

**GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT:
Career expectations of University of Jyväskylä students in
languages**

Master's thesis
Hanna Jäntti

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Languages
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Tiivistelmä <p>Akateeminen työympäristö on kohdannut viime vuosina suuria muutoksia.. Teknologioiden kehitys on mahdollistanut, mutta myös samalla vaatinut, että korkeakoulutuksesta on tullut osa yhä useamman suomalaisen elämää. Työelämässä pärjääminen vaatii akateemisilta asiantuntijoilta erilaisia kvalifikaatioita ja kompetensseja. Pysyäkseen työympäristöjen kehityksessä mukana myös korkeakoulujen täytyy kehittää tarjoamaansa opetusta.</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää minkälaisia uraodotuksia Jyväskylän yliopiston kielten laitoksen pääaineopiskelijoilla on. Kyselylomakkeen avulla saatiin tietoa yhteensä 368 opiskelijalta. Tutkimus toteutettiin pääosin kvantitatiivisia menetelmiä käyttäen ja vain muutamaa avointa kysymystä tarkasteltiin kvalitatiivisesti. Tulokset jaettiin neljään osaan kunkin tutkimuskysymyksen mukaisesti, jotka käsitelivät opiskeluun liittyviä odotuksia, ammattikuvan muodostumista opintojen aikana, opiskelijoiden käsityksiä työelämän vaatimista tärkeimmistä ominaisuuksista ja valmiuksista sekä opintojen työelämään antamia valmiuksia.</p> <p>Tärkeimmät syyt opinto-ohjelman valitsemiseen olivat olleet kiinnostus alaa kohtaan ja halu saada tutkinto sekä ammatti. Enemmistö opiskelijoista oli tyytyväisiä opinto-ohjelmaansa. Puolet vastaajista oli jo varma tulevasta ammatistaan ja opettajan tehtävät oli mainittu useimmin. Kuitenkin yli puolet vastaajista oli huolissaan työllistymisestään. Eniten mielikuvaan työllistymisestä olivat vaikuttaneet pää- ja sivuaineopinnot. Työllistymisen kannalta olennaisimmiksi ominaisuuksiksi ja valmiuksiksi vastaajat valitsivat kommunikointitaidot ja motivaation. Työkokemusta arvostettiin yllättävän vähän. Opintojen vastaavuuteen työelämän vaatimuksien kanssa oltiin melko tyytyväisiä. Yleisesti ottaen opintoja haluttiin kehittää enemmän käytännönläheisempään suuntaan.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Since the 1960s higher education has gone through a massive growth in Finland from being something for the elitist few to becoming education to everyone. At the moment 60-65 per cent of each age group has the possibility to enrol into higher education (Hämäläinen 2003: 8, Vuorinen 2007: 13). The paths reaching higher education have also become diversified, not being limited only to passing matriculation examinations any more.

The rapidly changing information society has also led to quickly changing job requirements. The simple manual labour jobs have disappeared into low cost developing countries, while the difficult knowledge based occupations have become the competitive advantage the Western countries such as Finland have. Finland has seized this opportunity and the investment into education and to research and development has been considerable.

Some higher education degrees prepare students for specific jobs, such as a doctor or a teacher, but some give students expertise skills that can be used broadly in a variety of professions. This can lead to unfocused studies and even lack of motivation among the students. Creating a link between working life and studies is important when considering the whole future of these graduates. One of these non-specific degrees is the general Master of Arts in languages. Even though the majority of these students will also complete the pedagogical studies, there are also other possibilities of employment outside teaching. Discovering what these other professions are will improve the students' motivation and their future employment possibilities when they have an idea in advance of how they will be positioned in the working life.

Very few studies have been done on the university students' career expectations and none of them of the students at the University of Jyväskylä. The majority of the studies concerning the relationship between higher education and working life have concentrated on the quantitative side of graduate employment defining only when, how and by which type of employers the graduates have been employed (e.g. Juuti 2003, Tauriainen 2004 and Tuomela 2007). For example, the University of Jyväskylä publishes a survey about these matters after almost every

academic year, but no analysis has been made of how the employment opportunities correspond to the students' expectations.

Studying the students' career expectations is important from two perspectives, scientifically and from the working life's point of view. Finding out how the occupational image is created and what motivates the students to study are essential in developing the study programmes the way that the needs of working life can be met.

In this study the students majoring in languages at the University of Jyväskylä were asked about their career expectations and opinions about the working life relevance of their studies. To map out the framework of higher education and academic working life some background information about the topic was first examined. This theory part is divided into two sections of which the first deals with higher education and the academic labour markets, and the second the qualities of students in higher education.

In the first chapter of the theory section the development and purpose of Finnish higher education is examined. A short account of the research population's higher education institution, the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä, follows the general introduction. Then the nature of academic labour markets in today's society is being discussed and the concept of mass education and the resulting problem of overeducation are analysed in greater detail.

In the second chapter the focus shifts from the general framework of higher education and the labour markets to the innate qualities the actual research population, the students in higher education, possess. First the prerequisites of being an expert and the qualifications and competencies required in the working life are examined. Then the aspects of occupational image and occupational identity are compared. Finally, the previous studies about the relationship of higher education and working life used for this study are briefly introduced.

After examining the research questions, the practical aspects of the study, and the validity and reliability of the research material, the actual results of the study are divided into four sections. The questionnaire used was formulated in a coherent way so that questions related to each section were consecutive. The first section deals with the student's expectations of their studies. The idea was to reflect on the reasons why they applied to their degree programme in the University of

Jyväskylä and then rate how well their expectations had realised. The second theme is about the formation of the students' occupational image. Its purpose was to find out about the picture the students have about their future employment. Thirdly, the respondents were asked about their impressions of the qualifications and competencies they thought were the most important in their future working life. From the ready made list the respondents rated the different alternatives according to their perceptions. The final section comprises of an analysis about the students' impressions about their studies' working life relevance. In addition, the respondents were asked some background questions in order to find out whether they had any influence on the results.

Finally the results of the study are discussed in more detail and some concluding remarks are made. Furthermore, the realization of the study is evaluated and some ideas for further research on the topic are given.

2 Higher education and academic labour markets

This chapter gives an overview of the Finnish higher education and what the academic labour markets are like in today's society. First the development and purpose of Finnish higher education are being examined and the Master's studies in languages at the University of Jyväskylä are analysed in greater detail. Then it is discussed what the academic labour markets in Finland are like. After this the changed nature of higher education resulted from the massification issues is realised. Finally, it is analysed how the massification of higher education has led to overeducation and degradation of higher education degrees.

2.1 Development and purpose of Finnish higher education

The expansion of Finnish higher education started in the 1960s. According to Välimaa (2006: 38), the provision of equal educational opportunities was one of the most important objectives of a welfare-state agenda implemented at that time. It was noted that universities were important regional developers of culture and economy with their ability to attract and sustain knowledge-based employment opportunities. Välimaa (2006: 39-40) notes that higher education has always had an important role in building Finnish society and its purpose has been to train civil servants to serve society. This need for qualified workforce led to the establishment of polytechnics at the beginning of 1990s to work aside universities in creating this workforce. The aim of the polytechnics is to be more working life oriented with a practical and pragmatic adaptation.

One of the starting points of the change in the purpose of Finnish higher education was the deep economic recession in the early 1990s. This and also the shift in people's attitudes, as Välimaa (2006: 42) explains, led to the creation of the third mission of universities, which involves recognising the social role of higher education institutions and pursuing cooperation between them, business enterprises and society. The changes in the surrounding world have led to the need for universities to change as well. Virtanen (2002: 11) lists how the traditional leadership and funding models are being challenged by the massification of higher education,

the pressure on lifelong learning, the new demands on universities' cost efficiency, the new possibilities in teaching with the development of information and communication technologies, and the changes in the monopoly of universities as creators of new information. Kankaala et al. (2004: 37) note that defining what the third mission of universities actually means is problematic, but basically it can be said that the mission involves keeping the universities in touch with quickly changing society. The interaction between society and the universities is essential in keeping the universities up to date with providing current information and suitable workforce. As a part of this interaction, Virtanen (2006: 75) also emphasises the importance of the regional mission that provides equal opportunities to all students to participate in higher education irrespective of the part of the country they are living in.

One aspect triggering the start of the third mission of universities in Finland was the Bologna Declaration in 1999. As Teichler (2007: 207-208) points out, the main point of this declaration was to introduce coherence for all European study programmes in regard to their structure and degrees. He states that the four effects the reform has are increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of European universities world-wide, to make it easier for students to study in whichever European university, to create a flexible and transparent educational system, where also bachelor's degrees would gain more respect, and ensure more labour market relevant qualifications for students. Finland is also taking part in the Bologna Declaration and in reality this has meant changes in, for example, the crediting system and in the degree structures.

Good examples of Finnish higher education are the Master's programmes, or Master's studies as the correct term used in Finland is, in languages offered at the University of Jyväskylä. At the Department of Languages it is possible to major in English, Latin, Romance philology, Swedish, the German language and culture, Finnish, the Russian language and culture, and Finnish sign language. In addition to all these major subjects, the department offers minor subjects also in other languages. According to the university web pages, the department's aim is to educate experts in communication and culture to work, for example, as teachers and language experts in business life, media, international offices and information technology. The areas of emphasis of the studies are language learning and teaching, language use and discourse, and language and culture. These also are the areas in

which the research carried out by the department is realised. (University of Jyväskylä 2009.)

The Department of Languages has also stated the basic values it wants to pursue with its teaching. Some of these values are directly connected to the needs that the changing working environment has set to higher education. In research and data collection the focus is on encouraging the students to think independently and critically while being scientifically objective. The department's goal is to create a foundation for lifelong learning so that the students will be able to adapt their skills to changing environments and be enthusiastic about learning. (University of Jyväskylä 2009) These facts were also mentioned, for example, by Gibbons et al. (1994: 76-80, see also p. 13 in this paper) being important changes in higher education recently.

2.2 Academic labour market today

The quickly changing economic, technological and organisational structures have a significant impact on the labour market. The continuous development means changing job descriptions, which makes continuous learning inevitable. The skills and competencies required in working life change constantly especially because of the rise of new computer technologies. The job descriptions have become more and more complex, which leads to the fact that more often higher education is needed to fulfil the requirements imposed.

At least in Finland higher education graduates have traditionally been employed by the municipalities or the state (e.g. Karjalainen 1994, Juuti 2003, Tauriainen 2004). This is also noted by Autio (2001), whose study shows that the most common employer of the students graduating from the Department of Languages at the University of Oulu is the municipality or the federation of municipalities, for example in English Philology 55 %, in German Philology 68 % and in Nordic Philology 69 % of all the graduates. Usually this means that these people work as teachers. Of the state run instances, civil service departments and Universities and other higher education institutions are mentioned and they further increase the number of people working for state or municipality run professions with around another 10 %. One factor explaining this is that the majority of the

educational system is municipality or state owned and a significant number of the higher education graduates from languages work as teachers. However, Rhoades and Slaughter (2006: 18-19) argue that higher education graduates are thought to be employed by the private sector. In their attempt of disproving this assumption they list some significant new forms of higher education employment. They explain how capitalism has penetrated into the world of academia, making higher education intersect with private enterprises in the forms of board memberships and research contracts and contract education with companies. Furthermore, higher education has started to financially take advantage of their development and research work by applying patents and establishing spin-off companies providing intellectual products, instructional services and expertise. Rhoades and Slaughter (2006: 19) also note the significant increase in the number of managerial personnel in higher education. These new positions are mainly involved with information technologies and generating revenues.

This trend of Finnish higher education graduates being employed by the municipalities or the state might be slowly changing to more varied employers. According to Autio (2001), over a fifth of the graduates who majored in English worked for private companies of which small and medium sized companies concise 9 %. No German graduates were employed by the small and medium sized companies, but 5 % of the Nordic Philology graduates and 8 % of the Finnish Language graduates were working in these private companies. It is quite easy to conclude that state and municipalities are still the biggest employers of Finnish academics with a language degree, but it is not that uncommon to be employed by the non-traditional small private companies anymore.

2.3 Mass education

The massification of higher education started in Europe gradually after the Second World War. Välimaa (2001: 44-45) counts the massification of Finnish higher education to have happened during the 1970s, when the number of upper secondary school graduates significantly increased. He explains how this was due to the democratisation process of the Finnish higher education, which included an increase in student admissions, equalisation of the language and gender distribution and

regional expansion of higher education. The massification of Finnish higher education meant many changes to the old practices prevailing in the academia. For instance, the higher education was not anymore something only for the elite and the growing number of students created also a great deal of new academic professions needed to maintain the education system.

There is no doubt that the effects of massification have been great on higher education. Gibbons et al. (1994: 76-80) classify ten shifts that have happened in higher education during this process. The first shift that can be seen is diversification of the functions of higher education. The importance of the traditional education, such as master's and postgraduate studies has decreased when learning in the workplaces and continuous learning have become essential in mastering the academic jobs available these days.

The shift in the student population has also been significant. As Gibbons et al. (1994: 77) note, the students in higher education are no longer only from elite positions in society but they come from all the social classes and with diverse backgrounds. The educational paths leading to Finnish higher education are various giving their addition to the differences among the students. Formerly male dominant higher education has become more and more female oriented. Gibbons et al. (1994: 77) also point out that as higher education becomes more common the regional aspects gain more value – the students have no longer the need to leave their home towns and are able to be educated and further on employed by the regions they are originally from. This means that people with higher education as well as the jobs requiring a higher degree are distributed more equally compared to the elitist metropolitan areas that used to draw the entire educated workforce.

Furthermore, Gibbons et al. (1994: 77) mention the changes in the educational role of higher education. The core of higher education was previously arts and sciences with very little variation but now the quickly developing information society and the changing job descriptions have created the need for versatile study programmes, such as technical, caring and business professions. Overall, a closer connection to the working life and especially to business life can be seen in the variety of degree programmes.

Gibbons et al. (1994: 78) also note that in the higher education the emphasis has changed more and more from education to research. They fear that the effort put into scientific publications and technological devices rather than to

educating the students endangers the goal of creating future academics. In Finland this same kind of development can be seen, as Aittola (2001: 112) points out, in the form of the principle of management by results. She continues that the idea of this concept is that all the products of academic activities bring back revenues to the institutions. The quality of research has also changed. Gibbons et al. (1994: 78), also quoted by Aittola (2001: 112), state that the pure curiosity-driven research has become rare and the majority of all research is nowadays problem-oriented, many times directed to meet the needs of an outside source. Moreover, Gibbons et al. (1994: 78) note that research has turned more specified needing increasingly expensive equipment and specialised skills of researchers, while at the same time it is getting harder to get financing for studies that are not cost-effective. They continue that this trend has also led to the fact that primary knowledge production has decreased significantly and the emphasis is now on reconfiguration and dissemination of already existing results.

Another effect of massification is, according to Gibbons et al. (1994: 78-79), the broadening of accountability of higher education. Before, higher education consisted only of universities and they had somewhat an elite status and great autonomy. These days the network of higher education includes a larger variety of institutions and the quantity of them has multiplied universities just being a part of the complex. Gibbons et al. (1994: 79) remind us that this network also includes for example business life, industry, government and the media and that the knowledge created is influenced by all these components.

The most obvious impact of massification is the increased number of students and personnel, which has demanded new ways of teaching and organising education. The quickly developed technologies have been widely exploited to these purposes. The new technologies, such as internet based courses, have become vital for higher education because, as Aittola (2001: 112) notes, the numbers of students and teachers have not developed equally increasing the teaching load of the staff heavily. She adds that the increased responsibilities and the need for efficiency have made teaching and research conflict with each other and so the working environment of academia has become very demanding and stressful. Gibbons et al. (1994: 79) fear that the new ways of teaching lead to alienated learning environments instead of independent learning so that learning becomes mechanistic and less effective.

Furthermore, Gibbons et al. (1994: 79) point out the changes that have happened in the funding systems of higher education. The formerly predominantly state funded institutions need to find a growing proportion of their budgets from other sources, such as the business life. They state that this is the case especially with research. In Finland this trend is also visible. Aittola (2001: 112) argues that this has a significant impact on the ways of knowledge production and organising research. Obviously, this has a great effect on what is being studied and can even endanger the objectivity of academic research. However, Gibbons et al. (1994: 79) state that the division of funding can also have a positive effect by creating intellectual diversity.

Finally, Gibbons et al. (1994: 79-80) note the changed nature of higher education in respect of specialising and efficiency. As noted earlier, the variation of degree programmes has increased significantly and this specialisation has made knowledge production fragmented. According to them, this has also led to universities becoming more organisational and structured as businesslike enterprises. Gibbons et al. (1994: 80) fear that this specialisation gives universities so much pressure that the creation of intellectual and professional expertise is jeopardised. On the other hand, the massification has led to increasing competition between the institutions. In order to persuade the best students to enrol their institution, they need to have good study and research results and vice versa. This is very important since the funding systems have changed more to outcome based and, as noted earlier, the management by result has become the trend in Finnish higher education.

According to Honkimäki (2001: 100-101, 106-108), the massification of higher education has led to four major problems in Finnish education. First, she mentions the lack of resources. The funding of the institutions is not sufficient and the growing number of students per teacher requires new ways of organising teaching. The increase in group sizes, mass lectures and distant learning cannot be avoided and can cause serious problems for learning. Second, Honkimäki (2001: 106) lists the need for developing evaluation practices. They are seen as important means of getting feedback and improving the ways of teaching and learning. The third problem is the lack of educational technology, which is related to the lack of resources and increased number of students. Good technical facilities are essential in creating successful distant learning courses. Finally, Honkimäki (2001: 107) argues for the reform in degree programmes. The quick changes in society and working life create the need for the degree programmes to respond to these changes. The

fragmentation and incoherence of university studies should be made to correspond the needs of working life in order to secure the future employment of the students.

2.4 Overeducation

Mass education has led to the fact that there is more and more highly educated labour available on the markets and that higher education is not anymore only for the few and privileged. Obviously this leads at least to some extent to the degradation of the degrees, and in order to be employed, the graduates need to accept also jobs that formerly did not require a higher education degree. However, it can also be argued that due to technological development and more complex job descriptions there is a need for more and more skilled personnel. Even when this is true the massification of higher education has led to the problem of overeducation. When more and more highly educated people enter the labour markets it is obvious that at some point there just is not enough suitable jobs available for them.

Measuring overeducation is problematic, because defining which education corresponds to which job is not easy or unambiguous. Hämäläinen (2003: 19-31) mentions four different types of measurement that can be used. First she lists the statistical method that compares the level of a person's education to the general level of education in the profession. Then an outside source can also be used to define the demands of a certain job. A subjective measurement can be done by formulating a direct question on how a person thinks that the education and job correspond to each other in the job that the person is in. Another way of doing this is to ask what kind of an education the person estimates a new person hired for the job should have. Hämäläinen (2003: 19-21) states that none of these measurement types are entirely accurate but they are all good ways to study overeducation.

If defining and measuring overeducation is so difficult, one could ask how one can be certain that overeducation exists altogether. However, Hämäläinen (2003: 8-9) argues that the rapid technological development that started in Finland during the 1990s together with internationalisation has changed the demands in the labour markets significantly. At the same time also the amount of highly educated labour has increased considerably. In addition to these changes the amount of available workforce has increased faster than the job opportunities, creating vast

unemployment. From this it can easily be concluded that the situation in the labour markets has changed drastically and the unemployment most certainly is a sign that demand does not meet the supply. Therefore, the assumption that inequality exists between education and work is well justified.

In her study about the Masters of Arts graduated from the University of Oulu between years 1995-2000, Autio (2001: 32-34) outlines how the graduates are positioned in the working life. Many of the respondents considered being employed in jobs that correspond their degree, though some variation among the different degrees existed. Nearly a third of the graduates from Literature, General History, History of Science and Ideas, and Finnish and Scandinavian History were employed in professions that did not match their studies. In these cases some had found a good job outside their profession but many thought to be overeducated for their job. Overeducation caused also plenty of dissatisfaction with the jobs when the work tasks were considered to be too repetitious or unchallenging. These real-life examples give some idea about the existence of overeducation in the academic labour markets.

3 The qualities of students in higher education

In this chapter attention is shifted from the general framework of higher education to the qualities the students possess. First, it is discussed what it takes to be an expert of a field. Then the concepts of competence and qualification are examined in further detail. Many definitions exist but the foundation is always the same. Finally, the differences between occupational image and occupational identity are compared.

3.1 Expertise, qualifications and competencies

According to Pirttilä (1997: 73), the prerequisites of an expert in a specific field include the ability to adopt, develop and apply theoretical knowledge, have control of the labour markets, master social interaction skills, act ethically correctly, have an orientation to the future and be on top of your own expertise. Many of these traits were mentioned also when Eteläpelto (1997: 86-102) conducted three training sessions to different types of training experts. In addition to possessing theoretical knowledge, the importance of applied knowledge, such as problem solving and organisational skills were acknowledged to be an essential part of expertise. Some fairly new traits of expertise were mentioned, such as communication skills and the ability to advertise one's own expertise. Some personal traits were mentioned essential, such as patience, persistency, courage and motivation to learn new things. Furthermore, being situationally sensitive, flexible and easily adjustable to new situations were considered important. Thus in addition to so called formal knowledge, personal traits and cognitive skills are essential in forming expertise.

The above listed prerequisites of being an expert are very similar to the key qualifications, which Nijhof (1998: 19-38) lists and many different researchers have mentioned. According to Anderson and Marshall (1994, as quoted by Nijhof 1998: 26), the key qualifications can be divided into three stages of different types of skills. The first stage includes basic skills, which are essential for employability. They include basic educational skills, such as the ability to read, write and express oneself orally, and personal traits, such as openness, honesty and reliability. Stage two consists of skills, knowledge and attitudes one needs to successfully function in

a job. These skills include occupational-specific skills, for example bookkeeping or truck driving skills, generic skills, such as communication, problem solving and personal skills, and personal competences, for example motivation, leadership and initiative. The highest stage is formed of overarching capabilities, which maximise the performance of an employee in an organization. These skills are more or less different types of ways of thinking, such as teamwork, business thinking and customer orientation.

Quite similarly to Anderson and Marshall's categorization, Ruohotie (2002, as quoted by Ruohotie and Honka 2003: 61-62) divides the general qualifications needed in the working life into four different groups. The first group is the control of your own actions. This means the ability to learn, recognise your own strengths as well as learning and problem solving skills. These skills help one to control the uncertainties in the changing working life and to develop and learn new ways of doing the work tasks. The second group is communication skills, which include interaction, listening, oral and writing skills. The communication skills are an essential component of functioning efficiently among different types of people and teams. Collecting, integrating and sharing information are vital skills in performing well in one's job. Then there are the skills of managing people and tasks of which the most important ones are coordination, planning, organization, managing, conflict managing and decision making skills. The final group is the ability to be innovative and manage change. These abilities include vision, creativity, innovation, change sensitivity, and risk taking and perceiving skills, which enable one to change old-fashioned practices and enhance change in the constantly transforming business environment.

The concepts *competence* and *qualification* are often not clearly defined. The meanings of them differ according to the source and often no clear distinction is made between them. Kohonen and Saarelainen (2001: 13-16) explain how the concept of competence differs from qualifications. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993: 9-11, as quoted by Kohonen and Saarelainen 2001: 13), competence is not consisted only of skills and qualifications but it is formed also of motives, personal characteristics and one's self-image. Motives help people to strive for the goals they want and that way are a part of one's competence. Personal characteristics or qualities influence how people react in different situations or in a more concrete way affect one's ability to perform a certain task requiring for

example physical strength or a perfect vision. Self-image reflects on what things people consider valuable or worth striving for and how people perceive their own skills and qualities. Furthermore Kohonen and Saarelainen (2001: 14-15) note that competence can be divided into visible and hidden qualities. Skills and qualifications are part of the visible qualities, which are also much easier to develop, whereas the hidden qualities, for example motivation or personal characteristics, are hard or even impossible to change. Ellström (1998: 40) gives also some definitions of competence and qualification. According to him, competence can be, for example, regarded as an attribute of the employee, their human resources, which can be transformed into productivity. Furthermore, he continues that competence can also be defined as being the requirements a certain job has, even though this definition suits better the concept of qualification.

Ellström (1998: 40-42) lists different types of capacities which form a person's competence. These include:

- perceptual motor skills, for example dexterity
- cognitive factors, which are different types of knowledge and intellectual skills
- affective factors, for example attitudes, values and motivation, and
- personality traits, such as self-confidence, social skills, for example communication and team work skills.

He (1998: 40-41) continues that competence can be distinguished as having five different meanings. Formal competence means the amount of schooling or credentials a person has. Actual competence, however, is the potential capacity a person has which enables one to perform in a job. Competence can also be defined as the officially demanded competence that means the qualifications a certain job officially requires. On the other hand, competence can mean the qualifications that are actually required by the job, which can differ even notably from the official demands. The final definition is competence in use which focuses on the interaction between the person and the job. It concentrates on the competence actually used by the worker in the job. This competence is influenced by the worker's previous qualifications and also by the characteristics of the job.

Moreover, competence can be seen as personal capital. Brown and Hesketh (2004: 34-39) divide this personal capital into hard currencies including credentials, work experience and other achievements, and soft currencies, such as interpersonal skills, charisma, appearance and accent. When using Kohonen and Saarelainen's division hard currencies mean the visible qualities, skills and qualifications, whereas soft currencies refer to the hidden qualities. Brown and Hesketh (2004: 35) argue that these days the soft currencies are much more important when considering a person's employability than before. This is very convincing when considering the massification of higher education that has had an effect on people's hard currencies making more and more people stand on the same line as far as education is concerned. Furthermore, Brown and Hesketh (2004: 35-36) state how the self, the way a person presents one's currencies has a great impact on how the narrative of employability, the competence in other words, is created.

In their study about graduates' working life qualifications and competencies Tynjälä et al. (2006: 78) grouped the respondents into four different clusters according to their work tasks, which were called average level generalists, managers and developers, human relationship specialists and high responsibility symbol analysts. Work tasks common to all these four groups were independent tasks, updating domain knowledge, teamwork tasks, collaboration with clients, and advising and consulting. Therefore, Tynjälä et al. (2006: 78) suggest that these tasks can be generalised as being common to all university graduates in working life. The managers and developers and human relationship specialists had significantly less international tasks than the other clusters. Economic tasks belonged to the duties of average level generalists and human relationship managers only seldom. The other tasks mentioned were management and development tasks, which were the most common with high responsibility symbol analysts and least common among human relationship specialists. The only cluster that had a lot of tasks from all categories was the high responsibility symbol analysts.

Eteläpelto (1997: 91) argues in her study that expertise is created through not only traditional education but also practical working life experience is needed. Tynjälä and Nuutinen (1997: 185-187) state that the traditional education that mainly transmits the basic information and course of action has very little to do with the present ideas of how expertise is created. They continue that the ideal is that

higher education creates experts in learning who then are more easily able to become experts of their own field through working life experience.

According to the study by Mäkinen and Olkinuora (2001: 45-46), the second year students themselves did not yet think very highly of their own expertise. On a scale from zero to ten, 85 percent graded themselves below six so less than a half way to becoming an expert. The majority of the students gave themselves a two or a three, which gives a strong indication that at least for the moment the students did not think that the education would provide them enough qualifications and competencies to become an expert.

3.2 The occupational image vs. occupational identity

There is no one definition to one's occupational image and many different disciplines can be used in trying to identify it. Järvi (1997) uses, for example, psychology and sociology when describing how occupational image is created. Basically occupational image is the image a person has of different occupations, what work tasks they involve, how well they are being paid for and what kind of prestige the different occupations possess. The aspects affecting one's occupational image are various and they state how desirable one sees a certain profession.

Many sources affect the development of one's occupational image. First of all, Järvi (1997: 31) lists the occupational attributes involved in the occupational world. These attributes include for example self-realization and personal growth, which mean the meaningfulness, challenges and career prospects a profession has. The social aspects of a job are important in creating the occupational image. These include what kind of a status or a prestige a job has and what the working environment and colleagues are like. Important factors are also how the payment fits to the demands of the job and what kind of qualifications the job requires and develops. Closely related to the occupational attributes, Järvi (1997: 53) also argues that in general the professional world has an impact on the creation of the occupational image. This includes the professional roles and the genderness a certain job has. Furthermore, secure employment is a factor in the creation of the occupational image.

These characteristics come from inside the occupational world but Järvi (1997: 48-60) reminds that when considering the sociological point of view there are also many outside sources affecting the occupational image. These sources include the people one is in immediate contact with, for example family, friends and teachers, as well as the media and general values and norms society has.

From these aspects Järvi (1997: 55-56) concludes the components which create one's occupational image. These components are:

- experience,
- goals,
- needs,
- motives and expectations,
- knowledge and information,
- values,
- attitudes,
- norms,
- beliefs,
- feelings,
- preferences, and
- influences.

They are seen to affect each other in many ways and no clear cause-effect relationships can be formed. Järvi (1997: 63-83) argues that these components have an effect on the occupational self-image one has and vice versa. The self-image is affected by the interests and abilities one has and for example what kind of previous experiences one has about working in a certain profession. These experiences, on their behalf, have an effect on the occupational image and can even significantly change it.

Järvi (1997: 108-115) found out that when considering the development of one's occupational image, the most important experiences influencing it related to working experiences, especially working experiences of the own field. Positive experiences enhanced the students will to be employed in that field in the future. Other experiences were seen to have a significant impact as well; these included for

example excursions, conversations with professionals and the teachers in their current school. Another important component was, according to Järvi (1997: 115-121), target-orientation. This became evident as exact goal-setting to a certain future profession or in a more general way as a goal to get a job in general.

As stated earlier, Järvi (1997: 131) argues that the occupational components and the occupational self-image a person has have a two-sided connection. In the study (Järvi 1997: 131-135), the students often had conflicting feelings about their future professions. On the one hand, they thought that they did not have sufficient skills and competencies to perform the tasks, but on the other, they believed that personal traits would supplement the missing skills. The study by Järvi shows that the occupational self-image changes over time and becomes more mature the older and more experienced a person becomes.

Järvi (1997: 135-142) also wanted to find out which communication sources affected one's occupational image. The sources having the biggest impact had all something to do with the experiences and generally working life, for example professionals, working experience and the rates of employment. After these, the most important ones are public opinion (the one of teachers, television and newspapers) and then parents and relatives. However, compared to these outside sources the components of one's occupational self-image had significantly more impact on the occupational image.

In Mäkinen's study (2004: 61) about the development of students' occupational image most of the interviewed students had very little or no idea what studying in the university would be like. Especially students in the humanities and natural sciences were not sure what their study programmes consisted of. Mäkinen (2004: 61) states that at the beginning of their studies the students knew only the traditional professions their studies would prepare them for, such as a teacher, translator, doctor or psychologist. The expertise occupations were quite unfamiliar. According to Mäkinen (2004: 62), the students' impressions about their future employment had become clearer as their studies progressed. Again, however, differences between the study programmes could be seen. For example students in the medicine were very sure about the quality of their employment already when starting their studies, while the students in the humanities were not sure about their future employment or even if they were in the right field at all. On the basis of these results, Mäkinen (2004: 65) draws the conclusion that the students' occupational

image becomes clearer the further they progress in their studies. Other factors influencing the image included minor studies, work training and working done during the studies. A clear-cut difference in the certainty of their future employment is between the students studying for the traditional professions and the ones aiming for expertise jobs.

Occupational image has not been studied extensively. In addition to Järvi's study no other study could be found that would have explained occupational image in general. However, occupational identity is, on the other hand, studied quite widely. Eteläpelto and Vähäsantanen (2008: 26) define occupational identity to be how a person realises oneself in relation to the job and to which direction one wants to evolve in one's job and profession. The identity also includes social aspects, such as to which group of people a person feels one should belong to and identify oneself as well as what one believes in and believes to be important in one's job. Furthermore, Varila and Rekola (2003: 92) stress the changing nature of one's occupational identity. They explain how learning on the job affects one's occupational identity, making an individual create one's identity again by reflecting the history and the newly learned skills. This change is also recognized by Eteläpelto (2007:107). In addition to the learning on the job, they state that the social aspects such as a certain education, qualifications and attitudes as well as belonging to a certain profession and job environment have an effect on creating one's occupational identity.

From this it can be concluded that the basic difference between occupational image and identity is that the image is something a person has before one has been in the certain occupation long enough. One clearly needs at least some work experience before occupational identity can be formed. When thinking about the present study, the occupational image is a more relevant concept since the focus is on studying university students who most likely have very little or no work experience of their own field.

Eteläpelto and Vähäsantanen (2008: 27) also present some critique on the concept of occupational identity. They question the need for a strong identity when the job markets constantly enhance entirely opposite entities, such as competencies that go across different professions, multiprofessionality, shared expertise, professional mobility and flexibility and lifelong learning and renewal. Therefore, one can ask if a strong occupational identity is more of a burden than a benefit. However, they remind that in practice working life has showed that a strong

occupational identity is needed in order to succeed in one's job. The employees are expected to know and show their own skills and qualifications and in order to do this successfully one has to have an awareness of one's occupational identity and ability.

A practical example of the occupational identity a researcher can have is given by Räsänen (2005: 33). In his study he refers to an article he wrote with Mäntylä about four different main characteristics of a researcher's occupational identity they formed on the basis of conversations with professionals inside their field of study. These four types listed are an academic expert, a business-academic, worried and caring social scientist, and a critical and participating active researcher. The academic expert focuses on an exact area of specialty and produces plenty of relevant and current information based on research, while being also active in different expert networks. The business-academic is also very active in the job, but instead of one area of specialty, a wide range of subjects is being handled. This versatility and active behaviour makes contacts to business life easy. As an opposite to the business-academic is the worried and caring social scientist, who connects the autonomic and critical research into social influencing. The open critique this type of a researcher gives conflicts many times with the interests of the business life. The critical and participating active researcher is the new ideal type of an academic researcher who appreciates "making the world a better place" through research. In addition to expert knowledge, this researcher needs the skills to be a developer who guides the research into a more practical direction.

It is interesting to see how people in the exact same profession can have so many different types of identities. Of course, a person can also be a mix of two or even more types of identities creating an entirely own perception. Thus, classifying different types of occupational identities is always difficult and never completely accurate.

4 Previous studies: the students' impressions on working life

There are quite a few different studies done about the four different major themes used in this study. However, not a single one of them has concentrated on the exact same themes, but the emphases have always been different and many times also themes not addressed in this study have been used. The research populations have also varied significantly from students in different degree programmes and higher education institutions to already graduated students and teachers, as well as other personnel working in the institutions. In order to fully comprehend these different studies, a short introduction of each used in this study is given below.

Kuittinen, Rautopuro and Väisänen (1997) conducted a survey in 1995 about the perceptions the first year students had about the studies at the University of Joensuu. The first four questions of the study were also adopted to the questionnaire used in this paper. In their study Kuittinen et al. (1997: 7-8, 31) divide the reasons affecting the choice of degree into two groups. The choices “I wanted a degree”, “A well-paid profession in the future”, and “A secure employment” were listed to be the reasons why professionally oriented people chose their degree. The other group of people was considered to be more degree oriented and they emphasized the reasons “I was interested in science”, “Education itself”, “Getting educated” and “Getting a degree”.

The study that is most extensively used in the present study is the one done by Mäkinen (2004) about the development of university students' occupational image. The study was done on the students studying at the University of Turku in the faculties of humanities, mathematics and science, political science, and medicine. A questionnaire was sent to the students on their third year of studies and then some further interviews were carried out on the same research population during their fourth and fifth years. The data collected is quite extensive since 340 students answered the questionnaire and 32 students were interviewed. Mäkinen (2004) asked the students questions about their expectations of the university studies, what kind of occupational images they had had in the beginning of their studies, in the middle of their studies and at the end of their studies, what qualifications and competencies the students thought to be important in their future working life, and how well the

students thought their studies prepared them for the working life. The original questionnaire or the structure used for the interviews were not available when the present study was conducted, and thus the created questionnaire is independent from the one used by Mäkinen.

Mäkinen (2006) also conducted a further study on the students in the University of Turku about their studies in the university. She was interested in knowing, for example, about the usefulness of the career counselling and career services the university offered for the students.

In the University of Joensuu another study has been done about the students' impressions of their studies at the university. Mäkelä (1994:85-87) asked third and fourth year students doing their pedagogical studies about their feelings of studying. The reasons why the students had chosen this degree were quite similar to the ones that came up in Kuittinen et al.'s (1997) study as well.

Autio (2001) has done a study about the Masters of Arts graduates from the University of Oulu between the years 1995-2000. The purpose of this study was to map out how the graduates are positioned in the working life, what kind of degrees they have and how well their education has corresponded to the needs of working life.

The formation of the occupational image has not been too widely studied and the definition of the concept is not clear cut. Furthermore, this subject is relevant both in scientific research and in the working life. Järvi's (1997) empirical research was aimed to study the occupational image the business students in Satakunta Polytechnic have. He carried out a questionnaire to map out the background information of the study group and then asked the respondents to write an essay on how they imagined the occupational world they would enter in the future to be.

In his study, Järvi (1997: 96-105) organized the occupational attributes found in the essays into groups of which the most important ones were: 1) self-realization and personal growth, 2) social aspects such as belonging to a group and prestige, 3) sufficient income, and 4) the occupational skills and competencies. The most important attributes were thought to be the ones categorized to self-realization and personal growth. The students wanted their jobs to be interesting, versatile and meaningful and they wanted to be able to continuously learn new things and to

develop themselves. These attributes were very important in keeping the employee's motivation high.

Very often an interesting job was connected to a good working environment socially and physically. Therefore the group of attributes that was mentioned second most often was the social aspects. Interaction and social relations both horizontally and vertically and a pleasant working environment and good colleagues were seen as the most important attributes. Of the qualifications expertise, internationality and innovativeness were mentioned most often. Furthermore, avoiding unemployment was commonly mentioned when sufficient income was considered.

Quite a few qualitative studies have been done on graduates' employment using various target groups. Tynjälä et al. (2006: 73-88) carried out an interesting study on how graduates from computer sciences, teacher education, general educational sciences and pharmacy perceived their qualifications and skills needed in working life and how they saw the role of university education in providing those skills. Two different entities could be analysed from the results of the study: the work tasks in different fields and the skills needed in professionals' work. Furthermore, Tynjälä, Helle, Lonka, Murtonen, Mäkinen and Olkinuora (2001: 143-163) present several studies they have done about students' and graduates' perspectives of professional expertise. In a study done in the University of Turku, Tarkkinen and Vahtikari (2000) interviewed people who had graduated from the Faculty of Humanities about their impressions of their own employment. Carver (2006) studied about how well humanistic university education suits the needs of the employers. Unfortunately, the study was done only to the departments of history, culture research and art research, but these results can be quite well generalized to include the whole faculty of humanities. In addition to the departments' representatives some employers also answered the posed questions.

In the University of Jyväskylä some research has also been carried out about the employment of the already graduated students. Tauriainen (2002, 2004) carried out two studies about the employment of the graduates from the University of Jyväskylä in the academic years of 2000-2001 and 2002-2003. A corresponding study was also done by Juuti (2003) on the graduates in the academic year of 2001-2002. Furthermore, quite similar study was done by Tuomela (2007) with the research population of the graduates from the University of Jyväskylä in the year

2005. The problems with these studies are that the research reports available are very concise and that the results are analysed by every faculty so comparing the results with the results of only one department inside a faculty is problematic.

What is alarming is that so few studies have been done on students in the University of Jyväskylä. The only studies available about the relationship between working life and higher education are the aforementioned graduate studies by Tauriainen (2002, 2004), Juuti (2003), and Tuomela (2007). The only extensive study similar to the present study is the one carried out by Mäkinen (2004). With her study the research population was, however, quite different and furthermore, the data collected on this topic is relevant only for certain amount of time due to the rapid changes in the academic labour markets these days. This is why the data gained from the present study is so valuable.

The themes created by Mäkinen (2004) cover quite extensively the area of this study, and therefore it was good that the present study followed them as well. This way it was possible to collect a sufficient amount of relevant and interesting data. The graduate studies done in the University of Jyväskylä were not that relevant when thinking about the present study. The graduates were mainly asked strict facts about their employment and only little attention was put on their opinions about the quality of their studies. Moreover, since the research population with these studies was so big, the presentation of the results was quite brief and no in depth interpretations could be made. This is why narrowing down the research population in the present study to include only the students majoring at the department of Languages was vital in guaranteeing a successful study. The only problem with the present study was that it would have been interesting to compare the gained results on the opinions of already graduated students with actual experience from the working life. This way, for example, the studies' development ideas would have become more useful. However, since the University of Jyväskylä has no extensive alumni records and because of the financial constraints put on this study it would have been impossible to collect sufficient data from the graduates.

5 Data and methods

In the following sections the data and methods used in this study are presented. First the research questions are specified and then the ways of data collection and methods of analysis are discussed. Finally the reliability and validity of the collected research data are examined. The comprehensiveness of the collected data is estimated through the responses gained from the background variables. The questions of reliability and validity are important when criticising the accuracy of the gained results.

5.1 Research questions

University students' impressions about working life and their future employment are not a too widely studied field. Most studies done about the relationship of university studies and the working life have been quantitative and focused mainly on the working life experiences of people already graduated from the university. Furthermore, no qualitative study about the students at the University of Jyväskylä and their impressions on working life has been carried out, but the studies of the graduate employment have been focused on quantitative research and the published research reports have been very brief.

During recent years there has been much talk about the overeducation of Finnish labour force and about the unemployment of people with higher education. Mapping out the students' expectations about their studies in the university as well as their perceptions about their future employment and the working life relevance of their studies are important aspects when trying to define the reasons why higher education is valued to the extent that those problems occur.

The students and the studies at the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä have not been studied much. The only studies done about this research population are the graduate studies the university has done about their placement in the working life after the studies. The reports of these studies are quite concise and the asked questions differ significantly from the research questions posed in this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the career expectations the students majoring at the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä have. The goal is to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) What kind of expectations do the students at the Department of Languages have of studying at the university and in their programme?
- 2) How have their ideas about their future employment formulated during their studies?
- 3) What kind of skills do they think are important in the working life?
- 4) How do they think their studies help in acquiring these skills?

These four themes are adopted from the study done by Mäkinen (2004) about the development of career expectations of students in the University of Turku. The questionnaire was also divided into these themes. The themes dealt with the students' expectations of their studies in the university, the formation of the students' occupational image, the students' impressions of the qualifications and competencies required in the working life and the students' perceptions about their studies' working life relevance. Furthermore, some background questions were asked from the respondents in order to find out whether there were any factors influencing the students' answers.

Most of the questions asked in this study have already been answered in some forms in the previous studies, but never in one study and never with the same research population. Thus, doing this study is well justified. In addition, comparing the results from this study to the previous ones is quite interesting even though the research populations vary significantly.

5.2 Data and methods of analysis

The data for this study were collected via an e-mail questionnaire (see Appendix) that was sent to all students in the Department of Languages in the University of Jyväskylä in March 2009. The university has mailing lists for each programme, which include almost all students currently registered in the university. Of these lists, the students majoring in the Department of Languages were asked to answer the

questionnaire. When analysing the data from the questions concerning the formation of the students' occupational image the answers of the first and second year students were treated with reservation since they do not yet have enough experience of university studies in order to sufficiently develop their career expectations. A further reminder was sent in a week's time to increase the number of respondents. The results from the questionnaire were analysed statistically by using SPSS 16 for Windows and the comments from open questions were treated separately.

The questionnaire dealt with the themes adopted from Mäkinen's (2004) study. However, the actual questions were created independently for this study only. In total there were four different themes corresponding to the posed research questions. The questions for the first theme (numbers 7-10), the expectations the students had of their studies, were adapted from the study done by Kuittinen et al. (1997). The background questions were asked in order to find out if there are any consistencies in the career expectations the students have.

The questions in the first theme treat the expectations the students had of their studies. Question number 7, "*Why did you apply for your degree programme?*", portrays how much influence different factors had on the students' choice of their degree programme. The next three questions concern the contentment the students had with their current degree programme. The questions concerning the expectations the students had of their studies in the university can also be reflected on the students' career expectations and how they have changed during their studies. It is interesting to know what kind of image the language studies in the University of Jyväskylä have and how accurate it is with the image the university wants to portray of itself.

The second theme deals with the formation of the students' occupational image. The purpose is to find out how the students' impressions and attitudes towards their future employment have formulated when their knowledge of their field has increased. It was asked if the students had a clear idea about their future employment and whether they were concerned about their chances of being employed after their studies. Furthermore, the students were asked how much impact the choices made in major and minor studies and the possible work experience have had on their image about their future employment, and if the information available for their future employment opportunities has been sufficient. When considering the results gained from this theme, it is important to compare the students' answers to

their year of enrolment at the University of Jyväskylä in order to find out if there can be found any consistencies in the formation of the students' occupational image.

The questions in the following theme focus on the qualifications and competencies the students thought are important in their future careers. The students were asked to rate the importance of these qualifications and competencies when considering their future employment. The final theme is about the working life relevance of the university studies. The students were asked which courses they thought to be useful later on in the working life and whether their possible work placement or student exchange had been positive experiences when considering their employment. They were also asked whether they thought that their studies make them ready enough for the working life and to which direction they would develop their studies. Mapping out the students' ideas about the usefulness of their studies is valuable for developing the study programmes.

5.3 Validity and reliability

Some questions of validity and reliability need to be discussed when considering the results of this study. According to Bell (1993: 64-65), reliability can be defined as how a study reaches the results that remain constant under all occasions. This means that the measured outcomes should not be random but suitable to be generalized to be valid when a larger group of people are concerned. She continues that validity, on the other hand, is a somewhat more complex concept and its purpose is to define whether the used measurements can be regarded reliable. For a study to be high in validity, the research population needs to be asked the right questions relevant when considering the research questions.

The details affecting the validity of this study include the questions posed to the study group, the fact that the questionnaire was distributed via e-mail using the university's mailing lists, how interested the respondents were about the study, how much time they had to fill in the questionnaire, whether they understood the questions correctly and if they made any carelessness errors.

The main purpose of the study was to find answers to the posed four research questions, but also some background questions were asked in order to find out whether there were any differences among different types of students. The

questionnaire was divided into four themes, which corresponded also to the posed research questions. The background questions were essential in order to find out whether there exist any consistencies among the population but also to examine if the respondents are a comprehensive part of the entire population. If so, the reliability of the study can be considered sufficient and the results can be generalized to the whole population.

The questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the mailing lists that all different student associations in the Department of Languages in the University of Jyväskylä have. It is optional for the students studying the subject concerned to enrol to the mailing list but in practice it is quite essential and practically everyone does it. Hence, the sampling strategy used for the study was total enumeration. However, there are of course a few people who are not on the mailing lists and therefore did not receive the questionnaire but their number is so small that it had no significant impact on the results. Enrolling to the mailing lists is possible for everyone studying or working at the University of Jyväskylä so the questionnaire was sent to many people who are not a part of the population but it was clearly stated at the beginning of the cover letter that this study concerns only the students who are doing their major studies at the Department of Languages.

In total the questionnaire was answered by 368 students. This number was compared to the total number of students majoring in different languages in the department. The response rate was 26 %. Because of the lack of any available comprehensive student records it is also hard to compare the results to the total population when considering all the other background questions. It is only possible to make estimations about whether the responses correspond to the population.

According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are in all cases statistically significant or very significant. However, one must treat some of the results with reservation since the criteria for the test are not fulfilled. The reason why the criteria are not fulfilled is that when divided into the background variables the number of the respondents was too small in too many categories.

The sex ratio of the research material is highly female-oriented, while 343 of the respondents were female equalling to 93 % of the total number and only 25 male equalling to 7 %. This, however, quite well represents the sex ratio in the Department of Languages since languages are a highly female-oriented field. The age distribution of the research material seems quite well to correspond the total

population. The students' age distribution is increased in the younger alternatives, the majority (82 %) being 25 years old or younger and 30 % being under 22 years old. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Age distribution.

	%	N
Under 22	30	110
22 - 25	52	190
26 - 29	13	48
30 - 34	4	16
Over 34	1	4
	100	368

This age distribution is supported also by the female-orientedness of the field, since male students usually complete their military service before entering the university or during their first years of studying, thus making the number of respondents higher in the older options. To give some perspective, the age distribution can be compared to the one that Mäkinen (2006) got from her study of the age distribution of all students in the University of Turku. According to her, in total 60 % of the students in the university were the age of 25 or younger.

Nowadays the educational background of university students can be very varied but still the majority follows the traditional route of completing upper secondary school before entering university. This is true also with this study since 95 % of the respondents informed their educational background being upper secondary school. 4 % of the respondents had completed vocational school and 6 % polytechnic before their studies at the university. 2 % replied that they had already completed a degree at the university. The respondents could choose multiple alternatives in this question. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Educational background of the respondents (multiple choices).

	%	N
Upper secondary school	95	349
Vocational school	4	13
Polytechnic	6	21
University	2	9
	107	392

When analysing the research material in respect to the year of enrolment at the University of Jyväskylä, it can be seen that all years are quite evenly represented, the amount of responses varying from 15 – 18 % between the alternatives. (See Table 3.) The average time used for completing their studies for humanists was for students who had started their studies in the year 1991, according to Pajala and Lempinen (2001: 39-40), 6,5 years and according to Autio's more recent study (2001: 11), 6,4 years. Pajala and Lempinen (2001: 39-40) state that the trend in average studying times has been decreasing during the last decades so in reality Autio's statement is probably closer to the truth. In practice completing one's studies faster than in four years is rarely possible and the usual time spent studying is 5 – 6 years. The students who have started their studies in the university in the year 2004 or earlier have practically limitless time to be enrolled in the university but for students who have started their studies later than that there is a fixed allotted time in which they need to complete their studies. This is why there still can be students who spend much more time for their studies than is usual, making the average time of studies for all humanists so long.

Table 3. Year of enrolment at the University of Jyväskylä.

	%	N
2008	18	66
2007	18	65
2006	19	70
2005	16	58
2004	15	55
2003 or earlier	15	54
	100	368

In total there are eight different subjects that one can major in at the Department of Languages. For this study there are responses from all subjects except Latin, but at the moment there are only five students majoring in that subject counting just 0,3 % of the total population so this does not have a significant impact on the results. (See Table 4.) When comparing the research material to the total population, which includes all students majoring in languages on 31.12.2009, it can be seen that they correspond quite well. The biggest difference is 3 % units in English and in Romance philology. Otherwise, the differences are only 1 % unit or less.

Table 4. Distribution of major subjects.

	Respondents %	Population %	Respondents N	Population N
English	37	34	135	481
Latin	0	<1	0	5
Romance philology	6	9	21	136
Swedish	16	15	58	215
German language and culture	11	12	39	172
Finnish	20	19	75	262
Russian language and culture	8	9	28	128
Finnish sign language	2	2	12	34
	100	100	368	1433

The respondents were also asked in which departments they had done their minor subjects. (See Figure 1.) When considering their future employment, the minor subjects play a crucial part in what kind of work tasks the students will be handling. Over half (57 %) of the respondents had done minor studies at the Department of Languages. This indicates a general interest in languages as well as that many teacher professions include a combination of two or more language subjects. Furthermore, the departments of Education and Teacher Education were popular places to do minor studies in, including 39 % and 37 % of the respondents respectively. Other departments commonly mentioned were Communication, Art and Culture Studies (both 21 %), and Social Sciences and Philosophy (18 %). In the option “Other” most commonly mentioned alternatives were the Language Center, and Internet based subjects Asian Studies and Tourism. For example Chemistry, Physics, and Sport Sciences did not have any answers at all. The reason for this might be that students majoring in languages are not interested in these subjects or see them irrelevant in terms of their future employment, but also because many times inter-faculty studying is made quite difficult if not impossible.

When trying to find out if any consistencies exist among the data one should try to compare the given responses according to the groupings found through the background variables. In order to reliably do any generalizations the used groupings need to be sufficient in size. When considering this research material there were only 1 % in the age group of over 34 years so regrouping the final age group into over 29 years old is essential. Moreover, there were no responses from students majoring in Latin so it was left out from the alternatives for a major subject. Furthermore, when considering the minor subject category only the departments of Languages, Education and Teacher Education received enough responses so that any reliable generalizations could be made. This is why finding any real consistencies inside the research material can be problematic and one should always treat the results with some reservation.

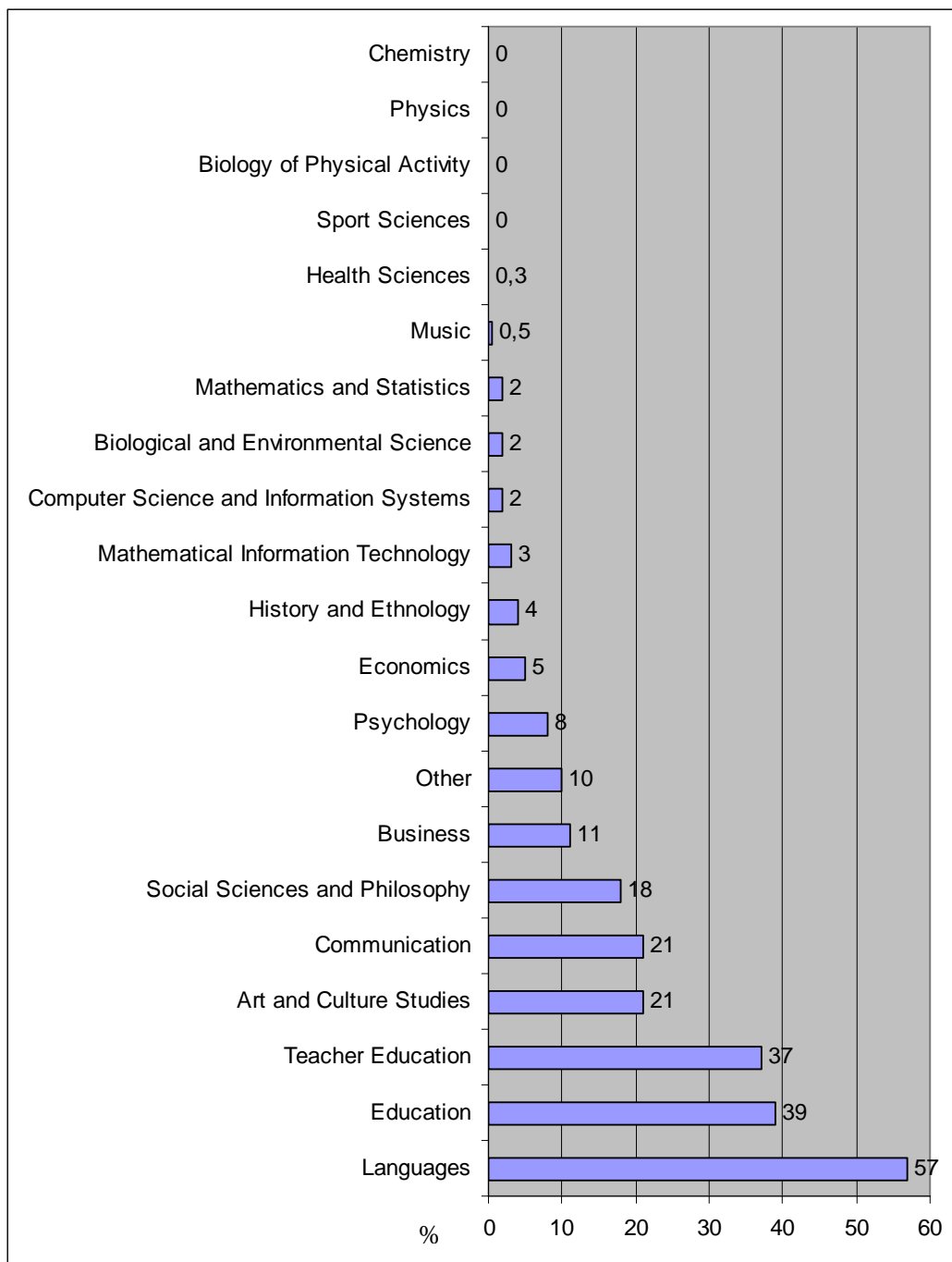


Figure 1. Distribution of minor subjects.

6 Results

In this section the results of this study are presented. According to the themes derived from the research questions the chapter is divided into four sections. The sections deal with the students' expectations of their studies at the university, the formation of the students' occupational image, the students' impressions of the qualifications and competencies required in the working life, and the students' perceptions of the studies' working life relevance. Accurate tables and figures are given to make presentation of the results clearer. Furthermore, the results of this study are compared to the results gained from previous studies of the same kind and the found similarities and differences are examined in detail.

6.1 The students' expectations of their studies

The first research question dealt with the students' expectations of studying at the university and in their degree programme. To answer the question, the students were asked the reasons why they applied for their degree programme. This question was adapted from the study done by Kuittinen et al. (1997: 31). Fixed alternatives were given and the recipients were asked to rate how much importance each alternative had had in their choice of studies. Not at all important was rated as 1, a little important 2, somewhat important 3, and very important 4. In total there were 15 different alternatives to be rated.

In Figure 2 the different reasons affecting the students' choice of the degree programme and the amount of influence they had had on the choice are presented. The most important reason why the students had applied for their degree programme was that they were interested in that certain field with an average of 3,4. Nearly as important reasons were the desire to have a degree (3,3) or a profession (3,1). The education itself (3,1) got quite a high score as well. The least important reasons were considered to be friends who chose the same field (1,1) and parents' recommendations (1,3). The geographical location of the university had little difference in the students' choices. A close distance from hometown (1,8) or the possibility to move away from home (1,9) had quite little impact on the students.

However, more importance was put on Jyväskylä as a student-friendly town or the University of Jyväskylä itself (both 2,6). The alternative *to ensure a job in the future* got an average score of 2,4. The fact that this number is not higher indicates that many people study just to develop themselves and for the enjoyment of learning new things. They seem to be much more scientifically than job oriented. The somewhat low number can also indicate the fact that the students have already realised that higher education does not automatically guarantee secure job opportunities.

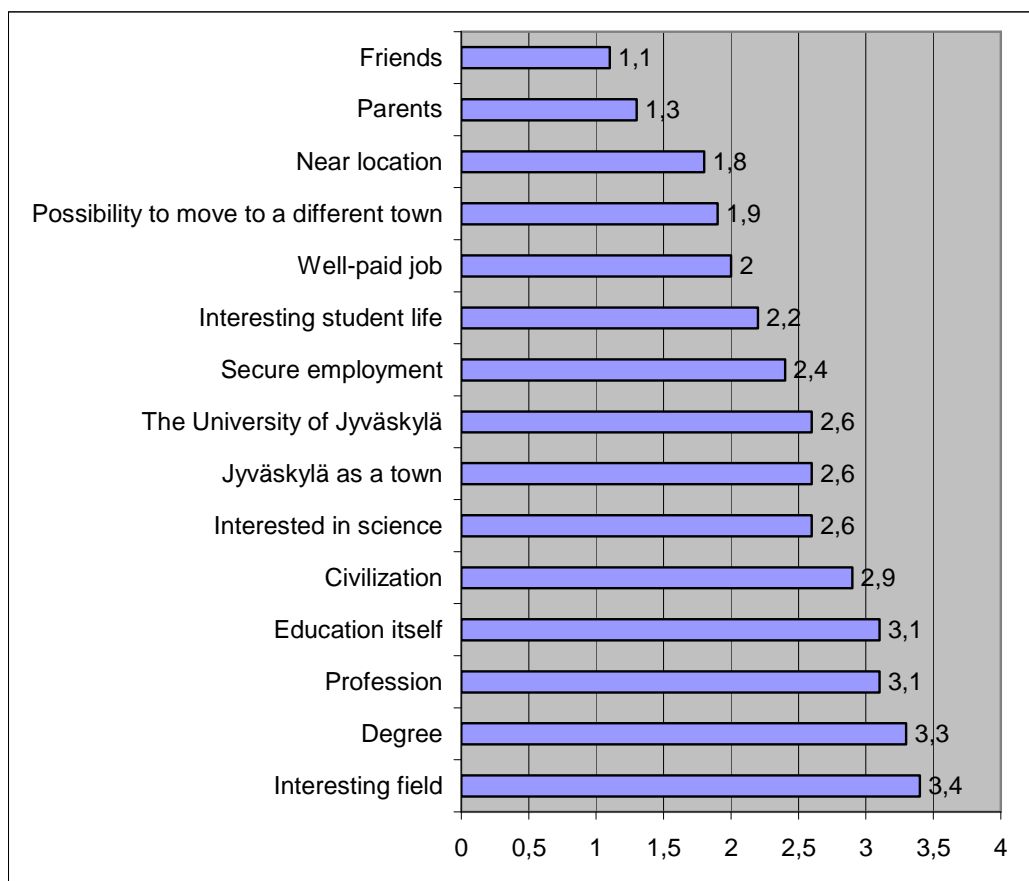


Figure 2. Reasons affecting the choice of the degree programme.

It seems that the main goal of educating experts in languages, communication and culture at the Department of Languages in the University of Jyväskylä has been marketed quite well since the alternative *interesting field* was the

most important reason why the respondents had applied to their degree programme. *Education itself* and *civilization* were also rated quite high and they can both be interpreted as a will to become an expert of a field as well as an interest to learn new things. Giving the students a foundation for lifelong learning is also one of the department's goals. In the light of these results it can be said that the image the Department of Languages wants to portray is quite accurate with the students expectations of their studies.

In Kuittinen et al.'s study (1997: 7-8,31) the same alternatives were used to measure the reasons affecting the students' choice of the degree programme. The respondents were divided into two groups according to their answers, professionally oriented people and degree oriented people. Both groups emphasized the given reasons in the same way, the professionally oriented getting a score of 3,42 (in a scale from 1-5) and the degree oriented scoring 3,58. The single reason affecting the choice of the degree the most was considered to be education itself. In total 80 % of the respondents had said that it affected their choice very much or quite much. Very close came "*Getting a degree*", which was an important reason for 78 % of the respondents. Other reasons having a big impact were "*I wanted a degree*" (74 %), "*Getting educated*" (71 %) and "*I was interested in science*" (65 %). The least affecting reasons were considered to be the friends' and parents' influences. In total 90 % of the respondents said that their friends' choices had had no effect on their choice of degree and 73 % felt the same of their parents' recommendations. The results found in the present study are quite well in line with Kuittinen et al.'s (1997) results.

In Mäkelä's study (1994:85-87) quite similar results could be found. 28 % of the students replied that beforehand the degree had felt like the only right one. As many as 7 % said that they had chosen this degree by chance. The most important reason to choose the degree was getting a profession, which was rated very important by 81 % of the respondents. Other important reasons were "*Getting to know the subjects close to own interest more profoundly*", "*Getting all-round education*" and "*Forming human contacts*". For example secure employment was also rated quite high with 44 % thinking it was very important, but only 18 % thought good earnings were a big incentive in the choice of degree.

Furthermore, in the present study the students were asked to rate if they felt that they were studying in the right degree programme or not. Almost half (48 %)

of the students thought that they were quite sure that the degree programme they were in was the right one for them and nearly a third (29 %) was sure of the suitability of the degree. Thus, over three quarters of the students were content with their choice of degree programme. Only 4 % did not at all enjoy their current programme. Related to this question it was asked whether their first choice of degree programme had realised. The results were consistent since 45 % of the students felt that their first choice of study had realised really well and 36 % that it had realised quite well. Again, only 4 % thought that their choice had not come true at all.

Tauriainen (2004: 14) also asked the respondents of his study whether they had been satisfied with their studies in the Faculty of Humanities. 23 % of them had replied that if given the chance they would do exactly the same studies again. This result is quite close to the 29 % of the respondents of this study being satisfied with their current degree programme. In Tauriainen's (2004:14) study the most often mentioned (41 %) change the respondents would have made was that they would study more minor subjects and 20 % would change their minor subjects. 18 % of the respondents would have done an entirely different degree programme and 13 % would have changed their major subject. Tauriainen seems to think that the number of dissatisfied respondents is small but when compared to the results of this study the numbers appear quite large. However, since Tauriainen's research material consisted of already graduated students from the Faculty of Humanities it may be that the opinion of the respondents in this study will also change after they have finished their studies.

In the present study, when the students were asked if they would change their degree programme if it were possible, in contrast, 13 % said that they would very likely do it and 14 % answered quite likely. These numbers together are higher when compared to the matching numbers from the previous two questions. It seems that in some cases even though people are content with their studies at the moment, they have a feeling that studying something else could suit them even better. It is common to want something one does not have and of which one has no first-hand experience. Furthermore, people can have the desire to be in a degree programme that they do not have realistic chances of getting in.

There were no significant differences in the students' expectations of their studies when compared to the background questions. If any, the only differences could be found when examining the students' major subject. The biggest

differences could be found when comparing the Finnish sign language majors to other subjects. The Finnish sign language majors had the highest score in the alternatives of interesting field (3,8, avg. 3,4) and a well-paid job (2,6, avg. 2,0). They also had significantly lower scores than the average in the alternatives concerning the quality and location of the place of study as well as in the alternative of expectations of an interesting student life. However, the Finnish sign language majors were not very certain about their future employment scoring only 2,2 while the average was 2,4. The low score in the quality and location of the place of study is explained by the fact that Jyväskylä is the only place where you can study sign language in a higher education institution.

In Table 5 it is represented how well the students' first choice of a degree programme was realised according to their degree programme. In general the Finnish sign language majors seemed more content with their choice of study than the students from other subjects, since half of them were sure and 42 % quite sure that they were in the right degree programme. Sign language had been the first choice of study for as many as 75 % of the subject's majors, while the corresponding number for other subjects was only 45 % on average. Likewise the number of the Finnish sign language majors not wanting to change their degree programme was clearly higher than the average. These factors indicate that the Finnish sign language majors seem to be the most job-oriented. Since the field is quite small and Finnish sign language is not a subject in any other higher education institution, the majors seem to put more emphasis on the studies themselves and not so much to the surrounding conditions. The expectations the students had for their studies seem to have realised better than with the other subjects. The reason for this can be that the Finnish sign language studies can be more focused and clearly oriented than the studies in other degree programmes. Furthermore, the rarity of higher-level Finnish sign language studies can make the enrolment process more difficult and that way ensure the motivation for the students chosen to the programme. However, the number of respondents in the Finnish sign language was only twelve so one must treat these results with some reservation since the criteria for the Pearson Chi-Square test are not fulfilled.

Table 5. How well the first choice of degree programme was realised according to the degree programmes.

(P = 0,001, 36 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

	Romance					Finnish sign		Total
	English Philology	Swedish	German	Finnish	Russian language			
	135	21	58	39	75	28	12	368
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not at all	2	5	9	10	0	7	0	4
A little	14	28	15	26	4	25	8	15
To some extent	33	24	38	38	45	39	17	36
Very well	51	43	38	26	51	29	75	45
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The alternative of a well-paid job divided the different subjects in other terms as well. Another subject that got a high score was the Russian language and culture (2,5), while the lowest of all was Romance philology (1,6). For some reason the majors in Romance philology seem to think that they will be poorly paid in their future jobs. The low number can also be an indication of uncertain future employment, which is confirmed also with a low score of 1,9 (avg. 2,4) in the alternative of secure future employment. These differences seem quite obvious, since different degrees, even though in the same department, prepare students for different types of professions.

According to Autio (2001: 10-11), the most common criteria that influenced the respondents' choice of degree was their own interest towards it and the strengths they had experienced to have during their studies in the upper secondary school. Many of the respondents had emphasized also the importance of chance when they chose their degree programme. Even the influence of friends' recommendations was mentioned. The future employment was not much thought about beforehand but many of the respondents had planned to become teachers. Secure employment as an important criterion was mentioned mainly by the students of two special degrees, information research and logopedics, since these two degrees have quite strictly defined professions they prepare the students for and they are not widely taught in Finnish universities.

Kuittinen et al. (1997: 11-12) also asked the respondents what impressions they had about studies in the university beforehand. The most common impressions were expectations that studying is demanding but can be done in one's own pace and that teaching is of high-quality. The freedom of choice and learning to take more responsibility were also mentioned. Furthermore, Kuittinen et al. (1997: 10) asked the respondents whether they felt that they were in the right degree programme or not. Only 15 % (11 % unsure and 4 % cannot say) of the respondents were not sure about the chosen programme. Nearly 30 % answered that the chosen degree programme was the only right option for them.

6.2 The formation of the students' occupational image

In this study the aim was also to find out about the formation of the students' occupational image and some interesting findings about the students' idea of their future employment could be drawn from the research material. When thinking about the formation of the students' occupational image during their studies in the university, it must be taken into consideration that the duration of their studies can have significant impact on the results. A first year student has had very little time to build any kind of occupational image, while a student finishing the master's thesis has had many years of experience and plenty of things affecting and perhaps changing the occupational image. To ensure that this deviation does not affect the results, the responses of the students who had started their studies in the year 2007 or 2008 were treated separately. Surprisingly, in most cases this had not any significant effect on the results so all the respondents were included in the research material if not otherwise stated.

The respondents were asked about whether they had an idea about which profession or professional field their studies prepare them for. 10 % of the respondents had no idea about their future profession, 40 % had some idea and half had a certain profession in their mind. These results are quite consistent with Kuittinen et al.'s (1997: 9-10) findings, since in their study 7 % of the respondents answered they had no idea, 49 % had some idea and 44% had a certain profession in mind. However, Kuittinen et al. did not ask which professions the students thought

they would graduate for, which would have also given some interesting results to compare with the present study.

No variation was found when comparing the first and second year students in the present study to the total population, and thus it seems that the students have already thought about their future employment before applying for the university. The respondents were also asked to mention the profession or professional field they thought to be employed in the future. Unfortunately, only 58 % of the respondents who had a clear idea about their future employment had specified the profession they thought to be employed. The most often mentioned profession was teacher (34 % of all answers in the certain profession or professional field option and 58 % of those who had specified the profession). Furthermore, rector was mentioned twice and a lecturer and a trainer were each mentioned once, which all can be loosely classified to professions requiring same kind of education as a teacher. This result is consistent when compared to the fact that as many as 72 % of the respondents who had taken a minor subject from the Department of Teacher Education had answered that they have a clear idea about their future employment. Other frequently mentioned professions were a translator (6 %) and a job in the international field (5 %). Other professions mentioned included, for example, social worker, journalist, researcher and interpreter. Professional fields mentioned included tourism, communication, economics and publishing.

When trying to examine if the background variables had any effect to the results, no clear findings could be discovered. The differences among, for example, different age groupings were quite small and 50 % of all groups had a clear idea about their future profession. In addition to the students having Teacher Education as their minor subject, some noteworthy differences could be found when comparing the material to the major subject. In Figure 3 it can be seen that the students majoring in Finnish have a somewhat clearer idea about their future employment since 60 % of them had a certain profession in their mind and only 4 % had no idea about their employment possibilities. According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are very significant, but these results should be treated with reservation since the number of the respondents is too small to fulfil the criteria of the test. The results seem consistent also when comparing the number of students who have done Teacher training in each major subject to the clear idea of future employment. As many as 49 % of Finnish majors have done Teacher Studies as a

minor subject, second comes English majors (44 %) and third Finnish sign language majors (42 %). The students who had participated the least in the Teacher training were Russian language and culture majors (14 %) and Romance Philology majors (19 %). They also seem to be most unsure about their future employment with only 21 % and 33 % claiming to have a certain profession in mind. What seems a bit surprising is that students majoring in Finnish sign language do not seem to have any clearer idea about their future employment than the other groups. They were most content with their choice of degree programme and also seemed to be the most job-oriented group. Furthermore they rated high in having Teacher Studies as a minor subject. An explanation for this could be found in one of the answers where the respondent had mentioned that only two sign language majors had already graduated so defining which profession they truly graduate was problematic.

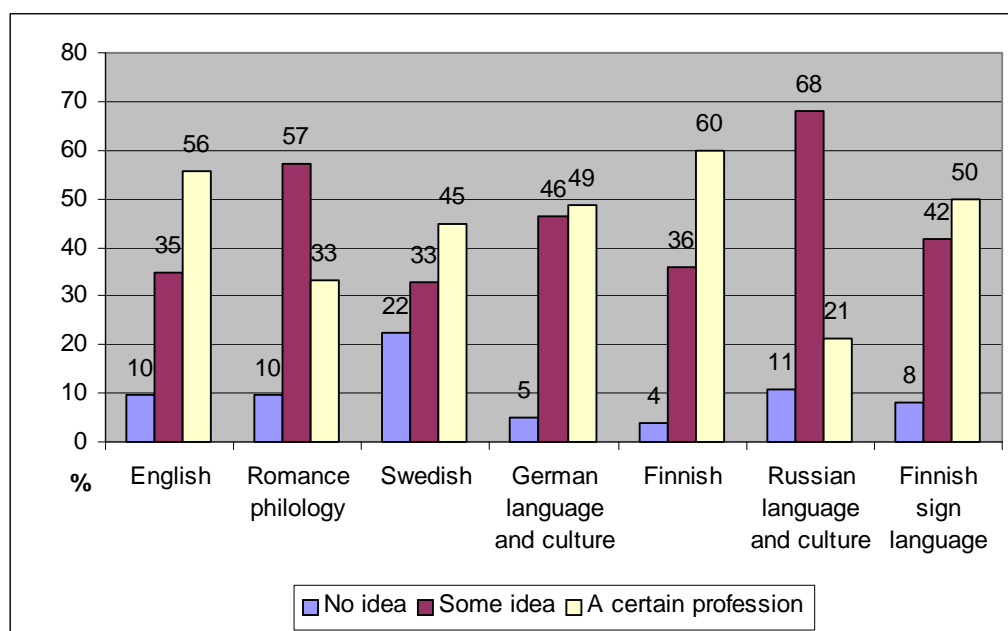


Figure 3. How well the respondents knew about their future employment compared to the major subject.

($P=0,03$, 24 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

Furthermore, there were some differences when comparing the students who had a clear idea about their future employment to their background education. It

seemed that those who had done some other studies than only the upper secondary school had a somewhat clearer idea about their future employment possibilities. In total 62 % of the students who had done studies in vocational school and 67 % of the students who had already previous university studies had a clear idea about their future employment compared to the average of 50 % of all the respondents. However, students who had studied in the polytechnic make an exception to this. Of them only 38 % had a certain profession in their mind. According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are statistically significant or very significant ($P = 0,463 - 0,685$). However, the number of respondents who had some other background education than upper secondary school was quite small so one must treat these results with reservation.

According to Mäkinen (2006: 103), quite a significant number of the students in the humanities did not know exactly what kind of a profession they were studying for. About half of the students had only little or no idea at all about their future employment. This number is consistent with the results of this study as well. The fact that Mäkinen's study included all students, the ones in their first year of studies as well, probably has had an impact on the great number of students not knowing the exact profession they are studying for.

In the present study, in order to find out the students' impressions about their future employment possibilities, they were asked whether they were worried about finding a job after graduation. In Figure 4 it can be seen how worried the students were about their future employment according to the entire data and then compared with the results gained when divided into groupings according to some background variables. Only 6 % were not at all worried, while as many as 15 % were very worried and 38 % quite worried about their future employment possibilities. When excluding the first and second year students, it can be seen that the students who already have a longer experience in studies of their field are even more concerned about their employment. 18 % of these students were very worried about their possibilities for employment and 43 % were quite worried.

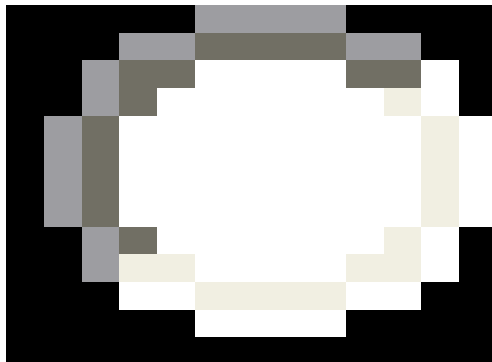


Figure 4. How worried the students were about their future employment.

Some interesting variations within the research material could be found when dividing the answers according to the different background variables. (See Figure 4.) The students who had teacher studies as their minor subject were less concerned about their future employment. The majority (58 %) of these students were only a little worried and only 7 % was very worried. The obvious reason for this is that, as stated earlier, these students were also more aware of their profession as teachers than others. A clear idea about the future employment and the fact that the employment rate of qualified teachers is high can have an effect on the need to be worried about getting a job in the future making it smaller. The group that were the least worried about their future employment was the male students. As many as 20 % of them were not at all worried about their employment and none of them was very worried. This can be explained by a number of facts. The professional field of teaching is quite female-oriented and this is only enhanced when talking about language teachers. It can be argued that employment is easier for male teachers since having both sexes as role models for pupils and students is seen beneficial for them even though officially this kind of gender favouring is not allowed. When there are only few rivals in the employment markets there is no great need to be worried about

one's employment. Furthermore, the number of male respondents was quite small, 25 persons, even though it represents the sex ratio in the field quite well. Thus, any large scale generalizations cannot be made.

To map out how the studies the respondents had done in the university had affected their impression about their employment, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of different study entities. In Figure 5 it can be seen how much effect the different study entities had had on the students' impressions about their future employment. The different entities seemed to divide the students opinion quite widely. Only 11 % of the respondents thought that their major studies had had a significant effect on their impressions about future employment. However, almost half (49 %) thought that major studies had had quite much effect and only 4 % had chosen the not at all alternative. Overall, it could be said that the major studies had had the greatest effect on the students' opinion about their future employment, but minor studies had had almost as great an impact. The most conflicting entity was workplace learning. In total 45 % of the respondents had had workplace learning as a part of their studies. In the *very much* category it scored the highest (17 %) but it also scored the second highest (32 %) in the *not at all* category. It seems that some of the students' working experiences have been good but some not so rewarding. It can also be that some students have already had such strong impressions about their future employment, for example as teachers, that the workplace learning has not had a significant impact on them. The least affecting alternative was student exchange. Almost half (47 %) of the respondents had been in exchange and only 4 % of them thought that it had had a significant impact on their impressions about future employment. Many times student exchange is not seen essential as such when considering the future employment possibilities but more as a possibility to widen one's life experience and language skills. The connection between the exchange and future job tasks may not be evident, but in reality it does enhance many of the skills, such as flexibility, and communication and interaction skills, considered important in the working life.

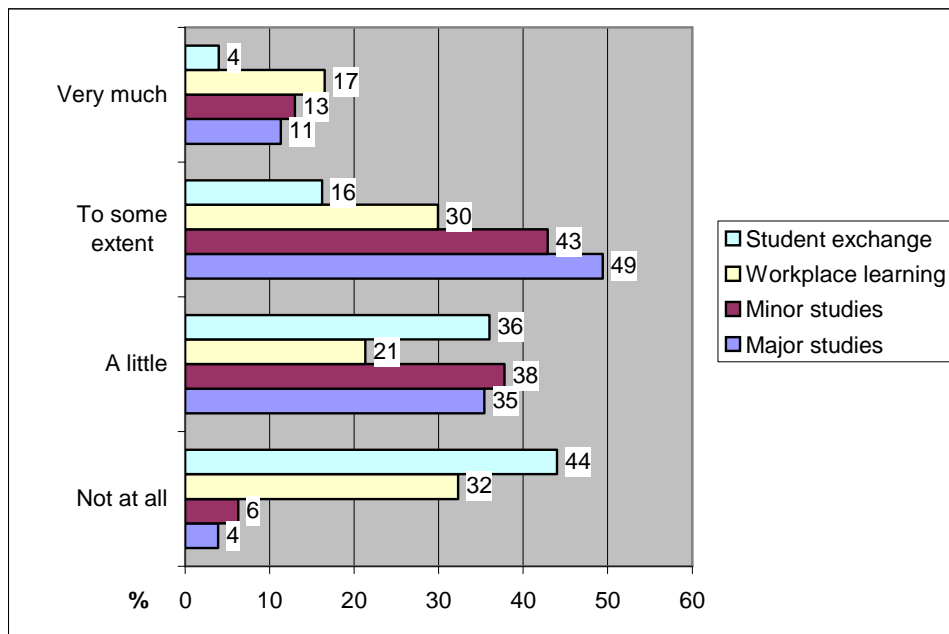


Figure 5. The effect the different types of studies have had on the impression about the future employment.

When comparing the effect the different study entities had had on the students' impression of their future employment to the background variables no significant differences could be found except in the opinions about workplace learning and student exchange. Table 6 shows how much impact workplace learning had had on the formation of the students' image of their future employment divided into the major subject. If compared with the major subject there were significant differences in the number of respondents as well as their opinions. Workplace learning had been a part of the studies least often with the students majoring in German language and culture (26 %) and most often with students majoring in Finnish sign language (67 %). Workplace learning is compulsory only for students who have Teacher Education as a minor subject, but all subjects grant study points for work placement. The differences in the number of students who have done workplace learning is therefore dependent on the number of students doing Teacher Education as well as on the number of available other type of workplace learning opportunities.

These above mentioned are reasons why the opinion of the significance of workplace learning in the formation of the students' image of their future employment varies greatly among different major subjects. (See Table 6.) Workplace learning was seen to have the least effect on the formation of their impressions of the future employment by the students majoring in German language and culture. As many as 70 % of them thought that it had had no effect at all and none of them thought that it had had a significant effect. Another group not appreciating the effect of workplace learning was the majors in Romance Philology of whom 55 % had chosen the alternative *not at all* and only 9 % *very much*. The group rating workplace learning the highest was Finnish majors (16 % not at all, 23 % very much). Most variation was within the Finnish sign language majors of which as many as 25 % chose the alternative very much and 37 % the alternative not at all. According to Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are statistically significant, but the results must be treated with reservation since the criteria of the test are not fulfilled.

Table 6. The impact of workplace learning on the formation of the image of the future employment divided into the major subject.

(P = 0,68, 57 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

	English	Romance Philology	Swedish	German	Finnish	Russian language	Finnish sign	Total
	65	11	21	10	31	18	8	164
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not at all	28	55	33	70	16	39	37	32
Quite little	23	9	33	10	13	33	13	21
Quite much	31	27	29	20	48	6	25	30
Very much	18	9	5	0	23	22	25	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In Table 7 it can be seen how much impact student exchange had had on the formation of the students' image about their future employment divided into the major subject. The number of students who had done student exchange varied greatly when compared to the major subject. One reason for this is that student

exchange is compulsory only for majors in Romance Philology, Swedish, German language and culture, and Russian language and culture. Obviously the number of students who had studied abroad was bigger within these subjects, but still there were big differences with Russian scoring the highest with 82 % and Swedish the lowest with only 45 %. Actually, English and Finnish sign language came very close to this having 44 % and 42 % respondents who had done student exchange. It seems that the students who had done student exchange voluntarily thought that the relationship with the formation of the image about future employment was weakest. The number of students who thought that the exchange period had had no effect at all was far greater than with the students having compulsory student exchange. All students majoring in Finnish sign language had chosen this alternative. However, there was some variation within the English majors of whom 5 % thought that the exchange had had a significant impact. Overall, how people perceive their student exchange depends vastly on their personal traits and many other factors so making any generalizations with the major subject or with any other background question is hard.

Table 7. The impact of student exchange on the formation of the image about the future employment divided into the major subject.

($P = 0,12$, 57 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

	Romance			Finnish sign language			Total	
	English	Philology	Swedish	German	Finnish	Russian		
	60	13	26	23	23	23	5	173
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not at all	55	15	38	17	65	26	100	44
Quite little	27	62	50	48	18	48	0	36
Quite much	13	23	8	26	17	22	0	16
Very much	5	0	4	9	0	4	0	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In order to find out where the students had gathered the information about their future employment possibilities, they were asked to rate the importance of different alternatives or then state their own sources of information. The differences in the importance of the alternatives can be seen in Figure 6. The most important

source was rated to be the fellow students from whom 12 % of the respondents had had sufficient information about their future employment and 70 % some information. The second most important source was mentioned to be staff tutoring from which 11 % had received sufficient information. Staff tutoring is, however, quite a new source, since it has been available for all subjects only from the year 2004 onwards. Obviously, this is the reason why any of the students who had started their studies in the year 2003 or earlier did not think that staff tutoring had given sufficiently information about their future employment since the majority of it is available only for first year students. The least effective sources were mentioned to be the employment office, teachers and other personnel in the department. Only 2 % of the respondents thought they had received sufficient information about their future employment from the employment office and 3 % were content with each, teachers and other personnel in the department, as information sources. However, once again the students who already had a long history in studying in the university divided the opinion slightly. Of them in average 6 % were content with the unemployment office's services. In the alternative other source the most often were mentioned friends, parents and alumni assemblies.

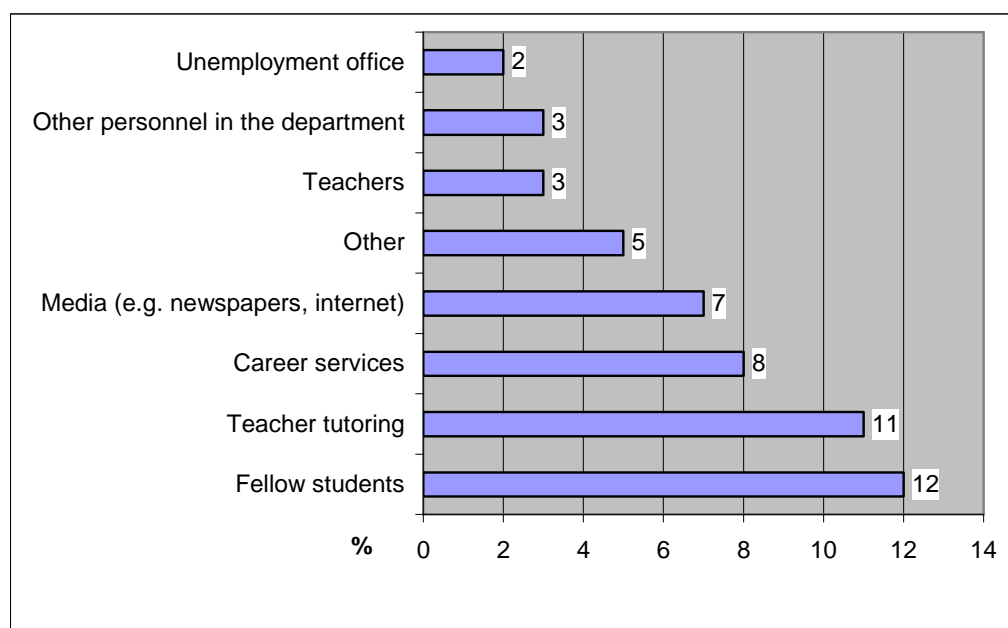


Figure 6. The sources where the students had received sufficient information about their future employment.

In her study, Mäkinen (2006: 79-80) asked about the career counselling the students had received and whether the students were satisfied or not with the career and employment services the university offered them. Only about fifth (21 %) of the students were satisfied with the services provided and the rest of the respondents were partly dissatisfied or entirely dissatisfied one third each. Unfortunately, Mäkinen (2006) did not ask the students about how much information of their future employment they had received from other sources, such as teachers or fellow students, and thus comparing the results with findings of the present study is problematic.

6.3 The students' impressions of the qualifications and competencies required in the working life

In order to map out what the students thought about the qualifications and competencies needed in the working life, they were asked to rate on a scale from one to three, one being not very important and three very important, how important they thought the given alternatives were in regard to their future employment. In Figure 7 it can be seen that the most important aspect was seen to be *communication skills*, with 87 % of the respondents thinking it to be very important and only 1 % rating it not very important. Very close to this came also *motivation*, having 82 % of respondents choosing it to be very important and only one respondent saying that it is not very important. Other aspects considered to be important in the working life were *stress control* (74 % very important), *flexibility* (69 % very important) and *perseverance* (66 % very important). The least important skills were considered to be *computer skills*, which were thought to be very important by only 22 % of the respondents, and work experience in general having 13 % of the respondents thinking that it is not very important when considering their future employment. In general, work experience was not valued very high since *work experience in their own domain* was rated to be 12th most important among the 18 listed qualifications and competencies. The students seem to think that schooling and other life experience will give them sufficient skills needed in the working life and actual work experience is not that important.

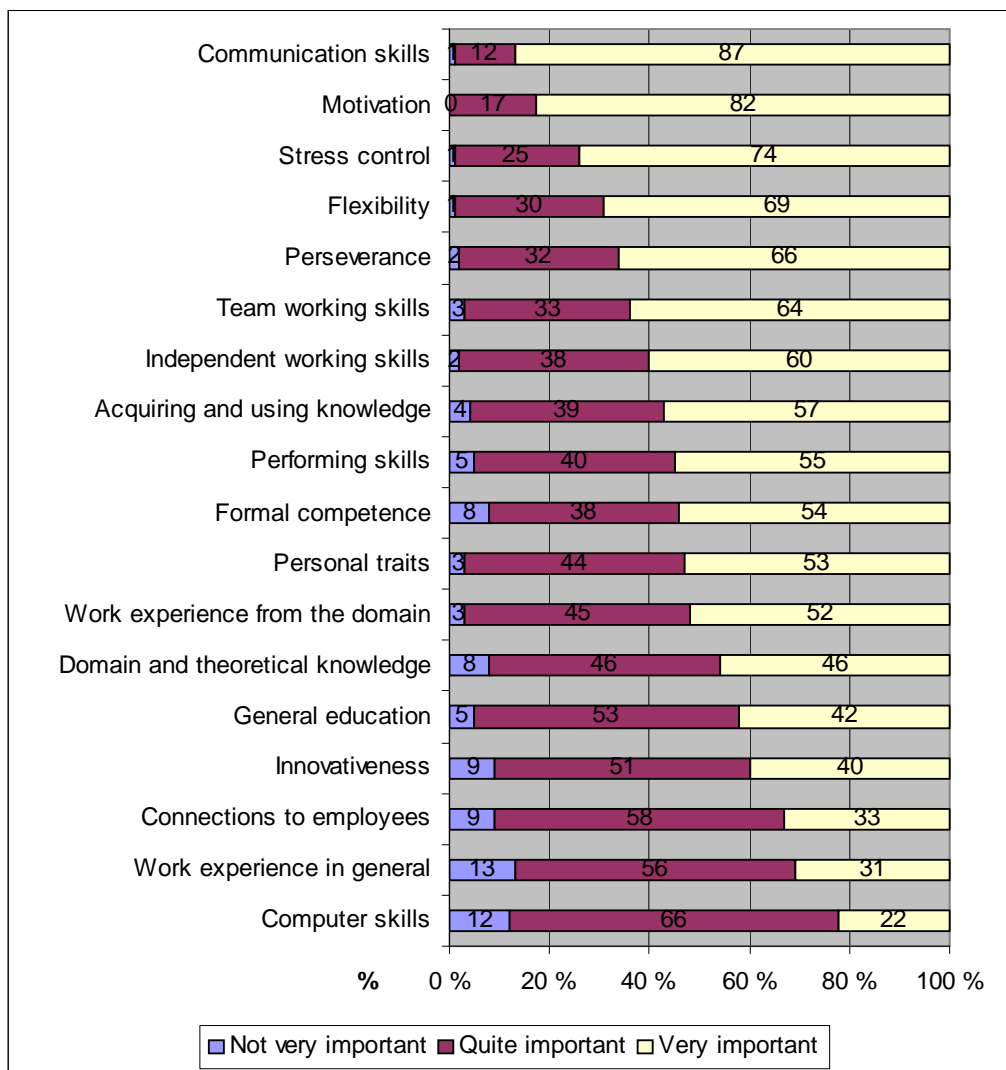


Figure 7. The students' perceptions about the importance of different qualifications and competencies in the working life.

In Tauriainen's (2002: 16) and Juuti's (2003: 18) studies the respondents were also asked about the qualifications and competencies they had thought to be the most important in getting a job. In both studies the most important aspect was thought to be the combination of studies they had done and the second most important was job experience. The least important aspects were rated to be grades, organizational activities and hobbies. Other important qualifications and competencies were rated to be performing, organizational, language, and computer

skills, and personal relationships. When comparing these results with the results from this study the most significant difference can be seen with the perceived importance of work experience. The comparison of being the second most important alternative in Tauriainen's and Juuti's studies and being the second least important in this study is quite shocking. It seems that more working life experience is needed before the students start to appreciate the skills that actual work experience provides them.

When comparing the students' impressions of the importance of the different qualifications and competencies to the background variables some significant differences could be found when looking at the age distribution and the year of enrolment in the university. When considering the importance of work experience from the domain it seems that quite consistently it is thought to be more important the older the respondents are and the longer they have been in the university. However, the oldest students as well as the students who had started their studies in the year 2003 or earlier did not fit into this pattern and seemed to value work experience less than could have been expected.

In Figure 8 the percentage of respondents rating work experience in general and work experience from the domain very important are divided according to the age distribution. Work experience from the domain was valued the most (58 % very important) by the respondents in the age grouping 26 – 29 years old. To this age grouping the trend had risen steadily but in the last age group, over 29 years old, the work experience was appreciated the least (40 % very important). However, work experience in general was rated highest (36 % very important) in the youngest age group and lowest (21 % very important) in the age group 26- 29 years old. Usually the older people have already more work experience than the younger ones. It probably is that within this research material the older respondents have not needed that much previous work experience from their own domain when they have worked during their studies so they do not rate it that important when considering their future employment. According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are statistically significant, but the results should be treated with some reservation since with *work experience from the domain* the criteria for the test are not fulfilled.

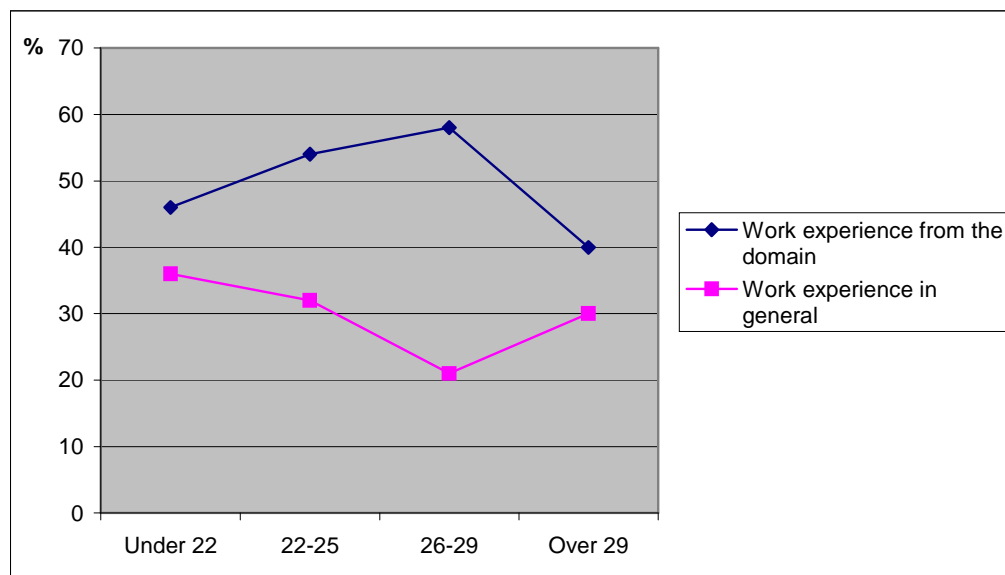


Figure 8. The percentage of respondents rating work experience in general and work experience from the domain very important in their future employment according to age.

(Work experience from the domain: $P = 0,419$, 25 % of the cells have expected count less than 5. Work experience in general: $P = 0,743$ 8 % of the cells have expected count less than 5.)

The same kind of pattern can also be found when comparing the research material to the enrolment year in the University of Jyväskylä. (See Figure 9.) Of course there can be close similarity between the groupings of age and enrolment year since the longer the students have been studying in the university the older they tend to be. However, it is quite common not to start university studies directly after graduating from the upper secondary school or vocational school, and thus the age of students enrolling in university can vary even significantly. Furthermore, 8 % of the respondents had already studied in the polytechnic or university before entering their degree programme, which also has an influence on the age distribution within the enrolment year. The importance of work experience from the domain increases the longer the respondents had studied in the university peaking in two thirds of the students enrolled in the year 2004 rating it very important. Again, the trend drops to 56 % in the final category of students who had

enrolled in the year 2003 or earlier. Work experience in general was appreciated quite evenly (32 – 34 %) by all enrolment years except once more in the last category only 22 % of the respondents rated it very important.

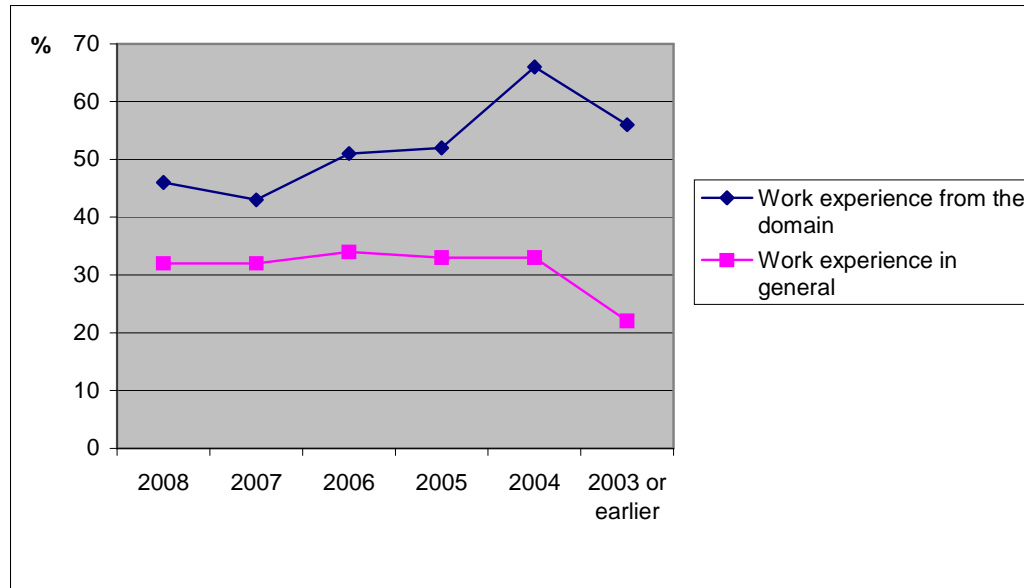


Figure 9. The percentage of respondents rating work experience in general and work experience from the domain very important in their future employment according to the year of enrolment in the university.

(Work experience from the domain: $P = 0,388$, 33 % of the cells have expected count less than 5. Work experience in general: $P = 0,742$, 0 % of the cells have expected count less than 5.)

Some interesting differences could also be found when comparing the research material to the sex of the respondents. In Figure 10 the importance of certain qualifications and competencies is divided according to the sex of the respondents. The biggest differences could be found in innovativeness, which was rated not very important by as many as 28 % of the male respondents, while only 7 % of the female respondents shared this opinion. The men did not rate work experience in general high either since 24 % of the respondents thought that it is not very important in their future employment compared to 12 % of the women thinking the same. Communication skills were also appreciated more by the female respondents 88 % of them rating it very important compared to 80 % of the male respondents.



Figure 10. The importance of certain qualifications and competencies divided into the sex of the respondents.

(Communication skills: $P = 0,361$, stress control: $P = 0,723$, perseverance: $P = 0,337$, work experience from the domain: $P = 0,123$, innovativeness: $P = 0,001$, work experience in general: $P = 0,197$, computer skills: $P = 0,145$)

Stress control, however, received opposite results: 80 % of the male respondents valuing it very important compared to 74% of the female respondents. The importance of computer skills divided the sexes as well. Within the female respondents there were higher variation with 13 % of the respondents thinking that computer skills are not very important, while 22 % thought them to be very important in their future employment. The majority of the men thought that it is important to know at least to some extent how to use computers since 84 % of them had rated these skills quite important, leaving the number in both extremes much smaller than with the female respondents. According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are significant or very significant. With communication skills and stress control the criteria for the test are not fulfilled so one should treat these results with reservation. Furthermore, the number of male respondents (25) was quite small compared to the number of the female respondents (343).

Quite many studies have been done about the students' perceptions about the most important competencies and qualifications needed in the working life. The categorization of the different skills vary to some degree but overall the results are quite consistent with each other. In their study, Tynjälä et al. (2006: 80-81) also asked the respondents to list the most important skills they needed in their jobs. They did not specify any alternatives in advance, and thus the responses vary slightly from the alternatives used in the present study. In general, the skills needed most were different kinds of social skills. In all fields production and technical skills were needed quite often. Innovative skills, such as creativity, problem-solving and learning skills, were important for graduates in computer and educational sciences but not for teachers or pharmacists. On the other hand, when considering adaptation skills, including adaptation to work requirements and pressures, the results changed vice versa, being important to teachers and pharmacists but quite seldom needed in educational and computer sciences. Motivational skills were also mentioned: teachers needing them most and pharmacists the least.

Furthermore, Mäkinen (2004: 66-68) asked the students what their impressions about the most important qualifications and competencies in their future jobs were. Very little variance occurred between the disciplines. In the humanities the most important qualifications and competencies were seen to be good knowledge of their own field, written communication skills, general knowledge, the ability to work independently and persistency.

In Tynjälä et al.'s (2001) book are presented several studies about qualifications and competencies needed in the working life. In Mäkinen and Olkinuora's study (Tynjälä et al. 2001: 151-152 in 1999) it was asked students from various disciplines to give the two most important qualities for an expert of their field. Most commonly social and co-operative skills were mentioned, but students in the humanities thought that good command of theoretical knowledge was the most important quality. Overall this quality was mentioned to be the second most important and on the third place was practical knowledge with computer skills. In Eteläpelto, Tynjälä and Järvelä's study (Tynjälä et al. 2001: 152) in 2000, students in the teacher training programme considered the most important qualities in their future work to be social skills, oral communication skills, personal characteristics, innovativeness and reflectivity. However, scientific and abstract thinking, theoretical analytic skills and computer skills were thought to be less important.

Tynjälä, Helle and Murtonen's (Tynjälä et al. 2001: 153-154) at the time still ongoing study contrasted the students' and professionals' views of the qualities needed in the working life. The results showed that the students underestimated the importance of many skills. In the field of teaching, the professionals valued objectivity more than the students and the professionals in information technology emphasized the importance of critical thinking, self-reflection and abstract thinking more than the students of the field. In both fields the students underestimated the importance of logical thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking skills, good service skills, communication skills and the ability to work independently.

In Autio's study (2001: 25-29) the respondents were also asked which things they thought to be the most important criteria that enabled them to get a job. The most important factor (69 %) was thought to be an academic degree no matter what the contents of the degree had been. Other important qualifications were considered to be job experience, especially from their own field, the combination of the degree, personal relations and recommendations, and a successful employment process, including the application, interviews and tests. Some less important qualifications were also mentioned, such as language skills, success in the studies, performing skills, computer skills, one's own personality and activity, courage to apply for jobs without any previous experience, and hobbies.

In his study Carver (2006: 23) found three factors affecting the employment process: education, job experience and personality. The first criterion was usually a suitable education. Carver (2006: 23) noted how the degree and formal qualifications are emphasized especially when the employer is the public sector. Secondly, the applicants' job experience is evaluated. Even some experience from a different field was regarded better than no experience at all. The personality is the final criteria affecting the employment decision. This is evaluated during the interviewing process and if the first two criteria are very similar among the applicants, it is the personality that counts.

Carver (2006: 26-92) also wanted to find out the core skills the students will need in the working life. He grouped the skills into seven different categories, which are expertise, social skills, communication skills, general working life skills, technical skills, and business skills. Expertise is mainly created by the university studies the students do. Carver (2006: 31) points out how in addition to the major subject also minor subjects are essential in creating expertise skills. For example, people who want to be employed as teachers will need Teacher Education as their minor subject. He (2006: 32, 42) also continues how especially humanistic studies are essential in creating expertise rather than giving other specific skills needed in the working life. An important benefit in the employment markets is also the general knowledge that humanistic studies provide.

Carver (2006: 47) continues how all the other categories he listed as the core skills are given much less attention in humanistic studies. However, these skills do still develop during the studies even though any special interest is not put on them. Carver (2006: 47-92) argues that these skills are not a triumph for the humanists in the labour markets but neither an obstacle. The different skills Carver lists to be important in working life are quite similar to the ones that came up also in Tynjälä et al's (2004) and Mäkinen's (2004) studies. As the most important social skills he lists flexibility, adaptation and teamwork skills. The communication skills are divided into communication in one's mother tongue, performance skills and communication in foreign languages. Of the general working life skills Carver (2006: 62-63) lists ability to work independently, ability to learn, problem-solving skills, creative thinking, project management skills and leading skills. The most important technical skill is computer skills and the business skills include an economic way of thinking and the ability to market.

In conclusion, when considering all the different studies, the most important qualifications and competencies the students will need in their future working life are different social and communication skills. In the present study communication skills were also rated to be the most important factor. Social skills as a group was not one of the given alternatives, but flexibility, team working skills and performing skills were mentioned and they all were also rated quite high among the different qualifications and competencies.

6.4 The studies' working life relevance

The purpose of the final section of the questionnaire was to find out what the students thought about the relevance of their studies when considering their future working life. They were first asked to rate the listed study modules in regard of how important they thought them to be in getting a job and doing well in the working life. Figure 11 shows the students' perceptions of the importance of the different study modules when considering the working life. Workplace learning was rated to be the most important. As many as 69 % of the respondents had chosen it to be very important and only 7 % not very important. This is a bit surprising when considering the results from the previous question where work experience was not regarded very highly among the qualifications and competencies needed in the working life. It seems that even though the respondents regarded so many skills to be more important when considering their future employment, from the study modules workplace learning is linked easiest to these skills. Most of the highly rated qualifications and competencies are something that are learned through university studies and cannot be taught separately. This is why associating them with certain courses is not easy.

Communication courses were seen as second most important when considering their working life relevance with 61 % of the respondents rating them very important. Pedagogical studies, in other words Teacher Training, came third in the very important scale but also as many as 23 % of the respondents had rated them not very important. Pedagogical studies are compulsory for future teachers and their purpose is to teach the students the required skills needed to work as a teacher and they include also workplace learning periods. For some reason many of the students had not seen the working life relevance of these studies to be very high.

The least important study entities when considering their working life relevance were seen to be literature courses, and Proseminar and Pro Gradu thesis. Thesis writing is directly related to working life mainly with researchers only and since the number of future researchers is probably quite small within the research material the small number (13 %) of respondents rating it very important seems reasonable. The working life relevance of the literature courses was also seen to be very low since almost half (42 %) of the respondents had rated them not very important when considering their future employment.

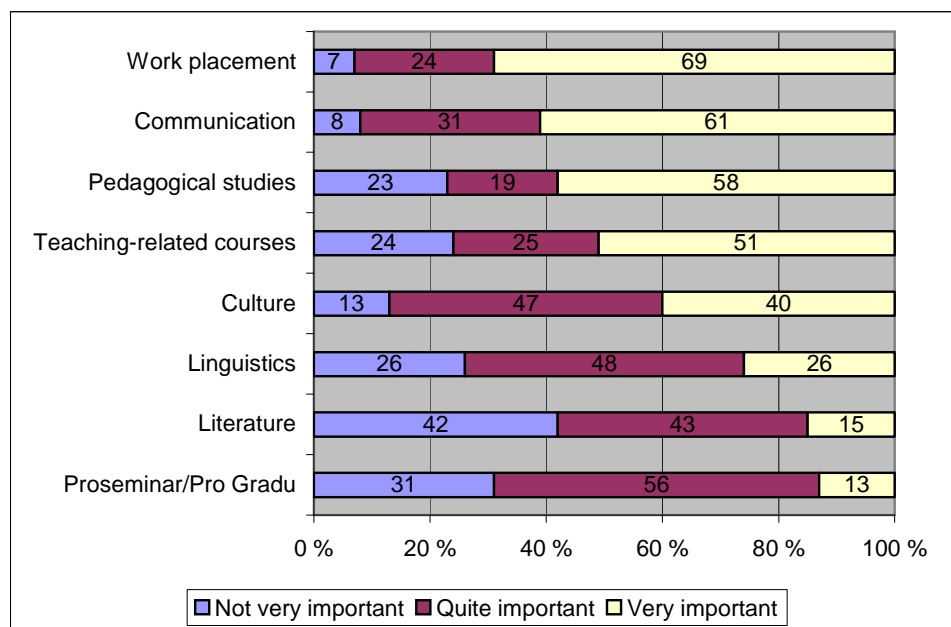


Figure 11. The perceptions about the importance of different study modules when considering the working life.

When comparing the perceived importance to the enrolment year in the university there could be found some differences within the research material (see Table 8). In general, the students who had spend only a little time in the university regarded their studies more important than students who already had longer experience of university studies. For example, when looking into the perceived importance of communication courses students who had started their studies in the years 2008 and 2007 had rated them significantly higher than the rest of the research

material. The same kind of pattern could be found when examining the perceived importance of workplace learning (see Table 9). Again, the first and second year students rated the importance of it higher. However, also students who had studied in the university the longest valued workplace learning quite high.

Table 8. The importance of communication courses in regard of working life divided into the year of enrolment in the University of Jyväskylä.

($P = 0,002$, 22 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003 or earlier	Total
	66	65	70	58	55	54	368
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not very important	0	2	7	12	14	13	8
Quite important	26	21	42	35	31	33	31
Very important	74	77	51	53	55	54	61
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 9. The importance of workplace learning in regard of working life divided into the year of enrolment in the University of Jyväskylä.

($P = 0,154$, 33 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003 or earlier	Total
	66	65	70	58	55	54	368
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not very important	0	6	11	7	15	4	7
Quite important	23	22	25	29	23	24	24
Very important	77	72	64	64	62	72	69
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

With Proseminar and Pro Gradu the same trend existed as well. As many as 23 % of the first year students rated it very important in regard to their future working life, while only 2 % of the students who had started in the year 2003

or earlier thought the same. Of course, none of the first year students have really done either of the theses so their perceptions are based only on their image on the usefulness of thesis writing rather than on first-hand experience, while the situation is practically the opposite with the students who have studied at the university the longest.

There were also some differences among the research material when comparing the perceived importance of the studies with the major subject. In Figure 12 it can be seen that the pedagogical studies divided the responses the most. The least important they were seen among the Russian language and culture and Romance philology majors. Of the former 43 % had rated pedagogical studies not very important and only 36 % very important. The respective numbers with the latter were 38 % and 33 %. Pedagogical studies were appreciated the most by Finnish sign language and Finnish majors. According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are very significant. The criteria for the test are fulfilled so these results can be treated as reliable. Quite interestingly these results match quite clearly to the percentage of different major subject students who had done the pedagogical studies. The Finnish majors had scored highest (49 %) percentage of these and the Finnish sign language majors the second highest (42 %). Pedagogical studies are relevant for the most part only to future teachers so the matching numbers are not a wonder. However, it also seems that students who have done the pedagogical studies are in general pleased with them and feel that they are relevant when thinking about their future working life.

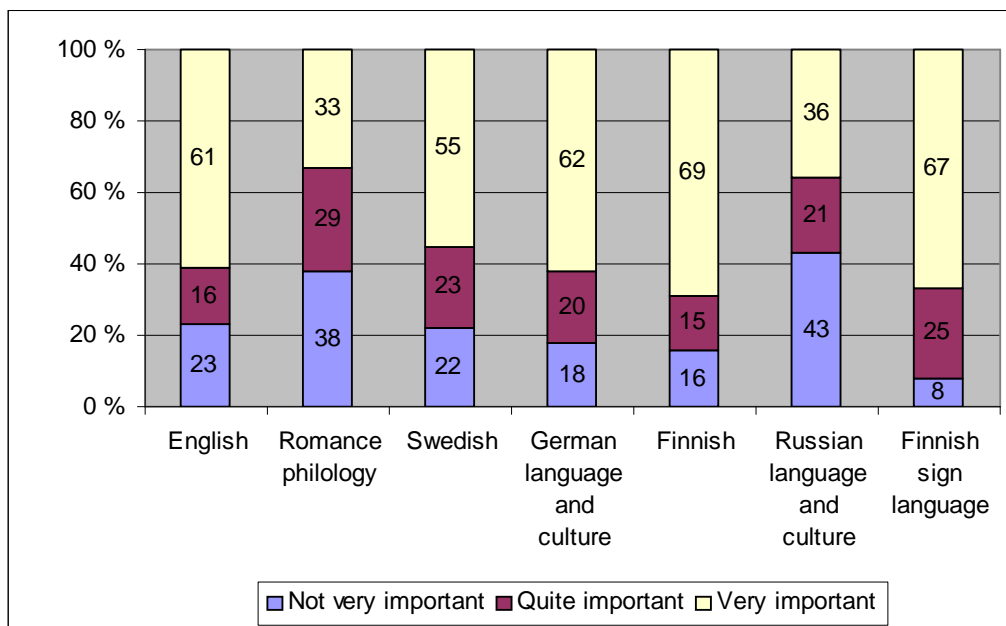


Figure 12. The importance of pedagogical studies in regard of working life divided into the major subject.

($P = 0,070$, 19 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

Furthermore, the option Proseminar and Pro Gradu divided the opinion also among different major subjects. None of the Romance philology majors thought them to be very important when considering their future employment and only 9 % of the English majors and 10 % of the Swedish majors had chosen this option. However, a third of the Finnish sign language majors thought thesis writing was very important for their future employment and of the Russian language and culture and German language and culture majors 21 % of both shared this opinion.

The respondents were also asked that had they felt that their studies prepare them sufficiently for working life. In Figure 13. the perceived working life relevance of the studies is divided according to the age of the respondents. It seems that the opinions about the studies relevance vary only slightly within the different age groups. A slight increase in the number of students not appreciating their studies' working life relevance at all seems to occur the older they get. However, in the oldest group no one had chosen the *not at all* alternative, but on the other hand none of them had chosen the *very much* alternative either. According to the Pearson Chi-Square test, the differences are statistically very significant, but one should treat these results with reservation since the criteria for the test are not fulfilled.

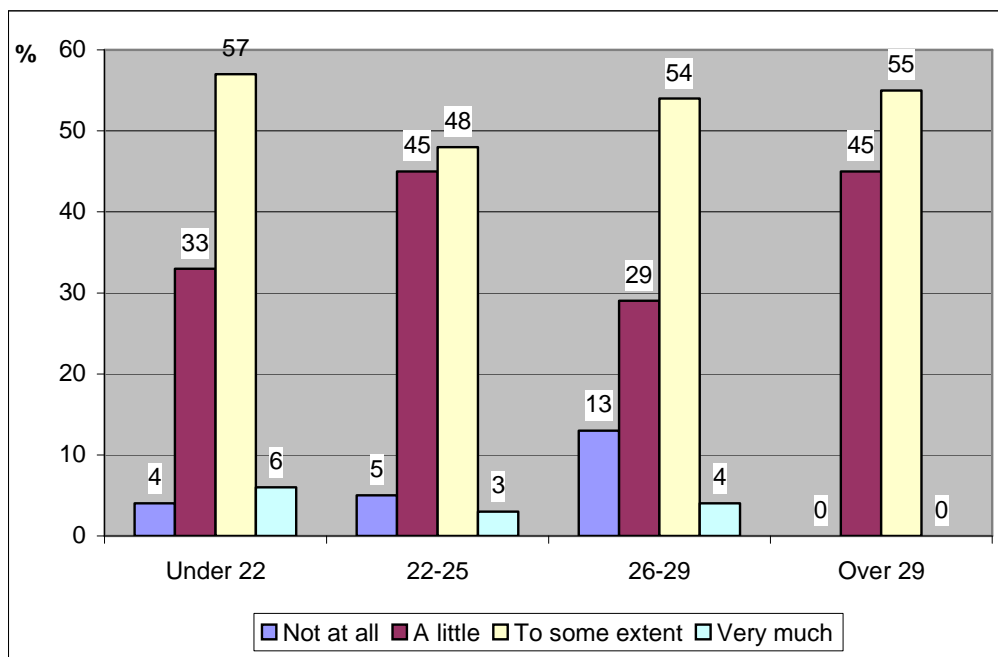


Figure 13. The perceived working life relevance of studies compared to age.
($P = 0,083$, 31 % of the cells have expected count less than 5)

A good insight whether the students' perceptions about the working life relevance of their studies is correct or not is given when the results of the present study are compared to the results of Tynjälä et al.'s (2006) study on the university graduates. They (2006: 80-81) asked the respondents where they had learned the skills needed in their jobs. Only 14 % replied that they had learned the skills required during their university studies and the majority (64 %) of them were learned not until entering the working life. This result does not significantly differ from the present study's result of 44 % of the respondents not being satisfied with their studies working life relevance. The skills learned at university were mainly the mastery of domain knowledge and theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, skills of acquiring, using and critically analysing knowledge were mentioned. The main defects of university education were seen in the uselessness or lack of certain courses. In addition, some saw that the contents of the courses had been outdated in relation to working life developments and that social skills and customer service were not paid enough attention to. Some also thought that the university studies are based on too

much theory and not enough practice. This information is very interesting when considering the students' perceptions in the present study of which direction the studies should be developed into.

To map out the students' perceptions in the present study of how the studies could be made to correspond better the needs of working life they were asked to rate whether they agreed with the suggested development ideas or not. In Figure 14 it can be seen that the ideas that were agreed with the most were *more practice* and *better workplace learning opportunities*, with which 69 % and 66 % of the respondents agreeing respectively. The alternatives that were the least agreed with were *more theory* with 81 % of the respondents disagreeing and *more compulsory courses* with 73 % of the respondents disagreeing with the statement. *Communication skills* were also quite highly regarded almost half (47 %) of the respondents agreeing with the statement and almost the same amount (43 %) slightly agreeing.

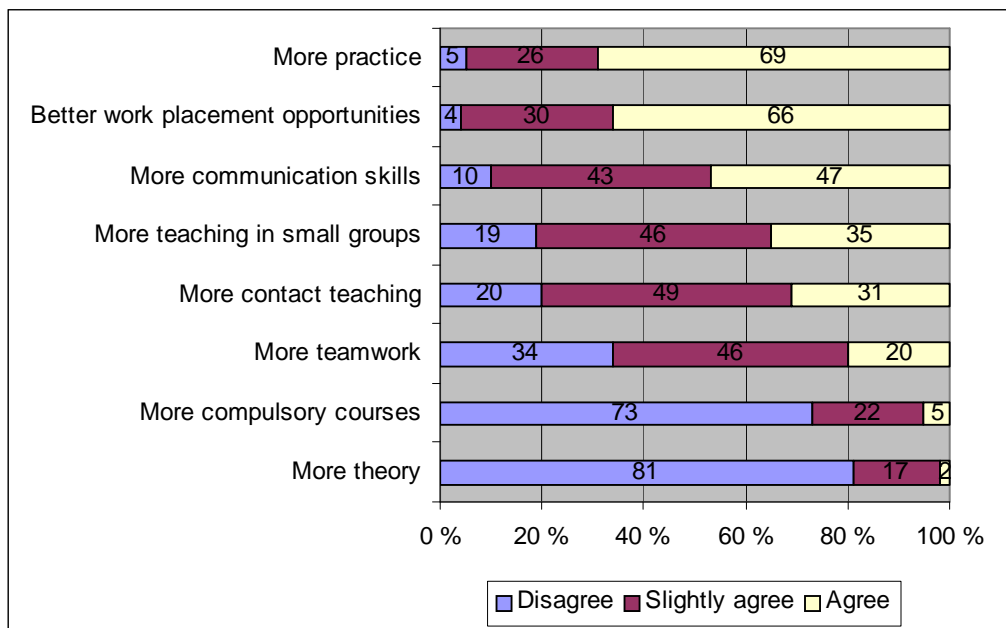


Figure 14. The students' perceptions which way the studies should be developed.

It seems that the students want the university studies to be less theoretical and much more practically oriented. Wanting better workplace learning

opportunities also speaks for this. The theoretical part of the studies is usually seen as the base for creating expertise, which is the main purpose of humanistic studies as Carver (2006: 32) states. Moreover, one of the aims in the Department of Languages in the University of Jyväskylä is to educate experts in communication and culture (University of Jyväskylä). However, it is many times difficult to see the working life relevance of the expertise skills and probably this is why they are not so highly regarded by the students.

Mäkinen (2004: 68-71) also asked in her study about the students' perceptions of the usefulness of their studies in the working life and she found out that less than half of the interviewed students thought that the working life relevance of their studies was sufficient or fairly sufficient. The main problems were seen to be the lack of practical training, too theory-oriented studies, lack of elective studies and the absence of working life contacts, quite similarly to results of the present study.

Furthermore, Mäkinen (2006: 96-104) asked the students how well they thought that their studies prepared them for working life. In the humanities only a little more than fifth of the students had mandatory workplace training included in their studies. From all the disciplines, this was clearly the second lowest result, the faculty of law being the lowest. A connection between the lack of workplace training and the satisfaction to one's possibilities to develop their working life skills through studies can clearly be seen in the answers to the question about the possibilities for development. Over half (52 %) of the students in the humanities were dissatisfied with the way they could develop their skills needed in the working life through their studies. These results and the students' answers (Mäkinen 2006: 96-97, 102-103) show that in general the students think that practical training is essential in developing the skills needed in the working life.

In Tarkkinen and Vahtikari's (2000: 6-8) study a student who had majored in English language translation and interpretation explained that in addition to the major subject, the most important aspect in being employed was the job experience in her own field acquired during the studies. She adds that also other types of work experience were considered surprisingly relevant on the job markets. Succeeding in the job also requires that one knows how to collect and process information. According to her, it is not so important which languages you study, but to have studies from many different fields. Knowledge of different fields also enables working in many other professions. Also another student who had majored in

Russian language translation and interpretation talks about this multidisciplinary. She works as a journalist even though she never really studied journalism. She explains how humanists should believe more in themselves and their studies, study a wide range of subjects and try employing themselves also in untraditional professions (Tarkkinen and Vahtikari 2000: 8-11).

According to Autio (2001: 36), the basic mission of the humanistic studies is to create versatile and multidisciplinary degrees. The studies are supposed to develop the students' skills to perceive vast entities and to be able to collect, handle and analyze information. Flexibility and responsibility are also emphasized. Many times the degrees offer a strong all-round education but not specific skills to a certain profession. Autio (2001:36) points out the criticism showed towards humanistic education, which is thought to be too theoretical and lacking the practical skills needed in the working life. She (2001: 38) continues that the graduates from the language department thought that the most important thing the studies offered them was the language skills they developed. Other positive things when considering working life were said to be grammar, pronunciation and translation skills as well as cultural knowledge of the languages. Some negative attention got the lack of business life orientation of the studies. The taught language skills should be more versatile and especially oral skills would need more attention. Furthermore, the lack of computer and other technical studies was thought to be problematic when considering the future employment.

Autio (2001: 45) also asked some development ideas from the respondents. The general idea that came up from the responses was that the language degrees prepared the students only to teachers or researchers. With those skills the graduates were not strong applicants in the business environment. Technical communication, translation and information skills were mentioned. The respondents wanted also closer relations to the working life already during their studies for example in the forms of seminars, introductions and co-operation projects. The students should be involved more in the university's own research projects and there should be courses where the students would be able to do translation tasks to external employers. The practicality of the studies should be realized by teaching more technical skills, such as computer, administrative and economic skills, as well as performing skills and oral and written communication. Furthermore, Autio (2001: 46) concludes from the results that more co-operation between the different faculties

would make the integration of the studies easier and the degrees would become more versatile. Some also thought that an obligatory training period abroad would be essential in enhancing the language skills, especially the lacking oral skills, and cultural knowledge.

All in all, the previous studies show that the students and graduates think that their studies should be more closely linked to the working life. Even though the purpose of humanistic studies is to create experts with strong theoretical knowledge of their field the respondents wanted the studies to be more practically oriented. These results are consistent with the findings in the present study. The vast contrast between the respondents wanting more practice and less theory in their studies speaks for the same development ideas found in all the studies.

7 Discussion and conclusion

The quickly changing labour markets have also led to development in the higher education. However, the changes in the academic labour markets have been so fast and drastic that it has been increasingly difficult for higher education institutions to keep up with them. The fact that higher education has become something that anyone can have has led to overeducation and in its part increased the pressure posed on higher education and on the employability of the graduates. The different qualifications and competencies the students will need in their future working life are something that the higher education should provide for them. Of course the final skills are learned after graduation but the core foundation for them should be created in their degree programmes.

The aim of this study was to find out what kind of career expectations the students majoring in languages in the University of Jyväskylä have. In order to do this the study was divided into four different themes each concerning one of the posed research questions. The research data was collected with a questionnaire sent via e-mail to all students studying in the Department of Languages. This data was analysed quantitatively with SPSS 16 for Windows.

The first theme dealt with the expectations the students had had of their studies before entering the university and how well these expectations had realised during that time they had spent doing their studies. The most important reasons why the students had chosen their current degree programmes were interest toward the field, and the desire to have a degree and a profession. The least important aspects were rated to be friends in the same field and parents' recommendations. In light of these results it seems that the respondents had made their choice of degree programme according to their own perceptions and had not let outside sources affect their decision. It can also be said that the respondents had valued the expertise skills the programmes offer more than concrete job opportunities, such as secure employment and a well-paid job. This is a good thing since the purpose of humanistic language studies is to create experts of languages and communication and these are also the aims of the Department of Languages in the University of

Jyväskylä. At least these results show that the students have had quite realistic expectations of their studies in the university.

The majority of the respondents were content or fairly content with their degree programme and this held true also with the realization of the first choice of study. The matching of these two results makes them quite trustworthy since it seems obvious that people whose first choice of study has realised are also content with their current degree programme. However, many more people than who were discontent with their current programme had replied that they would change their degree programme if possible. There are a number of factors explaining this result. For example, the students might have a desire to be in a degree programme that they do not have realistic chances of getting in. This is why they have not even hoped for getting into this programme but have put more emphasis on securing a place of study and getting a degree. It is also quite common for people to want things they do not have or do not possess any first-hand experience.

The second theme discussed the formation of the students' occupational image. Half of the students had a clear idea about their future employment and the profession mentioned most often was teacher. Other professions mentioned were, for example, translator, journalist, interpreter and a job in the international field but none of the other professions came even close to the frequency of teacher or teacher related professions. The problem with language studies in universities have been that defining any other profession they prepare the students for than teacher is quite difficult. However, there are many things that language experts can do besides teaching. The traditional profession of a researcher is related to be only for the very few but these days language expertise can be made use of in many ways in the business life as well. The only problem is that most of the students studying languages are not aware of the versatile job opportunities there are for them and this is why they many times study without a certain goal.

Over half of the respondents were worried or quite worried about their future employment. This number seems quite high. One reason for this can be the unfocusedness of the studies. Without having a clear idea of the future profession, it is more common to be worried about having a job at all in the future. Another reason for feeling uncertain about the employment opportunities is the current economic situation. During recent years the unemployment numbers have soared and now at

the age of mass education there are more and more people striving for the academic professions.

Of the study entities the ones that had had the most impact on the respondents' image about their future employment were major and minor studies. The least impact was rated for student exchange. The most conflicting results received workplace learning, which was rated highly influential by some and not at all influential by others. It is quite difficult to draw any conclusions why the opinions differ so significantly, but as stated earlier it seems that for some students workplace learning has been an enlightening experience and for some not. It can be that some of the students have had so strong opinions about their future employment that workplace learning has had no impact on them.

In order to get some ideas of how the students could get more information about their future employment and that way create a more accurate occupational image they were asked from where they had received information about their future employment possibilities. The best information sources were mentioned to be fellow students and staff tutoring while the least effective were employment office, teachers and other personnel in the department. Staff tutoring is a fairly new concept in the University of Jyväskylä but it seems to have gained its popularity among the students. Unfortunately, the majority of staff tutoring is given only during the first year of studies, while the occupational image continues to develop during the entire time of the studies. Many times questions about employment arise only in the later stage of studies and developing staff tutoring to respond also to this need would be essential.

The third theme dealt with the qualifications and competencies important in the students' future employment. Many times the students do not have much work experience and they do not have first-hand experience of what the working life actually requires from them. It was interesting to see what the students answered to this question and to compare the results with previous studies about students as well as the already graduated. The aspects that the respondents thought to be important in their future employment enhance their motivation to learn them and furthermore, the results should portray themselves also from the development ideas the students had for their studies.

In this study the most important qualifications and competencies needed in the working life were rated to be communication skills and motivation.

Also stress control, flexibility and perseverance received a high score. The least important skills were thought to be computer skills and work experience in general. Furthermore, work experience from the domain got a relatively low score as well. In Mäkinen's study (2004) the students were also asked to rate the most important skills needed in the working life and they chose, for example, good knowledge of the domain and written communication skills. Again, work experience was not included in the most important alternatives. However, when comparing the results of Taurianen's (2002) and Juuti's (2003) studies, which were done with graduated students, the most conflicting entity is work experience. The graduated students who already had experience from working life had in both studies rated work experience to be the single most important aspect when they had received a job. The only way to include work experience more effectively in the language studies is to create more possibilities for workplace learning. This would also be the best opportunity for students to acquire work experience from their own field.

The final section of the study concentrated on the working life relevance of the language studies. These aspects are important when considering the students' employability. After all, the purpose of university studies is to give the students good prospects to succeed in working life.

The study module rated to be the most important when considering working life was workplace learning. Almost as important were communication courses and also pedagogical studies were valued quite high. The least important were listed to be literature courses, and Pro seminar and Pro Gradu. This seems a somewhat conflicting result with the perceived most important qualifications and competencies where work experience was not valued high. However, the only study modules that could be linked directly to the given list of qualifications and competencies are workplace learning and communication courses. Probably this is why it is easiest to associate them with being the most working life relevant study modules. Furthermore, as already stated, most of the other listed skills are not something that cannot be taught separately but are learned through university studies. The reasons why literature courses and thesis writing are perceived to have the least working life relevance can be many. Usually thesis writing is directly connected only to the profession of a researcher and there are not many places available for academic language researchers. Moreover, the concrete knowledge learned from literary courses is very difficult to exploit in the working life, but other skills that are

learned through these courses, such as critical thinking, are, on the other hand, very useful when being employed.

Even though the students had difficulty to see the working life relevance of many study modules, over half of the respondents were quite or very satisfied with the working life skills their studies provided for them. This is quite a good result but of course it could be better when considering the purpose of university studies. The direction to which the studies should be developed was basically more practicality and less theory. Since the purpose of humanistic studies is to create experts and this is realised through learning the theoretical knowledge of the domain, the concentration on theory is therefore justified. Whether this goal is still valid when considering the employability of language graduates can be debated.

When comparing the most valued qualifications and competencies to the studies' development ideas, workplace learning gives yet again some conflicting results. Enhancing workplace learning opportunities was agreed the second most often of the given development ideas. The students' strong opinion about less theory and obligatory courses, however, is quite consistent since theoretical and domain knowledge as well as general education were not rated high among the most important qualifications and competencies needed in the working life. It is true that a good way to increase the practicality of the studies is emphasizing the workplace learning opportunities. Another way is to include more practical aspects to the courses, such as concrete working life tasks and case studies.

The questionnaire included also some background questions in order to find out how comprehensive the research material was. The background variables can also be used to portray the differences existing within the research material. In some cases very interesting results could be found. When comparing the students who had taken Teacher Education as minor subject to their perceptions about their future employment it could be seen that they were less worried about their future employment and had a much clearer idea about their future profession than the research material in general. It goes without saying that the profession mentioned was teacher and that employment opportunities for teachers are quite good at the moment. Another interesting finding was that it appears that the less time the students had been in the university the more they appreciated their studies in terms of their working life relevance. It seems that the students' anticipatory expectations are that language studies in the university prepare them well for working life.

Unfortunately, when the students have more experience of the studies these expectations decrease.

When considering the purpose of university studies it is important that they prepare the students well for the working life. The development in the academic working life has been fast and the quickly changing labour markets have also affected to the ways and places of learning. Boulton-Lewis et al. (2006: 158) say that learning is easiest when experienced in the context where it will be used although learning can also take place as a part of doing a job, and that it should not be forgotten that a formal university degree is many times a prerequisite for a job no matter what skills the worker already possesses. Acknowledging these facts is essential in making higher education correspond better to the needs of working life. According to the responses from the higher education graduates who have already entered the labour markets, teaching should be more closely linked to the business life (e.g. Juuti 2003:50, Tauriainen 2002: 84) but this should be done without compromising the objectivity of higher education.

In order to develop university studies the requirements of working life must be listened to but also the opinions of the students should be recognised. Employers know what they need from their employees but the ones closest to education are the students themselves. In this study the students' opinions were that more practicality should be included in the studies. The majority of them also wanted more contact teaching. Even though the new technologies enable many ways of distant learning, which makes learning free of place and time constraints, the students still value face-to-face contact with an expert of their field. Of course money becomes an issue here, but even though when higher education should be available for everyone attention must be put on quality, not solely on quantity.

All in all, this study gave some interesting information about the career expectations of the students majoring in languages in the University of Jyväskylä. Since there has never been done this type of study using the students majoring in languages as research population, the results of this study are important if the employability of language graduates is hoped to be made better. The results also indicate how the studies could be developed into a more working life relevant direction.

The most important factors influencing reliability of the study are the quality of the questionnaire, the way of its distribution and the chosen research

population. The posed questions seemed to be formulated well, since no evidence of major misunderstandings could be found. The only problems seemed to be that the respondents should have been stated more clearly that they could have chosen many alternatives as their background education. It is not certain whether all of the respondents realised this option. However, the majority of the students still come to university directly from the upper secondary school so given the fact that 95 % of the respondents had chosen this option seems quite trustworthy. Another problem was that if the respondents chose the alternative that they already had a clear idea about their future profession or professional field it was not compulsory to specify what they had in their mind. This resulted to the fact that only 58 % of the respondents who had chosen this option had specified the certain profession or professional field.

The questionnaire was distributed via e-mail by using the mailing lists the university has for each programme. It is not compulsory for the students to join these mailing lists but in reality practically all students choose to do so. When considering this it can be said that the questionnaire did reach the entire research population.

The most questionable factor is the research population itself. It can be argued that university students are not able to estimate what the working life really expects from them and, for example, developing the studies more according to their wishes could be disastrous since they have so little first-hand experience of working life and to what their studies should prepare them for. Furthermore, when comparing the results from the studies done on students to the studies done on graduates there can be seen some clear differences in the respondents' perceptions. However, the purpose of this study was to find out about the students' career expectations, and therefore it is not expected that the results should be closely linked to the actual reality. If it is found out that the students expectation about their future employment do not meet with the reality they will be facing after graduation it is essential to develop the studies in a way that these false expectations are not created. Even though the students' development ideas for their studies should be treated with some reservation, they do have, however, valuable first-hand experience of the usefulness of the studies and it should not be disregarded. Thus, using this research population is well justified.

Even though the response rate of this study was fairly good some further research should be done to ensure the accuracy of the results. Furthermore,

career expectations of the language students are bound to change over time as well as the working life's requirements for the studies. A second data collection would also be necessary so that any development in the students' perceptions could be examined. It would also be very interesting to be able to compare the results from this study to the results of same kind of study done on students who have already graduated from the Department of Languages. This could either be done with a different research population or, if waiting for a few years, with the same population, and thus making the results entirely comparable. Valuable results would be gained also if using another department in the University of Jyväskylä as a research population. The field of research in the relationship between higher education and working life is vast and current information about it is always needed.

In the age of mass higher education, continuous development of the studies is essential in securing the students' employability. The focus is on developing the theory-oriented higher education so that it would be more practical. One step towards this was the establishment of the polytechnics but now even universities have realised how important the practicality and working life connections are. The future experts created by higher education need to be able to work in many different professions. Continuous learning and learning how to learn are important skills in staying competitive in the labour markets. The question only is how much should higher education react to the changing needs of working life so that the academic freedom and the objectivity of research are not jeopardised.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1. Sukupuolesi

- Mies
- Nainen

2. Ikä

- Alle 22
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30-34
- Yli 34

3. Aikaisempi koulutus

- Ylioppilas
- Ammattikoulu
- Ammattikorkeakoulu
- Yliopisto

4. Aloitusvuosi Jyväskylän yliopistossa

- 2009
- 2008
- 2007
- 2006
- 2005
- 2004
- 2003 tai aikaisemmin

5. Pääaine

- Englannin kieli
- Latinan kieli
- Romaaninen filologia
- Ruotsin kieli
- Saksan kieli ja kulttuuri
- Suomen kieli
- Venäjän kieli ja kulttuuri
- Suomalainen viittomakieli

6. Olen suorittanut sivuaineita seuraavista laitoksista:

- Historian ja etnologian laitos
- Kielten laitos
- Musiikin laitos
- Taiteiden ja kulttuurin tutkimuksen laitos
- Viestintätieteiden laitos
- Tietojenkäsittelytieteiden laitos (TKTL)
- Tietotekniikan laitos (TTL)
- Kasvatustieteiden laitos
- Opettajankoulutuslaitos
- Liikuntatieteiden laitos
- Terveystieteiden laitos
- Liikuntabiologian laitos
- Bio- ja ympäristötieteiden laitos
- Fysiikan laitos
- Kemian laitos
- Matematiikan ja tilastotieteen laitos
- Kansantaloustiede
- Yrityksen taloustiede
- Psykologian laitos

Yhteiskuntatieteiden ja filosofian laitos

Muu, mikä?

Seuraavat väittämät pitävät paikkaansa kohdallasi: Ei lainkaan/melko vähän/melko paljon/erittäin paljon

7. Miksi hait pääaineeseesi?

	Ei lainkaan	Melko vähän	Melko paljon	Erittäin paljon
Halusin ammatin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiede kiinnosti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kinnostava ala	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hyvin palkattu työ tulevaisuudessa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Koulutus sinänsä	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turvattu työpaikka	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sivistyminen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tutkinnon hankkiminen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ystävänikin valitsi tämän alan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vanhempani suosittelivat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opiskelupaikan läheinen sijainti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jyväskylä opiskelupaikkakuntana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jyväskylän yliopisto opiskelupaikkana	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mahdollisuus muuttaa pois kotipaikkakunnalta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Odotukset mielenkiintoisesta opiskelijaelämästä	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Ei lainkaan	Melko vähän	Melko paljon	Erittäin paljon
8. Tunnen olevani oikeassa ohjelmassa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Ensisijainen opiskelutoiveeni toteutui hyvin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Jos saisin muuttaa pääainettani, todennäköisesti tekisin sen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Ei	Jonkinlainen kuva	Tietty ammatti tai ammattiala
11. Onko sinulla tässä vaiheessa mielessäsi jokin ammatti tai ammattiala, joihin toivot omien opintojesi johtavan?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Mikä ammatti?

	En lainkaan	Melko vähän	Melko paljon	Erittäin paljon
12. Oletko huolissasi työllistymisestä?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Ovatko tähän asti suorittamasi opinnot vaikuttaneet mielikuvaasi työllistymisestä?

(Jätä kohta tyhjäksi, jos vaihtoehto ei ole kuulunut opintoihisi).

	Ei lainkaan	Melko vähän	Melko paljon	Erittäin paljon
Pääaineopinnot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sivuaineopinnot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Työharjoittelu	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opiskelijavaihto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Miltä tahoilta olet saanut tietoa kielten laitokselta valmistuneiden maistereiden työllistymismahdollisuuksista?

	En ollenkaan	Jonkin verran	Riittävästi
Opettajatuutorointi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opettajat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laitoksen muu henkilökunta	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ura- ja rekrytointipalvelut	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opiskelutoverit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Työvoimatoimisto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Media (esim. sanomalehdet, internet)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Muu taho, mikä?

15. Arvioi kuinka olennaisia seuraavat ominaisuudet ja valmiudet ovat työllistymisessäsi.

	Ei juurikaan tärkeää	Melko tärkeä	Erittäin tärkeä
Alakohtainen ja teoreettinen tieto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiedonhankinta ja käyttö	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tutkinnon tuoma muodollinen pätevyys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yleissivistys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Itsenäisen työskentelyn taidot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pitkäjänteisyys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motivaatio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joustavuus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stressinsietokyky	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kommunikaatiotaidot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiimityöskentelytaidot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Esiintymistaidot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovatiivisuus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Atk-taidot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alakohtainen työkokemus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Työkokemus yleensä	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Henkilökohtaiset ominaisuudet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suhteet työnantajiin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Kuinka tärkeiksi työllistymisen ja työelämässä pärjäämisen kannalta koet seuraavat opintoihin liittyvät kokonaisuudet?

	Ei juurikaan tärkeä	Melko tärkeä	Erittäin tärkeä
Viestintä- ja kielitaitokurssit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kirjallisuuskurssit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kulttuurikurssit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kielitiedekurssit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opettajuuteen liittyvät kurssit kielten laitoksella	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pedagogiset opinnot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työharjoittelu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proseminaari/gradu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	En lainkaan	Melko vähän	Melko paljon	Erittäin paljon
17. Koetko, että koulutuksestasi saa riittävästi valmiuksia työelämää varten?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Mihin suuntaan opintoja mielestäsi tulisi kehittää?

	Ei juurikaan samaa mieltä	Jonkin verran samaa mieltä	Samaa mieltä
Enemmän kontaktiopetusta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enemmän pienryhmäopetusta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enemmän teoriapainotteisuutta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enemmän käytännönläheisyyttä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Työharjoittelumahdollisuuksia tulisi korostaa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enemmän viestintätaitoja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enemmän ryhmätyöskentelyä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enemmän pakollisia kursseja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>