

The role of languages at Finnish universities

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The promotion of multilingualism is one of the objectives of the European Union. However, in academic contexts, internationalisation and multilingual expertise are often understood as using English as a medium in teaching, research, tutoring and administrative communication. To explore the role of different languages at Finnish universities, an online survey was conducted in November – December 2009 among their staff, with 3605 respondents across disciplines and occupational groups. In this paper, we will present some of the results focussing on the following questions: How important are different languages considered in a university working environment? What are the language skills and use of the Finnish university personnel? Why languages other than English ought to be used? The results show that 92.8 % of the respondents judged different languages as very important or important but the majority highlighted the importance of English. English and Finnish were used by almost all staff members, whereas Swedish was known by 92.6% but used by only 73%. The second most important foreign language was German with 75.4% knowing but only 48.3% using it. The languages of Somalis, Thais, Iraqis and Turks that form the largest immigrant groups were known and used very seldom. Older staff members and higher professional groups used a greater number of languages than younger and other occupational groups. An important argument for the use of foreign languages other than English was their being a “resource for scientific research” in keeping with the socio-cultural nature of science. Today, internationalisation and multilingualism seem to contradict: the more important internationalisation has become, the more English rules the academic world. The plurilingual potential of Finland’s university staff members could be used to extend and intensify multilingual practices with the help of strategic decisions, for example language policies, on the European, national, and university level.

Keywords: academic multilingualism, role of different languages, university staff across disciplines and occupational groups, online-survey

Introduction

In Europe, multilingualism is supported by the European Commission because it is seen as having special importance for the Lisbon aims of economic growth and social cohesion (European Communities 2007: 5). The European Community encourages cooperation between the Member States in the field of education while fully respecting their cultural and linguistic diversity in teaching and the

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organisation of education systems, as stated in the *Treaty Establishing the European Community* (Eur-Lex 2010: 112). To promote internationalisation and mobility, the Bologna Process aims at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) with comparable and compatible academic degree standards (BMWF 2008: 4) which are of particular relevance to the language constellation and to language learning and language use in the Union (European Communities 2007: 7).

Finnish universities have taken up the cause of internationalisation and multilingualism. Since the late nineteen eighties there have been several mobility programmes for students, teachers and researchers. International student exchange from and to Finland has been growing steadily (Korkkala 2008). In addition, international degree programmes have become central in the development of internationalisation in Finnish higher education from the beginning of this century (Garam 2009: 2). Departments are expected to offer undergraduate-level teaching and MA programmes in “foreign languages”. This is supported by the Finnish Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2009: 10) as well as by the University councils or senates – meaning that it also receives financial support. In the programme for the development of teaching and studies at the University of Helsinki, for example, the promotion of multilingualism and multiculturalism is seen as a prerequisite to creating an international learning environment that furthers academic mobility and supports the staff in meeting the challenges of internationalisation. Learning and teaching in an international environment are expected to “broaden our understanding of how things are learnt and understood, and how things are communicated in different languages and situations. An international learning environment will enhance thorough learning and hone awareness of the significance of languages and cultures, and will prepare students to act in increasingly international work environments.” (University of Helsinki 2006: 79). In the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015*, good language skills are mentioned as one of the key competences in internationality (Ministry of Education 2009: 20).

In sum, the attitudes toward multilingualism are very positive in European and Finnish higher education contexts. However, in practice the role of English as the academic lingua franca has been steadily growing worldwide and is nowadays uncontested. In fact, there seems to be a contradiction between internationalisation and the use of languages other than English, or, in other words, internationalisation seems to be possible only by using English. Undoubtedly, English has become the most important language for publishing scientific results in most disciplines; international conferences and in some countries and disciplines even national ones are held in English; and teaching in a foreign language means, at a closer look, teaching in English (Ammon & McConnell 2002, Wächter 2008, Saarinen forthcoming). Also in applied linguistics shared multilingualism seems to be a relic of bygone times (Carli & Ammon 2008). Multilingual expertise is thus often understood as using English in research, teaching, tutoring and administrative communication. In Finland, an officially bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish as national languages, there is even a recent public debate about whether or not to introduce English as one of the primary languages of teaching, discourse and perhaps even administration (Jacobs 2010, Hall 2010). The role of English in Finnish academia is dominant to such a degree that it forces one to reflect on the role of the

national languages. The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, for example, has published an appeal for ensuring Finnish as the language of science and higher education (Luukka 2010), and the Centre for International Mobility in Finland (CIMO) has recently emphasised the promotion of learning and teaching Finnish as a foreign language both in Finland and abroad (Ketolainen et al. 2010).

It seems self-evident that the development of a single dominant academic lingua franca has many advantages, and many international efforts would not be possible today without this condition. However, 'self-evident' phenomena – by definition – often escape critical scientific gaze (Bourdieu 1990). Epistemologists, philosophers and science historians have emphasised the socio-cultural nature of science and its implications for language use (Fleck 1979 [1935], Kuhn 1962, Nietzsche 1873, Weber 1992 [1919], Wittgenstein 1984 [1921], Knorr-Cetina 1981). According to Picht, the culture of science is nationally persistent even when French or German scientists copy American models, and the respective results are different in Paris and Tübingen. The triangle of understanding was still uncompleted when both parties met in Harvard. (Picht 1987: 17¹) Krumm concludes that it is a fallacy to believe that sciences would manage with one language. Only recently has Europe rediscovered multilingualism as a richness and resource. (Krumm 2003: 9).

With our study, we aimed to find out how multilingual Finnish universities are and what kind of practices and attitudes there are among the staff. For this purpose, we carried out the survey the results of which will be presented below. This survey is part of a larger project on the role of languages and especially of German as a vehicular language in academic and business contexts in Finland (Ylönen & Vainio 2010). In our survey, we were especially interested in the role of German because it was the dominating academic language, also in Finland, until the 1930's, and has strongly shaped the traditions of the Finnish sciences (Piri 2001: 105). Also the role of Swedish as the second official national language in Finland was explored in more detail. However, in this paper we will focus only on the first part of the survey that is dealing with multilingualism in general, without emphasising any particular language. Our research questions were: 1. How important are different languages considered in a university working environment by the staff at Finnish universities? 2. What are the language skills of the Finnish university personnel? 3. What languages are used for professional purposes at Finnish universities? and 4. What are the possible reasons why languages other than English should be used in university contexts?

The results section is divided into six subsections: 1. Background information, 2. Attitudes towards the role of different languages at Finnish universities, 3. Language skills of the Finnish university staff, 4. Language use for professional purposes, 5. Comparison of language skills and language use, and finally 6. Benefits of multilingualism. The background information is used to relate language skills and use to the age and profession of the respondents in subsection 5.

Material and methods

To survey language skills and usage of university staff in Finland as well as their attitudes toward multilingualism, we used an online questionnaire that was offered in four languages: Finnish, Swedish, English, and German. It consisted of two parts: the first part was designed for all staff members, independent of their language skills, and it contained 20 questions (see appendix). The second part was designed for those who had at least some knowledge of Swedish and/or German. In the following we will concentrate on some of the results from the first part of this survey only.

The questionnaire contained both multiple choice questions and fields for open comments. The answers to the multiple choice questions will be analysed statistically using valid percentages, and the number of respondents is mentioned for every question in the text or in the respective figure. Some quotations from the open comments will be used to illustrate the results. In addition, the results concerning language skills and language use will be compared both on the level of academic community and individual speakers. Language skills and use in the academic community will also be analysed with regard to age and occupational group.

The survey was addressed to 20 955 members of the staff at 20 universities and higher educational institutions. Officially, only 16 of these participated in the survey, but we received, nevertheless, answers also from further four universities. The survey was conducted between the 16th of November and the 4th of December 2009 (3 weeks). It was up to the universities to decide how to distribute the survey. Eight universities sent e-mails to their staff members, and eight put the survey into their intranet. It turned out that the manner of distribution strongly influenced the response rate. Our target group was quite large: the survey was sent to the members of all professional groups, from professors to facility managers.

We received a total of 3605 answers. Seven questionnaires were returned empty and therefore discarded, and the response rate was thus 17.2%. Mostly, the Finnish questionnaire was responded to (2990 answers), followed by the Swedish (317 answers), English (231 answers), and German (67 answers) ones.

The Universities of Helsinki, Jyväskylä and Lapland as well as the Lappeenranta University of Technology and the Theatre Academy in Helsinki sent the survey to all staff members; the Universities of Kuopio, Oulu and Tampere sent it to 20% of their staff members. There was a big difference in the response rate between e-mail and intranet distribution. With e-mail the response rate was on average 22.4% (3182 answers/14192 addressees), whereas the respective percentage with intranet was only 6.4% (463 answers/6763 addressees). In addition, the response rate was higher at universities that sent the survey to a random sample of their staff only. Especially high was the response rate at the University of Tampere (206 out of 450 = 45.8%). The response rates with random sample distribution indicate that it is worthwhile to apply this method for increasing the addressees' willingness to participate in surveys.

Results

Background information

Most of the 3598 answers came from the University of Helsinki and Jyväskylä, where the survey was sent to the whole staff. Also the Lappeenranta Technical University and the University of Tampere participated actively. (see Figure 1)

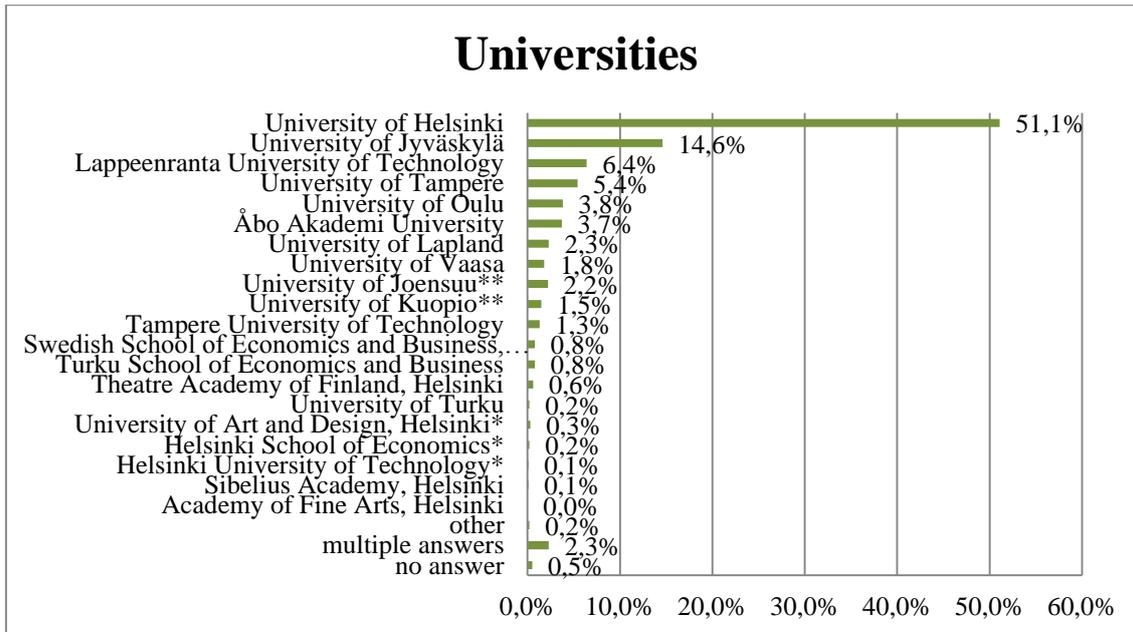


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents at Finnish universities.

*In 2010 these universities merged to form the Aalto University.

**Universities merged to the University of Eastern Finland in 2010.

The Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki, the Helsinki School of Economics, the Helsinki University of Technology, and the University of Turku did not officially participate in our survey. Nevertheless, we received some responses from these universities and partly even a bigger number than from some of the officially participating universities (e.g. 6 answers from the officially not participating Helsinki School of Economics compared with 3 answers from the officially participating Sibelius-Academy Helsinki). Participants who chose the option “other” mentioned being employed, for example, at foreign universities. About two percent of the respondents stated that they were employed at more than one university (multiple answers).

About two thirds of the respondents were women (64.3%), and one third men (35.7%), with 3581 answers. It was interesting that the greatest number of answers were received from natural scientists (see Figure 2) because in a previous survey among students, conducted in 2008, most respondents came from the faculties of Arts and Humanities (Ylönen & Vainio 2010). A possible explanation for this is that natural sciences have the largest staff, at least in Jyväskylä. As “other” working areas the Open University or a separate institution, such as the Agora Center in Jyväskylä, were mentioned. 11.8% of the respondents mentioned working in more than one area. The most common combinations with 30 or more answers were “natural sciences & medicine” (63 =

1.8% of all respondents), “arts and humanities & social sciences” (37 = 1%), “administration & arts and humanities” (34 = 0.9%), “natural sciences & engineering and technology” (30 = 0.8%), and “arts and humanities & education” (30 = 0.8%).

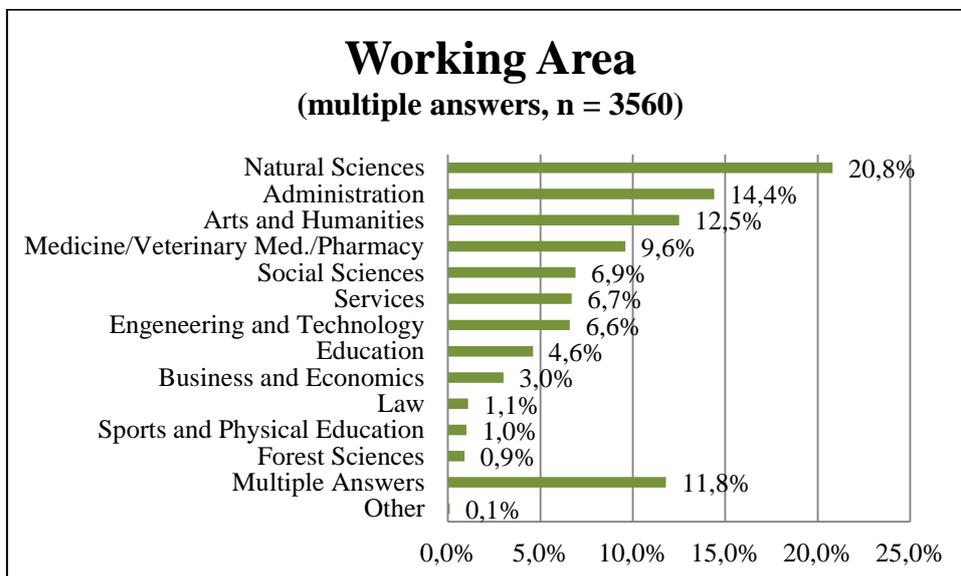


Figure 2. Background information: working areas of respondents.

The majority of the answers were obtained from teaching and research staff (see Figure 3). Together with the group of professors, the teaching and research staff represented almost two-thirds of the respondents (61.7%). Other groups with a high response rate were administrative and managerial staff. “Other” professional groups were project coordinators/workers, “other staff”, business development officer, consultant, expert, translator/interpreter, hospital staff, and study psychologist.

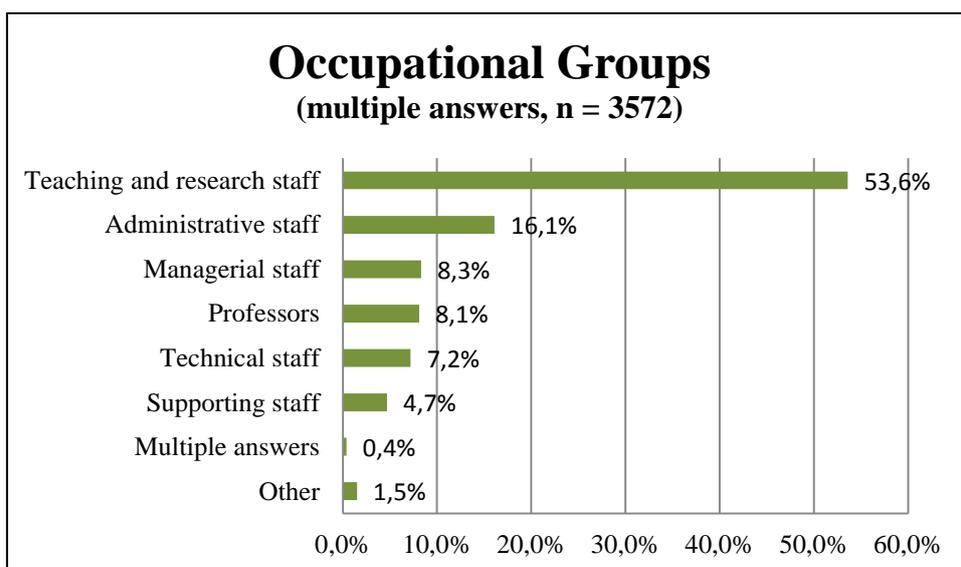


Figure 3. Background information: distribution of respondents by occupational group

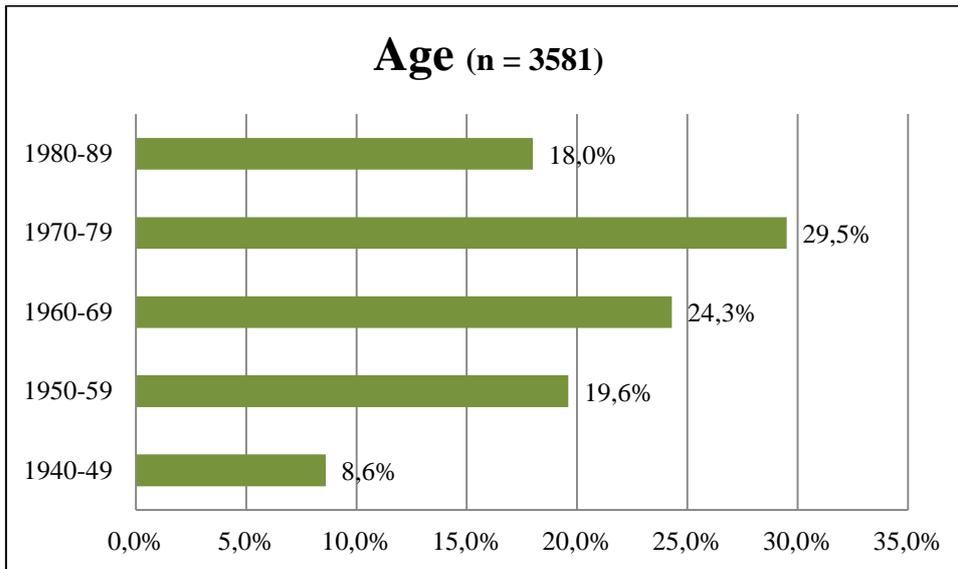


Figure 4. Background information: age of respondents

More than half of the respondents were born between 1960 and 1979, and consequently 30–49 years old at the time of the survey (see Figure 4).

Attitudes towards the role of different languages at Finnish universities

The purpose of our first research question was to find out how important different languages were considered in a university working environment by the staff of Finnish universities. To do this, we used a Likert scale ranging from very important to not important at all. The figure below shows that about 93 % of the staff regarded multilingualism as very important or important (see Figure 5).

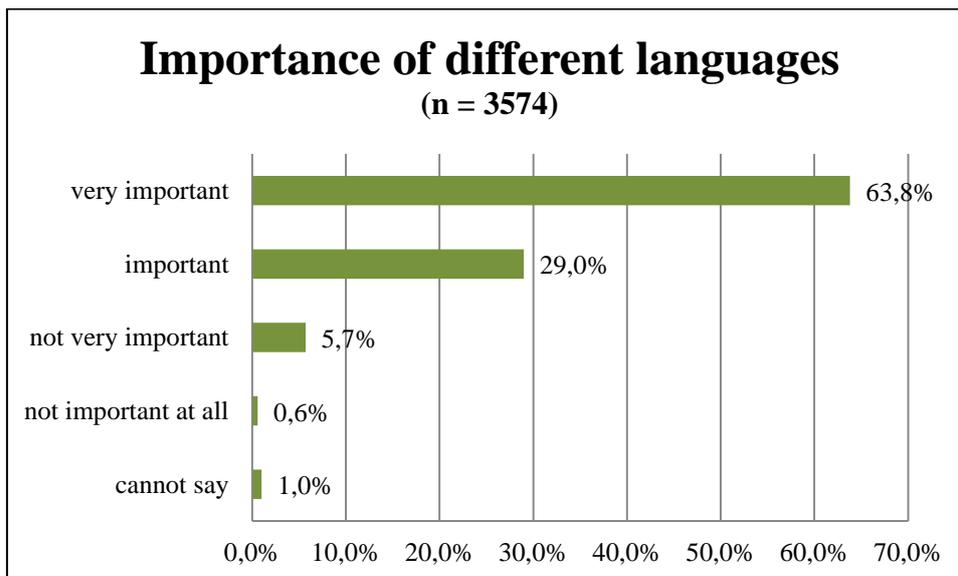


Figure 5. Attitudes towards academic multilingualism: importance of different languages

However, a closer look at the open comments to this question shows that most answers highlighted the importance of English (see example 1) but there were also comments that stressed the importance of other languages as well (see example 2).

- 1) *Kansainvälisessä yliopistossa pitää olla kansainvälinen meininki, mutta englannin ja suomen lisäksi muita kieliä ei mielestäni tarvita.*
An international university must have international goings-on, but in my opinion one does not need any other languages except Finnish and English. (1984, M, JyU, important, Administration, Supportive staff)

- 2) *Englanti on tiedemaailman kieli, mutta käytännössä vieraiden kielten osaaminen vaihtelee eri maissa suuresti. Englannilla ei pärjää yksin. Vähäisestäkin kielitaidosta eri kielissä on suurta apua myös tiedemaailman epävirallisissa ympyröissä. Ymmärtämällä edes hiukan eri kieliä voi paremmin sukkuloida verkostoissa ja myös muilla kielillä kuin englannilla raportoidun tutkimuksen tuntemus olisi tärkeää.*
English is the language of science, but in practice the knowledge of foreign languages varies a lot in different countries. English alone is not enough. Even a scant knowledge of different languages is helpful in unofficial circles of the scientific world. When you understand at least a little different languages, it is easier to shuttle in networks and it would also be important to be acquainted with research reported in other languages than English. (1951, F, OuU, very important, Arts and Humanities, Teaching and research staff)

Language skills of the Finnish university staff

Our second research question focused on the language skills of the Finnish university personnel. The respondents were asked to assess their language skills on a scale adjusted to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages with the following terms used to define the levels: A1 = poor skills/basic user, A2 = sufficient skills/basic user, B1 = satisfactory skills/independent user, B2 = good skills/independent user, C1 = very good skills/proficient user, C2 = fluent skills/proficient user. In addition, the options 0 = no skills and D = mother tongue were offered. The results are shown in Figure 6. Exceptionally, the percentages given here include the missing answers because many respondents did not choose any of the given options for languages they did not know.

It is not surprising that the majority of respondents, 81.3%, had Finnish as their mother tongue. Over 92.6% had at least some knowledge of Swedish, which can be explained by the fact that Swedish is the second national language in Finland, with about 5 percent of native speakers, and compulsory at school. Only 0.2% mentioned having no English skills. Another interesting observation is that a greater number of respondents mentioned having skills in English (99.1%) than in Finnish (98.4%). According to our results, German is still the second best known foreign language among the staff at Finnish universities as 75.4% of the respondents claimed to have at least some German skills. Other frequently mentioned languages with skills at any level (A1-D) were French (43.8%), Spanish (24%), Russian (22.3%), and Italian (17.5%).

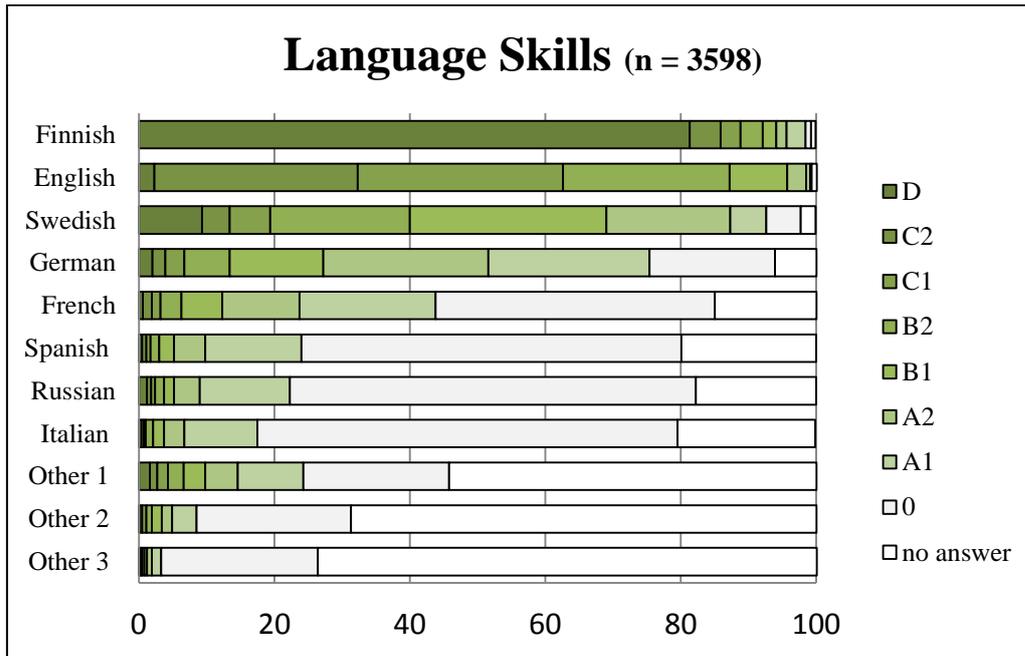


Figure 6. Self-assessment of the respondents' language skills

"Other 1/2/3" languages mentioned more often than ten times included Estonian (181 = 5%), Latin (142 = 3.9%), Danish (122 = 3.4%), Norwegian (83 = 2.3%), Dutch (67 = 1.9%), Chinese (59 = 1.6%), Greek (58 = 1.6%), Hungarian (38 = 1.1%), Japanese (35 = 1%), Portuguese (33 = 0.9%), Arabic (29 = 0.8%), Polish (27 = 0.8%), Hebrew (18 = 0.5%), sign language (16 = 0.4%), and Czech (16 = 0.4%). Except for Russian, Estonian, Swedish, Chinese, German, and English, the languages of other representatives of the ten largest migrant groups in Finland 2009 (Somalis 5570 = 3.6%, Thais 4497 = 2.9%, and Turks 3809 = 2.4%; Statistics Finland 2010) were seldom mentioned: Somali once, Thai four times (= 0.1%), and Turkish nine times (= 0.3%). In the case of Iraqis (3978 = 2.6%), the seventh biggest migrant group in Finland with Arabic and Kurdish as their national languages, Kurdish was mentioned only twice (= 0.1%).

An analysis of the number of languages known by a single respondent (any level A1-D) showed that the majority of the staff at Finnish universities (58.7%) knew five or more languages, almost one third (30.5%) four languages, 9.5% three languages and 1.1% two languages. Only 0.3% claimed to know only one language. These were five speakers of English and four of Finnish (valid percentages from 3589 answers).

Language use for professional purposes

With our third research question we wanted to find out which languages were used for professional purposes at Finnish universities and how often. Also in Figure 7 below, the percentages given include the missing answers because many respondents did not choose any of the given options for languages they did not use. Undoubtedly, English is the most frequently used foreign language in academic contexts. With all its uses (daily - seldom) being 98.9%, English was used even more frequently than Finnish (97.7%). However, daily or weekly use was higher for Finnish (94.6%) than for English (87.7%). The second national

language, Swedish, was used by 73% of the respondents (any use, daily – seldom), and its daily or weekly use was 23.6%. Also here, with respect to language use, German is the second most frequently used foreign language (46.3%), but only 7.5% (271) of the respondents used it daily or weekly for professional purposes. This means that over 80 % of them used German seldom or never (including missing answers, 83.4%). In contrast, English was used daily or weekly by 87.8% and seldom or never (including missing answers) by 4.7% of the respondents. This shows that there is a rather big gap between English and the second (most frequently used) foreign language.

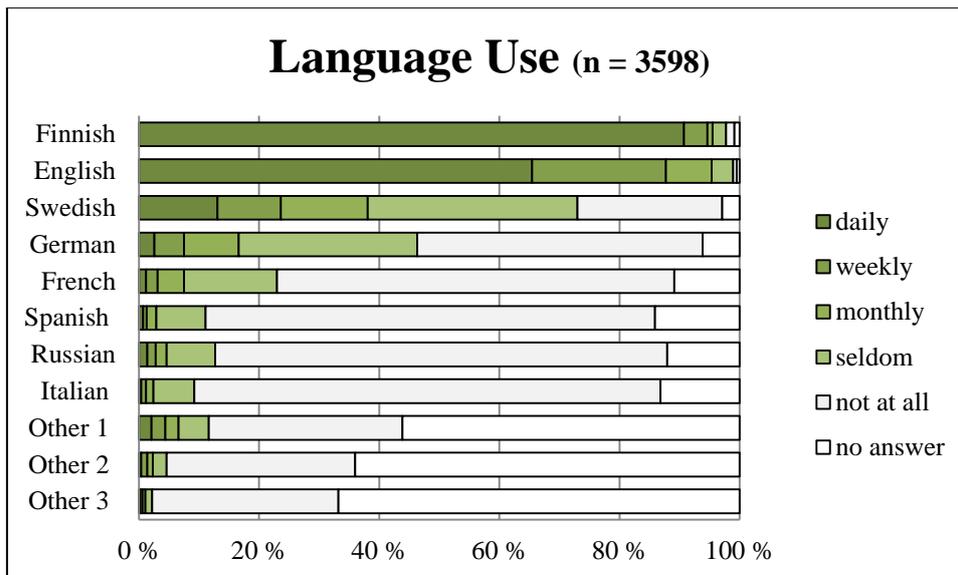


Figure 7. Which languages do you use at work and how often?

“Other 1/2/3” languages mentioned ten times or more were Norwegian (102 = 2.8%), Danish (96 = 2.7%), Estonian (91 = 2.5%), Latin (84 = 2.3%), Dutch (36 = 1%), Greek (30 = 0.8%), Portuguese (30 = 0.8%), Chinese (25 = 0.7%), Hungarian (19 = 0.5%), Arabic (13 = 0.4%), Sign language (12 = 0.3%), Japanese (11 = 0.3%), and Icelandic (10 = 0.3%). Compared to the “other” languages mentioned in the skills question, the Scandinavian languages Norwegian and Danish were thus more often used than Estonian and Latin. All in all, the percentages of users of “other” languages remain rather low. The languages of Somalis, Thais, Iraqis and Turks that belong to the largest immigrant groups (Statistics Finland: 2010) were used very seldom: Somali twice (0.06%), Thai once (= 0.03%), Kurdish once (=0.03%) and Turkish six times (= 0.17%).

The analysis of the number of languages used by individual speakers (any use: daily – seldom) showed that the staff at Finnish universities is fairly polyglot. 26.9% of the respondents mentioned using five or more languages, 25.2 % four languages, 29.8% three languages and 17.1% two languages. Only 1% (= 37 employees) used only one language (valid percentages from 3583 answers).

Purposes of language use

Finnish was the most frequently spoken language (95 %) whereas English was most frequently used for reading in academic contexts (96 %). In all, both Finnish and English were used relatively equally ($\pm 90\%$) for reading, writing, listening and speaking purposes (see Figure 8).

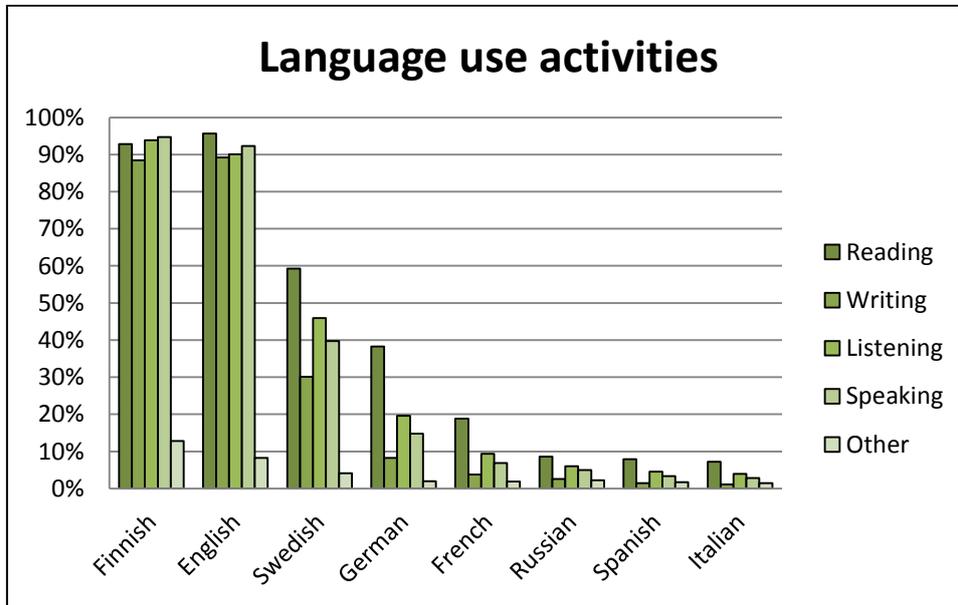


Figure 8. For what purposes do you use the following languages as working languages?

Bigger differences in these four core components of language use could be observed in the other languages where reading was clearly the commonest and writing the least often used activity. 60 % of all respondents used Swedish and 38 % German for reading purposes whereas the respective figures for writing were 30 % and 8 %. The differences between listening and speaking of other languages than Finnish and English were not as marked. 46 % used Swedish and 20 % German for listening compared to 40 % Swedish and 15 % German used for speaking purposes. “Other”, generally less frequently mentioned activities were, for example, thinking, singing or using the respective sign language.

Foreign language contacts

The respondents were also asked to name the kinds of foreign language contacts they had had during their studies or work (see Figure 9). Some two thirds mentioned having cooperated in research and development projects. In addition, the majority had guided foreign students (56.1%) and hosted visitors (55.2%). Almost half of them had worked (45.6%) or studied (42.7%) outside Finland, and only 18% had cooperated in exchange programmes. Examples of “other” foreign language contacts (36.5%) included school partnerships, purchasing/internet-shopping and complaints, websites, customer service, and buying material for libraries (journals, databanks).

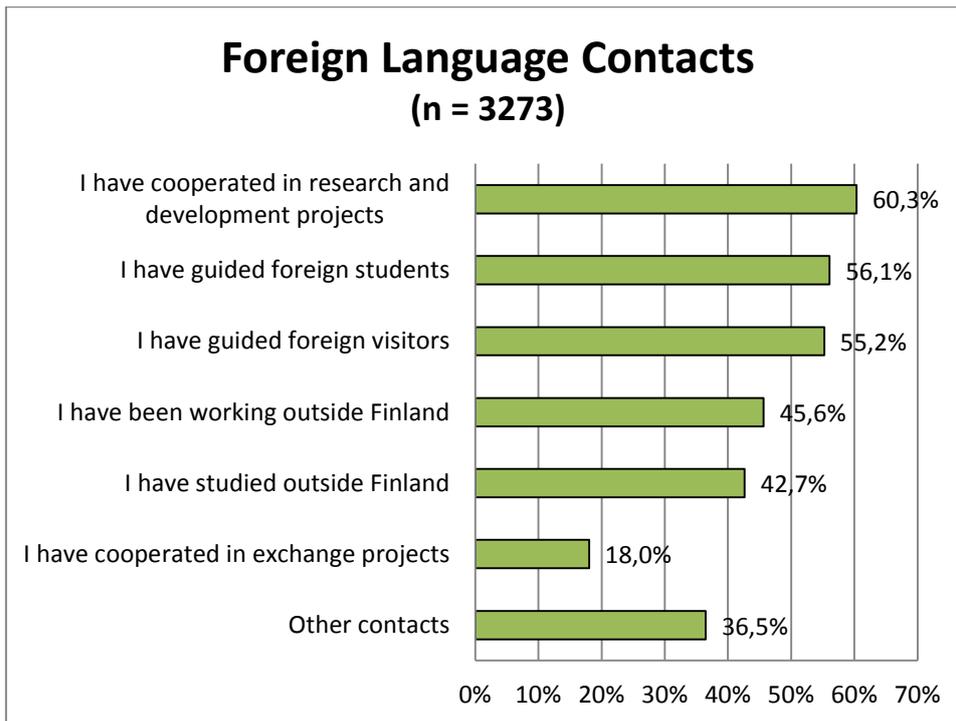


Figure 9. What kind of foreign language contacts have you had during your studies or work?

In open questions, the respondents were furthermore asked to mention the language mainly used for their foreign language contacts as well as their country of studying or working abroad, and the countries of their project partners. The answers indicate that English is without doubt the most commonly used language in all contact situations both abroad and in Finland. However, other languages were mentioned in all situations as well, mostly Swedish and German. The open answers to this question have not yet been statistically analysed but at first glance the frequencies seem to match roughly the results for language use given in Figure 7.

Comparison of language skills and language use

Overall comparison of language skills and language use

A comparison of language skills with language use shows that only Finnish and English were both known and used by almost all members of the university staff in Finland, with English obtaining slightly higher percentages. All the other languages were known to a higher degree than used for professional purposes. (see Figure 10)

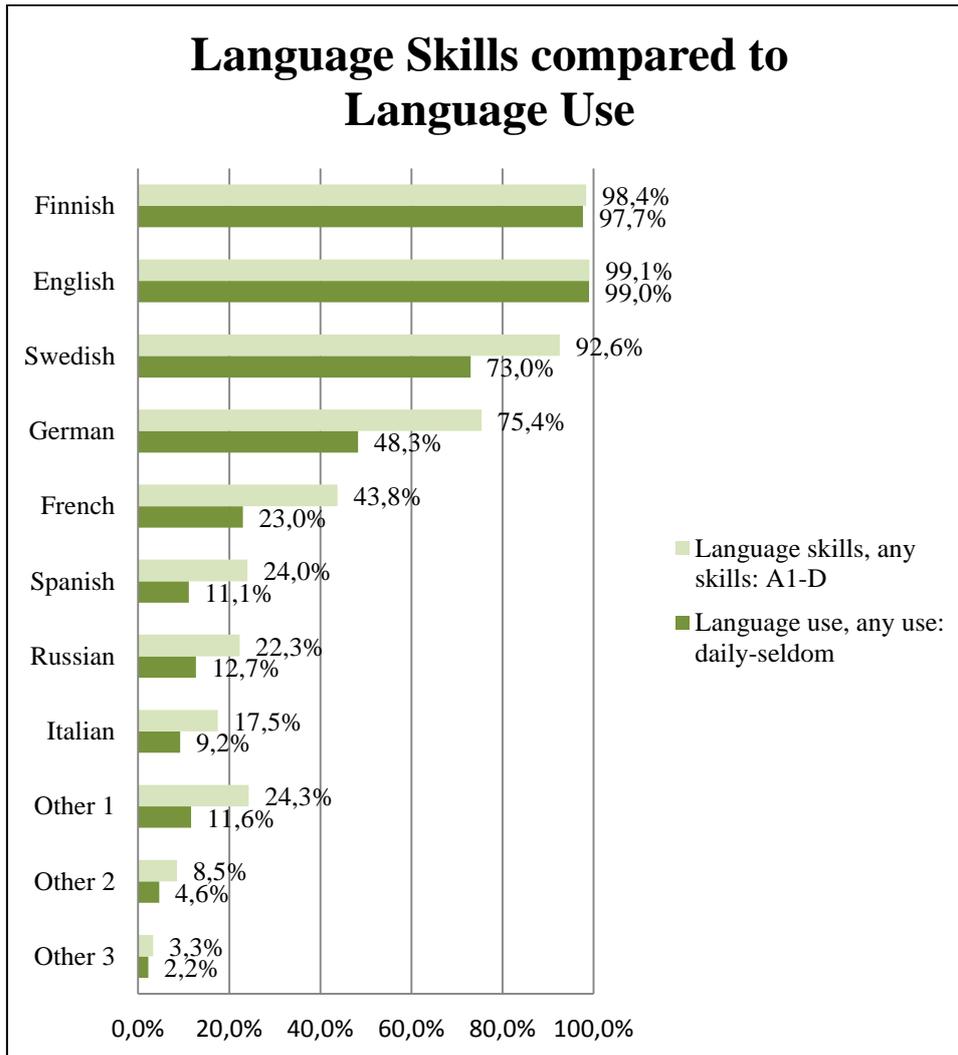


Figure 10. Language skills and use of the staff at Finnish universities (based on all 3598 answers).

On an individual level, the comparison of language skills with language use (see Figure 11) shows that 89.3 % knew more than four languages at least to some degree (any level: A1-D) but only a little more than half of the respondents (52.1%) used more than four languages for professional purposes at least to some degree (any use: daily - seldom). However, Figure 11 gives only a summarised picture of individual language skills and language use. Cross tabulation allows more detailed insights into the skills of individual persons compared to their actual use of languages for professional purposes. The cross tabulation in Table 1 includes all the missing answers and the percentages given here thus refer to all 3598 respondents.

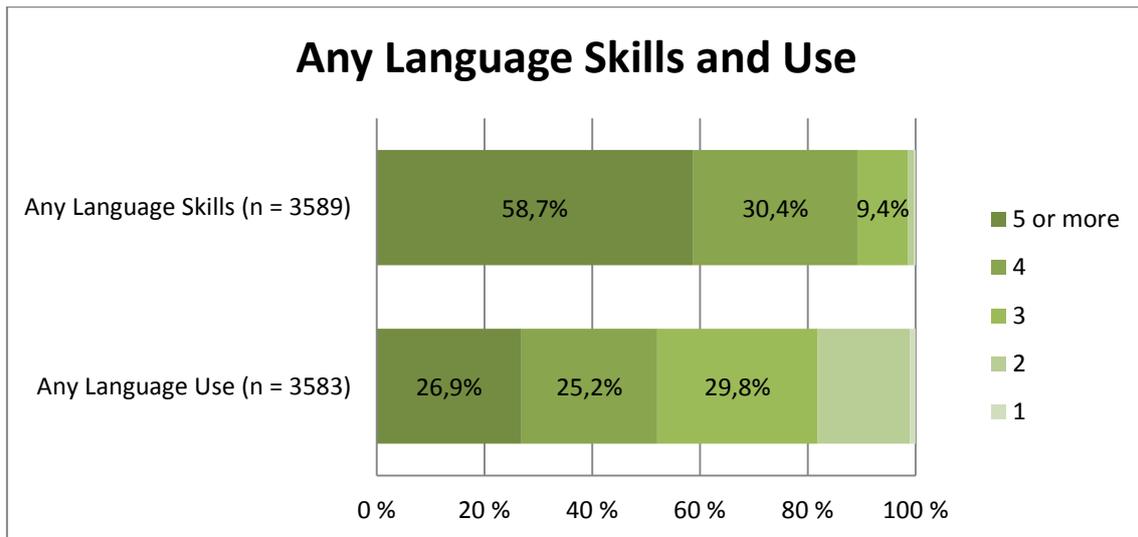


Figure 11. Individual multilingualism (valid percentages)

In Table 1, the total numbers of answers for language skills are given in the right-hand column, and the total numbers for language use in the bottom row. In addition, the percentages for languages known and used most often are given here (about 59 % knew five languages, and about 30 % used three languages). Because of the low percentage of missing answers to both questions, the rounded values for valid (Figure 11) and total percentages (Table 1) match.

Table 1. Cross tabulation of language skills and language use

		Language use						Total (Language skills)
		missing	1	2	3	4	5 or more	
Language skills	missing	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
	1	0	6 0,2%	3	0	0	0	9
	2	1	5	30 0,8%	2	1	2	41
	3	0	10	144	161 4,5%	22	1	338
	4	4	9	232	419	395 11%	36	1095
	5 or more	1	7	205	484	483	926 25,7%	2106 58,5%
Total (Language use)		15	37	614	1066 29,6%	901	965	3598

The results of the cross tabulation showed that of all respondents 25.7% knew and used five or more, 11% four, 4.5% three, and 0.8% two languages (highlighted in black). Cumulatively viewed, 25.7% knew and used five or more, 36.7% four or more, 41.2% three or more, and 42% two or more languages.

Furthermore, 36 respondents (= 1%) knew four and used five or more languages, 23 knew three and used four or more (= 0.6%), 5 knew two and used three or

more (= 0.1%), and 3 knew one and used two languages (= 0.08%, highlighted in light grey). This suggests that the more languages one knows the more additional languages can be used for occupational purposes. It is conceivable that the knowledge of one Romanic, Slavic or Germanic language lowers the barrier to use other languages in the same language family, for example.

On the other hand, the percentages of those who knew more languages and used fewer are much higher. 1180 respondents (= 32.8%) knew five and used four or fewer languages, 664 (= 18.5%) knew four and used three or fewer, 154 (= 4.3%) knew three and used two or fewer, and 6 (= 0.2%) knew two and used only one language (highlighted in dark grey). This means that, in general, the respondents knew more languages than they used for professional purposes. For example, most respondents (2106 = 58.5%) knew five or more languages but less than half of them (only 926 = 25.7%) used five or more languages for occupational purposes.

In sum, the respondents were quite plurilingual, despite the generally lower language use compared to language skills (52 percent used four or more languages for professional purposes). Nevertheless it has to be taken into account that this figure refers to any language use (daily - seldom). A more detailed comparison of the first and second most frequently used foreign languages in the subsection "Language use for professional purposes" above showed that English was used daily and weekly by some 88% of the respondents whereas the equivalent figure for German was only some 8% (see Figure 7). Also the open comments indicate that English is without doubt the dominating foreign and internationally used vehicular language for professional purposes.

Next, language skills and use for professional purposes will be analysed in relation to the age and professional groups of the respondents.

Language skills and use in relation to the age of respondents

In terms of age, there is a clear tendency towards fewer language skills with younger age groups (see Figure 12). The same tendency can be observed in terms of language use: older respondents used a greater number of languages than younger ones (see Figure 13). Except for Finnish and English, more languages were known than used for professional purposes in all age groups. Especially Spanish that seems to be favored by younger generations as far as skills are concerned is not very often used for professional purposes.

The total number of respondents for the different language skills/use was: Finnish 3564/3555, Swedish 3511/3484, English 3561/3571, German 3369/3368, French 3048/3197, Russian 2949/3156, Spanish 2874/3085, and Italian 2858/3114, and valid percentages are used in the analysis.

These results - that all other languages except English and Finnish were known to a higher degree than used for professional purposes and the decrease in language skills and use with age - indicate that the use of versatile language skills is not encouraged in Finnish university environments today. Also the open comments support this assumption, as in the following quotation (see example 3):

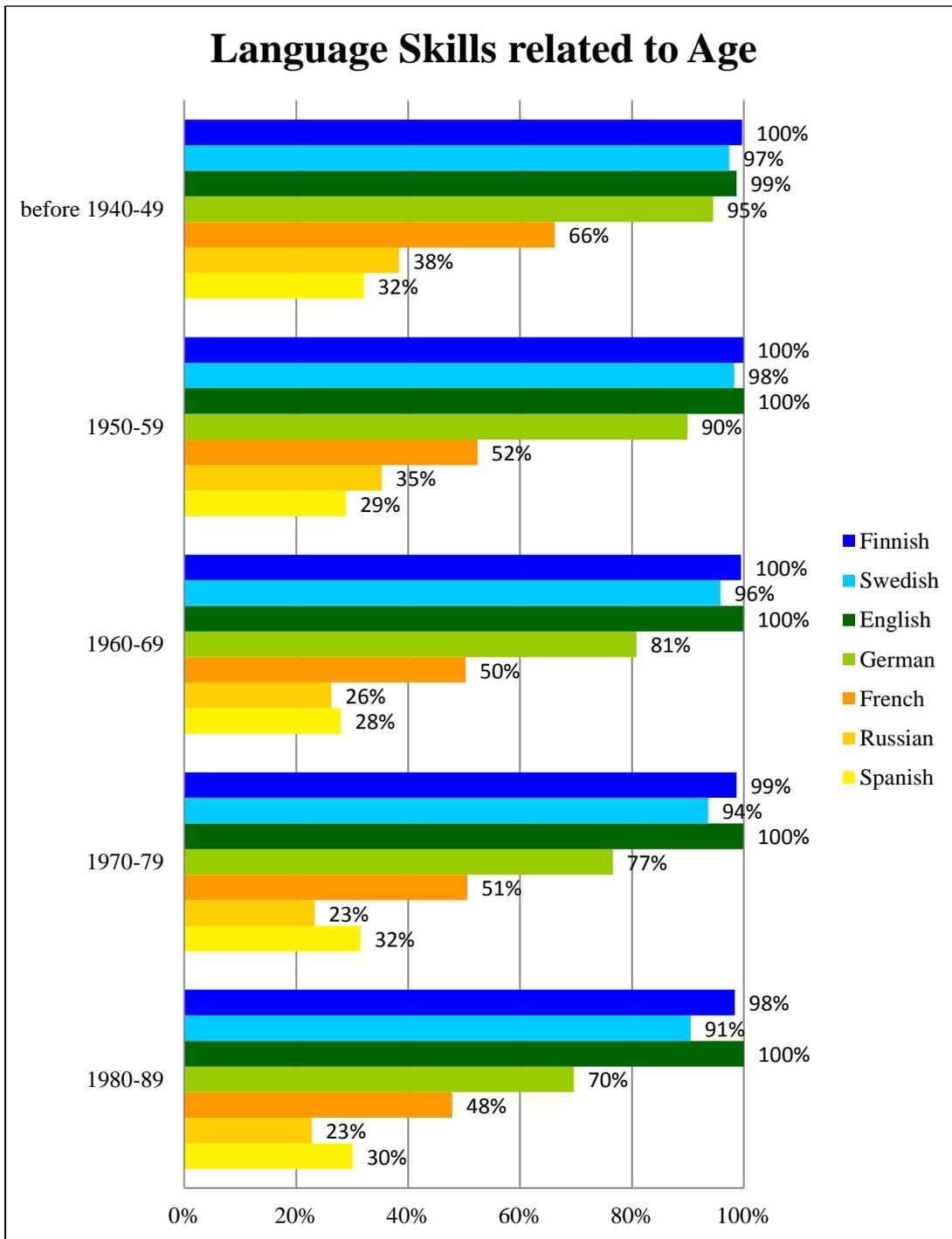


Figure 12. Comparison of language skills with age. Any skills (A1 – D).

- 3) *Jos on hankkinut muutakin kielitaitoa, on tuhlausta olla ylläpitämättä sitä, mutta tähän ei käytännössä kannusteta. Ainoastaan englannintaitoa pidetään oleellisena. Toisaalta julkaisutoiminta ja kirjallisuus on englanninkielistä, joten se on ehdottomasti tärkein vieras kieli.*

If you have acquired skills in other languages, it's wasteful not to maintain them, but in practice this is not encouraged. Only the knowledge of English is considered essential. On the other hand, publishing and literature are in English,

and so it is by far the most important foreign language. (N, 1981, University of Helsinki, Natural Sciences, Teaching and research staff)

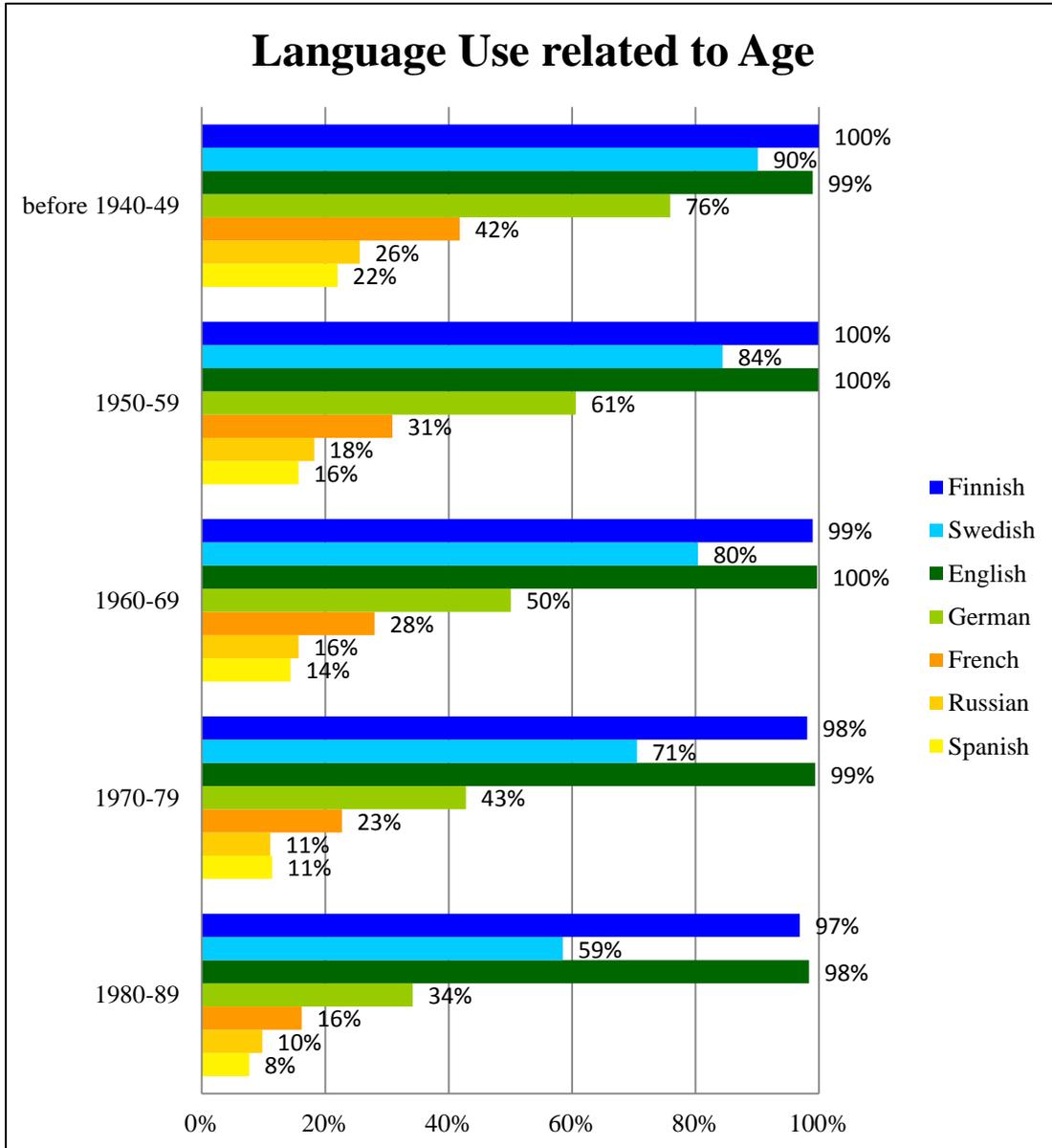


Figure13. Comparison of language use with age. Any use (daily – seldom).

The use of languages other than English may prove a disappointing choice and even harm the career of an academic in Finland (see example 4):

- 4) *Mielestäni kannattaisi kiinnittää huomiota myös viranhaussa tapahtuvaan kielelliseen syrjintään. Olen saanut kokea sitä melko lailla, koska tein sen "virheen" että julkaisin väitöskirjani saksaksi. Useamman kerran viranhaussa ovat ulkomaiset (yleensä amerikkalaiset) asiantuntijat todenneet, etteivät pysty lukemaan tuotantoani ja jättäneet tyhjän lausuntolomakkeen. Valituksista ei ole ollut hyötyä.*

In my opinion, attention should also be paid to linguistic discrimination when applying for an appointment. This has happened to me quite a lot because I made the “mistake” of publishing my dissertation in German. It has happened many times that when I have applied for an appointment, foreign (usually American) experts have noted that they cannot read my publications and submitted an empty expert opinion form. Appeals have been of no use. (M, 1951, University of Helsinki, Arts and Humanities, Professor)

Language skills and use in relation to professional groups

When we compare skills and use of languages with regard to professional groups, we can see that professors and managerial staff have the most versatile skills and also use these skills most frequently for professional purposes (see Figures 14 and 15). In all professional groups, the respondents knew more languages than they used for professional purposes, except for Finnish and English that were used nearly 100 per cent. Among technical and administrative staff, the use of English was higher (99% resp. 100%) than the skills (94% resp. 99%) as stated by the respondents. An explanation for this could be the importance of English as the language of IT for technical staff, and the increasing number of foreign students and visitors as well as international projects that need to be dealt with by administrative staff. Managerial and administrative staff had the best skills in Swedish (100% resp. 98%). These high percentages for Swedish can be explained by the fact that knowledge of both national languages, Finnish and Swedish, has been a basic requirement for university administration staff until 2009 (before the Finnish university reform came into effect), and is part of all higher education degrees.

However, the figures for using Swedish were only 85% (managerial staff) and 82% (administrative staff). Interestingly, Swedish was used most often by the group of professors (91%) who also used German to a very high degree (80%). As in the previous figures (Figures 12 and 13), we looked also here at any skills (D = mother tongue - A1 = basic) of the respondents and any frequency of professional use (daily - seldom).

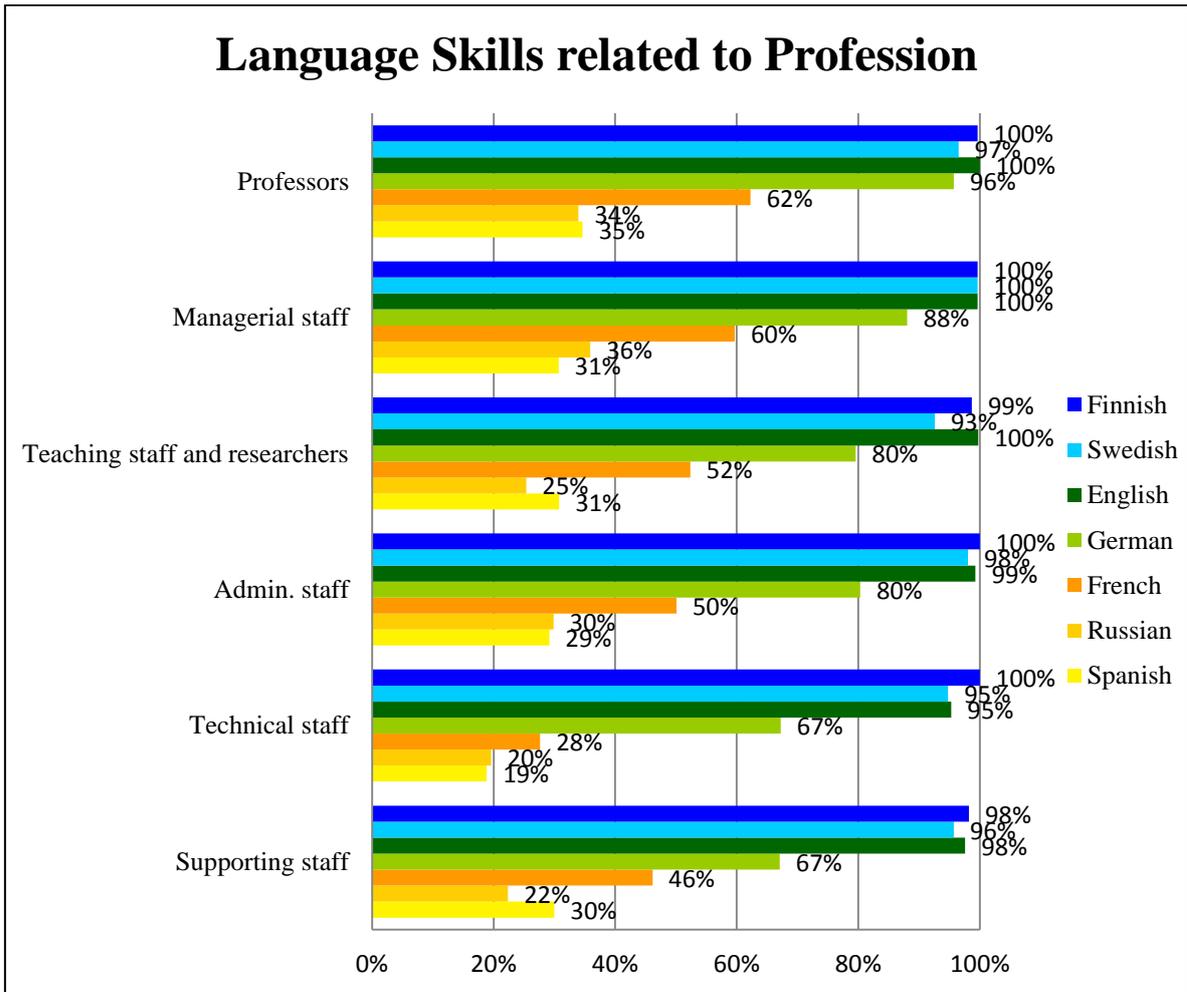


Figure 14. Comparison of language skills with professional group. Any skills (A1 - D).

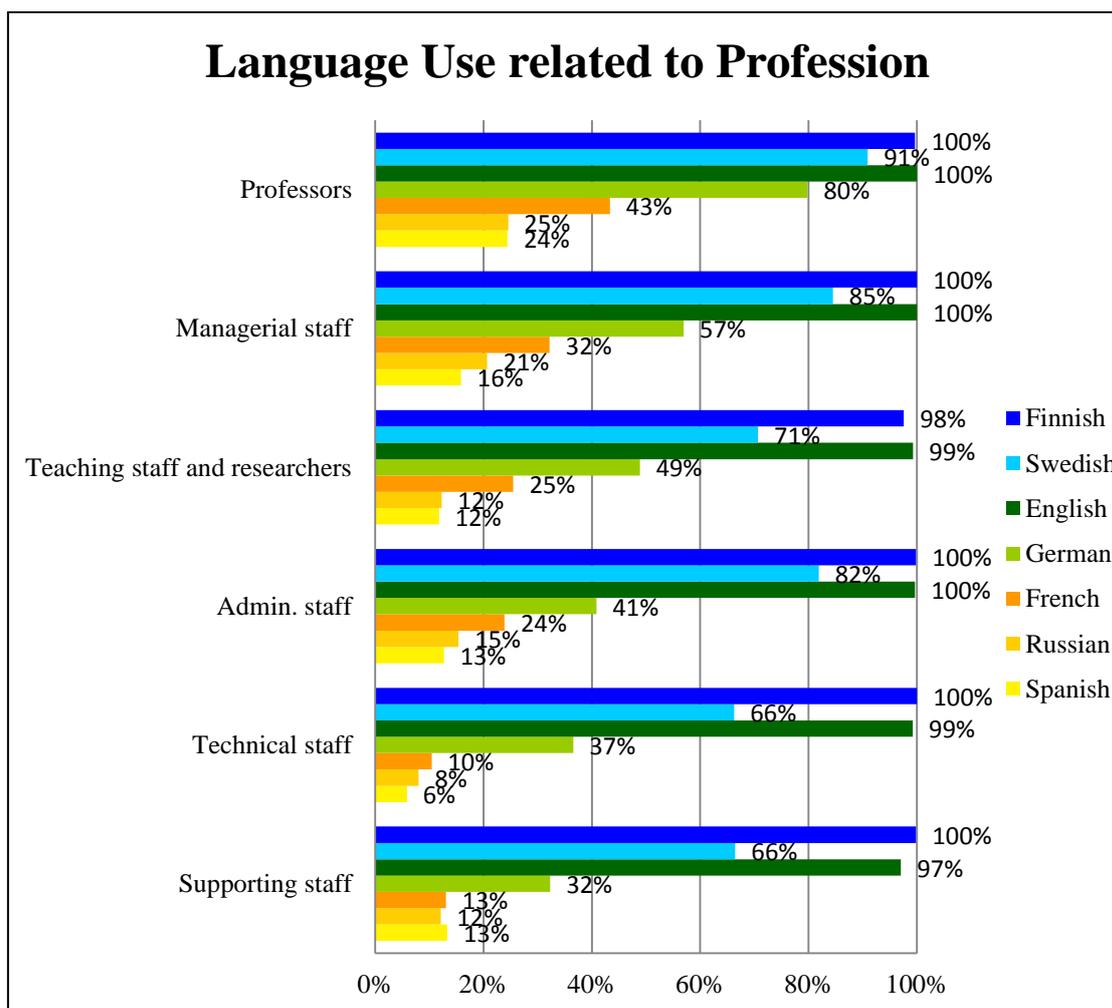


Figure 15. Comparison of language use with professional group. Any use (daily – seldom).

The total number of respondents in the case of different language skills/use was: Finnish 3556/3551, Swedish 3502/3480, English 3553/3566, German 3361/3364, French 3043/3195, Russian 2946/3155, Spanish 2872/3083, and valid percentages are used in the analysis.

Benefits of multilingualism

The purpose of our fourth research question was to discover possible reasons why, in the opinion of the respondents, languages other than English should be used in university contexts. We posed the following question: *As far as foreign languages are concerned, English is often seen as sufficient in Finnish university contexts. Can you think of any reason why other languages should be used?* This was an open-ended question and we received 2015 comments. These comments have not yet been statistically analysed but we found 248 answers stating that there was NO reason to use any other language except English (see examples 5 and 6).

NO:

- 5) *En keksi. Suomesta ja ruotsistakin voitaisiin luopua ja voitaisiin mielestäni käyttää pelkästään englantia.*
Can't think of any. We could give up using Finnish and even Swedish and use only English as far as I'm concerned. (F, 1979, University of Helsinki, Natural Sciences, Teaching and research staff)
- 6) *Miksi pitäisi? Monista asioistakin on kirjoitettu tasan yksi standardi, jota noudatetaan, miksei myös kielten käytössä noudatettaisi sama formaattia?*
Why should we? There is in many procedures one single standard that everyone follows, so why not follow the same format for using languages? (M, 1983, Lappeenranta TU, Engineering and Technology, Teaching and research staff)

On the other hand, also Finnish was mentioned as being enough in Finnish university contexts.

- 7) *En edes keksi syytä miksi englantiakaan pitäisi käyttää.*
I can't think of any reason why one should use even English. (M, 1952, Social Sciences, Teaching and research staff)

The majority of the respondents answered YES, there were reasons for using other languages than English. These answers have not yet been analysed statistically because the open-ended comments have to be coded first, which is an enormously time-consuming task. Often the arguments were *for reasons of politeness* (see examples 8–10) and *against the superiority of English in principle* (see examples 11–13). Also the potential of multilingualism as a *resource for scientific research* (see examples 14–16) and to *promote an academic career abroad* (see example 17) were mentioned.

YES, politeness:

- 8) *Toki se on aina kohteliaisuus jos osaa jonkun isännän/vieraan omaa kieltä*
Naturally it is always polite if you know the language of a host/visitor. (M, 1967, University of Helsinki, Natural Sciences, Teaching and research staff)
- 9) *Kohteliaisuus, toisen ihmisen huomioiminen ja tervetulleeksi osoittaminen.*
Politeness, consideration for another person and making them feel welcome. (F, 1969, Lappeenranta TU, Administration, Supporting staff)
- 10) *Yliopisto kansainvälistyy kovaa vauhtia ja ulkomailta (muuallakin kuin englannin kielisistä maista) tulee paljon opiskelijoita, vierailijoita ja henkilökuntaa.[...]*
The university is rapidly becoming more international and many students, guests and staff members are coming from abroad (also from other than English-speaking countries). [...] (F, 1982, University of Helsinki, Natural Sciences, Teaching and research staff)

YES, in principle against the superiority of English:

- 11) *Periaate: monikielisyys on parempi kuin monokielisyys vieraalla kielellä. Eli jos ei puhuta suomea tai ruotsia, parempi jos puhutaan muitakin kieliä kuin englantia.*
Principle: multilingualism is better than monolingualism in a foreign language. In other words, if we do not speak Finnish or Swedish, it is better to speak some

other language than English. (F, 1960, University of Helsinki, Arts and Humanities, Teaching and research staff)

- 12) *Ei kaikkien hyvien tutkijoiden tarvitse osata englantia.*
Not all good researchers have to know English. (F, 1956, University of Helsinki, Medicine, Teaching and research staff)
- 13) *Englannin ylivalta ärsyttää jonkin verran, kielen mukana tulee aina jotakin myös vastaavista kulttuureista.*
I find the superiority of English somewhat annoying, with a foreign language also something about the corresponding cultures always comes along. (F, 1953, University of Lapland, Services, Managerial staff)

YES, resource for scientific research:

- 14) *[...] On mahdoton tehdä ymmärtävää tutkimusta, yleensä ihmistutkimusta, ellei osaa tutkittavien äidinkieltä, kirjallisuutta ja kulttuuria. [...] poliittinen ja virkamieskieli on täynnä kulttuurisia tulkintoja.*
[...] It is impossible to do qualitative research, generally research on human beings, if you do not know the language, literature and culture of your subjects. [...] political and administrative language is full of cultural interpretations. (F, 1960, University of Joensuu, Social Sciences, Teaching and research staff)
- 15) *Englannin kielen ylivalta köyhdyttää ajattelua. Kieli EI ole vain ajattelun apuväline, se on jo ajattelua itsessään. Jos kirjoitamme, myös ajattelemme englanniksi, jolloin maailma alkaa näyttää englantilaiselta.*
The superiority of English has an impoverishing effect on thinking. Language is NOT only an instrument of thinking, it is thinking itself. If we write, we also think in English and then the world begins to look English. (M, 1981, Turku School of Economics and Business, Business and Economics, Teaching and research staff)
- 16) *Kansainvälistyminen lisääntyy ja merkittäviä tieteellisiä oivalluksia voi tulla myös angloamerikkalaisen kielialueen ulkopuolelta.*
Internationalisation is increasing and significant scientific insights may also come from outside the Anglo-American language area. (M, 1972, University of Vaasa, Services/Library, Supporting staff)

YES, career abroad:

- 17) *[...] Vieraiden kielten taito helpottaa myös omaa vierailua tai uraa ulkomailla.*
[...] Foreign language skills also make it easier for one to visit or have a career abroad. (F, 1982, University of Helsinki, Natural Sciences, Teaching and research staff)

In some responses, the positive and negative aspects of using different languages were discussed, as the following examples 18–19 show:

Differentiated view

- 18) *Päivittäisessä kommunikoinnissa englanti usein riittää, mutta laajempi kielitaito antaa mahdollisuuden tutustua paremmin sekä ihmisiin että julkaisuihin. 2082*
In daily communication English is often enough, but a more extensive knowledge of languages gives you a chance to get better acquainted with both people and publications. (F, 1972, University of Helsinki, Medicine, Teaching and research staff)

19) *Kansainvälisyyden ja moninaisuuden. Englannin valinta maailmankieleksi saattaa loukata tiettyjä isoja kansakuntia (Ranskaa, Saksaa jne.), mutta jos ei ole muuta tietä tasoittaa ongelmaa, silloin siirryttänee englantiin. Berliinissä maaliskuussa 2010 minun toivotaan puhuvan englantia, "jotta mahdollisimman moni ulkomainen kollega ymmärtäisi". Se on periaatteitani vastaan ja aiheuttaa ristiriitaisen tunnelman. Säälän saksalaisten murtuvaa periaatetta ja ihmettelen, milloin Ranska moiseen suostunee.*

Internationality and variety. The choice of English as a world language may offend certain big nations (France, Germany etc.), but unless there is some other way to solve a problem then switching to English is likely. In Berlin in March 2010 I am expected to speak English "so that as many foreign colleagues as possible would understand". This is against my principles and creates a conflicting mood. I am sorry that Germans give up their principles and wonder when France will consent to this sort of thing. (M, 1958, Universities of Helsinki and Oulu, Arts and Humanities, Managerial staff)

In general, the attitudes towards the use of languages other than English for academic purposes were very positive. The frequencies of different opinions and the reasons given in the explanations can only be analysed after a detailed classification of the open comments into categories (no, yes, differentiated) and subcategories (politeness, in principle against superiority of English, as resource for scientific research, etc.).

Summary and prospects

English has become the lingua franca in academic contexts, and internationalisation and multilingual expertise are often understood as using English for research and teaching. However, this dominance of English for academic purposes is contrary to European policy with the promotion of multilingualism as one of the EU objectives. To explore the role of different languages at Finnish universities, an online-survey was conducted in November - December 2009 among their staff, with 3605 respondents. Our research questions in the present study were: How important are different languages considered in a university working environment by the staff at Finnish universities? What are the language skills of the Finnish university personnel? What languages are used in academic contexts at Finnish universities? and What are the possible reasons why languages other than English should be used in university contexts?

The results show that 92.8 % of the respondents judged the use of different languages as very important or important but the majority emphasised the dominant role of English, as most of the open comments indicate. This is no surprise because English has been the most important language for the publication of scientific research for a long time also in Finland (Wilson 2002), and lately offering degree programmes in English has become one of the strategic focuses in Finnish higher education. Despite the fact that strategy documents usually use the expression "foreign languages" in the headings (at the University of Jyväskylä, for example, *Undergraduate-level teaching in a foreign language*, University of Jyväskylä 2010a, and *M.A. programmes in a foreign language*, University of Jyväskylä 2010b), in fact, only teaching in English is supported, as the texts that follow these headings show (...*instruction in English is provided sporadically and irregularly and there is too little of it.* and *With regard to*

including the proposal for an M.A. programme in English...). This euphemistic usage of “foreign” is discussed in more detail in Saarinen (forthcoming), for example.

The language skills of the university staff are fairly versatile. With regard to skills at any level (A1 = basic skills - D = mother tongue), the Finnish academic community is almost trilingual with English known by 99.1%, Finnish by 98.4%, and Swedish by 92.6% of the respondents. In addition, three out of four knew German (75.4%), and almost half French (43.8%). Also on the individual level, the respondents had versatile language skills: almost 90 % knew four languages, and some 60 % knew five or more languages.

English and Finnish were also used by almost all of the staff members at Finnish universities (English 99%, Finnish 97.7%), whereas the second national language, Swedish, was used only by 73% of the respondents. Other languages were used to a lesser degree in the Finnish academic working environment. For example, German was used by 48.3% and French by 23% of all respondents. These figures correspond obviously to the languages learned at school, and consequently we can draw the conclusion that educational language policy is an important factor in influencing societal multilingualism.

However, these percentages cover any language use (daily - seldom), and the picture is not quite so optimistic when we compare the frequencies of different languages used for professional purposes. There is, for example, a big gap between using the first and the second foreign language for professional purposes: 87.8 % used English daily or weekly (compared to 99.8% of any skills) but only 9.5 % used German daily or weekly (compared to 75.4% of any skills).

On the individual level, the respondents generally knew more languages than they used for professional purposes. For example, less than half of the respondents who knew five or more languages (58.5%) used five or more languages (25.7%). Older staff members and representatives of higher professional groups both knew and used more languages than younger employees and other occupational groups. Especially in the group of professors different languages were frequently used. This suggests that having versatile language skills seems to be helpful for an academic career, at least in terms of producing scientific insights, although publishing in other languages than English can be counter-productive for an academic career (see Example 4). The decreasing number of languages used by younger generations indicates again, in our opinion, that the languages offered (or not offered) at school seem to have an immediate impact on their use for professional purposes.

Except for Russian, Estonian, Swedish, Chinese, German, and English, the languages of other representatives of the ten largest migrant groups in Finland 2009 (Somalis, Thais, Iraqis and Turks) were seldom known and used: Somali (0.03% any skills, including mother tongue skills/0.06% use, any use: daily-seldom), Thai (0.11%/0.03%), Kurdish (0.06%/0.03%) and Arabic (0.8%/0.4%), and Turkish nine times (= 0.25%/0.17%). This indicates that representatives of these migrant groups are extremely rarely employed at Finnish universities and their languages are not considered important in the academic environment.

The majority of the respondents considered the use of other foreign languages than English for academic purposes important and fruitful. Mostly used arguments included, for example, “for reasons of politeness”, “against the superiority of English in principle”, and their potential as a “resource to contribute to the richness of scientific research”.

In sum, there seems to be an area of tension between internationalisation and multilingualism at Finnish universities. The more important internationalisation has become, the more dominant is the rule of English in academic contexts. As a result, other foreign languages are used less and less by younger generations. However, Finland's university staff members are quite plurilingual, and this potential could be developed further by encouraging measures such as recognition for an active and more frequent use of different languages in research, teaching, administration and public relations. The euphemistic use of "foreign language" in university teaching strategies indicates, in our opinion, a silent appreciation of multi- and plurilingualism. International offices and language departments could be pioneers in promoting true multilingualism by offering public relations, tutorial guidance and, for example, under- and postgraduate courses in European and international studies in foreign languages other than English.

The use of foreign languages could also be actively promoted by formulating explicit language policies for all universities. However, such language policies would take effect only if the use of languages other than English was also concretely recognised in the evaluation of professional performance that would also affect salaries and recruitment policy (including the choice of plurilingual experts for evaluation purposes), for example. In addition to the number of refereed publications, supervised theses and acquired funding also teaching or other working experience in foreign languages could be measured and acknowledged. Instead of linguistic discrimination (as mentioned in Example 4) acknowledgement could be made not only for publishing but also for citing research written in other languages than English (which presupposes reading comprehension skills in these languages), for organising of and participating in multilingual conferences (not restricted to English and domestic languages) with invited international speakers also from non-English countries, for cooperating with international partners and servicing customers in foreign languages other than English. In the age of e-commerce also acquisition services (be it in the area of technical or library-oriented equipment) could benefit greatly from versatile language skills.

Appreciating the plurilingual potential of the universities' staff members concretely in salary and recruiting practices could have a long-term effect on the variety of languages offered in schools and on the choices made by pupils and their parents to learn other foreign languages than English which, in turn, could help to broaden the language skills of the younger generation. Today, university foreign language departments suffer increasingly from the poor skills of their students in the target languages (other than English). Also generally speaking, only basic language skills do not obviously motivate students to use a foreign language for studying purposes (Ylönen & Vainio 2010). More advanced skills of the younger generation in combination with greater concrete acknowledgement of versatile language use would also advance the teaching and learning of foreign languages for specific purposes at the university language centres.

Different languages are without a doubt a resource for scientific research in all disciplines because of the socio-cultural nature of science. The above mentioned quotation *If we write, we also think in English and then the world begins to look English* is true also for natural sciences that are no different from other scientific disciplines in this respect. Further research is needed and political solutions have to be found to solve the question of how academic

multilingualism can be promoted not contrary to but in line with internationalisation. The development of language policies at different levels (EU, national and universities) are important steps in this direction, and we hope that our research results are of assistance in their formulation.

Endnotes

- 1) „Die Kultur der Wissenschaft, die der Wahrheit verpflichtet ist und damit auf das Universale zielt, erweist sich als in besonders hartnäckiger Weise national geprägt. Sie beharrt in kulturspezifischen Kommunikationsformen und damit einer Vorstrukturierung der Inhalte, die weiterhin erheblich voneinander abweichen. Dies gilt, wie man ständig beobachten kann, beispielsweise selbst dann, wenn Deutsche und Franzosen gemeinsame amerikanische Vorbilder kopieren: das Ergebnis ist doch in Paris und Tübingen jeweils ein ganz anderes. Das Dreieck der Verständigung schließt sich auch dann nicht, wenn beide Seiten in Harvard zusammentreffen.“ (Picht 1987: 17)

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Appendix: Questionnaire

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender 2. Year of birth 3. Country of birth 4. Mother tongue(s) 5. Your language skills 6. Highest education 7. University/Higher educational institution where you work 8. Field (choose all that apply) 9. Department/Unit 10. Which of these groups do you belong to? Choose all that apply. 11. Does your post include administrative duties? (e.g. dean, director of a unit, project coordinator..)
RELEVANCE OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES IN A UNIVERSITY WORKING ENVIRONMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. How important are different languages in a university working environment in your opinion? 13. How do you feel about the following statements about the use of languages in a university working environment? 14. Which languages do you use at work and how often? 15. For which purposes do you use the following languages as working languages? 16. What kind of foreign language contacts have you had during your studies or work? 17. How do you choose the working language when communicating with people who have a different native language from yours? 18. Do language skills, in your opinion, improve job opportunities for the younger generation in your field? 19. As far as foreign languages are concerned, English is often seen as sufficient in Finnish university contexts. Can you think of any reason why other languages should be used? 20. Do you know at least some Swedish and/or German?
FURTHER COMMENTS	Field for open comments
PERSONAL DATA (optional)	Name: Address: Postal code: Place: Country:

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