

A group of four people, two men and two women, are smiling and posing for a photo in a snowy, winter setting. They are wearing various winter hats and scarves. The background is a soft-focus snow-covered landscape. The text 'MULTI-LINGUALISM AS A STRENGTH' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters across the top half of the image.

MULTI- LINGUALISM AS A STRENGTH

**PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING
FINLAND'S NATIONAL LANGUAGE RESERVE**

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OUTLOOK FOR 2025


FINLAND is an active member of the international community. Its strength lies in its linguistic and cultural diversity. Each working-age citizen is proficient in not only the national languages of Finland, but also English, which is the global language of intercourse. Many people are also proficient in one or more languages other than these and are constantly developing their skills. Finland's multilingualism is seen as a strength and resource, with investments being made in the development of language proficiency and multiple languages confidently being used side by side. Languages learned informally are identified and recognised along with languages learned in formal education. Language awareness and language proficiency are assets for both the individual and society as a whole.

IN the future, language studies will begin by no later than the spring term of the first grade in comprehensive school. By the year 2025, a majority of pupils will choose a language other than English as their compulsory A1 language. The voluntary A2 language, primarily English, will begin in third grade. Instruction in the native languages of immigrants will be supported by expanding the legal basis for providing basic education in native languages as a separate syllabus and defining the qualifications of teachers in native languages.

EQUAL opportunities for pupils to study languages will be improved by requiring municipalities to increase the possibilities for pupils to choose languages other than English as part of the A1 syllabus. In the reform of upper secondary school, ways to enhance and support long-term language studies are being sought, for example, by using models that make use of the entire school year instead of the 6–8 week course instruction cycles.

MUNICIPALITIES are preparing programmes for language education and internationalism in an effort to increase the level of regional equality among pupils and the continuity of language education paths as well as support meeting the competence needs of working life. The Finnish National Agency for Education is building a network of developer municipalities.

THE Government Decree on University Degrees will be amended so that all degrees will require a demonstration of proficiency in at least two foreign languages. Methods for the identification and recognition of prior learning will be further developed. Under the direction of Universities Finland (UNIFI) and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (Arene), institutions of higher education will make agreements on the division of work and co-operation for the provision of instruction in Asian and African languages in basic education and degree education. New types of degree programmes combining language subjects and other content are being developed for degree education in foreign languages.

A woman with blonde, wavy hair is looking towards a man in a dark suit. A hand is visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the view. The background is bright and out of focus.

More extensive background notes
and sources can be found here:
www.minedu.fi/en/multilingualism

*Although there
has been a great
deal of discourse on
language education
needs, it has been
fragmented in nature.*

FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH there has been (and is still) a great deal of discourse on language proficiency needs, it is fragmented in nature. This same fragmentation is also characteristic of decision-making: the field of language education is extensive, involving a large number of actors, and the solutions offered are discrete, apply to a single level of education and are implemented as separate projects. Choices affecting language education often fail to take their impact on other levels of education into consideration. If, for example, languages are studied unilaterally in general education, the pressure will increase in higher education. Not enough thought is given to the continuity of an individual speaker's language path when coming up with solutions.


FURTHERMORE, development of the language reserve as a whole is not being understood broadly enough: in addition to what is learned in formal education, the language reserve is further reinforced at work and during free time through prior learning, international mobility and immigration. The national language reserve comprises not only the learning and proficiency of different languages, but also an overall potential and skill to learn languages.

ALTHOUGH language proficiency needs vary widely, language studies, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, have become monolithic and most pupils only study English in addition to the national languages, Finnish and Swedish. The needs also depend on the perspective from which they are being examined. The number of immigrants in Finland has grown exponentially, thus affecting language education needs. This also expands the national language reserve, something which has not been taken full advantage of.

THE principles and objectives of the Finnish language education policy therefore require clarification, so that the primary objective will be to enhance the language proficiency, national linguistic diversity and internationalism of Finns. The world is changing, and international co-operation places new demands on competence. Finland's language education has been rather Eurocentric, but economic growth is becoming more oriented toward other parts of the world. Finland has become more multicultural and multilingual, and there is no sign of any decrease in population mobility. This places new demands on both the instruction of national languages as a second language and practices used to identify and recognise other language proficiency possessed by immigrants. Language proficiency is a social factor affecting equality and the future, and it is not strictly limited to language education. Language and languages are also crucial to strengthening general competence and education.

THIS report is intended as an expert view on the state and level of the national language reserve as well as its development needs. I sincerely hope that this report will provide a basis for drafting a national language strategy and making decisions concerning language education policy.

December 13, 2017, RIITTA PYYKKÖ, Vice Rector, Professor



*Connections
are made
through
under-
standing*

WE NEED AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE RESERVE

Even though English is the world's current lingua franca, proficiency in other languages is also needed

MAINTAINING a diverse language reserve is also a way to prepare for any rapid changes in language needs. Our understanding of what constitutes language proficiency also needs updating: We do not identify or recognise all aspects of the national language reserve. For example, we might consider immigrants as lacking language proficiency, even if they speak multiple languages, simply because they do not speak Finnish, Swedish or English. Although

more and more families are bi- or multilingual, so far, our statistics show only one language as being spoken. In a multilingual world, languages are used side by side and overlapping each other, which challenges our conventional perceptions that languages are discrete entities.

There is demand for language proficiency in society. Work is becoming increasingly verbal, and language proficiency is not just being able to speak foreign languages, but also maintaining

a wide range of skills in one's native language. We have perhaps become accustomed to thinking of language proficiency in excessively broad terms, comprehending all areas. In reality, different situations require different verbal communication skills and different aspects of language proficiency: oral or written, producing or understanding. Even though gaining a solid foundation in the development of language proficiency is indeed important, it must be recognised that even



FINNS WITH PROFICIENCY IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
18-64 YEARS OLD

FOREIGN LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY FINNS
18-64 YEARS OLD




a small amount of proficiency is still proficiency, which individuals can be motivated to build upon later. Language proficiency also typically fosters intercultural skills and mutual understanding, which is why it is important in terms of social cohesiveness and international relations.

The percentage of the population with an immigrant background in secondary and tertiary education has risen. Providers of vocational education and training and higher education

institutions play a key role in the existing language reserve of students and the recognition of competence potential it provides. Co-operation between education providers and working life in the anticipation of competence and education needs as well as in educational planning, orientation, implementation and development is crucial.

• **STATISTICS** Finland changes the way it compiles statistics on language proficiency so that individuals can list their native language as well as any other languages spoken at home in the Population Information System.

• **WORKING** in co-operation with working life, education providers develop are developing measures, which can be used to more effectively identify the language reserve of students and make use of it in working life.



Language proficiency is a profitable investment for both the individual and society as a whole – it is a secure asset

FEWER LANGUAGES ARE BEING STUDIED IN SCHOOL

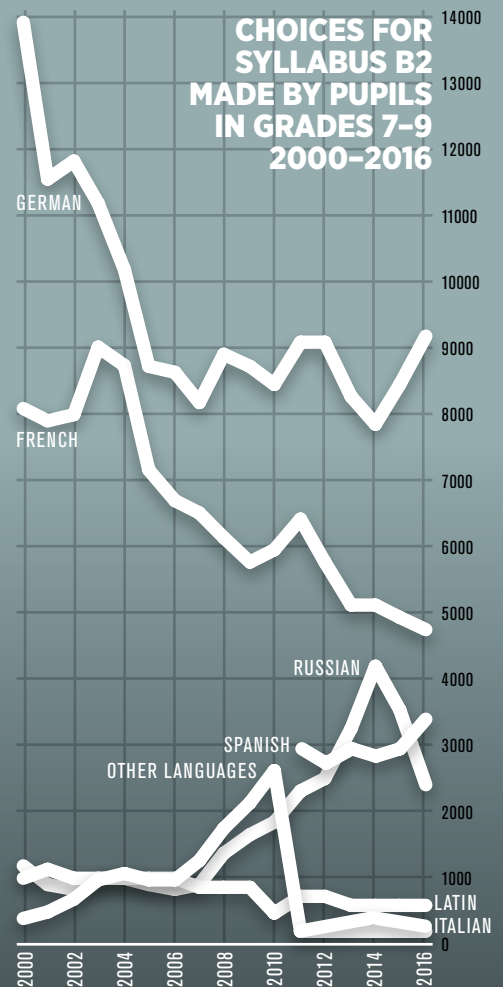
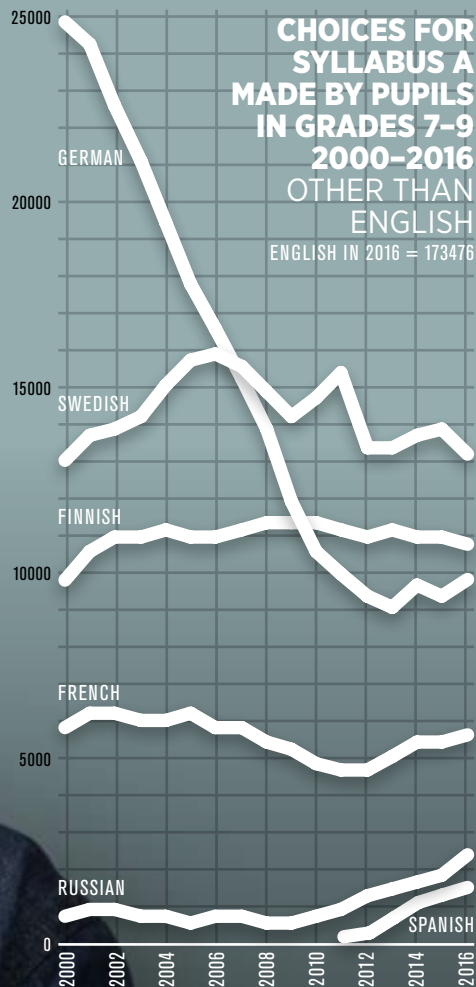
The study of languages in schools has decreased, and the range of languages studied has narrowed.

MAJOR differences in language offerings between schools threatens to create regional and social inequalities (see more detailed statistical data in the more extensive online version of the report www.minedu.fi/en/multilingualism). In a majority of Finnish schools, the only A1 (advanced, compulsory) language beginning in the third grade is English. Indeed, many pupils only study English and a second national language (Finnish or Swedish). Voluntary study of an A2 language beginning in the fifth grade has declined precipitously since its peak in the

1990s, but this decline has now levelled off. In upper secondary school, the study of German and French has dropped sharply in both basic and advanced courses. In vocational education and training, students only study their native language, a second national language and English. New phenomena are the strong growth in teaching Finnish as a second language and a focus on education and training aimed specifically at immigrants at some vocational education and training institutions.

In large cities with an extensive language offering, langu-

ages tend to be studied more. However, there are also some municipalities that do have a rather extensive offering, but languages other than English or Swedish are not widely studied. Conversely, there are some small municipalities where language studies are very active. Although some results were achieved in pilot projects, development stopped as soon as the projects were concluded. The reasons for the one-sidedness of language choices can be attributed to both a lack of municipal resources and attitudes in schools and households. Language studies



are not seen as being an investment in individuals and society.

English is taken as a given, and the importance of other languages is not discussed enough. Pupils and their parents or guardians often feel that English will be sufficient for all international dealings. Families are reluctant to choose languages other than English also because of a possible move to another city or region.

- **THE** A1 language will begin earlier, starting by no later than the spring term of first grade. The necessary addition to the

minimum number of hours will be made to facilitate this earlier start. The recommendation for the choice of A1 language is primarily a language other than English.

- **THE** voluntary A2 language, primarily English, will begin in third grade. Assessing the cost impacts of proposals concerning the A1 and A2 languages can be found in the background notes for this report.
- **ALTERNATIVELY**, equal opportunities for pupils to study languages will be improved by requiring municipalities to increase the possibilities for pupils

to choose languages other than English as part of the advanced (A) language syllabi. Regional co-operative approaches and online courses are used in the provision of education.

- **THE** structure of upper secondary school is being developed in a way that allows for flexible, long-term and diverse language studies by taking advantage of cross-curricular multidisciplinary modules.
- **A** test for oral skills is embedded in the Matriculation Examinations for languages. The test is devised making use of new technologies.



*Motivation helps
the individual
learn and success
increases motivation*

DEVELOPING SCHOOL PRACTICES

With the introduction of new curricula, schools are entering an age of language sensitive learning and teaching.

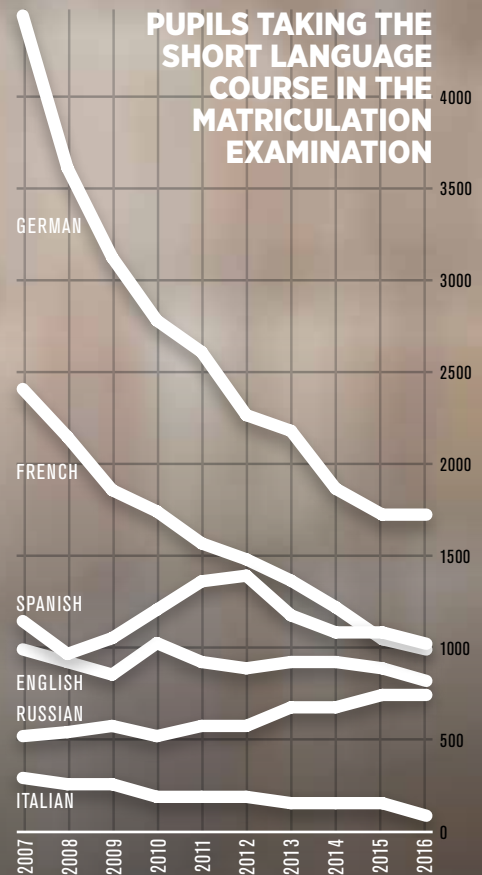
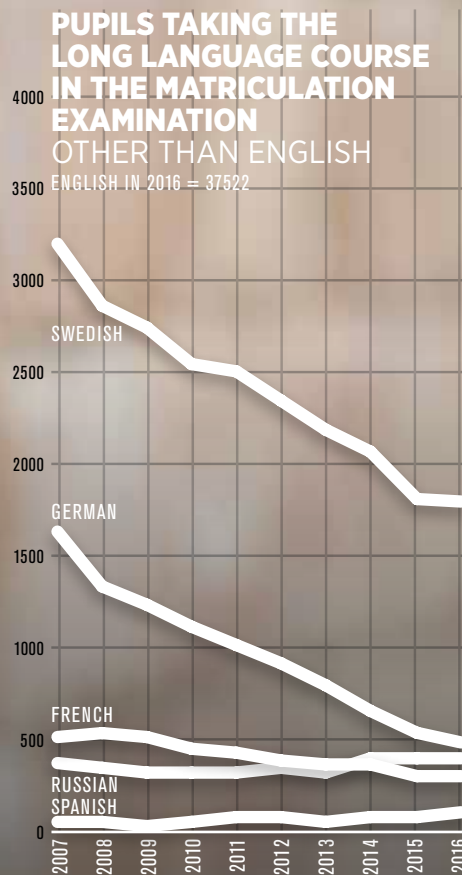
NEW curricula means that, in addition to actual language subjects, the role that language and subject-specific language practices play in all learning will be identified. A diverse language reserve is seen as social capital for both individuals and society as a whole. However, the study of language is generally considered to be difficult and demanding. Motivation is a key factor in learning: it helps people learn and, in turn, success in learning increases motivation.

The motivation of pupils to study languages is enhanced by linking instruction to their own lives, taking informal learning into consideration in formal instruction, taking advantage of

“internationalisation at home”, emphasising the importance of language in internationalism, and making multilingualism attainable and natural. The importance of language encounters in learning languages other than English, such as through tandem learning or exchanges, is clear. Enhancing the role of the learner and providing authentic learning environments are in line with the new curricula, and excellent tools for this can be found on the Internet.

Particularly at the upper secondary school level, languages are easily relegated to just a few courses, and taking languages in the Matriculation Examination is steadily declining. All in

all, course instruction in upper secondary education fails to promote the learning of languages, which requires continuity. Some of the teaching methods and learning materials used in schools are considered outdated. Furthermore, no links are established between the language practices used in everyday life and at school, thus making any prior learning difficult to recognise. Increasing the integration of languages and other subjects makes it possible to provide more authentic learning geared toward working life situations. Integration offers major opportunities for language. This requires the enhancement of co-teaching practices.



For all our pupils and students, everyday life in their future will be multilingual. Despite the language sensitivity and multilingualism of the new curricula, languages (native language(s) and foreign languages) remain far too disconnected in schools, and the connections between them are underutilised. The opportunities that school multilingualism offers for home internationalisation and building a sense of community are not fully advantaged.

- **WORKING** in co-operation with education providers, the National Agency for Education develops ways to more effectively identify, support and

make use of multilingualism as a strength for learners, schools and local communities.

- **LANGUAGE** sensitive activity in schools is further enhanced with continuing education so that each education provider has a sufficient number of experts in language-sensitive teaching.
- **EDUCATIONAL** institutions offer a variety of language paths in different levels of education: language clubs, gamification and other possibilities offered by digital applications.
- **MODELS** for the recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning are developed for upper secondary level education. Opportunities for co-operation between upper secondary

school and liberal adult education institutions and development of the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (YKI) are explored to meet the need for an "upper secondary YKI".

- **IN** vocational education and training, the amount of degree education given in languages other than Finnish and Swedish will be increased and the role that language studies play in all areas of education will be strengthened.

- **AFTER** the year 2020, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) will evaluate the impacts of reforms in vocational education and training on study and learning in common units (including languages).



*Learning foreign
languages
through play*

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Finland has become a multilingual and multicultural country.

ENTERING into effect in 2016, the new Early Childhood Education and Care Plan identifies this development and emphasises language-sensitive early childhood education and care. It offers an excellent foundation for the development of language sensitivity and provides a spark for studying foreign languages. Languages are omnipresent and function as both subject and

tool in learning. Because one's native language is an essential part of all language learning, any activity that promotes proficiency in the native language or languages will, in turn, promote language learning.

Studies show that language immersion is an effective teaching method, which poses no impediment to the development of the native language. Language

immersion makes it possible to achieve functional proficiency in two languages. In addition to full language immersion, instruction may also be provided in other bilingual early childhood education or pre-primary education to a greater or lesser extent. It is important to inspire children to learn and use a foreign language and take full advantage of children's sensitive period for lan-



FOREIGN LANGUAGES ARE BEING LEARNED AT AN EARLIER AGE

THE VOLUNTARY A2 LANGUAGE, PRIMARILY ENGLISH, WILL BEGIN IN THIRD GRADE

A MAJORITY OF PUPILS WILL CHOOSE A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AS THEIR COMPULSORY A1 LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE STUDIES WILL BEGIN BY NO LATER THAN THE SPRING TERM OF THE FIRST GRADE

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVIDES A SPARK FOR STUDYING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

guage development. However, this requires educators to have greater language sensitivity and skills in identifying the challenges of language development.


- **ORIENTATION** elements, such as playfulness, gamification, language showers, etc., are being introduced in early childhood and pre-primary education as a means of launching language

studies. Based on the Government key project for languages and measures for developing language immersion, pedagogy that supports and provides orientation for beginning foreign language studies in early childhood education will be augmented.

- **UNIVERSITIES** are increasing the level of content dealing with language sensitivity and the lan-

guage development of children in kindergarten teacher training.

- **UNIVERSITIES** and universities of applied sciences are jointly planning and providing shorter-duration continuing education and training and a specialisation training programme in language-sensitive teaching for kindergarten teachers.



The language path continuum from one level to another

CONTINUUM FROM LEVEL TO LEVEL

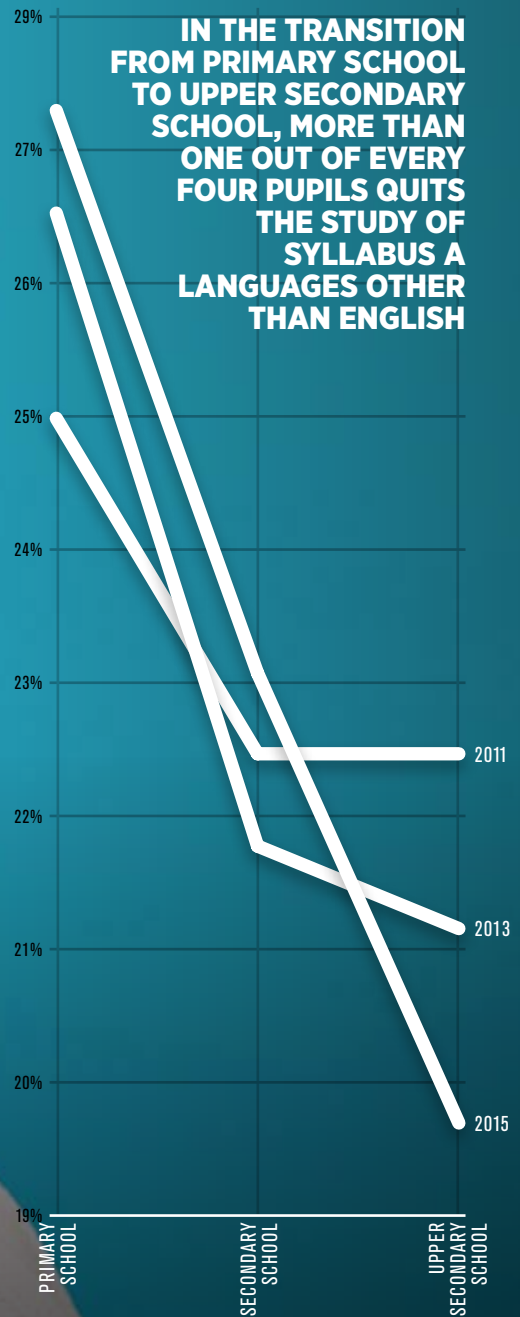
Even though solutions for one level of education might be reflected in others, language instruction is not developed as a whole at the national or regional level.

STUDENTS' language paths end abruptly when moving from one level of education to the next. The number of languages studied decreases as students progress through different levels of education, with the number of students taking only one language in addition to their

native language increasing, for example, in upper secondary schools. Conversely, adult interest in studying languages is sparked later in their studies or in general liberal adult education. Information provided in the anticipation of competence needs is also poorly utilised in

language studies. Establishing a seamless continuum requires the implementation of both strategic and practical solutions.

- **MUNICIPALITIES** are being encouraged to draft language and internationalisation programmes by 2020, in which language




education will be examined in terms of the pupils' language path continuum, the offering and distribution of language choices, the needs of local or regional business, and international needs. The programmes will also take into consideration the role that liberal adult educational

institutions play in ensuring the continuity of language studies.

• **TOGETHER** with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the National Agency for Education is assembling a network of developer municipalities for language education, in which municipalities

will be given an opportunity to collaborate in finding good practices and disseminating them in language education. Existing networks are utilised in work. The National Agency for Education Innovation Unit is involved in the creation of the network.



Language proficiency opens the door to the world

LANGUAGES IN ALL HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES

Students of higher education institutions are currently required to demonstrate their proficiency in not only Finnish and Swedish, but also at least one foreign language to the extent that their proficiency allows them to follow developments in their particular field of education and function in an international environment.

SOME universities or fields of education and training also require proficiency in multiple foreign languages, and the scope of compulsory language studies varies according to the field of education. The scope of language studies in curricula steers student choices. The most important thing is that the content and provision of language studies in each field of education are appropriate and of a high standard. The most commonly studied language, even among higher education students, is English. Although there is also a high demand for voluntary language studies, the problem is

that these studies generally do not go beyond the basic level. In some higher education institutions, the language offering has shrunk due to budget cuts.

Language centres have a tough task to perform: they must identify the competence needs for each field of education, while supporting the objectives of the higher education institution, taking changes in society and working life into consideration, and promoting the development of students into academic experts. Integrating the study of languages with other subjects in education has proven to be a functional and motivating model,

but such integration is still quite rare in quantitative terms. Mobility periods for higher education students have increased since the turn of the millennium, with developments in longer-term periods (over 3 months) still ongoing. In many cases, students do not study languages out of sheer interest, but rather as a means of enhancing their internationality and cultural knowledge.

The number of degree programmes given in English is increasing in higher education institutions, which requires that teachers possess an adequate command of the teaching language and cultural knowledge

MOBILITY PERIODS IN UNIVERSITIES 2016

TOP 10 TARGET COUNTRIES AMONG OUTGOING STUDENTS (INCL. GRADUATE STUDENTS)



MOBILITY PERIODS IN UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES 2016

TOP 10 TARGET COUNTRIES AMONG OUTGOING STUDENTS



as well as skills in teaching multicultural groups. Students, on the other hand, must not only have an adequate command of English to make progress in their studies, but also enough proficiency in Finnish or Swedish to facilitate their integration in Finland and obtain employment after completing their degree.


- **IN** student admissions, universities and universities of applied sciences are increasingly giving attention to the inclusion of languages in the Matriculation Examination. This also means languages other than Finnish, Swedish and English.

- **THE** Government Decree on University Degrees will be amended in such a way that requires students to demonstrate proficiency in at least two foreign languages. Flexible models for the acquisition and demonstration of competence are being jointly developed by universities, upper secondary schools and liberal adult education.

- **UNDER** the direction of Universities Finland (UNIFI) and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (Arene), institutions of higher education will make agreements on the division of work and cooperation for the provision of

basic level instruction in Asian and African languages (e.g. Somali, Kurdish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korea, Japanese) in language centres or equivalent institutions. Analysis is done alongside the development of degree education in languages. Online courses in Asian and African languages will also be jointly developed to meet the needs of Finnish higher education institutions and adult education.

- **HIGHER** education institutions will increase specialisation courses in Finnish/Swedish as a second language.



*There is demand
for culture and
language experts
in working life*

DEGREE EDUCATION IN LANGUAGES AT UNIVERSITIES

Over the past ten years, the development of degree education in language subjects has been examined by several national groups, which focused on increasing the division of work and co-operation.

AS the number of applicants for degree education in languages other than English has declined, it would be wise to consolidate studies in less common languages. Indeed, there have been some changes. An in-depth knowledge of languages and regions other than those more commonly studied, such as studies and research in Asian and African languages and cultures,

is also needed to increase the degree of internationalisation. The possibilities offered by technology in providing common core studies are not being fully advantaged at the moment.

Degree programmes or structures in language subjects must also be rethought. If the current trend continues, the need for language teachers in schools will not increase. On the other hand,

following the procedural recommendations presented in this report would change the situation. At any rate, elsewhere in working life, there is an increasing need for experts who possess knowledge in languages and cultures as well as strong internationalisation skills, but also have skills in other areas. Until now, students have enjoyed relatively free rein in putting together their own



MOST COMMONLY SPOKEN LANGUAGES IN FINNISH COMPANIES 2013



combinations of major and minor subjects, but ready-made models have been lacking.

- **LANGUAGE** degree studies and research are profiled differently at different schools, and meeting needs is assessed jointly by universities with regard to the national language reserve. At the same time, an effort is made to ensure that universities providing

subject teacher training offer a broad enough range of language subjects. Although the University of Helsinki has the most extensive offering, other universities also offer studies in, for example, individual Asian languages. Studies in Chinese are seeing the biggest increase.

- **UNIVERSITIES** are developing new types of degree programmes combining language

subjects and other content for degree education in foreign languages.

- **FINNISH** universities are increasing their co-operation with universities in the Nordic countries and Estonia in providing less commonly studied languages, making use of digitalisation in teaching.

*Where school
and daily
life meet*



A NEW KIND OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

The qualification status among language subject teachers is good, and in some language subjects there is clearly a surplus of qualified teachers.

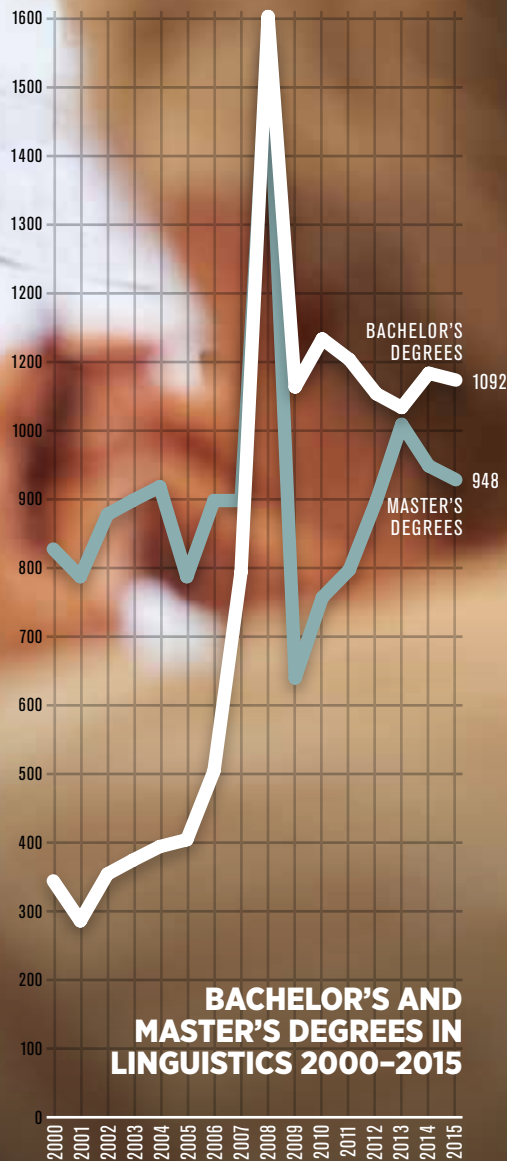
IN the present situation, the need for language teachers will see an increase primarily in adult education. In teacher training, there is no particular support for this specialisation. The implementation of the procedural recommendations presented in this report will also have a direct impact on teacher needs.

There is a small number of teachers with immigrant backgrounds in schools, even though

the situation among pupils, particularly in large cities, is the opposite. The Teaching Qualifications Degree has been amended several times and, in reality, municipalities make widely varying decisions because they can hire unqualified teachers for a year at a time. This is particularly true in teaching one's own native language, because qualifications can only be earned in languages for which it is possible to graduate

as a subject teacher in Finland.

Language subject teacher training and didactic research require content development. How can language sensitivity and multilingualism in the new curricula be implemented in school routines? Who is teaching where? What kinds of new competence combinations would be good to have in degrees? How can the level of native language teachers be guaranteed? Teachers work-



ing in different levels of education need more language-specific and general continuing education related to language learning.


- **UNIVERSITIES** are reforming language subject teacher training and teacher training research as a joint effort between subject departments and teacher education departments. In particular, research and expertise in student-centered learning, multicultur-

turalism, flexible approaches and functioning in a digital environment will be enhanced.

- **THE** role of language- and culture-sensitive education in language subject teacher training will be emphasised. The possibility of specialising in pedagogical studies, such as teaching practice, with a greater focus on adult education will be examined.
- **EDUCATION** providers guarantee teachers opportunities

for continuing education, which promotes the maintenance of contact with a language area and cultural environment.

- **WORKING** together with working life actors, universities will continue the development of specialist training for teachers in, for example, language sensitivity, multiculturalism, bilingual pedagogy and functioning in a multicultural community.



The language reserve of immigrants has been underutilised

PRIMARY LANGUAGES OF IMMIGRANTS

Where immigrants are concerned, the general debate has focused primarily on their proficiency in Finnish and Swedish.

IMMIGRANTS' own languages are not taken into consideration as a strength and resource, which would also support integration into Finnish society. However, over 500 languages are spoken in Finland.

Even though the operating environment today is global in

nearly all sectors, the languages spoken in Finland are clearly underutilised. Support for the development of primary languages in different levels of education and the methods for demonstrating proficiency are inadequate. Instruction in pre-primary, basic and upper

secondary education is voluntary supplementary education provided under separate government subsidy. The level of national support and expertise in native language teaching is low, and early childhood education provides no support for primary languages. Defining the



NATIVE LANGUAGES MOST COMMONLY SPOKEN IN FINLAND 2016

OTHER THAN FINNISH, SWEDISH OR SAAMI



qualifications of native language teachers will not, in itself, increase the number of qualified teachers, but it would be a major step toward strengthening the national language reserve. Proficiency in the primary language will atrophy if it is not supported.

- **THE** Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Ministry of Education and Culture will strengthen the role that child health clinics play in enhancing language sensitivity and promoting multilingualism in families.

- **THE** legal basis for providing basic education in native languages as a separate syllabus will be expanded and the qualifications of teachers in native languages will be defined.

*Proficiency in Finnish
is often a prerequisite
for employment*



FINNISH AND SWEDISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The choice to study Finnish/Swedish as a second language in basic education is based on the proficiency level and study prerequisites of the pupil.

THE fact that the basic level of language proficiency does not become evident until pupils move up to more advanced studies has proved problematic. Development of these pupils' language proficiency comes to a standstill and they adopt various survival strategies, but still fail to perform at a satisfactory level in the next school level. This occurs in upper secondary

school, where the early school dropout risk among S2 (Finnish as a second language) students is high. The sheer number of hours devoted to S2/R2 (Finnish as a second language/Swedish as a second language) in basic education may also speak to the situation. Although higher education institutions do offer S2/R2 studies, the offering of specialisation courses is too small.

The most common method for demonstrating language proficiency is taking a National Certificate of Language Proficiency (YKI) test. The system was originally created to meet the needs of Finnish language learners, but it is now primarily used for the demonstration of language proficiency required when applying for Finnish citizenship. There is some room for improvement in



PROPORTION OF UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS WHOSE NATIVE LANGUAGE IS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE 2010-2015



the organisation of YKI tests.

A lack of proficiency in national languages is a barrier to employment, with SMEs being particularly reluctant to employ people with lower proficiency in Finnish or Swedish. A small change can be seen in this situation. Different types of language proficiency are needed for different types of work, and we must also become accustomed

to different ways of speaking Finnish or Swedish. It is also important to establish social networks and environments for learning languages.

- **THE** University of Jyväskylä Centre for Applied Language Studies works in co-operation with employers to determine the real requirement level for S2/R2 in workplaces, how professional

language proficiency is evaluated and how proficiency in Finnish/Swedish can be effectively developed at work.

- **OPPORTUNITIES** for taking the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (YKI) tests are being improved by increasing the number of languages being tested and accelerating the digitalisation of tests.

*Technology
creates new
professions
for language
experts*



TECHNOLOGY HELPS, BUT IT'S NOT THE ONLY ANSWER

The nature of work has changed, and nearly all tasks require language skills.

LANGUAGE proficiency has increasingly become a part of professional skill. However, the amount of systematic data on the level and needs of language proficiency in different fields is unfortunately low. The report also found that employers are unfamiliar with the tools for evaluating and demonstrating language proficiency, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Even though Finnish, Swedish and English will remain important, after these it is difficult

to arrange languages in order of priority. There have indeed been attempts to do this. Employers believe that the European languages traditionally and commonly studied in Finland are still important, but proficiency in Asian languages should be increased. For example, the operations of export companies are diversifying, and needs may also arise very quickly. This is why the baseline national language reserve must be maintained.

The digital operating environment is changing all

types of work. Even though machine translation is developing, computers are still unable to produce very refined language. On the other hand, the development of language technology will also provide employment in the future, and digitalisation will create new professions for language experts. It is of utmost importance that Finland remain at the forefront of utilising language technology.

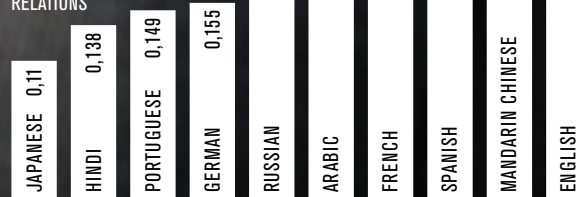
For example, in service professions employees are dealing with customers more directly,



MOST INFLUENTIAL LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD 2050

BASIS:

1. GEOGRAPHY: THE ABILITY TO TRAVEL
2. ECONOMY: THE ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ECONOMY
3. COMMUNICATION: THE ABILITY TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE
4. KNOWLEDGE AND MEDIA: THE ABILITY TO CONSUME KNOWLEDGE AND MEDIA
5. DIPLOMACY: THE ABILITY TO ENGAGE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



which requires both language and cultural competence. Working life demands a wide range of interactive skills, because work is performed in networks. Even though things can get off to a start in English, deeper understanding and co-operation will not be possible without proficiency in different languages and face-to-face encounters.

Languages are also important in terms of lifelong learning. Language proficiency is an asset for both the individual and society as a whole.

- **LABOUR** market organisations and universities work together to determine the true competence needs in language and culture for each sector of working life.
- **THE** working life connections and utilisation of competences of international degree programme students and graduates are augmented also in SMEs.
- **THE** number of international schools in large and/or internationalising cities will be increased in order to help bring international experts to Finland.

- **EXPERIENCES** from the Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland project (2017-2020) will be used in providing immigrants with guidance for gaining access to higher education. Good practices in guidance and co-operation with other actors will be integrated in the operations of educational institutions and employment centres.



Languages belong to us all



**Ministry of
Education
and Culture**

More extensive background notes
and sources can be found here:
www.minedu.fi/en/multilingualism