the thesis were found successfully, and the interview provided a deeper understanding of diversity.

It is important to note that this is a limited research due to a small number of interviewees, all of them were searched on a random sample from different universities in Sweden. The majority of them are represented by female students and the minority male ones. All of them were interviewed in Sweden, especially in the region of Skåne, so their experiences may have differed from those in other parts of Europe.

This research also focuses on students' mobility in the short time frame during a maximum of three years after the Erasmus took place. If not taken into consideration how their attitudes were after the experience ended, they might have changed as not.

Another crucial piece is that it is unknown if the nation, from where the participants come, plays a major role in the situation that we are considering, and it is critical to emphasise that it should not be confused by the stereotype and the generalisation that we have on that specific country.

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Appendix I

Orkanen Library

First interview on the 09/03/2026

So, my thesis focuses on how the language we speak reshapes the way we think about ourselves, the way we think about Europe in general. I have three main questions in my thesis. The first one is, how does the experience of multilingualism during this Erasmus ability reshape students' perception of themselves? Also, the cultural differences and the European identity.

So, I will first ask you to introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about yourself.

That's stressful.

Take it like super chill.

Yeah, yeah, sure. So I'm from France.

And I'm studying in Paris and it's mandatory for us to go abroad in the third year.

That's why I'm here. And I chose Sweden, basically, for multiple reasons, mainly financial ones, because we have the Erasmus scholarship, so it was easier for me. And I always wanted to travel around Scandinavia, so I was happy to go to Sweden.

And so, here I'm at the department, Faculty of Social Sciences. Okay. So, I can take a lot of classes in this department and also other departments that are linked to social sciences.

And, yes, that's pretty it. I don't know what you...

So, you're a master or a bachelor?

No, I'm doing... Yeah, bachelor.

And you said going abroad is mandatory?

Yes, it's mandatory.

And you chose Sweden for the Scandinavian vibe?

Yes, yes. Honestly, yes.

Okay. So, you speak French, English and other languages?

No. also... Spanish, but just a bit.

Why did you decide to do that? So, you told me that you always wanted to start and travel around the world. And do you think that this was... I mean, it was basically forced, right? A little bit forced by your school. But do you feel like you would have done it anyways?

I don't know, because I'm a scholarship student. I know that my parents can't afford to, like, pay for me. But now I also have a loan. So, I know that I have something to support me, I would say, during this year. But I think that if this wasn't mandatory... So, when I entered the school, I knew that I was about to leave during my third year.

Maybe if this wasn't mandatory, I would not have had the opportunity to go abroad. But because I have a loan and because I'm a scholarship student, I'm happy to live this experience. But I don't know if... Like, not in this specific context, I don't know if I would have...

It's a matter of interest for me how your level of English was before and after. Because I always see myself in this. So, for example, one of my questions is, when you decided to embark on this journey, was language proficiency a factor that made this decision?

Yes. Because, like, it's weird because my bachelor was in English. Because I was in a specific campus in Reims. It's like a city in the north of France. A bit, like, not far from Paris, actually. Like 45 minutes by train. Okay. Not that far. And I didn't know that the program was in English when I applied. And I've been accepted. So, I was like, oh my God.

Because, I don't know, I think we have a bad reputation in France, we're so bad in languages. Especially in English. Okay. We studied English since elementary school.

I passed the TOEFL. And I knew that I couldn't reach C1 level. So, I did succeed at B2. Okay, which is great. Yeah, and we have partnerships with I think 145 universities across the world. But a lot of them require C1 level. Okay. Which is not the case for Sweden and most Scandinavian and northern countries.

For the TOEFLs, did you study by yourself?

Yes. Like since the third year abroad is mandatory, the school pay for us for our test, but just once. So if you fail, basically you have to pay again. And I don't have the money to pay again. And my parents don't have that. So I had my classes in English because I was in the Euro-American program. So most of my classes were in English. I was struggling a lot, especially during my first year. And I did not participate at all. It was very stressful for me. And I thought I would fail my first year. But I did succeed. I was happy. But that was very, very difficult. So I was a bit prepared.

But I think when I entered the school, I was like A2 level. And I had English classes, of course, at Saint-Saëns. And when I left, I was in C1 class. So I did improve. I also took the courses offered by the platform TOEFL.

So do you think, based on what we said... Because I had the experience that maybe my colleagues... So my classmates, they were more proficient than me in English. They had more advantages doing this at Rasmus+. Do you feel the same happened to you?

Yes. Yeah. Like 100%. I feel like... I don't know if you... you know my uni it's a quite famous school in France and across Europe. It's like... It's well ranked, basically. And so it's also very bourgeois. It's like a semi-private school. So basically you pay if you're not a scholarship student. And I also entered the school via a specific... I would say policy in France.

We have like priority schools. If you're in an unprivileged area. So I'm from the suburb of Paris. So it's quite... And they have like kind of quotas. I don't know if it's the word in English. Like percentage. So they have to... It's a bit not very human, but they have to accept a quota of scholarship students and a quota of students coming from elite students. I'm a scholarship and I'm from a poor background. So I was very... It was like... I felt like there was a huge gap between students and me. Because first of all, most of them are from a very prestigious background. They did travel a lot, which I couldn't. And also because some people, they do talk in English because they live abroad. They already lived abroad, which wasn't my case.

So I think I was kind of the only one in my class each time, not being able to talk in English at an acceptable level. And so, yeah, it was very difficult for me. Even like the exams, the first exams, I was lost. And it wasn't the case for my classmates. Like they had at least a B2 level and I was like A2. So that was like a huge gap. Because I also feel like your possibilities helped you a lot. And that's how it's really sad. Also a lot of people in the school have like a double nationality. A lot of them were also Americans because it's like an American program. So a lot of students were also exchange students and they were doing their bachelor's in France. That's also why I felt like a huge gap. Because people, that was their native language. If the classes were in English, I don't have an advantage on them.

So, you told me about the language barrier affect the university and your proficiency also in the exams, and also in the humanistic way. Did any language difficulties ever affect your ability to build friendships or social networks?

Yes, a lot. Like especially during the first two years, but here in Sweden, it's better.

I have a lot of friends. But in France, that was very difficult. I just... I basically had one friend. And she was French. I think it was difficult because of the language. And also because this gap between students and me. Both because of the language. But also because of like, you know, cultural gaps. Because I know that they are from like a very prestigious background. And they have always something nice to say. Like, oh, well, I was there. And I went there. And I was like... And you traveled to Spain. And I was like, that's good. But I don't have that. So I can't participate basically in the conversation. There was... I think I was... I a bit isolated myself. So that was both because of the language, of course. But also because of other factors. That are not directly linked to the language. But here, I'm happy because I met a lot of people. I think it's also because I took two classes in English during two years. So I'm still not that comfortable in English. And I feel that I still need to improve. But I feel way better than when I entered the school first. So I'm happy. And I feel also that here I improved.

Because I need to practice every day. Because I can't talk in French in the streets, Which was not the case in France. I was talking in French in my everyday life. Only not in school. But here it's like every day and everywhere I need to talk in English, Because I don't speak Swedish. I think I'm better now. So I'm happy.

Are your friends from all the... Europe?

Yes. Also from Japan. And one of my best friends here is from the UK. And she can actually understand me. So that's awesome. I'm like, okay, she accepts me. And I also have French friends. I

So you don't have Swedish friends?

No, most of the people in my classes are exchange students. But I have some classes where we have Swedish people and they are not my friends, but I did work with them for projects. They were nice. But it's actually difficult to approach them. I feel they are quite distant. And the culture in France is not the same. We have more everyday interactions. Even when I'm doing my grocery shopping. I'm like, okay. I just say, hey, tack, and that's it. And people don't ask me questions or... They don't make remarks, which is not the case in France. Usually they talk to you like, oh, yeah, that's you And they talk, which is not the case in Sweden. So I was a bit surprised because I don't have much interactions with local people. Here they don't really like... How do you say? Bothering you or like small talks.

I saw the integration in Sweden is not going well.

I wouldn't say it's not going well, but it's not as I was expecting. It's not as in France, basically. But I can say France is the norm. It's just a different way of doing. I think it's not bad. It's not good. It's just I'm not used to this type of way of living.

What did you expect? Like what was your idea?

Like I expected much more talks with locals, I live in base camp in Malmö. And I know that a lot of them are exchange students. I was also expecting to talk with people, which is not the case. I think they are talking with each other.

Are you talking about the Swedish people?

No, not Swedish people.

Or in general?

Yeah, in general. So I was a bit surprised because for me it's like an international. But also I'm quite shy. So that's also why I don't really participate. I'm not very involved in the building. So it's not their fault. I was not expecting this type of living.

Okay. Another question that I'm really, really curious about. Did you feel like your personality or your characteristics changed based on the language that you were speaking?

Yes, a lot. First of all, I feel like even my voice isn't the same at all in English and in French. I don't know what I would say. Like, agree and grave.

Grave, you say grave.

Okay. So high pitch.

Yes.

I feel like when I'm talking in English, it's way more high pitch. And in French, it's way more low pitch. And even when I was in group projects, sometimes I just answered the phone and I was talking in French. And people were like, oh my god, that's your voice. And I was like, yeah, yeah, that's a completely different voice. So that's funny because I don't even recognize myself when I'm speaking. And sometimes I speak in French, like I switch from English to French because I just talk to different people. on the practical side, I was actually writing in English. First I was writing in French and then I was translating, but now I'm writing in English. And even when we do spontaneous exchanges here it's very... How is it in French?

Valoriser.

So we have the same to value or to...I get it.

Okay, so spontaneous exchanges are very valuable here. I feel in France it's not the case, like people don't really care about what you do. think. It's not the norm to say what you think, it's even like in copies we write. I don't know if it's the same in Italy but we don't say i think blah blah blah if you write i think professors will write i don't care about what you think. it's not the question that's a bit rude but yeah that's also a difference from the educational system is like professors are very it's not the same hierarchy uh we don't have like in france is very a system of domination basically. students and professors and you have to be quiet and they don't really care about what you say. They also call them by the last name. Yes, we call them Mr. or Mrs. Same, doctor if they want to be called doctor. I don't remember what was the question exactly I don't know if I answered

Do you feel more confident or independent?

Yeah, okay.

Did you think that this experience changed your sense of belonging to Europe? Because I know that I, for example, before moving, I felt I'm Italian, but I'm also from my province. So before feeling Italian, I felt like from my province and I feel Italian. And then I felt like, yeah, I feel European because I know I'm in Europe. but do you really feel like this belonging to Europe before this experience?

That was interesting because I had exactly the same question in class. I had a class on European integration and we had a similar question. I was working with someone from the Netherlands, someone from Sweden, and also someone from Japan. And I think she felt a bit excluded from the conversation because she's not from Europe. But it was interesting

because the girl from the Netherlands and the boy from Sweden, they were like, here in Sweden and in the Netherlands, we put the accent on belonging to Europe, like you're European first of all. And then you're part of the specific nation you're from. And in France, I feel it's different, but I do understand why it's also different in Italy, because I think we had strong nationalisms in the past, and even maybe now. Yeah, I think it's true. I feel like I'm in France it's a bit Paris or like the suburb of Paris Île de France, it's the region versus the rest of the France so I do belong in this specific area even if I'm not in the center of Paris and then I feel French but it's also because I was educated this way. like the media. like the whole culture educated me in this specific way so I don't think it's changed something about being European. because here I just think about Sweden and not Europe so I don't know even like with the Russian threats on like Greenland no no the US threats on Greenland, And Russian threats in Finland and Sweden and Copenhagen etc. I don't think about Being European first, I think about being French in Sweden.

Okay, that's pretty important though. I think there must be, they should implement some kind of feeling of belonging.

Yes, because I feel like also that's why most of Europe now has a right wing as a main force in the government. It's like our country first and then Europe. But I was surprised to know that it's not the same in every country. It's like in the Netherlands, for example.

Because in France, it's very... Like, we don't... Even in school, in the programs, we don't talk about Europe. We were like... I learned here, like this year, that we were one of the founders of the European Union. I didn't know. We don't talk about that. We just talk about France, what we did in the past, World War II. So maybe that would be also another improvement. I had like the option like geopolitics and even there we don't talk about you that's so I don't know why. it's like you're French before everything else. Which it has sense, it's super nice to have this national...Especially since I'm here, I felt like I've never been so nationalistic. And I'm happy to share my culture because I can see the differences here, whereas I can't see them in France.

So there is no shared European identity?

No.

Also in your classmates, for example.

Like French or...?

Like in the classmate here, in the Erasmus. You talked about it.

I don't think so. Apart from the Netherlands and the Swedish there. No, I don't think so. Usually when I meet people in class and they are from Europe, they usually know, with my accent that I'm French, they talk about France and then I ask them, oh where are you from and we talk about their respective country but we don't talk about Europe as a whole like I feel like when we're talking about Europe we're just it's just when...oh yeah I just talk about Europe with like my friend from the UK but because they left the European Union and she told me how difficult it was to get a visa and how difficult it was to get here basically. So only for the negative side basically.

We talk about identity, how do you feel different? So as you told me about this, as you are completing almost your erasmus, what kind of insight you have about your language proficiency and you told me that you passed from A2 to C1, that's really great. Also, do you feel like you're going to continue, also when you're going to go back to France? Do you want to continue learning, maybe to become an English teacher? Or like, you know, do you want to continue using English, though?

Yeah, yeah. I'm a bit scared of losing my English in France, but we need to get our master's degree. We need to have a C2 level. So I will be forced to speak in English because I need to pass the level. I would like to talk about it. But I'm a bit scared of losing my English after France. I think I will travel, but I don't want to become an English teacher. But yes, maybe in my future job, I would like to work at UNESCO. So maybe I will need to talk in English. I hope so, because I don't want to close my English.

Appendix II

SECOND INTERVIEW

MALMO 10/03/2026

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My thesis focuses on how the language we speak changes the way we think. With the focus, since I had to connect it with European Studies, I focused on Erasmus+. My goal is to focus on how to reshape, how to change the perception of ourselves, of the individuals who participate in this experience, but also at the European level, or the sense of European identity. I have three main questions. The first question is how this experience of multilingualism during your Erasmus or Mobility experiences has changed your perception of yourself, of cultural differences or of integration in Europe. So if you want to introduce yourself, talk a little about yourself, how old are you, what languages do you speak?

So I'm 21 years old, now I study International Relations here in Malmo, I come from Slovakia. I speak Italian, which I learned, let's say, thanks to myself, I didn't take any courses, I didn't even read a book. Then I obviously speak Slovak, I speak English, now I'm learning Swedish and I speak a little French. So that's it.

And you've had, you told me, different experiences, so not just in one place, but in different places. What languages did you use in these two experiences?

So, English, I studied at my high school in Slovakia, but all the subjects were in English. I have a C2 certificate in English for this, but I don't think I speak it that well. So that's why I speak English. And I obviously also use it here in the studio, I use it with my friends. All these, all the exchanges I did, we worked, spoke in English. So I also know English from the point of view of, let's say, more technical. At school I can speak about economic things, I can do all this in English too, because I understand it completely. But I also know it from the point of view of, let's say, the less formal language, with friends, the slang, let's say. Then Italian, I used it only in Italy, obviously, during my volunteering. French, I had it as a secondary language at school, so I don't speak it that well, I don't use it often. But I understand if I get a

reel in French, I understand it. I also try to read at least one book in French for a year. I had French friends, but we spoke more English than French, because I don't have a, let's say, high level. I don't have a high enough level to speak Italian, for example. But an interesting thing, French has taught me a lot to learn Italian. So when I arrived in Italy without knowing any words, there were words that helped me understand what was happening.

Do you want to tell me a little about your experiences, where you did them, in which countries? How many did you do in total? In total, maybe three or four.

The biggest one was in Italy, of course.

Ten months, right?

Yes, it was ten months. First I was there for seven months, then I came back to Slovakia to finish my school exams. Because it was during my studies, I was 18 when I arrived in Italy for the first time. So I had to balance these two things. And then I came back for another three months.

Where did you say you were?

Altamura. So it was the south, that's why I had to learn Italian. Then, or actually maybe even before, I had my first experience with Erasmus in Romania. I don't really remember what city it was, it was a small city. But the topic of this exchange was Europe. Everything that I can do as a student, but also what I have to do in the European Union. So there was no longer just this thing that you see on TV, that you hear about, the political thing. It was more something that, ah, I can also go to study in some countries. Or I can meet people, I can go to work, I don't know, in France for example. So there I learned a lot. Also thanks to this experience I did my first job, let's say, because there was the guy who wrote this project. He worked as ... he made articles on Instagram. When they were, let's say, his company, when they were hiring other people to ... Expand. Yes, to other countries too, not just Romania. He wrote to me if I wanted to participate. Thanks to them I also had many other experiences that went, I don't know, to Estonia, I think it was. And we worked on a very beautiful project. So thanks to Erasmus I found a job that I didn't even know I could do, or that existed, or that I had the ability to do. Then I was in Greece, this project was on Environment Green. The name of the project was Act Green for a Week. I thought that, so, on this project, during this week, we don't eat meat, we do all the recycling, everything. So no. Because it was in Greece. In my opinion, it is not really a good country to do these things. So we talked a lot about Green things, Environment, blah blah blah. The program was beautiful, but we didn't do anything, let's say, practical things. Because the project was really beautiful, but it lacked this element of, so, we know all this, all this theory, and what do we do? What do we want to do for this city where we are? Another one was in Poland, and that was similar to the second one, Environment, but it was more connected to, let's say, the children. So education is like educating other people to do Green things. And so it was more activism, let's say. Yes, maybe I talk a lot, if you want to...

No, no, this is fine. Because you are giving me a lot of information, so thank you. The next question is, why did you decide to start this path? what pushed you?

A very interesting question. I think that I've always heard that someone left a country and didn't have to pay, and how is it possible? The European Union, yes, but who pays? But how do you do it? When I was 18 years old, on Facebook I found a group called Erasmus Plus Slovakia. And there, many associations that had written projects were looking for young people to participate. And so I went to Romania with a group of Slovaks, but unknown to me. And there, since the theme was the European Union, there I learned that, there is also this, also this, also this. But I didn't know if I could really do it, if it was possible, or if this was just the theme of the project and they had to say it and it didn't work that way. So I was asked many times, do these projects work as I think, or is it a, I don't know, a fairy tale that they say outside and then you don't do anything? And then I read a lot more about these projects, how they work, the difference between youth exchange, volunteering, a long, short experience, like that. And I don't know, I always had the thought of knowing how to live outside my country. When I was leaving for Italy, I had some meetings with a lady who works for the Slovak association that sent me to Italy. And she was asking me what I think about cultural shocks, and I say, ah, I don't think there will be any, because Italy is Europe, so I don't think something big will happen. She was telling me "I think it will happen, but it's okay,". She was telling the truth, because I discovered that Italy was never a country where I wanted to go or live, or Italian was never a language I wanted to learn. But the opportunity I had to go there and understand how people live, how people understand the world, and how people understand things that maybe in Slovakia people understand completely differently, and for me to understand both points of views, for me that was the motivation that I still have, that's why I study in Sweden. Because I said, okay, I want to understand how the North works.

Okay, you told me why, and when. Because you started at 18, right? The first time, in Italy. But you already had experience before? When was your first experience?

I started when I was 18, first in Romania, then Italy, and then Greece, Macedonia.

Okay, so in a row like that.

So you were already 18.

And you said that your experience was with fundings, I don't know how to translate it into Italian, it was sponsored by this youth exchange. So you didn't have to pay anything. The accommodation was given, the food too, everything was given to you.

Exactly. For the youth exchange, before, the participants, including me too, paid our tickets, for example, to go. And then we came back and the project closed, the association sent the documents, so I paid so much for this flight or for this train, and they sent the money back.

In Italy it was basically the same, but the difference was that obviously in Italy I was 10 months, so I cooked on my own, I ate on my own, it wasn't a community group like on these projects for a week. And there we received money every month, we had money for food, we had money for, let's say, pocket money. To put yourself aside in case you don't study.

Yes, or if you want to travel somewhere, to have another experience, let's say, because in any case volunteering, yes, you have to work, but you can also go for a weekend, I don't know, to Naples, for example.

Wait, what is the nearest city you could go to? For example, if you traveled for a moment while you were in Italy.

So, Bari is closer, then I was in Puglia more, much more, but then I was also in Naples, Salerno, Capri, all this stuff. And then I also wanted to go to see the north, but I couldn't, and then I said to myself, oh well, it doesn't matter, maybe another time. So Puglia, I concentrated right there.

And you told me that you already had a C2 as a level.

Yes, in English. So before starting to travel anyway, the school...

You did it through school, right?

Yes.

So also your, you said high school, so the high schools, you did it all in English, so you are already prepared?

Let's say yes

In your opinion, the level of proficiency in English has had a very big effect on the experience? Maybe if you had had a level a little lower, a little higher, the experience would have been better or worse.

Honestly, I don't think that if you have it, the important thing is that you can participate. And obviously you find a way to participate anyway. In my opinion, it is more important to understand how the people of the place are. For example, when it was just a week of an exchange where none of us spoke the language of Romania or Greece, the only way we could speak was English or their own language with the group of, let's say, Slovaks. We spoke Slovak, obviously. Then the Poles spoke Polish, among themselves. But I don't think it was so important to have a high level in English because it depended on what you wanted to do for the project. If you really want to participate, express yourself, make all the ideas, I don't know, make very big, very deep speeches, then yes. But if you're here just to listen or see how it's done, how people live, in my opinion you don't have to have such a high level. I got the certificate because I had to go to school. It wasn't my decision to do it because I wanted to have this experience. I don't think it's really important to have a piece of paper that says, ah, I speak this language. Also in Italian, when I went to Italy, it wasn't important that I spoke English. I mean, I spoke English very well, but I had to learn Italian to enter the community, the area, and to make friends. I mean, yes, of course, you can find friends with whom you speak English, but for those people in the place it was important to have friends who speak Italian. So I had to learn Italian if I wanted to make friends. So it depends on the people, the place, it depends on what experience it is. If it's long, if it's short, it also depends on that. But I don't think that if you have B1 or C1, in my opinion, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that you can maybe not even speak, but you can communicate with others in a way that is understood, that it doesn't have to be English.

So, for example, when I was in Greece, I was working on my computer and this lady came who was preparing food for us, for the participants. Obviously she didn't speak English, I

didn't speak Greek. But we managed to speak thanks to Google Translate. And we managed to make ourselves a coffee, a fika, without knowing another language, basically.

In fact, the next question would have been an example of, I call them in this interview, we call them language barriers. So you managed to use a translator, but you still managed to talk to other people, exchange information. Have you had other similar experiences? Where maybe the language was more of a barrier, but you managed, or maybe you didn't manage to talk to someone.

It happened once in Italy, I had a friend who came from Tunisia. She worked in Italy, but she went to her house for a month, I think and she needed to do some paperwork or something, it was something technical that I couldn't understand. At the Italian post office. It was about three months after I arrived. And she asked me, as a friend, if I could go there and explain to them what she wanted. She sent me two voice messages on WhatsApp and told me to go to the post office, give her my phone, you can listen, she tells you what she wants. And yes, that's how it is. I did it like that, but it didn't go as well as it could, because the man from the post office, he didn't understand what he had to do with the cell phone. I put the cell phone under the glass, and he was looking at me, and he didn't understand what was going on. Then he called someone who spoke, let's say, English better, and then they listened, but it was half an hour of my stress, I was sweating all the time. So, let's say, if the knowledge is just level zero, and you have to do something very difficult, then obviously it is difficult or even impossible. In the end we succeeded.

Ok, the next question for me is very, very curious. I think it's the main question, on which my thesis is based.

Ok.

In your opinion, have you ever felt like your personality or your character were different or changed based on the language you spoke?

Obviously yes, because I learned English as the language of the school. Obviously I speak with my friends in English, but still English is the language of education and work. It's a professional language. Also because I lost a lot of time learning English. Italian is a language where I feel very comfortable, even if I make mistakes there, I don't mind. Italian is more the language of, I call it the heart, for me, because Italian is connected to all the beautiful things I've done in Italy, all the experiences, all the people of the place. I can say that I'm more dramatic in Italian, I speak more with my hands, I speak faster, more, I don't know, very different from English. In English I'm a bit more, you know, like basic English. And then French, I don't know, I can't say because I don't use French, I don't speak it. And in Swedish I still don't know how I am when I use it.

In terms of personality, do you feel maybe, even when you speak in Slovak, maybe a little more shy in one language, a little more open in another, extroverted, introverted, I mean, in terms of personality, do you feel a little stronger, a little more independent when you speak English?

In English I feel strong because I know that I learned well, but I understand that I still make mistakes and let's say that at least once a month I look around and ask myself, maybe I should do another course, even if I have a certificate, maybe I still need some grammar lessons, to really not make mistakes there.

Then, Slovak, I don't know, with my mother tongue, I don't use it often these days, that's why when I call my mom or my grandma, sometimes I can't find the word I want to use. And they ask me, what's going on? Do you speak Slovak? Yes, but sorry, I can't think for the moment. I can say that I'm much more shy in English or in Swedish, even if I'm just learning now, than in Italian. In Italian I'm much more open, I speak a lot more, even if I make bigger mistakes than in English, I speak a lot more, like now, I think that if we do a speech and we speak in English, I won't say as many things as I'm saying now in Italian. So there's a big difference. Italian is a language of the heart that I feel good, that I like, I like the melody, I like everything that I've experienced with the Italian language, I like it because I feel, I don't know, even excited. But English is more the professional language that I don't have so much. I mean, I have good memories with English, obviously, but it's also the language of professional life that isn't that easy every time. So that's why I think there's a difference, because the connection between the language and the environment where you learned it is different.

I also thought about the vocal level, from my experience when I speak in English I have a high pitch, when I speak in Italian I have a low pitch. So maybe when I had friends, I would answer a call and they would say, ah, but this is your voice when you speak in Italian. Because when I speak in English I use my throat when I speak in English, while when I speak in Italian I use my mouth. So they are really different muscles.

I never thought about this and I don't think anyone has ever told me that I speak differently, but maybe there is some truth, yes. Because even when I speak Italian I think I speak lower because I'm comfortable, but if I speak English, yes, I'm comfortable, but maybe I speak a little higher. Interesting.

What friends do you have here? Do you have international friends, Swedish friends, or even during your experiences? Apart from in Italy, because I imagine they are Italian people.

So here I have more international friends, but for example I have a friend who comes from Germany, but she also speaks Italian, also Swedish, because her parents are Swedish mom and Italian dad, but they live in Germany, so she speaks German. But we speak in English, we speak Italian only when we are drunk. Then there are many of my friends who are Swedish, they are not real Swedes because their parents come from the other side.

So they speak Swedish, but I don't want to speak Swedish with them because for them Swedish is not their language, their language that they want to use or that they want to help me learn. So they all come from Europe, my friends here, but we always speak English. I'm also thinking that maybe the trick to learning a language is to use it with people who speak it, but here I'm trying it, but my friends don't have the patience to speak with me. My friends in Italy had it, my colleagues, I don't know if it was because they were used to this environment that another person came who doesn't speak Italian, so we speak more slowly, we have patience with this person, we help her. If she makes a word, if she makes a mistake, we wait for her to finish and then we say it, then she makes a mistake, blah blah blah.

Do you know anything about the main goals or policies of the Erasmus plus?

I don't know about policies, but I think that what the project wants to do is an exchange between two or more cultures. And, basically, to make the inclusion of everyone, also, let's say, on education, but also, perhaps, the other thing depends on which point of Erasmus one speaks. I think, because, perhaps, there is a difference, I don't know.

In your opinion, is this Erasmus program, accomplishing and achieving its main goal? Or, in your opinion, in this experience, have you seen how, perhaps, there are things that could be improved?

In my experience, I think that, obviously, there are always things to improve, which is also nice, because we have another goal to achieve, we have another motivation to continue what we are doing. So, obviously, as I said, for example, that project on the environment was, for me, not a very quality-based project. It didn't make sense for me to just talk about things and then not do anything. But, perhaps, I am the wrong one.

Perhaps someone else liked it and liked that they had the opportunity to learn the theory, in theory, how to do it and practice it, let's say, with themselves, right? Get it out and collect it, I don't know. So, there are always things to improve, but, in my opinion, what I did, thanks to Erasmus, was what was the goal. So, I became more grateful for this part of the world where I live, where I am, thank God, but I also became more, let's say, open to cultures and, let's say, things... I don't want to say that I was racist when I was 18 and I didn't have an experience outside of Slovakia, but I can say that it was the thoughts that, perhaps, the person with another... It's not that another person with another skin colour is bad, but, I don't know, if I saw a group of black guys, perhaps I would take the bag... I don't know. Just like that (grabbing the bag closer to her). Yes, just like that. I didn't think there was something, but I did it because, I don't know, because it was like that. But now I'm more, let's say, critical of myself, not to do it, not to think badly, because I've lived with people like that. I talk, I meet the guys, the students at SFI, I talk to them, I'm not bad. Why do I have such a perception? What tells me to take my bag tighter? So, I'm also more critical of myself and I ask myself a lot of things, but also, in my opinion, Erasmus helped me to decide what I wanted to do in my life. I still don't know what it is, but we're getting there. It helped me to make the decision to go here, to study international relations, to know that I can survive in another country in which I don't speak my own language, but if I want to, I can learn it. So, from my point of view, yes, Erasmus is perhaps the best program that the European Union has done.

Do you think this experience has also strengthened the way you feel European?

I think so, because I've met a lot of people with whom we've found things similar in our lives. Sorry, I'm getting lost.

We're almost done.

I didn't expect it. I, as a young person, have the same problems as a young person in Italy, or in Spain, or in Sweden. Or even if, let's say, the political things you see on TV or read in the newspaper. We all have the same problems. The important thing is if we have the ability to perhaps take our ego and put it under, I don't know, take inspiration from others, as they do with me. So, I don't know, I feel bad, but this person feels so good the way she does, to feel so good, or the way she does, to learn all these things that we're studying. She knows more and more about me. How does she do it? What does she read? What does she do in

her free time? Does she read or listen to some podcasts? I think it's nice to go and ask her. And it would be nice to do this also at the political level. So, I don't know, Slovakia has problems with this and that. For example, Italy doesn't have any. How is it possible? What do they do that is different from us? It becomes even more important than if we're talking about the European Union. In my opinion, it's very, very important that countries speak to each other. So, yes, but I'm going to another level. This wasn't your question. I feel much more European because I know a lot more, I know a lot of people. Anyway, as I said at the beginning, my goal, the reason to go and discover how people think about the world, where we live, I basically do it. So, this also helps me to feel more European, yes.

And it also reinforced your nationalist ideas. So, maybe you feel a little more Slovak. I don't know if I feel more Slovak, but I know that during my first experience in Romania, when we had a circle of introductions, so name, age, country, I remember that when I was about to say that I come from Slovakia, I felt a little, I don't know, shy, embarrassed, a little.

But now I don't feel like that. So, after, I don't know, three years that have passed, I can say that I come from Slovakia without thinking about what this person thinks about me, that I come from Slovakia, what this person knows about Slovakia. So, yes, like that.

But I don't think that, I don't know, I don't know if it's really about nationality, but I feel like that. Ok.

And in your opinion, does this shared European identity exist? So, is it something that is also felt by people our age? Or do you think it's more of an abstract thing, on which, yes, Erasmus Plus is working, but in reality it doesn't really exist?

In my opinion it exists, as I already said, that we all have the same problems, that we don't realize that we have them.

So, in my opinion it exists, but maybe each of us has to find this European identity that we have. But it depends on the person, on their experience. I don't know.

For me, maybe if I've never been to Italy, I've never had experience abroad, maybe I would never feel European. So, I don't know. What happens if a person doesn't have experience outside of their country, right? Because, especially in Slovakia, we have this phrase that says, Brussels dictates.

So, what it says, Brussels is really holy, that's how it's done. If it's bad, if it's good, that's how it's done, right? And it's taken, Brussels is taken a little badly, let's say. Even if we're part of the Union.

So, it's important to understand this European Union, not only through the things you see on TV, but also through the conversations you can have with people who come from other parts of Europe. European Union.

Last question. If you have something that you want to say in particular, that has struck you, even about yourself, about this change after Erasmus, obviously you'll feel like a different person after Erasmus. But you've told me many things about the fact that the language, but

one thing that maybe you haven't spoken about, that you feel you want to say now, about this strong change after this experience.

Surely I've become more, how do you say it in English? Realize your fullest potential.

I think I'm doing it. So I've become more direct, I've become more... I've become an adult, let's say. Which is always curious, like a child.

And these experiences have given me that everything you think during a conversation with anyone, this person can tell you completely different things and can change your world. For example, during an interview, a meeting. So it's important to have some opinion, it's important to try to understand things, let's say, from their point of view.

It's important to know how to share this point of view of mine with other people. It's also important to understand that other people have the right to have their own point of view and that their point of view can change mine, practically every day, in every situation. Ok, I thank you again.

It was very, very useful. Everything I said was really very curious. Thank you too.

Good luck with listening.

Appendix III

THIRD INTERVIEW

CAFETERIA ITALIANISSIMO LUND

11/03/2026

Okay, so I'm gonna tell you about my thesis a little bit. So, as I told you, I'm writing about how the experience of the Erasmus Plus reshapes the personal perception of the students, but also in European-wise, so their belonging to the European Union, and also some cultural differences and language barrier. I have three main questions in my thesis.

So, the first one is how the experience of multilingualism during the Erasmus reshapes your perception of yourself and the cultural difference and integration in Europe. So, I will start asking you maybe to introduce yourself, how old are you, and can you tell me about what you do for the exchange?

Yes, so I'm 28. I will be 28 tomorrow. I'm doing an Erasmus Plus internship in Malmö connected to Lund University, and I'm doing this internship as part of my applied studies. It's a one-year master's degree, and then this internship is part of that program, and I'm working at the international office now. Mainly working with Erasmus Plus mobility programs, not just like other mobility programs as well, but I'm helping the international officer at the Malmö Academy of Music. And yes, so the work is mainly about mobility programs, and of course many of it is Erasmus Plus, as like that's the biggest one in Europe. Yes, and the official language of the internship is English, but I was... But I already spoke some Swedish before starting it, so I'm trying to like speak a lot of Swedish as well, but officially it's in English.

Okay. It was not a requirement to speak Swedish. So you know Swedish, English and Hungarian.

Yes.

Do you know any other languages?

No, I mean a very, very basic German, but I wouldn't really list it as something I know. It's like I have a basic understanding of the language.

Okay, okay, okay. Why did you decide to do this Erasmus internship?

Well, I needed an internship that I can do, and this one accepted me, so like that's one very practical part. Doing your master, it's mandatory. It's a requirement, and I get credits for it, so like I have to do it. And I applied to a few places, but nothing really seemed to stick. And so in the Netherlands it's really hard to find internships or work, but even internships are a bit hard if you don't speak Dutch. So that was a bit harder, and I also wanted to come to Sweden because I've already been here before doing an exchange year with Erasmus as well. And I learned the language before, like I've been learning Swedish for a few years now, so it kind of made sense to look for opportunities in Sweden where I'm a bit more comfortable with the language and with the culture. And yes, the other part of the whole thing is that I would like to stay in Sweden in like a longer term, or indefinitely, or I don't know what's the right word. And this seemed like a good opportunity to kind of get a sense of Swedish working culture and just have some experience in Sweden. But I'm not sure that Erasmus, like I'm not sure that you're supposed to use Erasmus as this, but or I don't know, like officially it's like you're visiting another country, getting experiences, but I also think it's a really nice way of kind of getting a sneak peek into the country, I guess.

So you did another experience with Erasmus before.

Yes.

Can you tell me about this one?

Yes, so that was during my studies in Hungary, it was musicology studies as well. But I did, I started a bachelor's in Scandinavian studies, like simultaneously with my master's in musicology. And I learned Swedish through that, or I started with Swedish through that, but then I didn't finish the program. And I wanted to do an exchange study period. The way I did it is I basically finished my master's, but I didn't write my thesis. So I still had my, like I still had my thesis course left, but I could do it from anywhere. And I wanted to take some courses in Sweden as well. I was, I was in Gothenburg University for two semesters in 2022, 20, no, 20, 21, 22, or 22, 23, I don't remember, but a couple of years ago.

Okay, okay. And what's your experience founding? So were you paid to do the experience or it was all by your pocket?

Oh, I got, I got like right now or?

Both.

Yeah, I got grants both times.

I think I was really fortunate with the Erasmus grant for the whole year when I did my exchange in Gothenburg. And then now I, from the university in the Netherlands, I, like I'm here for three months and, but the university only finances a bit less than three months.

When you decided to start this journey, was it the language, so English was like a factor that makes you decide to do that?

Like to improve my English?

Yeah.

Or was your English the same one that you have now? Did you improve? Yeah. That's an interesting question. I don't know if it improved. I think it did. But I don't know how much. I'm doing now and I also did a few years ago, a weird mixture of Swedish and English. So in that sense, I'm not like a typical Erasmus student, I guess. And now I'm also trying to communicate as much in Swedish, but I do, I did write papers in English and I also communicated a lot in English in Gothenburg. And I also, like, I mean, most of my friends were international, so like I used it daily. But I already had a really good level of English because I learned it in the States when I was 14, my family moved there for a year. So I learned English there and then I kind of liked it. I had a really good base and then I had a really good English teacher in high school. So I think by the time I got to university, my English was really good. So during my five years of doing my bachelor's and then my master's, I also had to do a lot of reading in English and then taking an exam in Hungarian, which was really hard. But it's kind of like, I used English a lot even before doing the Erasmus. But I guess it probably improved in a way of, like, I was forced to use it daily. And I, just a couple of days ago, I was thinking about when I became so comfortable with speaking English, because somewhere along the way it did change. And it is possible that the exchange here helped. But I already had a really like good level of English before.

So did you do some kind of like test before, like to prove your English before the Erasmus or internship and both at the other one?

For the Gothenburg one, I already had a language exam. But I think I took the Erasmus, like, like, there was like some kind of a language, like a language, not of course, but yeah, like a test you had to take. I think I took that. And then, I don't remember clearly, but I might have also done something at the end of the mobility test, like another test or something, but maybe not.

Or TOEFLs, those kinds of?

No, I'm not sure, but it's possible that it was like the first, you had to take a test before, and then maybe to kind of check your progress after. But I'm not super sure, because I know there was also like an evaluation form that I had to take, and maybe I'm confusing the two. I think I had to take a language test before. But now for the internship, I didn't do, I didn't, but I already have, like, I have a Cambridge C2, so I don't know if that's why, or maybe it was not

important for them, or like they saw that I could speak English, and I don't know, but I was not asked to do the English.

You never thought like, oh, my level of English is not good enough, so I'm not sure I'm gonna take this experience?

No, for me, no. But it is, it is hard to kind of switch to writing in English for like, like a paper. I feel like that's, that is, that was more of a challenge now that I'm doing this master's, but it's not an Erasmus. But yeah, of course, you have to kind of switch your mind. And I think the first time I wrote a paper in Gothenburg, I think I first wrote it, it was just a short paper, but I first wrote it in Hungarian, and then I translated it to English, and then I think I translated it to Swedish, which is a very... A long way. Yeah, it's not the most efficient way of writing a paper. Um, yeah, so I guess I wasn't comfortable enough to write in English at first, and I felt like I'm more comfortable writing in Hungarian. And then translating it to English. But now, like, later that changed, and now I'm not doing that. Like, sometimes I have, like, a sentence that I'm, I'm like, I want to write this, and then I, I, I put it in deep file, you know, the, the, it's like Google Translate, but the other one.

Okay.

Like a translator program, and then I put that exact sentence, and I see how it translates it to English to kind of, like, like, if there is something very specific I want to say, but now I don't, like, now I'm just trying to, like, switch my mind to English and not really translate from Hungarian to English.

So it never also influenced your way of, um, making friends during the Erasmus, or maybe your academic results?

I mean, of course I sometimes feel that, um, and I'm, I'm also doing, like, humanities, which, where language is so important. So, and I spent, like, five, six, seven, I don't know how many years, kind of, like, cultivating my, cultivating, I don't know if that's the right word, but, like, like, working on my way of writing in Hungarian. And, like, I think I got to a pretty good level. And then, of course, I cannot get to that level in English, because it's not my mother tongue. So, like, I feel, maybe if you do it for 25 years, then, yeah, I don't know. But I feel like I will never be on the same level as I would be if I had to write in Hungarian. And that is very frustrating, to be honest. So, I do, I do feel that even though I, like, I'm not, I'm not shy about my English. I use it a lot. I think I, like, when it comes to, like, writing emails or whatever, I think I have a very good sense of, like, when I'm writing in English during my internship now, it's like, I'm just writing it. And, like, I know how to write it. I, I think I have a good sense of the nuances of, like, if you write this, this is more polite, or if you, like, with Swedish, I don't have that. It's very frustrating as well. But in English, I think I have it. But when it comes to, like, academic writing, of course, it's, it's not going to be on, on the same level. So, it is, it is a bit frustrating. And I do sometimes feel like I'm, you know, like, I could be better if I didn't have this disadvantage. When I was doing my exchange in Gothenburg, it was, I think, it was a bit different in a sense of, I, so I was at the end of my master's, but I took bachelor level courses. So, like, the, the, like, the academic criteria, or not criteria, but, like, the, you know, like, the lessons itself, or no, but the, like, the lessons itself were not as hard for me, because I already had, like, five years of, like, that subject behind me, like, musicology as, like, a field. So, of course, I learned new things, but I, but it was not new in a sense of, like, I

kind of knew what I was doing, I think. And I felt like that the level was not, like, like, I could achieve that level even in English. But, but it is definitely something that's, like, of course, it's not gonna be on, on the same level. And then with making friends, I don't think it, it really affected me. I was living in a, in Gothenburg, I was living in, like, a student building, so it was really easy to make friends. There were a lot of internationals. I did sometimes feel like even though I'm supposed to, like, be really good in English, because I lived in the States, I sometimes felt like other people could, like, speak even better than me. Like, it didn't really matter in a sense of, like, we could have really good conversations, but sometimes I remember sometimes thinking of, like, how, how can they, like, like, how is that level possible? Because when it comes to, like, speaking in English, I'm, I'm often, like, forgetting words or, or not, like, finding the right one. And, and it can be a bit frustrating. And it's also frustrating because I think, like, language is really important to me. And I feel like if I don't find the right word, then my personality kind of, like, it doesn't come through because I'm, like, if I want to say something exactly the way it was, but I don't know the words, I have to change it a bit. But then I feel like the whole thing kind of changes. And I'm, like, I don't know if it's because I'm doing humanities and, like, I spend so many, I don't know, hours just trying to, like, find the right words or is it because I, like, just, I don't know, finding the exact word. But even now, I feel like I can't really explain it as well as I could, you know, in my mother tongue. Yeah, so it didn't really hold me back. But of course, there were, like, certain... Yeah, related to this, I have a question.

Do you think that your personality or your character may be changed based on the language you speak? Yeah, of course. Yeah, it's really funny.

Yeah, it does. It does. Yeah, especially because I learned English in the US. So I feel like my personality becomes a bit more American. And it's really funny because, like, it's not, like, a big, like, it's an, I think it's more like a nuance. But it does change a bit. And I'm really, like, I'm really comfortable with Americans. And I actually had some American friends in Gothenburg when I was doing my Erasmus. And yeah, I think it's really easy to kind of act. But it is, it sometimes feel like you're acting, because you do have to act a bit to, like, like, Hungarian pronunciation is very different from English pronunciation. If I'm pronouncing an English word correctly, it feels like I'm exaggerating. Because if I would pronounce it in Hungarian, I would do it differently. But then that's when you have the really strong accent, for me, it feels a bit like I'm mocking them sometimes, but I know I'm not. But it does feel a bit like that. And then it also kind of feels like I'm putting on a mask. Like, this is Rebecca in English. This is Rebecca. Like, this is Rebecca in Hungarian. Speaking in English I put on some kind of a mask, which is really similar to my face, but it's not the same. And also just like, also that like, the culture, like, you're not just knowing the language, you don't just have to know the language, you have to know the culture as well. So like, your references are going to be different if you're speaking another language. Like, there are so many references in Hungarian to Hungarian TV shows, and books, and poems, and I don't know, whatever, cartoons, and you're losing all of them. When you're switching to another language, and you're speaking with people who are not from Hungary. But then, of course, you're gaining a lot of other, like references to, I don't know, English TV shows, or English books, or, or like the more like, European thing, or the globalized thing, or like, I lived in the US and my parents now live in the US as well. So I feel like I can connect with people from the US easier, because I do, like, I'm following what's happening in the US, because my parents live there, or, like, I've been there a couple of times, like, I have a basic understanding of like,

how life is there. But like, now that I'm here, I watched Melody Festival. And so now I, like, I know that with the face mask, that it's like, now it's a thing, and you can joke about it. And like, of course, I wouldn't know that if I, like, I mean, I could watch Melody Festival from home, but why would I, like, it's a Swedish thing. So, so it's kind of like, you don't just change the language, you change the culture a bit. And then I sometimes feel like I lose, I also lose myself a bit, because, because of all these, like, preferences that you lose. And then, of course, there is also the thing that, like, my vocabulary is bigger in Hungarian. And I really like just saying, like, really, like, stupid, silly things, or making sarcastic comments, or whatever. And that is harder in another language. And also just, I feel like, I don't really have it with English anymore. Sometimes I do, but I don't really have it anymore. But with Swedish, I have it every day that sometimes it's the hardest to speak about everyday things.

Like, I'm a very extroverted, talkative person. And then I just, like, I just want to share, like, a funny story that happened with me, but I don't know the words. So I can choose to either not share it or share it in a really bad way. And it's like, neither is good. Like, I feel like I'm losing something either way. Yeah, and just like saying those really easy everyday things can be, can be really hard, I think.

And you told me that you have a lot of international friends here, so not a lot of Swedish, I suppose.

Well, I mean, when I was in Gothenburg, I had mostly international friends. I did went to school with Swedish people, but I couldn't really connect with them. Sometimes I, like, talk with them, but it was hard because it was a Swedish class, and I couldn't speak that good Swedish, so I always felt left out. But I didn't want everyone to, like, switch to English for me, and I also wanted to practice the language. So, I mean, sometimes I talk with them, and, like, we had group projects and stuff like that, but it was really hard to, like, connect with them, and we didn't connect outside of school at all. And sometimes they didn't even say hi to me, which I was told it was, like, a Swedish thing, like, they were not being rude, they were just being Swedish. But, yeah, but then other people told me that maybe it's, like, it was probably not them being, like, rude, it's just how they are, it was really weird, because I feel like, like, if you know someone, you say hi to them, no? Yeah, exactly, no, I feel the same. So, yeah, so, like, mostly I had, most of my friends were either, were from two places, one was the student building, or, like, it was basically, like, it felt like an apartment complex or something, like, a lot of, like, smaller houses with small apartments and shared, mostly shared kitchens, but there was a community space where we could hang out every week. I think there was, like, two board game nights every week, and I started volunteering there, and it was a really good group of people, and it was really nice, because there were, like, regulars, but they were, like, you could just talk with anyone, like, who came there, it was always in English, and then everyone just, like, I don't think I knew most of the people's names, but it was just a really fun way to connect with people and just play board games and have a coffee and some, you know, like a fika, but there were a few regulars, so I kind of got to know them and became friends with them, and that, but mostly I hang out with people from, like, a church community, so I I joined the church, it was a Swedish church, but it was full of internationals who are, like, kind of integrated or knew some level of Swedish, but it was really also really easy to talk with them in English, and then I also joined, like, a

Christian student group, so I had, like, a few Swedish friends from there, but we also always talked in English, so I mostly, yeah, I mostly connected, like, through these, so actually I couldn't connect to people through university basically at all, which was very interesting, yeah, yeah.

Okay, so now we're gonna pass to the second part of these questions, and they are more about how the language barrier affects the Erasmus policies and goals. I don't know if you know about the policies.

I'm not sure. Like the main goals of the Erasmus and why they found this board. I'm guessing it's mostly to encourage international experiences and to kind of contribute to the feeling of being European and not, you know, Hungarian or Swedish. Yeah. Kind of like the whole European Union feeling of you can move freely, you can work freely, you can study wherever. Of course, not wherever, but kind of wherever. but I have, I've never read anything about it. I'm just, it would make sense if it was something like this.

In the European Commission website, you can find the goals and the policies and they're like a list of them. So if you're curious, you can just like simply text. But this is mainly how you told me. So do you think that in your experience, these policies and goals were effectively accomplished?

In my case or like in general?

In your case

I mean, yeah, I would say it was a really easy way to move to another country for a year when I was in Gothenburg. And now it's also, it was a really easy way of just starting to work in another country, to work, like to gain some experience. And also to like understand a bit better how other countries work. And I mean, when I did my exchange in Gothenburg, it was a really nice way of kind of connecting with people from all over Europe. So like I had a friend from Switzerland and from France and I had a half Italian, half Hungarian flatmate or like he was living in the next room by chance. And then of course we talked a lot in Hungarian, but we were also like, we became friends. Yeah, so it's like, I don't think I would have met so many internationals if I didn't go. And I think my idea of like, I mean, even before I was already open to like meeting people from other cultures. And I already lived in another country where I also met like, if you move to the States, there are people from... Everywhere. So I already had a bit of experience with it. But I think like moving back to Hungary, one thing that I actually really missed was not being in an international community. Because it's, it's so nice. And there's a lot of like, like you lose the local references and all, but then you gain a lot of like other things. Like you gain other perspectives and other cultures and, you know, other jokes or whatever. So it's like you do gain a lot as well. Especially like if it's like outside of Europe, there are even more, you know, things that you can learn about and you can kind of, yeah, like just experience. There was one more thing I wanted to say, but I forgot. I don't know what it was. Oh, yeah. But the one thing that I don't know if it's, if it's actually a goal of Erasmus or not, but it is something that's... This was also my experience, but I've heard many people say the same thing or like a few people say the same things of like, it's really hard to connect to the locals. Like you are in an Erasmus bubble and it's really nice, but it's really hard to like connect to like in Sweden, it's quite hard to connect to Swedish people. And I know people who wanted to go to like German speaking

countries to learn or like to practice their German, but they basically never spoke German because all their friends were internationalists who spoke English. So I don't know if that's a plus or a minus because I don't know, but it is something that's like, this was my experience. Now with this internship, it's a bit different because I am working in a very Swedish place. Like all of my co-workers or most of my co-workers are Swedish and those who are not, they're already like speaking Swedish, like they've been living here for a while. So they're kind of integrated into Sweden. So it is a bit different now because I feel like I actually, I'm much closer to the local culture, like how they act, you know, among themselves. And because I understand Swedish, they don't really switch to English around me. So I actually experience how it is when they have lunch or, you know, like these are not big things, but small, you know, details. Yeah, like we had a breakfast fika together this morning and just how, like I didn't know how something like this went. Like I had a basic understanding of, you know, like I expected coffee and some food, but the way it went, like actually, like it is probably a bit different from like other, you know, like probably if you're in Germany, it's a bit different. Or if you're in Hungary, it's a bit different, like it's basically the same, but it's not exactly. So now it's a bit different.

Is there something you would like to improve regarding these policies or goals? Is something maybe you were missing and you wanted to have maybe like a support from the program?

Well, to be honest, I think the whole like, no, I think it's generally it's really nice and really good. But and I think it's impossible to have like perfect program. But the main idea that you study like the higher education institutions are so connected that you can basically just go to another country for a semester and learn something there. And then the whole thing can be if the whole of the like all of the classes that you do can just be accepted in your home university. Like that is that doesn't like that part doesn't work. Like in theory, it should. And with all the credit system and the bachelor and master, like all like I mean, I don't know how it was in Italy, but I know in Hungary they didn't have the bachelor master system. They implemented it. I don't know, 20 or 10, 15, 20 years ago. I don't know how much. So like I like my parents don't have a bachelor's or a master's. They have they they went to university for five or six years and then they got something that's probably would be a master's today. But they got the diploma. And then, yes, I mean, it was like kind of a similar but still a different system. And then this bachelor master was implemented and the credit system like they didn't get credits like my parents generation. They got grades and then you could fail or pass and then go to the next year or not. So the whole credit system also didn't really exist. So, of course, it like shaped how how higher education is. But you like there are so many differences still between countries and universities within different countries that it's really hard to like find. Or especially like with with Hungary, where I think or like Eastern Central Eastern Europe. I think it's a lot different than like Northern Europe or Western. Like maybe if you are going from the Netherlands to Sweden, it's a bit closer. But and of course, it also depends on like what program you're doing. I know some about this because my dad teaches or was teaching at a university in Hungary and he's an engineer. So it's like an engineering program. And he was also sometimes responsible for like accepting Erasmus things. And then so the way like it works at that university is that they have a lot of subjects that they feel like is important to like teach before giving a diploma. So there are a lot of subjects for small amount of credits. But that is something that's completely different in like

Western European universities where you usually have like a big project for like half a year or like you often have like a big project for, I don't know, half a year and then you get seven, eight or 15 credits at the end. Like I'm getting 15 credits for this internship or, you know, like you take one class and then you get seven credits, which is for like it's often a lot for Hungarian universities. And then you do your like lesson or like your subject here in Sweden, you get seven credits and then you want to take it home. But they can't accept that because it's an enormous amount of credits, like compared to what the system is in most Hungarian universities. So like that, like in theory, it works, but in practice, I think there's a lot of, you know, like there's still a lot of differences. Maybe this is more related to the university rather than the Erasmus program, though. I guess it's like to like in like I think they are related. I mean, they are related in a sense of like if you build a program on this like principle, but the principle doesn't really work in practice, then you're going to have some problems. Like what happens often in Hungarian universities is that they don't accept the credits. So like basically when you do an Erasmus plus semester, you kind of end up losing that semester, which is fine because you gain a lot of experiences. But often you can't really continue with your studies in the same like like you have to like probably take an extra semester to finish your studies, which is like it's not a huge problem. But like I intentionally intentionally did it like that. I mean, not like I didn't lose because I was writing my thesis, but I didn't like I only took my Erasmus courses as electives. But it was a lot easier this way because then no one really questioned what I was taking. But if I wanted those courses to be accepted as like my mandatory courses, then I think I would have had a bit of a problem because they were so different. But yeah, it's probably not just about Erasmus, it's about the whole European university system. Yeah, so I think like the original idea about just going to another country and then doing the same thing and then going home that that doesn't that doesn't work in practice. Or like maybe it sometimes does, but like not in this in your case.

Did this experience enhance you belonging to Europe?

I don't know if it enhanced my European feeling of European-ness. Probably a bit, yes. Yeah, I think it like helped with it. I like to think about myself as European. I like this. I mean, I don't really think about myself, but I like I like this idea of thinking more about ourselves as European and not as like from the individual countries. I like this idea. But you don't feel like. Oh, no, I think it's just I don't I wouldn't like define myself like I don't really think about defining myself. I don't know. It's just something I don't think about.

OK, because, for example, I I think I've rarely felt European. I don't feel like since I'm here, I feel like, oh, I'm in Sweden and I feel like it's not the part of Europe I was used to live. But I always felt like I'm Italian. And even more than that, I'm from my region in Italy.

OK, I mean, yeah, this is an interesting now that you say it. I mean, it is an interesting thing, because I think like I like this idea of European-ness and I I want to. I want to think of myself as European, and I think I generally kind of do, although I don't I don't know if I would define myself like that, but I do. I like the idea of being more European than Hungarian, I think. But it is also true what you're saying that the like my sense of what it means to be Hungarian also heightened because like I kind of have to define that as well now that I'm not there anymore. Like in Hungary, of course, you're Hungarian. But what does it mean for me to be

Hungarian here? And like I, I don't I don't like Hungary so much right now with like everything that's happening. And like I would like to like I basically decided to not really be there anymore or like try to not be there anymore because of the political situation or partly because of the political situation and the economic situation. But I also find myself missing it a lot now that I'm not there. And I kind of appreciating things that are maybe not felt natural before. So, yeah, it's like this double thing that I culturally I really enjoy. And like in theory, I really enjoy this European-ness, but there are so many like small nuances or even it can be bigger. But often I feel like it's a small things of like bread is really different here than in Hungary. And I hate that or, you know, like I wish there was this specific thing that I really like, but I cannot find it in the store.

This food or whatever. Yeah, so and of course, I'm like comparing the two cultures constantly because there is one that I know and then there's another that I'm learning now. So, yeah, it's and sometimes I don't I don't like that's also part of like how do you I don't know. Maybe sometimes I seem rude, but I don't want to be rude. But just because I don't know the unwritten rules of society here. So, like, that's also a bit difficult.

Yeah. OK, and we talk about your identity. So do you feel like there is yourself before this experience and yourself after the experience?

Yeah.

In what ways?

Do you want me to talk more about like the Gothenburg because that's already like done or more about this internship now?

The one that you felt you gain more from it, more changes. I mean, the Gothenburg one was a really big thing because I did live outside of Hungary before, but it was always with my family. And then that was the first that I organized for myself and I wanted to go. And I went like my parents took me to the States. I didn't want to go, but I had to go because I was a kid. But with Sweden, I I could decide and I I had to organize it and I had to find accommodation. I mean, it was really easy to find it. They gave it to me, but like still I had to organize everything. And then I went there on my own and I had to like create and I never lived on my own before. Like I lived, I moved from my parents' place, but I always lived with roommates. So that was the first time living completely alone. I didn't really like it, but it was an experience that I didn't have before and I'll probably never have again. So it was like a really unique one year of just having a place all to myself with all of its challenges and really nice things as well. Like it was really nice that, you know, like I could just do whatever I wanted, but I often felt really lonely. Did you feel more independent? Yeah, like I liked that I could be independent, but I also had to be independent even when I didn't want to. And yeah, and then I feel like I also had to like face some fears about living alone. And like one big fear of mine is like, what if I suddenly just get really sick and then I'm alone and there's no one to help. And I actually almost fainted one time when I was home alone. And then that was like kind of like, okay, so it can happen. But then I kind of like, I'm not saying that it was me who dealt with that because it was more like at the last minute I didn't faint. But it was still something that I was like, okay, this is a really bad experience. But I did like manage to get

out of it. But then sometimes, of course, I also I think I had to face a lot of like hard truth about myself of like how like sometimes I can be really bad at taking care of things. Yeah, so it was like a very, yeah, it was a very big thing for me because I never lived alone and I never lived in another country alone. And my boyfriend back then, who's my husband now, he was there, but in a different city. So like I was not completely alone. But in that city, I was basically completely alone.

And then, yeah, it was also like my first time in another university. And yeah, so it was I think it was a very big change in a sense of like, yeah, I think a lot of like my perspective and a lot of things changed. But but now with this internship, I also feel like it's it's there's like things that are changing because I also have to face a lot of fears of like I hate speaking when I don't have the right words. But like I'm forcing myself to practice my speech constantly. And sometimes I think I I'm I look ridiculous trying to just put together a sentence that I can't and like my colleagues are really nice. But of course, like and I know it's sometimes probably very tiring for them. So like I'm constantly facing this fear of like being annoying and being really bad at the language and not being able to express myself properly. And I also feel like it's a bit more like an adult thing, what I'm doing now, like doing the exchange in Gothenburg was more like a college kid just having a nice year. And like I mean, I I did write my thesis, but I didn't I had so much free time. I started a new hobby and I don't know. I had so much free time to just hang around and drink coffee with people. And yeah, I started crocheting and I had so much time to work. Like I spent hours and hours just crocheting and knitting in my room and then going out and having a coffee with a friend and then I don't know, going to exercise a bit. And so it was a lot of like I'm just experiencing life as a young person. But now it feels a lot more like I have to prepare for adult life. I need a job after this. I need to like it's a lot more real in a sense of like I I have very clear goals and I want to put effort into getting to go to like into like achieving those goals. Yeah. But I don't know if like looking back, I will think about this as like a turning point or more like. But I yeah, I think it's like I feel like any time you kind of start something really new, you have it does like change you a bit. So, yeah, I'll probably think about this period also as like, OK, I changed a lot.

That was my last question. If there is something you want to add or ask me. I feel like I talk so much, but it's just so interesting questions and it's so hard to like find the right things, you know, like the right words to say.

If you want just to if there is something else that you want to add, just send me a message. Or I can also like, yeah, you have my Facebook. I can also give you my number.

So I'm just going to stop the registration.

APPENDIX IV
Fourth interview
Orkanen library

Here you go. Okay, first of all, I'm gonna tell you a little bit about my thesis.

So I'm writing about how the way we speak, the language we speak, influence also the way we think in the context of Erasmus mobility. Okay, okay. So it's focusing mainly about how the experience can reshape the perception of the students about themselves, about the European Union, how they felt to belong to Europe, and maybe also about the cultural difference, language barrier, so all the stuff that you can meet during this experience.

And I...

Wow, wow, that's really important

. I turned my thesis about three main questions, and then based on this question, I also rephrased small little questions. And so the first one is how the experience of multilingualism during the Erasmus Plus has reshaped your perception of yourself. If you want to introduce yourself a little bit, tell me how old are you, what are you doing, which language do you speak?

Yeah, I am originally from India, but I grew up in Malaysia until high school, and then I went back to India. And now for my master's, like I also did my bachelor's in India, and for my master's, I have come over here. as I told you before, as part of my course, I started at Lund University. And then for one semester, I went on exchange to the University of Torino in Italy. And for my third semester, I went to Aarhus University in Denmark.

So that was my program. And compared to all my other classmates, I am a little younger. I'm just 23. So it's kind of like I'm still at like an immature age, I would say, while all my other classmates are like a little bit more matured. They have like better perspectives and better knowledge about how the world works. They did a lot more research, they have more experience. But I was just straight out of my bachelor's to start my master's program. I feel like something really weird for me was that my classmates were like 40, 30, 50. In Italy, you don't really go to university if you're more than 30, I would say, or people look at you like weirdly. I love it. Yeah, it was really diverse and just very new to me, this whole experience. Like even like starting at Lund University and then like each country that I went to for exchange, all of those were like completely different experiences.

Which language was your experience? So both in one in Denmark and one in Italy?

Both were in English. Like the mode of instruction, the teaching, everything was in English. And also the students, we all communicate with each other in English. So like within my course, most of us are all like, we're just mixed. We're like from different countries. So the common language for us to speak is English. And for some of the students, like I think like five of us are from India. So we get to speak in like one common Indian language. Because again, in India, you have like hundreds of languages.

Which one do you speak?

I speak Tamil, which is the oldest language in the world.

Yeah. And it's like the other languages in the southern part of India kind of developed from this language. And yeah, like my friends speak those other languages. So it's like if I speak my language, the other person can understand a little bit. Okay. Even though it's not the same.

That's very interesting. What makes you think to start this experience like Erasmus Plus?

So my cousin was the one who actually did an Erasmus program.

And that was kind of like he went to exchange for like three different countries. I think it was in something to do with software engineering. And he told me that there were other programs exactly like this. So when I was looking at a few programs at Lund University and so on, I found these kind of exchange programs, which offer like exchange semesters abroad. So I thought, okay, why not? Because I really just wanted to learn as much as I could about the world. Like I already had grown up in Malaysia and then in India, but I felt like I was just locked within like those two cities. I didn't really get to travel and explore. And I was actually quite introverted. And I just wanted to grow out of that. And by kind of like comfortably forcing me into situations, which will make me speak to people. So I thought, okay, why not? Instead of doing my master's in India, I could, you know, do my master's in Europe. And also like because Europe is amazing for obvious reasons. So yeah, that's what kind of like encouraged me to come over here to Europe. Okay. So you were able to do this experience because you were in Lund University? Yes.

So your bachelor is in Lund, right?

Oh, no, my bachelor's was in India, but my master's program started at Lund.

Okay, master, sorry. Okay. And so you decided after your cousin told you about this experience?

Yeah, his experiences. And like his program was across Italy, Finland and Amsterdam, which is completely three different cultures and perspectives. And just hearing the stories about like his experiences, the people that he meets, and even just random stories of his neighbors and stuff, all of that just felt like the kind of environment that I wanted to live my life. So that kind of inspired me to make this decision to come here.

. Was your experience founding? So did someone pay for your experience in Italy or in Denmark?

So my program is actually offered by this education institution called EIT. And through them, we get a scholarship based on our academics at the time that we apply for the course. So based on my bachelor's and all, I was able to get a 70 person scholarship. Yeah, that's really good. But that's only part of the tuition, like the scholarship is only for the tuition fees. And like maybe if there's like some of the events or even our flight tickets or accommodation, all of that is on us. Okay.

Yeah. Okay, okay. So 50-50.

Yeah, yeah. When you decided to start and doing this Erasmus experience, was the language proficiency something that you felt like a barrier, so like an obstacle or more like you felt fluent in English? And you were like, yeah, let's do it. No problem. Easy peasy. Well, honestly, because the course and the academics is in English, and because even the website and like any other like forms or something that we have to fill, all of that was in English. So that was never a problem for me.

But one thing that all of us, all of my classmates as well as me had to think of was after going there to interact with the natives, or with people who are already over there, you do need to know the local language a little bit. Like within your university, with your professors, English is always the best. But maybe if I was going to a cafe and I wanted to order, maybe they didn't understand my English accent, then I would kind of like feel, oh, I should have learned a little bit of Italian or a little bit of Danish.

So from like the university perspective or the, you know, the university, how do you say it? The activities or participation? No problem. So with English, you never had problem before. So yeah, it's good.

Do you feel like the language, so the English, the level of English of someone can change the experience after all? Because maybe people don't have your same level of English and the same experience would have had different.

Do you mean this in like the students English level or the professors?

The students.

I mean, definitely. I mean, for me, because I'm quite fluent and I know how to communicate with, I mean, like quite well in English. I never found that as a problem. I mean, sometimes I feel like I speak a little too fast. And so the other person can't understand me so well. So at that time, I kind of slow down and I like start using simpler words. And at the same time, I know like I've observed some of my other friends students from like other programs. They struggle to speak in English a little bit. So for them, I mean, as far as what I have observed, I guess it kind of brings out the confidence to go out and talk to people or even to your professors just because you feel like your English is not good enough. But honestly, for me, it hasn't really been a problem. Like not knowing the local language has been a problem. Yeah.

So, for example, about the local language, do you ever felt, do you have some language barrier experiences, like examples?

I mean, funny experiences were in Italy, honestly. Like I learned a little bit of Italian through Duolingo. And some of my professors would even say like a few things like and stuff like that.

So I kind of picked up on that. But maybe if I just wanted to ask someone for directions, or maybe if I was at a cafe, or I remember even when I was looking for part-time jobs in Italy, even then when I would try to speak in Italian with them, they're just like, what? And like, I

don't know, maybe it was my pronunciations or something. And then they would say something else in Italian. And I'd be like, I don't understand at all.

Do you have an example, like a specific one?

Yeah, so I went to this one cafe. It was just like a small cafe somewhere in Torino near my house. And I asked them in Italian if they had any part-time jobs available. I don't remember the translation right now. And she was really happy to see that I, obviously, a non-Italian was speaking in Italian. And she was so happy. And she's like, she said something in Italian. I couldn't understand it at all. And I was just like, blinking at her. And then she tried to slow down and explain a little slowly. But still, I couldn't understand. And then somehow we just used Google Translate. And then she typed it in. And then I was like, oh, OK, this is what you meant. And yeah, after that, we spoke that way. I mean, but sadly, she didn't have any opportunity for me. But it was just a really nice interaction.. And in Denmark, I don't really think I have experienced something like that. Because in Denmark, a lot of the people know Danish. So even if I want to ask someone for help or something, I'll be like, in Danish, I don't remember the word exactly right now. But I would be like, excuse me, do you speak English? And they would say yes. And then I was able to talk to them. And even if they didn't know English, they'd still be like, no, it's OK. And then they'd kind of try to understand. And if they just completely don't, they'd be like, oh, no, I'm sorry

.So it was always a middle ground.

I mean, from my experiences. Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Do you feel like you are integrated? You're integrated in any of the society where you have the experience?

You mean in like student activities or just like my neighborhood, the place where I was? In Italy, yes. I kind of like I didn't even make friends. Like the locals just knew that I was new to the neighborhood. And it was just nice. Like whenever they saw me, they would smile. And there was this lady who had a cat. And with that, we became very good friends, even though we couldn't speak that much. So in Italy, I really felt like I belonged over there, even though we weren't speaking in English. I still felt that way because that's how Italian culture is. You're just very welcoming and accepting. And I don't know, everyone was just so impressed, even if I would just be able to say like, ciao, pieccere. With that itself, it felt good. But in Denmark, I didn't feel that way. I just felt like everyone was very closed off. Nobody really wanted to interact. And even if like even my neighbors, like we have never had a conversation once. We just see each other maybe when we're parking our cycles, but they don't smile at us. And even if we tried to smile at them or maybe have small talk in like the laundry room or something, nobody was really conversing.

Yeah. So cultural differences..

Most really strong. Yeah. I mean, I don't blame, you know, Danish culture for this. It's just like people are just so independent and like they feel that they have to prioritize themselves in anything that they do. So I mean, it's right. It's not wrong. It's just the way that they were raised. Yeah.

And do you feel like your personality or your character change depending on the language? Yes, definitely.

So even when I was a little younger, like my English wasn't this good. I think after like moving to Malaysia, I think during like my teenage years, that's when I was watching a lot of YouTube, like American. I mean, that was exactly like 2016 when this vlogging and all of that became quite popular. So with that, I was able to pick up a little more English. And even without me realizing it, I just became more confident and I was able to speak better. And afterwards, just seeing my dad interact with a lot of other people, like he's doing something in the IT industry and he has a lot of clients from different places. And just seeing the way that he converses with them kind of also gave me an idea, OK, this is how you talk to people in English. And just combining, I mean, like without like, I mean, I'm actually just realizing all of this now, but just combining all of that and, you know, applying different talking techniques to people over here, it really did boost my confidence a lot. Because when I was doing my bachelor's, I mean, like, yes, everyone did speak English, but we were more like speaking to each other in our own local language in Tamil. And because of that, I was kind of like I never really had the chance to practice, like speaking openly in English or even maybe giving a presentation. I never really had the chance to practice that. And it kind of made me feel shy. And I was always kind of reserved. I never used to go out and initiate a conversation. But just, I don't know, but I always had the English skills inside me. I mean, that's what I feel. And after coming here, I had the opportunity to kind of like exercise the skills that I had and just learning, just observing the way that people are responding. Maybe something that I say in one way is a little rude. So I'd kind of like, OK, I shouldn't be saying it this way. Then I'd kind of like change. And it's honestly helped me a lot just to become more confident in myself. And yeah, I mean, earlier, maybe two years ago, if someone was to describe me, they would say that I'm a very shy person. But now they'd be like, oh, she can talk to anyone. Like she's really open. She talks well. She converses very well. Her English is also easy to understand. That's what people would say about me. Yeah, definitely my personality has changed.

OK, and I'm going to take the second part. So this is more about like Erasmus policies and goals. OK, I don't know if you know about some of them.

Yeah, yeah, I am aware.

So do you feel like the Erasmus Mobility actually accomplish these goals, in your opinion?

So I think one of the goals was that we have to like maybe integrate with the locals and, you know, participate. I mean, it's not that you have to participate, but it's kind of like you just involved yourself with like the local activities, maybe through student organizations.

So in Italy, that really wasn't a problem. Like even though everyone else was speaking in Italian and we were the only English speakers, it just felt very welcoming to be around them. And, you know, they would even, you know, like try to have small talk with you.

And that was fine. But in Denmark, again, it just felt very, very closed off. And I was honestly very surprised by that because I think like ESN Aarhus was ranked like the number one organization of like the ESN communities all over Europe. But I never really felt that warm or welcomed for like any of the events that was going on. I don't really know if it was that like my personality or like what was wrong. I don't really know.

But I just never really connected with the people over there. Yeah, like even with like with the locals and the international students as well. It was almost like everyone was just really closed off and nobody really wanted to interact with others. Like even if they wanted, even if they wanted to, they just wouldn't speak to you. That was like kind of surprising. I mean, even in the student community.

OK, so do you feel like there are some improvements that could be made on these goals or policy like to help?

I mean, honestly, the problem isn't language, in my opinion, but I mean, something can be done, but I really don't know what can be done.

So it's not language.

I mean, thinking about it, I mean, of course, like any country you go to, the locals are speaking their own local language and they're more comfortable in that language. But maybe if someone who speaks English comes and tries to talk to you, people at least, you know, try to speak to them back in English. And even if they can't, they just find the middle ground, maybe with hand gestures or something or just by pointing, they'll somehow make an effort to talk to you. But in Denmark, I just felt that even trying to initiate a conversation with someone always felt like you were disturbing their personal space. Maybe that's what the other person also felt about us. And maybe that's why nobody really conversed with each other. But also inside of the organisation and maybe the experience that they were organising was the same. Yeah, I mean, a lot of these student events, maybe parties or just even like in our host, there was this culture of like Friday bars, where it's like everyone just goes bar hopping to like the different bars available in the university. But even for that, it just felt like people who were already a group of friends just stayed within themselves. Like even if you tried to go and introduce yourself, they'd just be like, oh, OK, yeah. And then they just go back to that group. Yeah, that's just what I have experienced.

Was the Erasmus programme advertised enough by maybe the Lund University or even in India?

I mean, in India, definitely. We do see advertisements about like the Erasmus programme. There's also another organisation called EIT. So I mean, definitely based on your algorithm, you get these advertisements. And then speaking of here, like yeah, on YouTube, I have seen digital advertisements. And at the same time, even maybe at like the welcome events at the university, they tell you about their Instagram page. They even have flyers. And like through that, you just get to know that, OK, there is a community like this, there are events and, you know, organisations available this way.

OK. Do you think, to what extent does the language barrier prevent the organisation from achieving their potential?

I mean, that was like what I said right now was my experience. Maybe a small population of the people do feel this way. So I'd say maybe 20 percent. Maybe or maybe it is just maybe like people's perceptions of other cultures and that they just really don't want to, you know, have friends from certain cultures. Maybe. I don't know. OK. So there is nothing that you maybe in your experience you wouldn't have improved. Maybe like if, for example, if you

could be the organiser, there is something and maybe some activities or I don't know, something you feel like, oh, this it would have been nice if there was this thing instead. I mean, maybe first I would have tried to find out like which international community had like the most number of students and maybe just catering to maybe some festivals. That belong to that culture. Just so that they also feel more welcomed and accepted over there. I think that would have kind of maybe helped. But I mean, seeing that you can't do like you can't celebrate all festivals of like hundred and twenty five countries.

So yeah, it's still difficult, but maybe just figuring out which are like the major communities available and like your university or even your city and just trying to take an initiative to, you know, like organise something for them. I mean, that also gives you the opportunity to learn a little bit more about that culture, which I think is important, because when international students go to another country, they definitely learn. They do a little bit of research just to know about the other country. So it would be nice just to kind of like understand, OK, when they are going to, you know, like maybe maybe they are curious to learn a little bit about our countries as well. So, yeah, I think maybe like or maybe even like language exchange or just like small events like that, where maybe a group of people from different countries get together and just talk a little bit about their own countries. I think even that would be, you know, kind of a nice idea to do.

That's a nice initiative. Yeah. Since you start from maybe like a background that doesn't really involve Europe.

No, no. Exactly.

Do you feel like since you're here, does a sense of European identity start growing up on you or?

So, I mean, mainly I would say like all of that was because of social media.

So it's kind of like social media kind of markets these certain lifestyles and just kind of like like comparing those lifestyles with maybe just people that I randomly see, maybe even in London or even in Malmo, just by the way that they're dressed or like maybe just they have like a coffee in their hand or like just just seeing all of that. I'm like, OK, this is what European lifestyle is like. And it looks nice, of course. So, you know, sometimes even me, my friends, we try to like mimic that. I mean, that's the main reason I got that coat. Ah, that one(pointing at the coat). Yeah, because it just felt very European and I liked it. I think I have the same at some point. I mean, it's from H&M. I got it on sale. It's really French to me. Something really French. Yeah. So just something that kind of like gives me like a European identity. I just wanted to, you know, like take in a few behaviours.

I mean, I have tried a few other things, like maybe just sitting in a park. But the thing is, I don't have the habit of reading books. So just sitting in a park, idly, that didn't match for me. Or maybe just cafe hopping and stuff like that. I'm a student on a budget, so I can't do that as well. So it's just, you know, just picking up like certain behaviours or maybe just like a few elements that I see other people doing that kind of gives me like like that that belonging of like just like, OK, I have a little bit of like a European side. Yeah. OK. So no coffee and like I know they're really expensive.

No park with the book. But which others do you feel like you're appropriating?

I'd also say biking. Like when I mean, when I was in London, I really like in 2024, I really wanted to get a bike. But it was my first time in Europe and I just wanted to observe and just see how are other people biking. So I didn't really get one then. And then in Italy, because I was in Torino, it wasn't really much of like a cycle friendly city. So again, over there, I couldn't really bike. But after going to Denmark in Aarhus, it was a really bike friendly city. So over there, I got the chance to get a cycle and, you know, go around. That just made me feel like I was part of, you know, like the other people and like just, you know, like riding along with them and like the bicycle lanes. I kind of felt like I belonged over there. And after coming back over here, actually today I'm going to go check out a one cycle.

And if I if I buy it, then, you know, it's kind of like, OK, I have like another, you know, like element of like the European culture in me once again.

OK, you have a green, maybe European identity, but you feel like this spirit also reinforced your national identity. Like do you feel more nationalistic when you're here rather than when you're back home?

I mean, honestly, I don't know if this is going to be a little controversial. But the thing is, I honestly don't really want to associate myself with my home country that much, mainly because people from our country are making a fool out of themselves after coming abroad, like whether they are in the US or Canada or wherever they go, everyone is making such a fool out of themselves. Yeah. I mean, maybe a lot of people, they are stealing. They don't know how to behave in public. Maybe they're spitting in public and, you know, just. Who's really here and it's cultural. Yeah. But it's just like, I mean, you have come from a foreign, like you've come from one country and you're going to another person's country. You have to respect their culture, their rules. And like, you can't just pick fights with anyone just because you don't like something that happened. And you just have to behave with, you know, like some moral conduct and like have some personal values.

Appendix IV

Orkanen library
Recorded 6/04/26

Here you go. Okay, first of all, I'm gonna tell you a little bit about my thesis. Yeah. So I'm writing about how the way we speak, the language we speak, influence also the way we think in the context of Erasmus mobility. Okay, okay. So it's focusing mainly about how the experience can reshape the perception of the students about themselves, about the European Union, how they felt to belong to Europe, and maybe also about the cultural difference, language barrier, so all the stuff that you can meet during this experience.

And I... Wow, wow, that's really important. I turned my thesis about three main questions, and then based on this question, I also rephrased small little questions. And so the first one is how the experience of multilingualism during the Erasmus Plus has reshaped your perception of yourself.

If you want to introduce yourself a little bit, tell me how old are you, what are you doing, which language do you speak? I am originally from India, but I grew up in Malaysia until high school, and then I went back to India. And now for my master's, like I also did my bachelor's in India, and for my master's, I have come over here.

So like, as I told you before, as part of my course, I started at Lund University. And then for one semester, I went on exchange to the University of Torino in Italy. And for my third semester, I went to Aarhus University in Denmark.

So that was my program. And compared to all my other classmates, I am a little younger. I'm just 23.

So it's kind of like I'm still at like an immature age, I would say, while all my other classmates are like a little bit more matured. They have like better perspectives and better knowledge about how the world works. They did a lot more research, they have more experience.

But I was just straight out of my bachelor's to start my master's program. I feel like something really weird for me was that my classmates were like 40, 30, 50. In Italy, you don't really go to university if you're more than 30, I would say, or people look at you like weirdly.

Even I noticed that. 90 years old. Yeah, it's amazing.

I love it. Yeah, it was really diverse and just very new to me, this whole experience. Like even like starting at Lund University and then like each country that I went to for exchange, all of those were like completely different experiences.

Yeah. Okay. Which language was your experience? So both in one in Denmark and one in Italy? Both were in English.

Like the mode of instruction, the teaching, everything was in English. And also the students, we all communicate with each other in English. So like within my course, most of us are all like, we're just mixed.

We're like from different countries. So the common language for us to speak is English. And for some of the students, like I think like five of us are from India.

So we get to speak in like one common Indian language. Because again, in India, you have like hundreds of languages. Which one do you speak? I speak Tamil, which is the oldest language in the world.

Yeah. And it's like the other languages in the southern part of India kind of developed from this language. And yeah, like my friends speak those other languages.

So it's like if I speak my language, the other person can understand a little bit. Okay. Even though it's not the same.

Yeah, even though it's not the same. Okay. Yeah.

Okay, okay. And they also speak different languages between each other. Yeah.

And they can understand each other. Yeah, sort of. I mean, mostly because we watch movies from the other person's language.

And with that, we kind of get familiar with some of the words. Okay. Yeah.

That's very interesting. Yeah, it is.

What makes you think to start this experience like Erasmus Plus?

So my cousin was the one who actually did an Erasmus program.

And that was kind of like he went to exchange for like three different countries. I think it was in something to do with software engineering. And he told me that there were other programs exactly like this.

So when I was looking at a few programs at Lund University and so on, I found these kind of exchange programs, which offer like exchange semesters abroad. So I thought, okay, why not? Because I really just wanted to learn as much as I could about the world. Like I already had grown up in Malaysia and then in India, but I felt like I was just locked within like those two cities.

I didn't really get to travel and explore. And I was actually quite introverted. And I just wanted to grow out of that.

And by kind of like comfortably forcing me into situations, which will make me speak to people. So I thought, okay, why not? Instead of doing my master's in India, I could, you know, do my master's in Europe. And also like because Europe is amazing for obvious reasons.

So yeah, that's what kind of like encouraged me to come over here to Europe. Okay. So you were able to do this experience because you were in Lund University? Yes.

So your bachelor is in Lund, right? Oh, no, my bachelor's was in India, but my master's program started at Lund. Okay, master, sorry. Okay.

And so you decided after your cousin told you about this experience? Yeah, his experiences. And like his program was across Italy, Finland and Amsterdam, which is completely three different cultures and perspectives. And just hearing the stories about like his experiences, the people that he meets, and even just random stories of his neighbors and stuff, all of that just felt like the kind of environment that I wanted to live my life.

Yeah. So that kind of inspired me to make this decision to come here. Was your experience founding? So did someone pay for your experience in Italy or in Denmark? So my program is actually offered by this education institution called EIT.

And through them, we get a scholarship based on our academics at the time that we apply for the course. So based on my bachelor's and all, I was able to get a 70 person scholarship. Yeah, that's really good.

But that's only part of the tuition, like the scholarship is only for the tuition fees. And like maybe if there's like some of the events or even our flight tickets or accommodation, all of that is on us. Okay.

Yeah. Okay, okay. So 50-50.

Yeah, yeah. When you decided to start and doing this Erasmus experience, was the language proficiency something that you felt like a barrier, so like an obstacle or more like you felt fluent in English? And you were like, yeah, let's do it. No problem.

Easy peasy. Well, honestly, because the course and the academics is in English, and because even the website and like any other like forms or something that we have to fill, all of that was in English. So that was never a problem for me.

But one thing that all of us, all of my classmates as well as me had to think of was after going there to interact with the natives, or with people who are already over there, you do need to know the local language a little bit. Like within your university, with your professors, English is always the best. But maybe if I was going to a cafe and I wanted to order, maybe they didn't understand my English accent, then I would kind of like feel, oh, I should have learned a little bit of Italian or a little bit of Danish.

So from like the university perspective or the, you know, the university, how do you say it? The activities or participation? No problem. So with English, you never had problem before. So yeah, it's good.

Do you feel like the language, so the English, the level of English of someone can change the experience after all? Because maybe people don't have your same level of English and the same experience would have had different. Do you mean this in like the students English level or the professors? The students. The students.

I mean, definitely. I mean, for me, because I'm quite fluent and I know how to communicate with, I mean, like quite well in English. I never found that as a problem.

I mean, sometimes I feel like I speak a little too fast. And so the other person can't understand me so well. So at that time, I kind of slow down and I like start using simpler words.

And at the same time, I know like I've observed some of my other friends students from like other programs. They struggle to speak in English a little bit. So for them, I mean, as far as what I have observed, I guess it kind of brings out the confidence to go out and talk to people or even to your professors just because you feel like your English is not good enough.

But honestly, for me, it hasn't really been a problem. Like not knowing the local language has been a problem. Yeah.

So, for example, about the local language, do you ever felt, do you have some language barrier experiences, like examples? I mean, funny experiences were in Italy, honestly. Like I learned a little bit of Italian through Duolingo. And some of my professors would even say like a few things like and stuff like that.

So I kind of picked up on that. But maybe if I just wanted to ask someone for directions, or maybe if I was at a cafe, or I remember even when I was looking for part-time jobs in Italy, even then when I would try to speak in Italian with them, they're just like, what? And like, I don't know, maybe it was my pronunciations or something. And then they would say something else in Italian.

And I'd be like, I don't understand at all. Do you have an example, like a specific one? Yeah, so I went to this one cafe. It was just like a small cafe somewhere in Torino near my house.

And I asked them in Italian if they had any part-time jobs available. I don't remember the translation right now. And she was really happy to see that I, obviously, a non-Italian was speaking in Italian.

And she was so happy. And she's like, she said something in Italian. I couldn't understand it at all.

And I was just like, blinking at her. And then she tried to slow down and explain a little slowly. But still, I couldn't understand.

And then somehow we just used Google Translate. And then she typed it in. And then I was like, oh, OK, this is what you meant.

And yeah, after that, we spoke that way. I mean, but sadly, she didn't have any opportunity for me. But it was just a really nice interaction.

OK. And in Denmark, I don't really think I have experienced something like that. Because in Denmark, a lot of the people know Danish.

So even if I want to ask someone for help or something, I'll be like, in Danish, I don't remember the word exactly right now. But I would be like, excuse me, do you speak English? And they would say yes. And then I was able to talk to them.

And even if they didn't know English, they'd still be like, no, it's OK. And then they'd kind of try to understand. And if they just completely don't, they'd be like, oh, no, I'm sorry.

I'm sorry. OK. OK.

So it was always a middle ground. Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

I mean, from my experiences. Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Do you feel like you are integrated? You're integrated in any of the society where you have the experience? You mean in like student activities or just like my neighborhood, the place where I was? In Italy, yes. I kind of like I didn't even make friends. Like the locals just knew that I was new to the neighborhood.

And it was just nice. Like whenever they saw me, they would smile. And there was this lady who had a cat.

And with that, we became very good friends, even though we couldn't speak that much. So in Italy, I really felt like I belonged over there, even though we weren't speaking in English. I still felt that way because that's how Italian culture is.

You're just very welcoming and accepting. And I don't know, everyone was just so impressed, even if I would just be able to say like, ciao, peccere. With that itself, it felt good.

But in Denmark, I didn't feel that way. I just felt like everyone was very closed off. Nobody really wanted to interact.

And even if like even my neighbors, like we have never had a conversation once. We just see each other maybe when we're parking our cycles, but they don't smile at us. And even if we tried to smile at them or maybe have small talk in like the laundry room or something, nobody was really conversing.

Yeah. So cultural differences. Exactly.

Most really strong. Yeah. I mean, I don't blame, you know, Danish culture for this.

It's just like people are just so independent and like they feel that they have to prioritize themselves in anything that they do. So I mean, it's right. It's not wrong.

It's just the way that they were raised. Yeah. And do you feel like your personality or your character change depending on the language? Yes, definitely.

So even when I was a little younger, like my English wasn't this good. I think after like moving to Malaysia, I think during like my teenage years, that's when I was watching a lot of YouTube, like American. I mean, that was exactly like 2016 when this vlogging and all of that became quite popular.

So with that, I was able to pick up a little more English. And even without me realizing it, I just became more confident and I was able to speak better. And afterwards, just seeing my dad interact with a lot of other people, like he's doing something in the IT industry and he has a lot of clients from different places.

And just seeing the way that he converses with them kind of also gave me an idea, OK, this is how you talk to people in English. And just combining, I mean, like without like, I mean, I'm actually just realizing all of this now, but just combining all of that and, you know, applying different talking techniques to people over here, it really did boost my confidence a lot.

Because when I was doing my bachelor's, I mean, like, yes, everyone did speak English, but we were more like speaking to each other in our own local language in Tamil.

And because of that, I was kind of like I never really had the chance to practice, like speaking openly in English or even maybe giving a presentation. I never really had the chance to practice that. And it kind of made me feel shy.

And I was always kind of reserved. I never used to go out and initiate a conversation. But just, I don't know, but I always had the English skills inside me.

I mean, that's what I feel. And after coming here, I had the opportunity to kind of like exercise the skills that I had and just learning, just observing the way that people are responding. Maybe something that I say in one way is a little rude.

So I'd kind of like, OK, I shouldn't be saying it this way. Then I'd kind of like change. And it's honestly helped me a lot just to become more confident in myself.

And yeah, I mean, earlier, maybe two years ago, if someone was to describe me, they would say that I'm a very shy person. But now they'd be like, oh, Jacinda, she can talk to anyone. Like she's really open.

She talks well. She converses very well. Her English is also easy to understand.

That's what people would say about me. Yeah, definitely my personality has changed. OK, and I'm going to take the second part.

So this is more about like Erasmus policies and goals. OK, I don't know if you know about some of them. Yeah, yeah, I am aware.

Yeah, yeah. So do you feel like the Erasmus Mobility actually accomplish these goals, in your opinion? So I think one of the goals was that we have to like maybe integrate with the locals and, you know, participate. I mean, it's not that you have to participate, but it's kind of like you just involved yourself with like the local activities, maybe through student organizations.

So in Italy, that really wasn't a problem. Like even though everyone else was speaking in Italian and we were the only English speakers, it just felt very welcoming to be around them. And, you know, they would even, you know, like try to have small talk with you.

And that was fine. But in Denmark, again, it just felt very, very closed off. And I was honestly very surprised by that because I think like ESN Aarhus was ranked like the number one organization of like the ESN communities all over Europe.

But I never really felt that warm or welcomed for like any of the events that was going on. I don't really know if it was that like my personality or like what was wrong. I don't really know.

But I just never really connected with the people over there. Yeah, like even with like with the locals and the international students as well. It was almost like everyone was just really closed off and nobody really wanted to interact with others.

Like even if they wanted, even if they wanted to, they just wouldn't speak to you. Oh, OK. Yeah, yeah.

That was like kind of surprising. I mean, even in the student community. OK, so do you feel like there are some improvements that could be made on these goals or policy like to help? I mean, honestly, the problem isn't language, in my opinion, but I mean, something can be done, but I really don't know what can be done.

So it's not language. I mean, thinking about it, I mean, of course, like any country you go to, the locals are speaking their own local language and they're more comfortable in that language. But maybe if someone who speaks English comes and tries to talk to you, people at least, you know, try to speak to them back in English.

And even if they can't, they just find the middle ground, maybe with hand gestures or something or just by pointing, they'll somehow make an effort to talk to you. But in Denmark, I just felt that even trying to initiate a conversation with someone always felt like you were disturbing their personal space. Maybe that's what the other person also felt about us.

And maybe that's why nobody really conversed with each other. But also inside of the organisation and maybe the experience that they were organising was the same. Yeah, I mean, a lot of these student events, maybe parties or just even like in our host, there was this culture of like Friday bars, where it's like everyone just goes bar hopping to like the different bars available in the university.

But even for that, it just felt like people who were already a group of friends just stayed within themselves. Like even if you tried to go and introduce yourself, they'd just be like, oh, OK, yeah. And then they just go back to that group.

Yeah, that's just what I have experienced. Was the Erasmus programme advertised enough by maybe the Lund University or even in India? I mean, in India, definitely. We do see advertisements about like the Erasmus programme.

There's also another organisation called EIT. So I mean, definitely based on your algorithm, you get these advertisements. And then speaking of here, like yeah, on YouTube, I have seen digital advertisements.

And at the same time, even maybe at like the welcome events at the university, they tell you about their Instagram page. They even have flyers. And like through that, you just get to know that, OK, there is a community like this, there are events and, you know, organisations available this way.

OK. Do you think, to what extent does the language barrier prevent the organisation from achieving their potential? I mean, that was like what I said right now was my experience. Maybe a small population of the people do feel this way.

So I'd say maybe 20 percent. Maybe or maybe it is just maybe like people's perceptions of other cultures and that they just really don't want to, you know, have friends from certain cultures. Maybe.

I don't know. OK. So there is nothing that you maybe in your experience you wouldn't have improved.

Maybe like if, for example, if you could be the organiser, there is something and maybe some activities or I don't know, something you feel like, oh, this it would have been nice if there was this thing instead. I mean, maybe first I would have tried to find out which like which international community had like the most number of students and maybe just catering to maybe some festivals. That belong to that culture.

Just so that they also feel more welcomed and accepted over there. I think that would have kind of maybe helped. But I mean, seeing that you can't do like you can't celebrate all festivals of like hundred and twenty five countries.

So yeah, it's still difficult, but maybe just figuring out which are like the major communities available and like your university or even your city and just trying to take an initiative to, you know, like organise something for them. I mean, that also gives you the opportunity to learn a little bit more about that culture, which I think is important, because when international students go to another country, they definitely learn. They do a little bit of research just to know about the other country.

So it would be nice just to kind of like understand, OK, when they are going to, you know, like maybe maybe they are curious to learn a little bit about our countries as well. So, yeah, I think maybe like or maybe even like language exchange or just like small events like that, where maybe a group of people from different countries get together and just talk a little bit about their own countries. I think even that would be, you know, kind of a nice idea to do.

That's a nice initiative. Yeah. Since you start from maybe like a background that doesn't really involve Europe.

No, no. Exactly. Do you feel like since you're here, does a sense of European identity start growing up on you or? So, I mean, mainly I would say like all of that was because of social media.

So it's kind of like social media kind of markets these certain lifestyles and just kind of like like comparing those lifestyles with maybe just people that I randomly see, maybe even in London or even in Malmo, just by the way that they're dressed or like maybe just they have like a coffee in their hand or like just just seeing all of that. I'm like, OK, this is what European lifestyle is like. And it looks nice, of course.

So, you know, sometimes even me, my friends, we try to like mimic that. I mean, that's the main reason I got that coat. Ah, that one.

Yeah, because it just felt very European and I liked it. I think I have the same at some point. I mean, it's from H&M.

I got it on sale. It's really French to me. Something really French.

Yeah. So just something that kind of like gives me like a European identity. I just wanted to, you know, like take in a few behaviours.

I mean, I have tried a few other things, like maybe just sitting in a park. But the thing is, I don't have the habit of reading books. So just sitting in a park, idly, that didn't match for me.

Or maybe just cafe hopping and stuff like that. I'm a student on a budget, so I can't do that as well. So it's just, you know, just picking up like certain behaviours or maybe just like a few elements that I see other people doing that kind of gives me like like that that belonging of like just like, OK, I have a little bit of like a European side.

Yeah. OK. So no coffee and like I know they're really expensive.

No park with the book. But which others do you feel like you're appropriating? I'd also say biking. Like when I mean, when I was in London, I really like in 2024, I really wanted to get a bike.

But I it was my first time in Europe and I just wanted to observe and just see how are other people biking. So I didn't really get one then. And then in Italy, because I was in Torino, it wasn't really much of like a cycle friendly city.

So again, over there, I couldn't really bike. But after going to Denmark in Aarhus, it was a really bike friendly city. So over there, I got the chance to get a cycle and, you know, go around.

That just made me feel like I was part of, you know, like the other people and like just, you know, like riding along with them and like the bicycle lanes. I kind of felt like I belonged over there. And after coming back over here, actually today I'm going to go check out a one cycle.

And if I if I buy it, then, you know, it's kind of like, OK, I have like another, you know, like element of like the European culture in me once again. Yeah, actually, we consider, we Italians, we consider the bicycle that are here not really European because it's what we had before the Second World War. Here, you have to brake turning the pedals.

Yeah, yeah. We don't have it anymore. So for me, for example, this type of bicycle are really North European.

But for a South European, I cannot drive it. I have a mountain bike with two handbrakes because otherwise I cannot use it. Yeah, yeah.

So it's really amazing how you can learn. Honestly. Yeah.

I mean, even that difference, I have never known about that. Wow. And instead of maybe like, OK, you have a green, maybe European identity, but you feel like this spirit also reinforced your national identity.

Like do you feel more nationalistic when you're here rather than when you're back home? I mean, honestly, I don't know if this is going to be a little controversial. But the thing is, I honestly don't really want to associate myself with my home country that much, mainly because people from our country are making a fool out of themselves after coming abroad, like whether they are in the US or Canada or wherever they go, everyone is making such a fool out of themselves. Yeah.

I mean, maybe a lot of people, they are stealing. They don't know how to behave in public. Maybe they're spitting in public and, you know, just.

Who's really here and it's cultural. Yeah. But it's just like, I mean, you have come from a foreign, like you've come from one country and you're going to another person's country.

You have to respect their culture, their rules. And like, you can't just pick fights with anyone just because you don't like something that happened. And you just have to behave with, you know, like some moral conduct and like have some personal values.

Appendix V

Home

Interviewed 17/04/026

So, if you want to start introducing what you did, where you went, which language you used.

So, I'll also tell you what I studied.

As you wish, yes

I studied Linguistic Mediation with Phrenological Guidance. And yes, for the second year I applied to do the Erasmus. And actually I wasn't so sure to pass, because there were four places for two, for Seville and Lisbon. There were four places for one and I was the reserve, I was taken. For Portuguese. And I didn't even have the priority, because I didn't speak Portuguese. So I had to, not to pretend to know Portuguese, but to have a not so basic level. Which actually I also had a bit, but I did it like that. Yes, they contacted me in April and then I left in September.

But was it a forced thing you had to do or was it something you could choose?

To do the Erasmus?

Yes.

Yes, totally voluntary. And then the graduation based on your grades, on average. So yes, obviously the higher the average, the more you can enter the cities you want. I think I could put two preferences, or three, maybe. And to be able to be selected. Or they call you if you want. Then I went to Padova, which is the main city of the university. I spoke with the rector. Then the system, you have to do everything yourself.

So you don't have any funding.

I didn't take it because I didn't have a high enough average. I had the average of 26 and it wasn't enough. So yes, you should. And it varies based on the city you go to. So I don't know, Lisbon is still a city that is not too expensive. So in my opinion they can cover the rent well or badly. Well or badly. In Norway I know it was almost double the subsidy. But there maybe you can't even get to the room. But more or less that's it. So yes, I had heard from a colleague of mine who came with me to Lisbon. She had found a room that was associated with another university. But you didn't have to study at another university. And yes, I met a lot of people of different cultures. Even if there were many Italians like me. Because it was a building with 33 people. 4 apartments. And 11 of them were Italians. Almost, no, wait, maybe. About ten were Italians. There were French, Spanish, Danish, Swedish, German. Let's see if I remember them all. Belgian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Argentinian. It's a bit of a nation.

So it was your premeditated idea?

Totally.

What did it do to you? Why did you say, now I'm going for Erasmus?

I mean, having studied languages both at high school and at university, I said, in my opinion it makes sense anyway. But then it was my thing. To be able to do such an experience, which is quite limited in time, because you can do Erasmus in high school, or a master's, or a master's. But you're never sure what you're going to do in the future. So I said, if I can do it, at least I'll try. Let's see if I get in. I was lucky, yes.

How many months were you there?

Six. And I was forced to stay six months. I couldn't, because in theory you can't study for a year. But at university they strongly discouraged it, also because you tend to lose a year. Because when you do the exams that correspond, most of the time they don't correspond to your university of origin. So you have to mix things up to be able to pass an exam. For example, I had an English language exam, which was a nightmare. But for the teacher, not for the language. And luckily I was able to pass it with a very easy grammar exam. So it depends. It can actually give you a lot of advantages. I can say that Erasmus has been very positive from all points of view, except for the school. Paradoxically, for me it was the thing that had the least value of all. Because in the end I had, I'm not kidding, I had eight hours of lessons a week. Nothing. I had two hours a day, basically. The best subject was terrorism, by the way. With a very influential person in Portugal. My classmates were police officers, military.

But was the language in English or Portuguese?

I had to do everything in Portuguese. Everything in Portuguese. The exams, no. The English exams. Everything, everything, everything in Portuguese. That's why, I mean, some lessons, others, much better, but it was... Anyway, tough. It's not really the best.

Before leaving, maybe you said, nah , wait. I don't do it because I don't know Portuguese so much, so I'm afraid of... No way, never. Never?

Never. I bought a grammar book. Then I said, well, Spanish will help me. Even if I've never had so many interactions with Portuguese, actually. Because living with me, there weren't. In university, they didn't want to do many groups. If they were group work, because I had subjects like psychology of emotions, of motivation, another type of psychology, and we had to do group work, maybe. No one wanted to work with me. But not only with me, with others too. We were very few, actually, with Erasmus. But they didn't want to because they didn't want to do the work in English. Even if, how to say, claim. I mean, they said they were very good at English, but then they didn't use it. Only as a boy, I was quite open. In fact, But the university was beautiful.

So do you think it's possible that a person who already had a good level of Portuguese maybe had a different experience than you?

Totally. Surely, if I had known Portuguese with another person, I would have wanted to. But because, apart from the fact that I speak now, because it's been seven and a half years. I left in September 2018, I came back in early February 2019. And then I graduated in December 2019. Then I went to Italy. But yes, I would have already started. Yes, I would have spoken a lot. Which I didn't do, but you know, people who speak a little modified Spanish, a little Portuguese, they don't like it at all. Really, no. You feel very bad. A bit like if you go to speak Spanish in Italy. Yes, but we are much more open. They are very closed, actually. The language is already very closed, compared to, for example, Brazilian. But they are not that open. Among other things, they also say negative things about the country. This thing came out on the last day that I was there, and I was talking to this Swedish guy who speaks Italian. He studied in Italy and he learned Italian on the street, in Florence. Very good, his name is Hugo. He was a friend of a friend. But he came to live where I lived.

And I was leaving. He made me open my eyes a little, and he says to me, do you realize that here they are very racist? And I said, but you know I would have said the exact opposite. And he was right. Because this happens in all the countries of ex-colonies, people from the ex-colonies come to work in the colonized country, and they usually do humble jobs. But this happens everywhere, every country has its own. But there you could feel a clear difference. So you know that there are Brazilians, or Angolans, or Capoverdes, you can feel it. They are very nationalistic, which is not necessarily negative. The fact is that they have this sense of nostalgia for the past, when they were conquerors of everything. This is also demonstrated by the monument of the navigators in Belém, near the tower. These navigators who look at nothing, the void, the sea, as a conquest, as a conquest of the horizon, but they no longer have it. And they miss this thing. They feel it. I was talking to my brother the other day, paradoxically a person like Cristiano Ronaldo has put Portugal on the maps a bit, because otherwise objectively it is not very relevant. So they feel this thing a bit. We take care of them

a bit, tourists, because for any person it is almost a country where you spend little. Even Italy is a bit like that, but they have a lot, a lot more. Also because it does not have much to offer. Lisbon is beautiful, Porto too, Sintra is very beautiful to see, Algarve is very beautiful, natural, but the rest is... It is rural. Yes, a lot. A little pleasant, but it is not... It is a country that could develop a lot more.

Have you ever had the experience of a language barrier? So not speaking...

No, because I... Because I have never had it.

Even if at that time I was 21 years old and I realize that I have changed as a person. I realize that before I was very shy. I was shy, I have changed from that point of view. So the approach to a language actually unlocks that shyness if you ever have it. But now I am here, I decided to do this experience, I will not leave. The only thing I have to do is throw myself away. I can't do anything else. That helps. It helps everyone. It helps everyone. So I have never had it. Then, surely, this German friend helped me who spoke Italian because his ex was from Milan. Anyway, this approach helped me. I saw that he was a very open person, half South African, half German, he also spoke Italian. It attracted me a little. Then, when I met Spaniards, I was intrigued because I didn't understand them. I studied for years and years and I didn't understand them. So I had to stay with them and they corrected me every time I was wrong. I asked them. And it worked. Then you meet a person, you meet another, you meet more people, you speak more, you meet other people. It's all a bit like that. If you are all Erasmus, anyway, you get used to it. Yes, then the age also changes, obviously. There were people who were already 28, maybe the age I have now is very different. Compared to now, I was really a child. But it's just like that. Depending on the age you have, you have different experiences. In fact, you told me that before you were more shy.

Do you think that after this experience your personality or your character has changed?

Yes, totally. Thank you for this experience. Yes, not only. You know, life brings you so many things. I have realized so many other things. I think that year, for various situations, this was a click for me. This opened my eyes and I said, wow, I can travel, I can meet people, wow, beautiful, I can do it, I feel proud to do it. My parents separated.

Anyway, it's a situation a bit of a break, so it makes you grow in some aspects. Even going back to Italy, I realized that I approached people in a different way, that my self-esteem was from here to there. One, because maybe people are very curious to know about your experience, so maybe they fill you with attention, even if you don't want to, but they say, wow, you're back, how did it go? Some people see you in a different way, so you have to learn that, to see how people perceive you based on how you put yourself. And they put me in a different way, totally. So you have to learn that you're a bit too early to decide how people perceive you. I decided.

Did you feel integrated in the Portuguese environment?

No, not at all. Because being Erasmus means being in a bubble, because most of the people you live with are Erasmus like you, they don't have so many contacts with Portuguese people, at least I talk about mine in Portugal, then I don't know about other places, but no, I

never felt integrated. Or maybe you didn't even do the steps. Me neither, no. But I repeat, in my opinion it's not even the goal of Erasmus itself. Yes, because in the end, I don't know, the Erasmus program, they maybe do events in some areas of the city, but obviously everyone can go, but you know that mainly because you're in Erasmus. So they're directed to people who do Erasmus. And it's much easier. Here, if you go to a university and you meet Portuguese people, I repeat, now I would behave differently, I would probably take more initiative, I would go and meet Portuguese people, but I'm very shy, so it's not always easy. You told me about Erasmus activities.

Before starting, did you already know the Erasmus Plus goals or policies? Is it wrong? Translate, I don't understand.

The policies or the main goal of Erasmus? If you ask me I don't have an exact answer. I can tell you what I gathered. In my opinion, the Erasmus Plus means connecting people at the European level, making them study for free, making them know the world. Maybe giving you the opportunity to do an internship at the university, maybe you find a job there. Of course, but it depends on the level. If you do a three-year internship, I don't know, maybe you know the language well and you decide to stop after you return home. I know a guy from Monza who did this in Lisbon a few years after me. So yes, I think it's very individual. I also met people, the French girl who lived next to me was always in the room. The Portuguese girl probably lived like at home. In my opinion, I understand that we are all different, but yes, it's very individual. Yes, the main goal of Erasmus is that.

But in your experience, apart from these activities, is there something that could have been done better? Or maybe something more that hasn't been done? Maybe you would have done it if you had been the organizer.

Well, I didn't go to Erasmus that much, because as I said, it's very individual. But if you find a group of friends who live with you, and let's say that's enough for you, because maybe there are already 10 people, then we'll meet others outside. But in the end, if you create your own group, or you try many of them, because you have to know them, then in reality I wouldn't be able to tell you. I think it's also nice that you have the freedom to do them by force, for example. I did two trips, one to Porto and one to Algarve. It's not that I organized the Erasmus program, but you organize it by yourself. Sure, maybe it would be nice if they did it, or maybe they did it and I didn't know. But I don't know, that's also different on a personal level, because maybe you don't like to do it by force. So I think it's nice that you are free to do many things. You are completely free to do them. That's very nice, because then it's all up to you. If you are an adult, you don't go to lessons, you don't do the exam, maybe you won't even get the subsidy. It's all up to you, you pay the rent, you do the laundry, maybe it was my first experience outside. That's why I did it. So the experience was a bit detached from Erasmus, from the organization. Yes, but I repeat, maybe it depends on the city. Because, for example, it's not something that Erasmus organizes, but in Lisbon there is a neighborhood called Bairro Alto, where there is this place called Erasmus Corner. It's called like that. So there are all Erasmus, but it's not organized by Erasmus. But that's the name of the place.

So you think that this experience could have been done even without supporting Erasmus, but it would have been the same if it had been you.

No, it's much easier with the Erasmus program, because they connect you directly with the university. Of course you have to do a lot of things on your own, but they help you. So no, it's useful. Very useful. You definitely waste time, but no, it's very useful. It's another thing to do on your own.

Ok, so maybe there aren't things that you would have done that you felt were missing?

No, maybe having a better correspondence in the subjects. Definitely. Too many things.

You're not the first one who said that. Another guy I interviewed in Hungary told me that for them it's like losing a year. It's almost like that.

It depends. There are some faculties, like Economics, that didn't lose anything. Design... Those are maybe the most humanistic faculties. Yes, those are a bit more complicated. Yes, I would say so. Then maybe there is an English faculty, but there isn't another one.

And maybe Engineering is always like that. That's it. In my opinion, there are subjects where it doesn't make sense to do Erasmus, like Medicine. It's rare for a 6-year-old to go and do Erasmus, because it changes everything. The language, the terminology, even the medical approach changes a lot. In fact, in Switzerland it changes a lot. There are some faculties where it's better to do it. Yes, but I always do it later. That's it.

If you didn't have this opportunity, do you think your development would have been the same? Or do you think it wouldn't have been successful?

No, I think... It's a question that is impossible to answer, but I think races would have been successful, but much later. Like the fact that I came here to Sweden, because I didn't pass the master's exam in Forlì. Thank God I didn't pass that exam. Because yes, it wakes you up. It's not necessarily going abroad, but it makes you face a different reality than the one you're used to. So yes, it makes you grow. It's up to you.

Either you do it or not. Yes. So I would say that yes, a person grows, but they would be very different. Maybe they would still be shy. I don't know.

Do you think this experience has strengthened your European identity?

Well...

How do you identify yourself? Because, for example, I identify myself as Italian, but I struggle a lot. I used to struggle a lot before this experience abroad, and I identify myself as European. Yes, I'm from Ravenna, I'm Italian, from Romagna. And then I'm also European,

But you know, I think it's a matter of customs, traditions, religion, for example. It's quite easy to enclose Europe in a Christian reality. So... Yes, I mean, growing up, you get the idea that you're in Europe because you're more or less like that. I've met other people who didn't come from Europe, because there are some Australians from Argentina, for example.

Yes, and maybe they're part of other programs, but yes, I mean, comparing yourself to other cultures from totally different countries that are not part of Europe makes you realize some European things. I'll give you a specific example. If you know South Americans, in this case

many Argentinians, they address you, or their language of origin is Spanish, and when they address you with Spanish, you see the difference between Europe and South America. They also make you notice it. For me it's funny, linguistically, it's beautiful, interesting, but yes, you see it. It certainly makes you perceive a little more of the culture. But there are also many differences within the European community itself.

So how do you identify yourself?

Yes, I'm Italian-European.

Maybe it gave you the opposite effect, so you feel a little more Italian, or it made you reborn this nationalism.

No, no, well, it makes you proud of your country for many things, because you see bad things about others, but you also see good things about others, so you could improve, so no. No, it just makes you open your eyes a little, it just makes you understand what's around you. I'm curious. I'm a curious person, so it makes me enter.

Ok. So, as I understand, you always feel European.

Yes, yes, yes. 50-50. Yes, yes, a good balance.

Ok.

And, if I talk about shared European identity, what does it make you think about? Visually, mentally, do you think it exists? Do you feel it?

I don't know. Maybe also based on the people you've met.

Did you feel there was a European group?

No, you feel the opposite more, you feel there are non-European groups.

Ok. So, people who don't feel European?

No, no, no, non-Europeans that you see, you can see they are divided a little. That's what I notice the most.

Do you mean that maybe based on the fact that you get along with other cultures, do you mean that too? The ease too? I

it's a part of this European sharing, in my opinion. Yes, but I don't think anyone did it on purpose. No one goes to Erasmus thinking about this.

Yes. No, no. It always depends on the age. When I was 21, I thought about it. But even now, I wouldn't live in a place thinking about how to feel European. I don't know. Maybe this, I don't know if Erasmus reflects on this. I honestly don't believe it. I don't know.

It's better for you. No, it depends on your point of view.

Are you very subjective about this?

No, never. Absolutely not.

Even if your friends all love Europe, right?

Yes, because by force of things, most people if you go to Erasmus, you are European. If you are not European because you did another kind of program, I don't know if it is also related to the citizenship that you have in Europe, maybe you can do it, you are facilitated, as many Argentinians have. yes. The Argentinians I knew practically didn't take lessons. So, yeah.

Have you noticed specific differences or something in common between you and your friends? On a cultural level.

Soccer, for example. The passion, yes. It's a very strong thing. Definitely. Yes. the experience is shared. The age is similar. Yes. I often found myself playing cards, for example. Something I never thought about. Actually, I played a lot of cards. Yes. Anyway, the fun in general is that. Not exaggerated, not too much, but you are at an age and you have rhythms that you can afford. The city is not expensive, you have a lot of free time, you are away from home, you have fun. Everyone has their own fun, of course. If you can share it, it's better. Actually, I go to the sea a lot, and you can afford it.

Yes, we talked about identity today and later. Erasmus. I bet you feel very changed. Did you continue to study Portuguese?

I continued not so much grammatically, but I started to listen to a lot of Portuguese music, and to read a lot of texts. Actually, my favorite Italian album is half Brazilian and half Italian. So, yes, I wanted to. Anyway, it makes you know the language, it really makes you get into the thoughts of another person, especially with the songs. I can say that I like this thing in Italian, I say it in Portuguese, it's a bit different. Yes, I continued to that level.

Then, having my dad when I was very young, he was Brazilian, and I connected with that thought. Anyway, yes, a bit. So, it's something to remember. Yes, good. But it's not that you want to continue studying or that it's a part of your life. Actually, yes. Actually, I think that moving here, I didn't have much time to do it, but actually, yes, it's always something

Appendix VI

Home

Interviewed the 17/04/26

Perfect. So, as I told you, my thesis is about the experience of the Erasmus+.

Are you recording now?

Yes.

So, if you want to start telling me what was your experience, when did you do it, which language did you speak?

Well, I went on Erasmus to Warsaw in Poland. And the core reason why I went is because I knew I wanted to do something in the future, internationally related. And so I thought and figured that Erasmus would be a good stepping stone towards this. And to also come along with the challenges of going to a new country and living there for a set amount of time and on your own to figure stuff out. And I chose Poland mainly because, well, I didn't have the best of grades. And I knew that these kinds of popular destinations like Australia, the US and things, I would not get in there. So I didn't even bother. And also because my father is from Poland. And so I'm half Polish. And I've been to Poland many, many times since I was born, almost every year. And I speak a bit of Polish. And so my thought was to go there, learn more about the country, learn more about the culture that is part of me, I guess.

And to also learn, hopefully, the language better. I had the goal of being able to speak it fluently when I come back. Did not very much happen. Because you hung out a lot with international people. So you were barely hanging out with any Polish people at all.

You have family there.

Yeah, but not in Warsaw. So my family is from north of Poland, close to Gdansk, Gdynia. And Warsaw is, well, in the middle of the country. So it's far away from there. So not really any family in Warsaw.

I'm going to skip the next question because it was why did you decide to do it. And you already told me. So when you decided to start doing the Erasmus, was English, like your level of English, something that could have stopped you from doing this?

No. No, I have always had good English. And I also did the tests ahead of going to Poland to kind of prove the English level. Because you need to have a certain English level to study doing the Erasmus. And I had like the highest level. So my English was never an issue, never a problem. I know I got this question also from family members and people. Ah, but you're going to be studying all the courses in English and things. But some of the courses at Lund University were already in English that I had already done. So I was not afraid of the English being any kind of stopper or anything like this.

It doesn't ever affect your university... Grades? Grades or like...

No, actually on the contrary. I got way better grades in Warsaw than I did in Lund University. But I think that's more so due to the structure of the education system there and in comparison to university here. It's very different. But the language itself was never an issue. And I was never afraid of it being an issue either. Because I speak it so often.

Was it difficult to convert? Because I heard from other people that it was difficult. Basically doing Erasmus was losing one year. Because sometimes the course that you do outside of your country, they don't really are able to be converted.

No, not for me in my case. So the semester that I did... So I studied the bachelor's program in strategic communication at Lund University. And one semester, so 30 high school points,

was supposed to be... You could choose to do either some kind of course here in Sweden or to do an Erasmus. But if you did the Erasmus, then all the courses that you wanted to study there had to be controlled slash checked by the right people at Lund University ahead of time. So that they could be then translated correctly. And so I could choose basically whatever I wanted as long as it was related in one way or another to the program overall. So what I did was... Because I knew already then that in the future in my work life that I wanted to work in an international job. So I chose courses always specific for international things. So I studied... So even though my program is strategic communication, in strategic communication there is many things that goes into it. Both psychology, company economics and things like this. So I studied... In Warsaw I studied international business law. EU economical law. And I also studied international marketing. I also studied...

What was it?

It was like international market research. So it was a lot focused on how to conduct studies and how to compile the data in different programs and things like this. So it was basically an opportunity for me to get an edge onto my education. Something that sets my education apart and makes me unique when it's time to apply for jobs. And I can see that today I work internationally. The fact that I studied those courses has helped me in my job but also helped me to get the job. Because if you look at my study curriculum since high school, it's always been focused on international. I also studied international social science in high school. From the beginning. So translating those were not an issue. It was not a problem. The exams and things that you did there were in my opinion almost... Or it was better suited for me. That's why I think my grades were better. Because in Sweden during my program all the exams almost were... You write an essay of one kind or another. You have to elaborate, you have to use different theories and things. Basically think more for yourself and use critical thinking. Meanwhile in Warsaw it was very much like high school here. You read this information on these 15 pages and then you get a quiz on it. So either multiple choice questions or open-ended questions where you have to write the answer. And that kind of tests were a lot easier for me. Actually in all my courses in Warsaw I got the highest grade in all of them. So five with exclamation mark. But the grade itself didn't matter because they could not translate the grade itself. It was a different counting. So it was fun for me to know and good to know. But in the translation to my official records from the university the grades don't show up from the Warsaw time anyway. So it was just the points and the name of the course.

Ok.

Did you ever experience a language barrier when you were in Poland? Can you speak Polish?

I think not so much for me. I heard from a lot of the other people doing Erasmus with language barrier. In terms of getting around in their everyday life. And going to the shop and things like this. Because Poland it's getting better now that there are a lot of young people who speak English. But the older generation are still not so good. So I definitely think if you plan on living in Poland or going to Poland you have to know a little bit of Polish. And so I had already the advantage of that because of my background. So I didn't really have any kind of know what to say barriers or anything like that. In school including the professors everyone spoke perfect English. Especially the professors. I guess the only thing with English in terms of being worried. I was a little bit worried that what if the professors actually

aren't that good in English. Not that I'm not but what if they're not. Because I've heard the horror stories but they were all of them exceptional in their English level. So it was very good.

Do you feel like your personality or your character change when you speak different languages in this experience?

That's a good question. Yes I think so maybe a little bit. It's more so that I noticed this recently actually. This is something that I noticed while I was there. Was that I often subconsciously adjust my English level to the person that I'm speaking to. So without even realizing it. So there were absolutely of course some people there. Some people had perfect English some had a little bit less English. And I adjusted my English level based on what level they were at. So I would like either dumb down if you say like that. Like dumb down my English or make it if I realized it was somebody like UK person. Who I mean it's their mother tongue. Then I could speak at whatever level. But I didn't notice this myself actually.

It was somebody there who pointed this out to me. Because it was one of my friends. We were heading out and we were speaking to a lot of different people in one night.

And he said at the end. He said have you noticed that you do this. Because now me as an outsider because I was actively listening to you. I noticed that you change it based on like who you speak to. They didn't notice it. I think it's good that you do it because not everyone speaks the same level.

Did you notice that you do this.

Yeah yeah oh no I did not know. But now that I put more mind to it I realized it. But in terms of like identity or something like this. No I don't. I feel like it's the same to me. Like speaking English for me is like speaking Swedish. I also think in English and things like this. So I don't feel like I I'm more so a social creature where I like to adjust based on the group that I'm hanging out with. So when I am in Italy with my girlfriend for example. And I'm all around Italian people. And everybody is speaking with an Italian accent and everything. I might change like a little bit. Like I might be more loud when I'm speaking. More expressive with words and using body language and things like this. But like in terms of my identity and how I portray myself. I think it's the same. I think you're the first one who told me. So you're giving a lot of important information. Maybe then I am the N or whatever. Exactly.

Do you know something about the Erasmus policies and goals? Before or after you did the experience?

Not really. I mean I guess the logical conclusion is that. They want to foster more of a European kind of identity. Or more so get young people to be more involved. In terms of realizing what the EU is. And all these possibilities that come with it. But I've also been kind of like involved in EU politics. Not as a politician. But since back in high school. I did these kinds of European Youth Parliament, EYP. Meaning you act as the European Parliament as young. And you compete in different circumstances. And so I know a lot. Because during that time there was a lot of speaking about Erasmus. And I learned a lot about Erasmus as a program. And what the EU wants to do for young people. Especially get young people involved in what the EU actually is. What the EU actually does. But in terms of when I went to university. Then it was time for Erasmus. No, it wasn't that explained I think. I think it was more so focused on. Like when we had these seminars and things. Ahead of going on

Erasmus. Where they would give you all information. It was a lot focused on practical information. And things like this. Not so much as to.

Hey, do you know why Lund University is doing this?

It wasn't really that much of this kind of thing.

Did you feel like the main goals of Erasmus were accomplished?

For me, yes. I think I feel like I accomplished what I wanted to do. In all aspects other than the language. I had the goal of being able to be better in Polish when I came back. But that didn't happen. But in terms of everything else. I managed to give my education an edge. That I wanted to do. I did manage to travel to multiple European countries. While I was in Warsaw. Which I also wanted to do. And I had a lot of fun. And made a lot of new contacts and people for life really. And I wanted to do that. But I was probably not expecting it to go that way. Which it did. It really became such an experience. I'm still in contact with a lot of people from Erasmus today. On social media. I wasn't expecting to make that much close contacts. Also, I met my girlfriend there.

Did you ever feel like there was a shared European identity? Could you feel it?

Yes, I definitely think so. Because in the group of people that I was hanging around with. There was even an EU identity. Because in the group I was hanging around with. It was basically only Europeans. And some of them were from Britain. And since the UK left the EU. It was a lot of shit talking. In this aspect. And the UK people were very honest also. That they think it was a bad decision to leave the EU. Because we would sit in an entire group. And everybody would be speaking about. Either the Erasmus grant money that you got. Or the logistics of how everything led up. To the point of how did you apply. How did your university take it. And of course it was different. But it was very noticeable. That the UK people had it more difficult. To do it. Because they are not in the EU. In terms of even such a thing as. Either having a visa. Or residency permit. Or rights to stay in the country. And things like this. It was a lot more advanced for them. And we were joking many times. And having a shared feeling. It's quite good actually. That we are able to do this. With basically no headache. It was not a lot of headache. So I would definitely say so. That it fostered the European identity. I would think so. At least I know for me personally. It very much did. Just being able to go to this other country. So easily. As if it was the same country. And to then study there. And be there. And meet all of these people.

And you have all these shared experiences. That are like the same. From culture and everything. But still it's different. I think there is a very unique beauty. In Europe. Like diversity. But still. Being one. And sharing all of this history together. And things like this. Which is.

You can't really find anywhere else. On earth I think. It also becomes a moment.

Of learning more about the European countries. And your European neighbours. So for me personally. I would think so. And we also went around. I was fortunate enough. To be with people. That were also interested in. How do you say? Culture and history. So I've been to the opera there. One time in Warsaw. It was in the park. And they were playing Chopin. Like on the piano. In the park. And it was full of people in the park. Everybody laying in the sun. And there was a guy at the piano. In the centre of the park. Playing Chopin. And being great artists. In classical music. And also today's music. And just all of these kinds of things.

That makes you think that. As a Swedish person. We often say in Sweden. That Sweden has no culture. That Swedes have no culture. We don't have a cultural identity.

But it opened the eyes. For the European culture. And the European identity. That we actually have one. A very strong one. And it also reinforced. Your national identity. Definitely. I think so. Because it also started these conversations. Of different countries. And what is different. Between the different countries. And then you realise. This is actually different in Sweden. And this is actually part of. Something that is very Swedish. This is our culture.

It also reinforced. Your European identity. More part of Europe. Yeah. Definitely. I think it's very hard to go on such an experience. And not feel that. Because when you go to a different country. You're in a group of 20 people. Everybody is from a different European country. And then you go on these trips. Like we went to Vienna. And Bratislava. And Prague. And all these trips together. To different countries. Had these shared experiences. And then we would go to some friends apartment. And have dinner. And they would serve dinner the kind of way. Or host the party. That they would do in their home country. And then the next person did it. Like their home country. And I celebrated also Christmas there. So I didn't go back to Sweden for Christmas. And it was me and a couple of different people. Who all stayed. And we rented an Airbnb together. And we did a Christmas table. Where everyone brought something. From their own country. And we celebrated Christmas. It was very cosy. And definitely made you feel more part of a community. Or the region itself. Definitely.

Do you have some improvement. That you would like to add to the Erasmus Plus program? That maybe you couldn't find in your experience?

No. I actually don't think so. I mean. I didn't really have any issues in this kind of way. In any way really. And so I think. Whatever, say bureaucratic headache. Or anything like this. It was more so probably the university themselves. Not the program design. The program design itself was very good. And very reasonable. Like the grant for example. If you wanted the Erasmus grant. Okay. You had to fill in some document or whatever before. And then to get the rest of the money after. You had to fill in some other documents. Of your experience. And that sounds very reasonable. To me. And it was very easy to do. And I think hopefully good for their information. And their knowledge. So no. Not really. Not in my opinion. I think if you ask somebody. From a non-EU country. Like the Brits. They definitely have points.

Yeah. When I interviewed the Indian girl. She gave me some. At least. I can imagine. But that's also in the wider specter of politics. Because you need the visa. Things like this. But as an EU citizen. Going to another EU country was overall very easy. So no. I have information before. Was very good. And the structure of it was quite easy also. I think.

From what I've heard. For example. I have a couple of friends who went to Italy. For example. And then they had a lot more issues. To choose the course. And get the catalog. Of what courses are actually available. And things like this. But I don't think that's on the Erasmus program itself. I mean that's because the universities. So yeah. No. For me it was good.

Yeah. So this experience changed the way you see yourself. As we said.

Yeah. I think I definitely felt more. Part of the European. Of the European community. I definitely think. Yeah.

Which you did so.

Yeah we did. We finished.

Oh okay.

Because I have to skip most of the questions. Because or you already answer it in your other question. Yeah.Perfect. Thank you so much. Honestly this was the best interview I ever had.Was super clear. Super smooth. And you. mean you already answered the question before. Very nice. Thank you.

Appendix VII

Orkanen Library

So... Italian, English or Italian?

Ok, so... You can introduce yourself. Tell me a bit about yourself. What languages do you speak? What languages did you speak during the exchange?

So, I'm a university student. I did the Erasmus during... the third year.The course was in English and cultural migrations. So, I studied the languages. I spoke... I mean, I studied, of course, Italian and native language.During the course, I specialized in English and Chinese. Which are the two languages I used during the Erasmus. English... Obviously, the Erasmus was in English and then... I met some Chinese people who gave me the opportunity to speak with them.So, I also used the language one.

What made you... make the decision to start and do this experience?

So, I always thought that for my degree course, the Erasmus was an obligatory experience to do. Because it's not just studying languages in a classroom that gives you the knowledge, but it has to be accompanied by an experience abroad.The Erasmus was the opportunity to make the best use of it to practice these languages. And then, in my life, I've already had three other Erasmus experiences.

Before?

Before.So, in other contexts, I already had knowledge of the implications. So, I went for the fourth time.

Was it sponsored by Erasmus Plus or was it at your expense?

This experience, the last one I did, was supported by Erasmus Plus for a small part. But the financial support given by the European Union wasn't, at least, from my university. It wasn't very high, so, anyway, I also contributed to my expenses.

Before starting the experience, did you ever think that maybe your level of English wasn't enough to reach the standard level? Or was your level of English a problem?

No, I have to say no, because in my life, I've always been used to living in a bilingual context of Italian and English. Partly because my mum got me used to speaking English since I was little. And also because I've always taken language courses, especially food courses. And also because I've already had other Erasmus experiences. So, I've always been very confident with my level of English. So, it wasn't a problem for me.

Do you think that those who have a better level of English benefit more from these Erasmus experiences than someone who doesn't have the same level?

No. Not necessarily. Because I think that having an Erasmus experience when you're not completely the master of the language you're going to speak during the experience gives you more opportunities than someone who already doesn't have the language, because they've already acquired it. But not knowing it so well, so deeply, the language pushes you to have more experiences than you do if you could do it if you already feel confident speaking it. For example, it pushes you to spend more time with other students who come from other countries because you think, damn, I came here just to speak because I have to get rid of them. Instead, when you're... the language isn't... speaking the language isn't the reason why Erasmus pushes you to spend time with others, to have more experiences than you could do, but maybe someone says, well, today I'll pass, today I won't do it.

Have you ever had many experiences of linguistic barriers while at Erasmus?

Well, not when I spoke English necessarily, maybe with... well, it may have happened very few times that there were misunderstandings, but more than cultural linguistics, because I have to say that the other people I was with spoke English at a high level, that in any case I have always been flexible in understanding a person who isn't native to that language, so I've never had such problems. Instead, speaking Chinese with... obviously not having such a high level of Chinese, yes, I've had many problems, I've found myself in trouble several times, but the friendships, the people I spoke with have always been very understandable, so they helped me improve, I've never found myself in trouble or I've never felt defective, because maybe I didn't know that word or I didn't know how to express a concept. With Polish? Yes, no, with Polish I have to say... I took a Polish course during Erasmus, but well, I didn't use it much, I've learned the basic words to survive, like good morning, good evening, a bag, please, things like that, so I can't say I've had an experience that brought me to speak even a little bit, because now I don't remember anything about Erasmus, but I did it two years ago and Polish, by now, I've forgotten everything I've learned. Maybe I've lost the question, I'm a bit lost. So, language barriers, even when you were trying to speak... So, language barriers, yes, with Polish people, Polish people, I have to say, most of them, especially young people, most of them spoke English, I've never had extreme difficulties to make myself understood, if they didn't speak English, we communicated with gestures, yes, it's never been...

Very Italian.

Yes, very Italian, but it's never been a problem, except a couple of times, I have vivid memories of two times when I didn't speak Polish, also because I lived in a dormitory in a peripheral area, let's say, not in the city center, in the supermarket where I lived, and I received some... Yes...

Catcalling?

No, not catcalling, but I tried to communicate even with those few Polish words I knew, but I was completely ignored, or, I don't want to say mocked, but treated as a typical experience of an immigrant who should go back to his country. But, I repeat, it was two times, I remember that this happened for Erasmus, I felt very good with everyone, most of the people spoke English, in fact, most of all the other Polish people I've met are very polite, so... And especially in a big city like Warsaw, where I did Erasmus, I've never heard these linguistic barriers so strong, in short.

Ok. And instead, you said that among your classmates there has never been any problem, also in terms of socialization, and everyone spoke English, right?

Yes, yes.

And also, regarding the performance at the university, with English you were...

So, regarding the linguistic performance, I've always found it very good, on my part, on the part of the teachers, except one teacher, whose English was very basic, so I struggled to understand him, but on the linguistic side I've always found it good, in fact, sometimes I even thought that it was too simple the level of English that was proposed to me during the lessons, for the subjects we were talking about. But everything went well, I passed the exams one in particular with enough difficulty, because they were different types of exams, but the others... I did six exams in total, and only one I faced with difficulty, the others I found very good, actually.

In your opinion, does your personality change when you speak English, Italian or Chinese?

Yes. So, I've reflected very often on this... I don't know, I don't know how to say it.

On what is happening?

Yes, regarding this specific thing, I have to say that, at least when it comes to English and Italian, my personality changes, and it's not just my perception, but also that of the people around me, who speak both English and Italian, and this thing is often affirmed to me.

For example, I already have the tone of voice, which in Italian is a bit more... since it's probably my native language, I find myself more confident, and so it sounds less delicate. Instead, when I speak English, my voice pitch rises, and so it seems, when I speak, at least the people around me have this perception that I'm more delicate. When I switch to English, when I speak Italian, they take me as a carrier. But besides that, I also have, let's say, I think I have more confidence to face debates and emotional questions in English. One thing is that when I speak Italian, I find myself a bit confused, maybe because I feel more free. I don't know, I've never attributed a reason, but I think...

The language is also connected from an empathic and emotional point of view, so probably when you speak Italian, you also have different experiences and memories in Italian, and these lead you to feel more attached, from an emotional point of view, when you talk about something in Italian.

Yes, but... Wait, maybe I didn't explain myself. When we talk about... In Italian, the discussions about my emotional status, for example, I can't face them, because I feel cringed when I speak in Italian. It's the opposite.

Instead, I manage to have a coherent speech in English, compared to my... how I perceive my emotional sphere. Also, when it comes to debates, I don't know, also academically, in English, I feel more courageous to have debates. I understood the opposite.

In English, I feel more confident compared to Italian, maybe because, I don't know, since it's not my language, I feel more free to say what I want. Probably.

Do you know what are the main goals? The main goal of Erasmus and why it was born?

I think so.

I know that Erasmus was born in Holland. It was created in Holland when the European Union already existed to promote a social cohesion of the European Union. Maybe, when it was created, there was still the perception that the states were not yet united in a union, but always left to themselves. I assume, from the few things I've read, that this is one of the main goals of Erasmus. But I don't know much more than this. From what you can imagine, the cohesion between different countries, also from an integrative point of view, to integrate people, to make them know the different... Their main goal is to make people from different backgrounds and from different countries and to make them feel this union. A shared European identity. Yes, like the slogan of the European Union, United in Diversity. Exactly.

Did you feel it?

I felt it a lot. My company while I was at Erasmus was extremely diverse, also with people not in the European Union, but always in the Schengen area, like Turkish people, for example. I have to say that it was a wonderful moment, a period of sharing of different cultures, but at the same time similar. They share the honour, the pleasure of living in a continent where there is the possibility to travel freely and not feel restricted in this kind of international experience. I have to say that all the people I talked to and stayed in touch with enjoyed it.

Also people from the UK, I have to say they faced the biggest difficulties they had to face, all the bureaucracy behind Erasmus, which was not a requirement for us because we were legally more free compared to the time of residency abroad, the visa, all the documents we didn't have to do, instead they had to and also the level of contributions we received. I have to say that this last experience really made me feel lucky to live in a country of the European Union because it gives me freedom, it gives me a sense of freedom that if I had been in America I probably wouldn't have experienced.

So, in your opinion, its purpose accomplished it.

Yes, it succeeded in its mission. Absolutely yes, I have to say.

Regarding the linguistic barriers, in your opinion, is it something that could or if there is something that could have been modified to make your experience better? If you were one of the people who organized Erasmus, would you have added something?

Not necessarily during the organization of Erasmus, but maybe for the recipient university, the University of Warsaw, on whose website I made an application for a room for students to stay there, whose website was all in Polish, without the possibility of translation directly from the website in English, and also the website to see the courses, to make the learning agreement. So, from the recipient university I would have modified these things, but in terms of human assistance, in terms of people, of the university staff, both from the recipient and the recipient university, they were all open. From the university in Poland, everyone spoke English, so I never had any kind of linguistic barriers, apart from the logistics from the website

. In your opinion, has this experience strengthened the way you feel nationalist, or has it strengthened the way you feel European?

I would say both things, because first of all, it has strengthened my perception of being European citizen, because it has opened up a new vision, it has given me a real idea of my opportunities in the future, as I am now doing studies abroad, where I don't have a limit, a national barrier, but where I feel free to work and have a life in any other state belonging to the European Union. It has also made me more attached to the idea of being an Italian citizen, because always linking to the slogan of the European Union, Uniting Diversity, it is nice to share a conviviality of different cultures, but it is also very nice to be part of your own culture, to be proud of it, because it is a piece of the puzzle, and in any case, any piece must be cherished, must be celebrated. So, this experience has changed you, it has also changed the way you see yourself, before and after. Yes, it has definitely changed me, it has made me grow as a person, because it is the first time that I have lived in a foreign country for so long, six months is not a very long period of time, but it really gives you the idea of what it means to live alone, to be independent.

I lost the question.

Has it changed you?

Yes, yes, and also, linked to independence, I have grown as a person, I have also enlarged my circle, in the sense that during Erasmus I met my current boyfriend, so, yes, a European relationship, let's say, we like to define it that way, but it has made me grow, it has made me meet a lot of people that I am still in contact with, and it has made me live experiences that I will never forget, and it has given me the right push to cement myself in fully exploiting all the opportunities that Europe can offer as a citizen. Thank you.
It was a pleasure. Thank you. Thank you for this interview.