

**“MÄ NAUTIN SIITÄ VAPAUESTA MIKÄ MEILLÄ ON” –
LANGUAGE TEACHING IN UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

A Master's Thesis

Mika Aromäki

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Languages

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Vieraiden kielten opetus suomalaisissa ammattikorkeakouluissa (AMK) on tiettyjen erityispiirteidensä vuoksi jossain määrin ainutlaatuisista rinnastettuna kielten opiskeluun muissa suomalaisissa oppilaitoksissa. Näitä erityispiirteitä ovat mm. opetussuunnitelmien yleisluonteisuus ja opettajien vapaus kurssien toteuttamisessa. Tämän tutkimuksen prioriteettina oli selvittää ammattikorkeakoulujen kielten opettajien näkemyksiä työstään liittyen esim. siihen, miten edellä mainittu vapaus koetaan, sekä mitä keinoja opettajat käyttävät tarjotakseen vaatimukset täyttävää opetusta eri alojen opiskelijoille. Opettajia pyydettiin myös kertomaan mitä ammatillisesti suuntautunut kielten opiskelu heidän mielestään tarkoittaa ammattikorkeakoulun kontekstissa. Lisäksi tutkimukseen kerättiin AMK-opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia kieliopinnoistaan ammattikorkeakoulussa liittyen pääasiassa siihen, onko heidän vastaanottamansa opetus vastannut heidän mielestään sille asetettuja tavoitteita.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu eurooppalaisen korkeakoulutuksen sekä suomalaisen AMK-pedagogiikan periaatteista ja ammatillisesti suuntautuneen kielten opiskelun ominaispiirteistä. Samankaltaisilla painotuksilla toteutettua aiempaa tutkimusta aiheesta ei ollut löydettävissä. Työ on monimetoditutkimus, jossa on hyödynnetty sekä laadullisen että määrällisen tutkimuksen teoriapohjaa. Aineisto kerättiin opettajien osalta puolistrukturoidun teemahaastattelun keinoin kahdessa kolmen opettajan ryhmässä ja opiskelijoiden osalta sähköisen kyselylomakkeen kautta, johon saatiin kriteerit täyttäviä vastauksia yhteensä 163 kappaletta. Kaikki tutkimuksen osallistujat tulivat samasta oppilaitoksesta.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että opettajat nauttivat työnsä luonteesta ja arvostivat vapauttaan kurssien toteuttamisessa. Kurssisuunnittelussa käyttämistään keinoista opettajat mainitsivat mm. alalta mahdollisesti julkaistujen oppikirjojen tarkastelun, tiedon etsimisen internetistä sekä kollegoiden tuen. Opettajat kokivat, että painoarvo kielten opiskelulla ammattikorkeakoulussa on elinikäistä oppimista tukevien taitojen vahvistamisella. Opiskelijat puolestaan olivat pääosin tyytyväisiä saamaansa kielten opetukseen. Joidenkin opiskelijoiden vastauksissa nousi esiin toive enemmän ammattisanaston painottamiselle opiskelussa. Kehitystoiveina opiskelijat mainitsivat myös mm. alakohtaiset opetusryhmät sekä opiskelijoiden lähtötason yhtenäistämisen esim. valmennuskurssien keinoin. Nämä kohdat nousivat esiin myös opettajien vastauksissa.</p>	
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INTRODUCTION

Universities of applied sciences in Finland were first introduced as a part of the higher education field as recently as in 1991, when 22 institutions received a trial license to provide tertiary education in vocational subjects. The concept of such institutions is somewhat unique, although similar institutions can be found in some other countries as well. The mission of scientific universities has traditionally been to conduct research and provide teaching based on it, whereas universities of applied sciences aim to “train professionals in response to labour market needs and conduct R&D (research and development) which supports instruction and promotes regional development in particular” (OKM 2013). Universities of applied sciences in Finland were created due to changes in society and working life and the resulting increase in the variety of skills required by workers in their respective occupations (Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 22). Originally the English name for the institutions in Finland was polytechnics, which is the name they are still better known by internationally. However, many have since adopted the name university of applied sciences. (OKM 2014).

Since the inception of universities of applied sciences, their operation has been regulated by both Finnish and international authorities. The Finnish law includes a number of decrees on how teaching should be organized in universities of applied sciences, but the institutions have also committed to certain international guidelines and regulations, e.g. as established by the Council of Europe (2003) and in the Bologna Declaration (OKM 2013). In fact, internationality has become one of the paramount values for Finnish universities of applied sciences as well as for tertiary education across Europe. The Common European Framework of Reference, drawn up by the Council of Europe (2003), and the Bologna Declaration, a treaty originally signed by the ministers of education of 29 European countries in June 1999 aiming for a common European higher education area (OKM 2013), place a particular emphasis on the role of foreign language skills and intercultural competence and thus foreign language teaching in institutions of higher education across Europe, and Finnish universities of applied sciences are no exception. Therefore, it could be argued that language teachers have a special responsibility in the institutions’ efforts to maintain an international outlook. It is also fair to say that the role of the English language in all this is especially important, as it is the lingua franca for most international communication in the modern world. This is largely due to certain historical developments that are explained in more detail in chapter 2.1.

In this study, the work of language teachers in a Finnish university of applied sciences will be examined concerning the ways they work to provide their students with teaching that is in line with the legislation and guidelines set for it on both domestic and international levels. Even though the special status of English language was highlighted earlier, the focus of the present study is not solely on English, as the aim was to have as broad a perspective on the subject matter as possible. The students' point of view will also be introduced in relation to their experiences as to whether the teaching they have received has matched the aforementioned regulations. Although previous research has been conducted concerning language teaching in universities of applied sciences and in particular about students' thoughts on language studies in these institutions (e.g. Juurakko-Paavola 2009, Huovinen and Rusanen 1996), no studies have been made that had similar points of focus to the ones described above. Therefore, the results of the present study can be considered somewhat innovative.

The framework within which foreign language teaching in Finnish universities of applied sciences is set will be described first. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the concept of vocationally oriented language learning, which is the type of language studying that takes place in universities of applied sciences, and matters related to it. The third chapter of this thesis contains the research questions of the present study and a thorough account of the methods used for data collection and analysis. The fourth and fifth chapters focus on reporting the contributions of both the teacher and student participants of this study. After the results have been analysed they will be discussed in length and finally, a conclusion of the main points of this thesis is presented.

1 FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES – NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Legislation concerning language studies in universities of applied sciences

From here on, the term polytechnic will mostly be used to refer to universities of applied sciences, as it is more recognized internationally of the two terms. The goals for foreign language teaching in polytechnics that are stated in the Finnish law are fairly broad. The polytechnic decree (352/2003, 8 §) dictates that a person who has been awarded a degree from a polytechnic should have such oral and writing skills in one or two foreign languages that are

required in order to cope in future working life and enable professional development. Students have to demonstrate these skills either as a part of their studies or by other means and it will be marked in their diploma that they have done so. These goals differ significantly from the goals of foreign language teaching in schools, which aims to offer a more general language education (e.g. OPS 2004). As it is relevant to the present study, it should be mentioned here that in Finland, Swedish is the second national language and it is not considered as a foreign language, even though most Finns are not fluent in it. Therefore, the law (424/2003) states that a person who is employed to a position that requires a tertiary level degree must have at least satisfactory level skills in Swedish. For this reason there is also a compulsory Swedish course for polytechnic students. Since most Finns are not fluent in the language, Swedish will be discussed in relation to foreign languages in this thesis.

As Kantelinen and Heiskanen point out (2004: 13), the polytechnic decree is quite vague about how exactly language teaching should be organized in universities of applied sciences. Yet it still offers the only official national instructions about language teaching in polytechnics to date. Other guidelines and frameworks have been offered, both on a national level and internationally, and some of them will be discussed in the following subchapters. They are, however, rather broad as well and leave a lot of decisions and planning to polytechnics on how to organize their language teaching. Nothing similar to the National Curriculum for Finnish Schools (OPS 2004) exists where e.g. goals and some content are given for each age level and even individual courses.

In other words, polytechnics have relative autonomy concerning issues such as planning their study programme and syllabus. Such autonomy is partially explained by polytechnics not being entirely government funded. In the past they have essentially been either private or municipal institutions. A normal operating model has been one where the government and local authorities have shared the basic costs, along with possible private funders (OKM 2013). However, the polytechnic reform of 2011-2014 has changed the situation. In the beginning of 2014 a process to transfer the responsibility of organizing the basic funding for polytechnics from municipalities to the government has been started. Private funders are still relied on to cover a part of the costs. Although the government is taking over the main responsibility of funding the institutions, it is stated in the polytechnic reform that the aim is to have them function even more independently in the future than before (OKM 2014). Therefore, while polytechnics do have certain responsibilities e.g. to the Ministry of Education and Culture as a

result of receiving funding from the government, ultimately they themselves decide on internal affairs. This forms an interesting parallel with the framework in which polytechnics function and that is what will be discussed in the following subchapters.

1.2 Pedagogical framework for universities of applied sciences

A description of the general purpose of universities of applied sciences in Finland stated in the law (351/2003) could be roughly translated as follows: to provide higher level education for professional expert tasks that is based on the demands of working life and the research of it, to support the professional growth of individuals and to practice R&D that serves polytechnic education as well as supports working life and regional development. The underlying themes of the education provided by polytechnics include working life-oriented teaching, creating authentic learning environments, lifelong learning and internationality (Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 24). It is emphasised in polytechnic pedagogy that everything starts from the students; they are seen as independent, active and they are expected to make decisions concerning their studies. The teachers' role is mainly to facilitate the learning process in required ways. (Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 24).

For comparison, the pedagogical approach in Finnish schools of compulsory education includes some similarities, such as encouraging students to be active and promoting independent thinking. However, there are considerable differences as well, mainly due to limitations caused by students' younger age and lesser studying experience compared to students in polytechnics. The role of teachers is more controlling in schools and the students are still only practising the skills required to make independent decisions concerning their studies (OPS 2004: 18-19). The main difference between any vocational education and the education received in other schools is that whereas schools aim at a general education that does not specialize in any particular subject, vocational education targets producing professionals and experts. This applies to polytechnics as well, although they increasingly also try to combine the teaching of the so called technical know-how with the teaching of scientific information and R&D, attempting to bring the two worlds closer together (Raij 2003: 42-44).

As the strategies for lifelong learning are seen as a priority in how teaching in polytechnics should be approached, one of the most essential skills for a polytechnic teacher is thought to be the ability to help a student find solutions to problems for themselves. Kalli (2003: 68) expands on this topic by explaining that in this type of pedagogical approach, the focus is set in future, i.e. the student is made to think what the situation will be once a problem is solved and how the skill learned while solving the problem will show in his or her way of working. He also stresses that in this kind of problem solving-oriented pedagogy, it is not only the students who are learning and improving, but teachers as well must constantly try to find ways to evolve and, in a way, reinvent themselves in relation to the way they are teaching. Kalli (2003: 69) believes teacher education should focus on giving students tools to find and create new ways of teaching instead of trying to get them to master the current trends in teaching. He continues that for teachers, it is harmful to become complacent and stagnant in their methods and he points out that the more options teachers have to face new challenging situations, the likelier it is that they will find a solution. Kalli (2003: 73) concludes by noting that pedagogy was born out of efforts to teach people something that they do not want to learn and thus, to achieve an effective learning situation a teacher should, in a way, attempt to get rid of pedagogy and make the students feel that what they want to learn is really what is supposed to be learned in that situation in the first place.

1.3 The Bologna Declaration

The roots of the Bologna Declaration date back to 1998, when the French, British, German and Italian ministers of education signed a treaty, the purpose of which was to harmonize the systems of higher education across Europe. This treaty was called the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (OKM 2013). Already at that time the common understanding between the ministers was that in the following year a new treaty was to be drawn up, only this time the hope was to have as many ministers of education as possible from across Europe to sign it. As mentioned in the introduction, overall ministers from 29 countries signed the Bologna Declaration in June 1999, including Finland (OKM 2013). Since then the number of countries that have committed to the treaty has increased to 47 (Bucharest Communiqué 2012).

Similarly to the Sorbonne Joint Declaration, the underlying purpose of the Bologna Declaration is to create a common European higher education area (EHEA) in order to

increase the competitiveness and appeal of European higher education compared to other parts of the world. Six principal lines of action to achieve this goal were determined: modifying degrees so that they are easy to understand and compare, creating uniform degree structures, establishing a system of credits, increasing international mobility, developing comparable criteria and methodology for assessment (quality assurance) and working on closer international cooperation by increasing networking and language/intercultural training (Bologna Declaration 1999). A follow-up group was also formed to monitor the progress of the undertaking, consisting of representatives from each country taking part in the project. In addition, seven international follow-up meetings have taken place since the start of the process between years 2001 and 2012, the next one being held in Yerevan, Armenia in 2015. (OKM 2013).

It was stated as a goal in the original Bologna Declaration to have achieved EHEA by the year 2010. The communiqué released after the follow-up meeting of 2012 in Bucharest, however, shows that although significant development has taken place, there are certain areas in which the representatives of the member states wish to see further improvement. These areas include e.g. enhancement of mobility, learning outcome quality assurance, as well as improving the employability of graduates and ensuring that higher education is of good quality everywhere in the member states. (Bucharest Communiqué 2012).

A report concerning the progress made to achieve the goals set by the Bologna Declaration in Finland was finished in 2009. As is the case in the Europe-wide context, in Finland clear progress has taken place yet some challenges remain. Some of the major milestones mentioned in the report include the 2005 reform of university and polytechnic degrees and the long tradition in Finland of implementing the three Bologna cycles. The three cycles refer to institutions of higher education awarding students bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates. It should be pointed out here that polytechnics do not award doctorates and that most degrees awarded by polytechnics are bachelor's level, although some master's level degrees have been awarded as well. Other achievements mentioned in the report were e.g. accomplished supporting of lifelong learning and increasing student, staff and researcher mobility, although the latter has also been seen as a challenge and subject for improvement. (OKM 2009).

1.4 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages is a document put together by a team of researchers working under the Council of Europe. During the entire developing process the researchers had a group of Swiss teachers assisting and giving feedback to them. Two tentative drafts were presented to language teaching experts from across Europe who gave feedback on them. Based on the feedback the final version was drawn up and signed by representatives of different European countries in the summer of 1997, after which the CEFR has been considered to bind all signing nations. (Huttunen 1997: 7).

The purpose of the framework is to provide “a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe” (Council of Europe 2013: 1). It includes a detailed description of what language learners need to know or learn in order to be recognized as knowing a language on one of the six levels introduced in the CEFR: C2, C1, B2, B1, A2, and A1, C2 being the highest level and A1 the weakest. Similarly to the Bologna Declaration, the Common European Framework was created to strengthen international cooperation and also to harmonize language teaching across Europe by providing instructions and guidelines for language professionals to support them in their work (Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 38-40). It is emphasized in the document, however, that its purpose is not to tell language professionals what to do and how, but to raise questions and provoke independent thinking (Council of Europe 2013).

The Finnish National Board of Education (Huttunen 1997) has released a teachers’ guidebook on how to implement the CEFR in their work. It is stated in the guidebook, for instance, that the hope is that language teachers would outline the basis of their own teaching and, preferably together with other language teachers of their institution, make a rough plan that can be followed and used for reference in different situations related to teaching. Attention is also drawn in the guidebook to the importance of separating tasks based on real-life situations and purely pedagogical tasks when planning teaching. Teaching learning strategies to students along with how to plan and evaluate their own work is regarded pivotal as well. (Huttunen 1997: 31-32).

The relevance of the CEFR in relation to the present study is that like other educational institutions in Finland and most parts of Europe, polytechnics also employ the framework in e.g. course planning and evaluation. Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004: 38-40) explain that the CEFR promotes the viewpoint that language learning is a lifelong process and that the role of polytechnics is to equip their students with such language learning skills that they can keep improving after graduation in working life. As was explained in chapter 1.1, this is also what the Finnish law dictates about language teaching in polytechnics.

In fact, here it can be seen how the CEFR, the Bologna Declaration and the polytechnic decree on language teaching all form a common paradigm for language education in Finnish universities of applied sciences. Lifelong learning is emphasized, along with internationality, intercultural competence and other language skills needed to survive in working life. It is interesting to see, however, that while so much of the guidelines for foreign language teaching in polytechnics promote uniformity in procedure, the institutions themselves are, in the end, left to do as they see fit regarding most issues. This is what was meant by the parallel mentioned in chapter 1.1 between the autonomy of polytechnics and the framework in which they function.

It is by no means implied here that the autonomy of polytechnics is a negative thing or that it should be limited in some way. The reason this issue was raised is merely to point out that as this autonomy extends to teaching as well, it seems that language teachers in universities of applied sciences are being asked to do quite a lot, as they have to take into account all the instructions presented above as well as working to achieve with their teaching what are set as its goals by law. What adds to the perceived challenge is that teachers can be unfamiliar with the professional context of the subject area they are teaching, as Vogt (in Kantelinen and Pollari 2009: 64-68) points out. This matter will be expanded on in the following chapters. One of the main purposes of this study is to explore the means language teachers have for coping with the challenges of their work and also their thoughts about the objectives that have been determined for foreign language teaching in polytechnics. Questions related to these issues will be addressed later in this thesis, but before that the special nature of language teaching in institutions of vocational education has to be examined, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

2 VOCATIONALLY ORIENTED LANGUAGE LEARNING & LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

2.1 Definitions of VOLL and LSP

Many different views have been presented about the actual meaning of languages for specific purposes (LSP) and vocationally oriented language learning (VOLL) since the terms were first coined. As explained by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 6-8), the origins of the concept of teaching and learning a foreign language for the purpose of individuals being able to practise their trade date back to the time after the ending of World War 2, when international activity in the fields of science, technology and economy started increasing rapidly. As commerce continued to establish its world-dominating position, the need for common languages became evident. Mainly due to the significant role the United States had in the world economy, English began to gain its status as the lingua franca of international business. This development in the need for language skills also led to a reform in the way language learning was viewed. Whereas before the prestige of knowing a foreign language was seen as a sufficient reason to study languages in itself, after the new-found demand for language skills emphasis gradually started to be placed on the needs of learners and the difference between teaching general language and purpose specific language started to surface. (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 6-8).

Due to the lingua franca nature of English, it has received a term of its own to refer to studying it in a professionally oriented way, English for specific purposes (ESP). However, most factors related to ESP are also applicable to the studying of other languages and for the purposes of this thesis it is not reasonable to limit the discussion in a way that only considers English, as it is vital that the subject matter is examined from a viewpoint that is as wide as possible. Therefore, the more general terms LSP and VOLL will be used to discuss the topic.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 12), speaking about ESP, encapsulate the main purpose of studying foreign languages for specific purposes as enabling learners to function appropriately in a target situation, i.e. the situation where learners use the language they are learning. This, in essence, is what LSP and VOLL are about. However, as Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004: 31) point out, finding a definition for these terms that everyone would agree

with has not been that simple. Egloff and Fitzpatrick (1997, cited in Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 31-32) see LSP mainly as a one-sided studying method where professional vocabulary is learned by heart. They value VOLL as being much more multidimensional and developed. According to them VOLL is focused on language learners and their needs concerning their professional future as well as placing emphasis on intercultural communication and student independence. Robinson (2001, cited in Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 32), on the other hand, finds similar qualities in LSP and his evaluation of it is more versatile. In Robinson's view LSP covers a variety of methods for teaching and studying, all of which are based on the notion that languages are not studied for the sake of learning languages but to help the students function in situations related to working life or studying. Consequently, the emphasis is not on using the target language flawlessly or learning about structures and grammar. Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004: 32) express the opinion that Robinson's definition of LSP is appropriate to be considered as the frame of reference for language teaching in Finnish polytechnics.

Vogt (2009: 64-68) offers yet another take on the topic. She sees LSP as having a "highly specialized professional *context* as a focus of instruction". Vogt prefers the term VOLL to be used when talking about the type of education relevant to this thesis and explains that it teaches language that people use in professional contexts, which she further elaborates on as being neither general language nor specified for a particular professional task. Vogt also provides an even simpler characterization for VOLL plainly as learning languages for work and life. In the frame of this study both LSP and VOLL are considered to mean roughly the same thing. However, as Vogt (2009: 64) points out, the term VOLL was coined by the Council of Europe and therefore it can be regarded as a good term for referring to this topic in a European context. For this reason, the term VOLL will mainly be used in this thesis.

2.2 The special nature and characteristics of teaching VOLL

There are several factors that cause the teaching and learning of VOLL to differ significantly from that of so called general language that is taught in schools that come under compulsory education. As mentioned in chapter 1.4, language teachers that teach VOLL can be variably unfamiliar with the professional context of the subject area they are teaching. As Vogt (2009: 68) explains, VOLL teachers are language experts but often not specialists in the vocational

field their students are studying. She also adds that even in cases where language teachers have either been trained in the job, or have previously worked in the field the students of which they are teaching, it is still difficult for them to stay aware of latest changes that take place in the field e.g. due to advances in technology. This can make it challenging for teachers to know exactly what future employers want from students and thus what their students need from them.

The possibility exists where students themselves may be able to provide some of this information. However, oftentimes when students start the first compulsory foreign language courses in Finnish polytechnics they do not yet have significant experience in the profession they are studying, as these courses are commonly taken during the first year or two of studies. What is more, there might be a conflict between what learners want at the time and what it is that they, in reality, actually need in the future (see e.g. Hutchinson and Waters 1987, Vogt 2009). For these reasons, it could be argued that the knowledge of students cannot be the primary premise for teachers when planning courses.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 21-77), focussing on ESP, expand on the topic of VOLL course planning. They divide the main factors that affect course design in this field into three: language descriptions, learning theories and the analysis of students' needs. The first one is not of such relevance to the present study that it should be explained in detail. In short it means that VOLL teachers should consider the kind of language their course is dealing with from the point of view of structure, function and discourse. As for learning theories, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 49-52) offer an idea for one that they say is suitable for VOLL teachers to consult, simply titled a model for learning. It emphasizes the notion that learners need to draw on previous knowledge to learn new things, so the teacher's ability to help students build links between existing knowledge and new information is seen as important. The role of motivation is also highlighted and it is said that a learner's want to make the effort to learn new language skills is of crucial importance. Kotila (2003: 20) also mentions that if students feel that what they are studying is worthwhile, it has an effect on how they experience their studies. Some information about how learners and learning are perceived in Finnish Polytechnics was provided in chapter 1.2.

In the division presented by Hutchinson and Waters, it is the third factor, the analysis of students' needs, which is perhaps of most interest in relation to the present study. They point

out that it cannot be said that the difference between studying general language in schools and studying ESP, and consequently VOLL, is that there is a need when studying for a specific purpose. Learners who study general language also have needs; it is just that in the case of VOLL, we are particularly aware of the need. In other words, there are target needs (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 53-55). Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 59-60) have developed a framework for analysing those target needs and situations they may come up in to help teachers in course planning. This framework is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. A target situation analysis framework: Hutchinson, T. and Waters, A. 1987: 59-60.

Why is the language needed?	How will the language be used?	What will the content areas be?	Who will the learner use the language with?	Where will the language be used?	When will the language be used?
For study For work For training For other purposes	Medium: speaking, writing, reading etc. Channel: e.g. telephone, face to face	Subjects: medicine, engineering, commerce etc. Level: e.g. technician, secondary school, postgraduate	Native or non-native speakers Level of knowledge of receiver: e.g. expert, layman, student Relationship: e.g. colleague, customer, teacher, superior	Physical setting: e.g. office, lecture, hotel, workshop Human context: e.g. alone, meetings, on telephone Linguistic context: in own country, abroad	Concurrently with the VOLL course or subsequently, frequently, seldom, in small amounts, in large chunks

Hutchinson and Waters emphasise that needs analysis is not something that is done just once, but a continuing process in which the analyst constantly re-assesses the conclusions he or she has drawn. They also point out that the conception of what needs might there be for a particular group of learners can vary according to how the respondents see the situation, i.e.

what the learning wants are (1987: 58-60). What is more, Hutchinson and Waters stress that what is achieved by performing the target situation analysis is merely establishing the goals of the language learning process; it does not reveal how to get to the destination. They continue, somewhat self-evidently, that a course cannot be based solely on knowing the beginning and the end of the learning process, but a teacher must also consider how to facilitate students' attempts to reach the end and how to motivate them effectively. This begins to fall under the subject matter of VOLL tasks, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

2.3 Tasks in VOLL teaching

As has been established, language teachers in Finnish polytechnics are relatively autonomous in their work and they are effectively able to teach as they see fit. Thus, there are no set models of what tasks should be like in these institutions, because every teacher does things in their own way. It could be said that this same mentality applies generally when considering VOLL tasks; naturally one can explore what others have done, but in the end it is the teacher's decision how they want to approach tasks. For comparison, in Finnish schools of compulsory education language teachers also can and need to carry through their own ideas within the limits of the National Curriculum for Finnish schools. However, as exercise books and alike are commonly used, there tends to be more similarity in how teachers teach in schools than in polytechnics.

At the end of their account of the target situation analysis framework, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 60-61) provide an example of what they consider to be a motivating ESP task. In 1979 in the University of Kuwait a teacher named James B. Herbolich conducted a project in which engineering students had to construct a box kite and then write a manual on how they did it. Hutchinson and Waters' point about Herbolich's experiment is that instead of e.g. making his students read a long boring text, he made learning interesting and motivating for them by adding a human element to it. It should be pointed out here, however, that conducting experiments such as the one described above is naturally also a matter of resources and time, and therefore it may not always be possible for teachers to include everything they would like when planning courses.

This issue was addressed in the CEF Professional Project, which was funded by the European Commission's (EC) Leonardo Da Vinci programme. The Da Vinci programme is a sub-programme for the EC's Lifelong Learning Programme, established to improve education across Europe (European Commission 19.5.2014). The CEF Professional Project, which ran from 2005 to 2007, was set up to prepare so called professional profiles for different vocational fields, including descriptions of field-specific language and communication. The profiles were constructed by experienced language professionals in Finland, Germany, Poland and Bulgaria (Tulkki and Huhta n.d.). The essential purpose of the project was described by project members as follows: "...to cater for the needs of the language and communication teachers working in the field of vocational and professional language education. It aims at a process of designing and implementing language courses that better correspond to the language needs of the future professionals in their respective fields" (Tulkki and Huhta n.d.).

The project focused mainly on four fields: business, technology, healthcare and law. The creators of the aforementioned profiles produced guidelines for teachers to implement the profiles in their teaching and course planning, the idea being also to offer bases for tasks and exercises. It was specifically important to the team that the tasks were feasible, which is why they were piloted at teacher training seminars. According to project members, the project has had a strong impact on the VOLL teaching field and it has also brought the existing polytechnic teaching regulations and the needs of workplaces closer together. The project members express a strong view that language course planning should be based on actual knowledge about the communication that takes place in workplaces, instead of what they call "intuition and guesswork of what might be useful to teach". (Tulkki and Huhta n.d.).

The CEF profiles are displayed on the website of Finnish Proflang – Association of Languages for Professional Communication. Proflang's aims can be summarized to supporting the work of language teachers and trainers who teach professional communication, along with acting as a source of information to anybody who is interested in the subject matter. The association also does research on the field of professional communication, grants bursaries to students who do well in languages and overall attempts to develop the teaching of professional communication in foreign languages (Proflang 2014). The website also includes some guidelines on how to use the CEF profiles. Firstly, it is recommended that a teacher familiarizes his or herself with the sociocultural communicative events that a person working in the field in question might encounter by reading the profile and searching the internet using

the key words that appear in the profile. Secondly, teachers are advised to match the profile information with the requirements of their institution, i.e. the resources at their disposal, number of classes they have, possible curriculum etc. Thirdly, teachers should consider learner needs and plan the course, create material and exercises, organize possible exams and alike accordingly. The rest of the guide focuses on building a professional communication identity for learners. (Tulkki and Huhta n.d.).

To provide readers an idea what the CEF profiles are actually like, the profile of people working in international business will now be briefly described. The profile begins with a list of typical occupations for people working in international business (e.g. office manager), as well as a mention of typical organizations they might work in. This is followed by typical job descriptions and an account of the extent to which foreign languages are needed. In the case of international business, a graduate is said to need “versatile, fluent and flexible English language skills both in speech and writing”, possible skills in other languages being considered a great advantage as well (Purokuru and Ryyänen 2006: 1-3). After this, context information is provided, meaning e.g. locations, persons, institutions, communication situations and texts. What follows after this section is perhaps the most interesting and fruitful part for teachers considering course planning and creating exercises, i.e. detailed descriptions of the most frequent situations and the most demanding situations people in this field will encounter during their working day. Examples of the most frequent situations include taking care of clients’ relocation needs, using e-mail/phone/fax and dealing with missing deliveries. Examples of the most demanding situations include having to host foreign visitors with no time to prepare due to a co-worker’s illness and dealing with an urgent delivery gone missing. Finally, at the end of the profile there are two so called snapshots, meaning descriptions of actual people and what their normal working day is like (Purokuru and Ryyänen 2006: 4-10). Something that should be pointed out here is that at least on Proflang’s website the profiles are only available in English, so using them in the teaching of other languages requires some adapting and translating.

Vogt (2009: 71) provides a very noteworthy point about how the CEF profiles can be utilized in practical teaching work. She examines an example situation where a manager of an American poultry processing plant enquires a worker of a Finnish company about a possibility of a change in a delivery. Vogt points out that this kind of a situation can be used to differentiate between students of different levels, e.g. by providing less advanced students

with an imaginary transcript of the conversation so that they can make observations about correct telephone etiquette and terminology etc., whereas skilled students can act out the conversation with the help of role cards. The exercise is done in pairs. This is a fine example of how the CEF profiles can act as task bases for VOLL teachers and how they can be used creatively to support the learning of students of all skill levels.

As mentioned in chapter 1.2, the underlying themes of the education provided by polytechnics include working life-oriented teaching, creating authentic learning environments, lifelong learning and internationality (Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 24). It can be acknowledged that the CEF profiles touch on all of these themes, as the first two are what the profiles were essentially created for and international competence, along with lifelong learning skills, more or less come as a result of that. Overall, the CEF profiles appear to be very helpful to VOLL teachers, especially inexperienced ones, in providing information about what actually takes place in real working environments of the field they are teaching foreign language communication in. Other ways to acquire this kind of information of course exist, and in the next subchapter one that is very relevant in relation to the present study is examined.

2.4 Teacher cooperation supporting VOLL teaching in polytechnics

As explained in the previous chapters, language teachers who work in institutions that provide vocational education often face the problem of not being familiar with the professional field their students are going to be working in. The teachers' area of expertise is foreign languages and normally if they possess deeper knowledge on a particular field, it is e.g. because they happen to have worked in that field previously. It is neither a part of their education nor their formal qualifications as such. The CEF professional profiles have been established as a helpful source of information about actual working life communicational situations, but teachers in institutions of vocational education, such as Finnish polytechnics, also have another useful resource at their disposal for this purpose and that is the knowledge and expertise of the vocational subject teachers.

Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004: 21-29) state that there is an inherent will in polytechnics to strive for making the foreign language teaching the best it can be and that efforts are constantly made to find improvements. Naturally, the language teachers have a pivotal role in

this process, but Kantelinen and Heiskanen point out that internal factors in individual institutions also affect the outcome. They continue that one key factor in this is what kinds of resources and opportunities are the language teachers and vocational subject teachers given to cooperate. Teachers' personal qualities, such as their motivation to cooperate, their attitudes towards cooperation and their social skills are said to also play a significant role in the success of the development work.

Savonmäki (2007: 17-18) expands on the topic of teacher cooperation in Finnish polytechnics. He highlights that in modern working life the ability to cooperate with different people has become a vital part of one's qualifications. This view is echoed e.g. by Meriläinen and Rauhala (2013: 17). Savonmäki continues that this applies particularly well to polytechnics, as they constantly aim to learn and evolve as organizations. The staff's ability to cooperate is said to be seen as key in this learning process. Savonmäki further explains that for institutions of vocational education close relations to professionals in working life are extremely important as the quality of the education these institutions provide shows in the work performance of future professionals, and that this so called external cooperation combined with internal cooperation continues to broaden the job description of a polytechnic teacher. (Savonmäki 2007: 17-18).

The attraction of cooperation in today's working life is based on the notion that two or more people working together as a team can achieve greater things and be more effective than an individual person. Thus, cooperation is seen as something to pursue (see e.g. Savonmäki 2007, Meriläinen and Rauhala 2013). Another way of looking at the issue is that cooperating with one's colleagues is a way to achieve change and goals, rather than being a goal in itself. Studies show that teachers view working together as a way to improve the atmosphere and conditions at the workplace. Also, and perhaps even more interestingly, teacher cooperation has also been shown to have a positive effect on students' learning results (Savonmäki 2007: 18-21). However, as Savonmäki (ibid.) points out, some teachers can have a differing view on the topic. Being able to cope alone can also be seen as a positive thing by teachers and a sign, mainly to themselves, that they are competent in their work. Cooperation may be seen as having to ask for help from colleagues, in other words a sign of weakness. Although these kinds of attitudes can inhibit the development of a cooperative workplace culture, the popular opinion concerning cooperation is increasingly positive. In fact, as Meriläinen and Rauhala

(2013: 93-95) note, focussing on multi-professional collaboration, becoming aware of challenges and accepting them are keys to developing professional cooperation.

As mentioned above, polytechnics as organizations aspire to learn and evolve. Koskela (2013) examines the idea of learning organizations and what it means in relation to teacher collaboration. She explains that the process of learning for people working in pedagogical organizations is not individual in the sense that it cannot be separated from the context of the organization. The context always affects the process. This in turn leads to learning in organizations being a shared process. Koskela talks about the culture of participation. Much like in the view presented above where cooperation is seen as a way to achieve goals rather than being a goal in itself, the culture of participation is understood to enable professionals gain expertise as a side product of contributing to the common learning process and absorbing others' contributions (Koskela 2013: 40-43). She adds to this by saying that the participation of team members is also a process in the sense that so called novice members should be allowed to contribute less and at first to focus more on observing. By doing this they take in information and grow to become expert members. Koskela further adds that this process of learning together creates commitment to the working community for the members as they have adopted shared values through exchanging knowledge and ideas. (Koskela 2013: 44-46).

In his study where Finnish polytechnic teachers offered statements about their working community, Savonmäki (2007: 98-105) also discusses the idea of organizational culture affecting the work of teachers. The participants of his study agreed that the organizational context does have an effect on their work. Interestingly, however, they expressed the view that the institutions they worked in were bureaucratic and there was a strong hierarchy. For example, those who worked in administration had little contact with teachers. There were also complaints about conflicts in what was valued by the institutions. Achieving good results was valued, along with relations to working life professionals, but the actual teaching work was not valued according to the respondents. This is very interesting, because the participants of the present study expressed no such dissatisfaction with their working environment whatsoever, quite the opposite in fact. This subject matter is discussed in greater detail in the results and analysis sections of this thesis.

As has been shown in this section, in the modern working life there is an appreciation for staff cooperation in different fields, as well as in institutions of vocational education. As mentioned

above, teacher collaboration is seen as a particularly functioning working model for Finnish polytechnics. It should be mentioned briefly here that naturally, teacher cooperation does not mean only language teachers and vocational subject teachers working together. Language teachers can also collaborate productively with other language teachers, just as vocational subject teachers can work together with their colleagues. The so called third party who will experience the results of this interaction are, of course, the students. In the next segment, some background information as to how they might experience VOLL and studying foreign languages in Finnish polytechnics will be discussed.

2.5 Students in Finnish polytechnics' foreign language classrooms

2.5.1 Students' backgrounds

The groups of students in Finnish polytechnics' foreign language classrooms can be quite versatile. The students often come from very different backgrounds; some may come from different countries, some have worked for 15 years and decided to return to studying, others have only finished upper secondary school in the previous spring etc. What is more, in some instances there are students of different fields in the same classroom. The varying backgrounds also mean that there can be vast differences in the students' language skills, which presents a challenge for language teachers. There are certain criteria that a student who has been accepted to a polytechnic has to fill, but they are rather loose from the point of view of foreign language skills. (Kantelinen and Heiskanen 2004: 64-66).

Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004: 66-79) explain that attempts have been made to solve or alleviate the issue by organizing tests to determine the skill level the students are at when beginning their language studies. However, they continue that as autonomous institutions the polytechnics can decide whether or not to have these starting level tests and not all polytechnics have chosen to do so. What is more, their study shows that in some institutions the tests were only done by students of certain fields and that some polytechnics did not have a clear policy on what to do with the test results; the use of them might vary according to teachers' discretion. Kantelinen and Heiskanen also state that some polytechnics organized preparatory courses for students who were deemed to need them before starting the actual language studies, but that in other polytechnics such courses were not organized due to

perceived lack of resources. According to Kantelinen and Heiskanen, this can lead to students being in an unequal position to develop their language skills depending on which polytechnic they are studying in (2004: 67).

As established in chapter 1, Finnish polytechnics have legal responsibilities in relation to the quality of foreign language teaching as well as an obligation to collaborate with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Jaatinen and Juuso (2008: 5), in their study about proficiency levels of new foreign language students in a university of applied sciences located in western Finland, remind readers about these duties and point out that polytechnics also have a responsibility to their students and their future employers to ensure best possible education for students. Their view is that the language skill tests are extremely important. In the institution that Jaatinen and Juuso's study focussed on there were significant differences in the students' proficiency levels. According to their study (2008: 32), of the 801 students who began their language studies in 2007, 681, i.e. over 85%, needed preparatory courses in the Swedish language. The English language proficiency numbers were somewhat better. Out of the students who had received a secondary level vocational education before coming to polytechnic around 50% needed a preparatory course or courses and out of the upper secondary school graduates only 17% had the same need.

Jaatinen and Juuso have drawn conclusions about their results and they speculate whether the goals set for language teaching in Finnish polytechnics are too demanding and should be changed. According to them, the goals and reality do not match and there is too much work left to polytechnics concerning trying to bridge the gap in students' language proficiency with the current resources. They raise the question whether or not it should be the students' responsibility to make sure their skills are at a sufficient level to attend language teaching in polytechnics and they stress that it should be made clear to them that the demands are higher in tertiary education than in vocational schools or upper secondary schools (2008: 33). It should be pointed out here, however, that if it was left to students' own responsibility to improve their language skills before coming to polytechnics, for many it could mean paying for private preparatory courses, which might make the problem of unequal chances mentioned above even worse. It is the writer's opinion that a different solution to this issue should be found, e.g. employing in all institutions the model mentioned previously by Kantelinen and Heiskanen where polytechnics organize preparatory courses for students who need them.

2.5.2 Students' views on foreign language studies and internationality

As reported above, internationality is a major theme for Finnish Polytechnics and this shows e.g. in participating in joint European projects and accepting and sending exchange students. As for example Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004: 21) point out, working life is also becoming increasingly international and it could be argued that the occupations where a person is not at all likely to encounter someone who does not speak the same first language as they do are virtually impossible to name. As mentioned in chapter 2.1, English has acquired the status of lingua franca of international business and thus it is extremely important to know at least some English in the modern world. This is also acknowledged by polytechnic students, as Huovinen and Rusanen (1996) state in their study, conducted in a polytechnic located in northern Finland to health science students, about the views of students on studying languages and internationality.

Huovinen and Rusanen (1996: 59-63) report that 95% of respondent students considered the two compulsory English courses to be necessary and 83% thought knowing English well eases the studying of their field. 63% even thought that two compulsory courses of English are not enough. 90% of respondents were of the opinion that having good language skills in general will be useful in future working life. There were also clear connections made between good language proficiency and internationality, which seemed to be generally valued. However, there were also signs that this positive attitude might not always show in practice, as only about half of the respondents expressed interest in taking voluntary language courses and some though they had good enough skills already.

Juurakko-Paavola (2009: 214-218) has studied Finnish polytechnic students' motivation to study Swedish. She reports that there are considerable differences between students of different fields and also between men and women. A positive motivation was shown by female business students with an upper secondary school degree, on the average 3.67 out of 5, the scale being from 1 to 5 where 5 was the most positive and 1 the most negative. Male technology students with a vocational school degree had much poorer attitudes towards studying Swedish, averaging 1.72 out of 5. Overall women had better motivation towards studying Swedish. On the same scale their average answer was 3.36-3.55, whereas for male respondents it was 2.17-2.39. Although Swedish is officially not considered as a foreign language in Finland, as mentioned in chapter 1.1, it is discussed in relation to foreign

languages in this thesis and therefore it is worthwhile to examine polytechnic students' attitudes towards studying Swedish as well as English and other foreign languages.

Based on the data presented above from Huovinen and Rusanen and Juurakko-Paavola, as well as some of the results discovered in the data collected for the present study, it can be said that polytechnic students in general have positive attitudes towards studying foreign languages and internationality. At the same time, however, they might not always be so keen to take voluntary language courses, as previously pointed out. As has been established, the pool of students in the foreign language classrooms of Finnish universities of applied sciences is very diverse. The ideas and views the students who participated in the present study have about the language teaching in their institution will be further examined in later chapters of this thesis. In the next chapter the data gathering and analysis methods used in this study will be described.

3 METHODS OF STUDY

3.1 Research questions

As explained e.g. in chapter two, in this thesis the subject area of foreign language teaching in Finnish universities of applied sciences is examined from two different points of view, those of the teachers and the students. This makes the present study somewhat innovative, as no previous research was discovered where these two viewpoints were compared in a similar manner. Furthermore, special attention was paid to what means do language teachers in polytechnics have for coping with the demands of their work. The main areas of interest to this study can be seen below in the form of research questions:

- 1) What are the views of language teachers in the university of applied sciences under study concerning the guidelines and legislation set for their work?
- 2) What means are used by the language teachers to meet the demands of students of different fields?
- 3) How do the language teachers perceive VOLL?

- 4) Do students in this particular university of applied sciences feel that the language teaching they have received has been according to the guidelines and legislation set for it?
- 5) How do the students perceive VOLL?

According to Dörnyei (2007: 74), researchers often feel there ought to be a difference in the way research questions are drawn up between qualitative and quantitative studies. He explains that this is because the two types of research are quite different in nature. Quantitative research is usually more precise and requires that the researcher is very specific in describing the target issues and variables when stating the purpose of his or her study. Also, oftentimes researchers make detailed hypotheses about the results of their quantitative study. Accordingly, Dörnyei states that when conducting quantitative research a good guideline for considering research questions is the more precise, the better. Dörnyei (2007: 74) continues that in the case of qualitative research, however, it is normally not possible or even reasonable to form very specific research questions or hypotheses. This is because qualitative research tends to focus on phenomena that are found interesting rather than a particular problem. In this type of research new points and issues emerge constantly that the person conducting the research might not have even thought about when starting the process. Therefore, specific research questions could potentially limit the investigatory process and thus be harmful.

When examining the research questions of the present study, one can see that they are mostly not designed to be answered with just one or two words, i.e. they are not very specific. The intention was indeed to get as profound answers as possible, especially from the teachers. However, in the case of students' views on the topic, a large number of replies was also wanted in order to be able to make at least careful, suggestive generalizations. For this reason, the research questions include elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This way of conducting research, as Dörnyei (2007: 42) points out, is known as a mixed methods study. The analytic approaches in relation to the present study will be addressed in more detail in the following sections of this thesis.

As mentioned above, both the teachers' and the students' views on the foreign language teaching in their polytechnic are displayed in the present study. An interesting aspect to this subject matter was examining the possible differences in the two groups' perceptions of VOLL; in other words, are there differences between the way teachers feel they should

approach foreign language teaching and what students believe they should be taught. The answers to this particular question and all the other research questions are presented in the results chapter. In the next section the data gathering methods used for the purposes of this study are described in detail.

3.2 Collecting data for the present study

3.2.1 The build-up to data collection

The respondents of the present study consisted of 6 language teachers and altogether 163 students of the target polytechnic. The teachers took part in group interviews, 3 teachers per group, whereas the students were sent an online questionnaire via e-mail. In this section the relevant events that enabled conducting the actual data collection will be explained and also some reasons will be provided as to why these particular data collection methods were chosen for the purposes of this thesis.

The process of collecting data for this thesis began in February 2014 when an e-mail was sent to the language centre Head of Department of the target polytechnic, containing a tentative inquiry about the possibility of interviewing a number of language teachers as well as sending a questionnaire to students, naturally along with a detailed description of the aims of the present study. The request was met very positively and the Head of Department instructed me to apply for a formal research permit, which was swiftly accepted by the administrative body of the polytechnic. As e.g. Dufva (2011: 142-143) points out, when conducting research in an institution, such as a university of applied sciences, it is essential to ask the administration for permission in order to maintain a proper ethical approach to the process.

After the research permit issue was clear, the language centre Head of Department acted as an intermediary, asking language teachers for volunteers to participate in the study. This was done according to correct research procedure as participating in interviews where data is collected should always be voluntary (e.g. Hirsjärvi et al. 2009 and Kalaja et al. 2011). The right number of volunteers was quickly found and meetings for the interviews were agreed. By the time the interviews took place the participants had been fully briefed as to what was going to be discussed and that the sessions would be recorded. This information was again

briefly explained to all teachers face-to-face right before the interviews and their informed consent was collected in writing, as is strongly recommended by e.g. Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 25).

As to the criteria according to which suitable teachers were selected to participate in the present study, there was none except that they had to be teaching languages other than Finnish in the target institution. As mentioned in chapter 1.1, Swedish studies are discussed in relation to foreign language studies in this thesis since most Finns are not fluent in the language, especially and essentially not the majority of students in the target polytechnic due to its location in a mainly Finnish speaking area of Finland. All participants had worked in the institution for a sufficient amount of time to be interviewed at the time of study, i.e. everyone was experienced enough to provide useful insight on the topic. For the purposes of this study, further information about the participant teachers is not relevant. Some language specific issues did arise in the interviews and they shall be discussed in more detail in the results section. However, in order to maintain an outlook to the study that is not limited in focus to any single language, but rather investigates general VOLL phenomena, it was deemed as unnecessary to list here which languages are taught by the teachers that participated.

As reported in the beginning of this section, a total of six teachers took part in the interviews. A decision was made in the start of the research process that it would not be reasonable to try to arrange interviews with teachers from other polytechnics, as it would have been quite challenging and arduous to find volunteers from different parts of Finland, then arranging suitable times for everyone and finally carrying out the interviews. Six interviewees, after all, is a quite satisfactory number for the purposes of a Master's thesis, particularly seeing that data was also going to be collected from a large number of students. Moreover, six teachers represent a relatively large percentage of all the language teachers working in the polytechnic in question, so it can be considered as a decent sample. Although it would have been possible to attempt to get a wider pool of participants by e.g. sending an online questionnaire to teachers in different polytechnics, it was seen as key to get as in-depth answers as possible from the teachers and the questions they were asked were such that could not be properly answered in the format of a questionnaire. For this reason, the freedom of an interview was preferred. The questions that were asked in the interview can be seen in Appendix number 2.

In the case of students, however, both volume and content of the replies were seen as important. This was because having a large number of replies does make the results more reliable, which was essential considering what the aims of gathering data from the students were. For example, it eliminates the risk of basing a significant proportion of the study on an opinion of a student that the majority does not agree with, since some of the questions they were asked were very much matters of opinion. Therefore, an online questionnaire was drawn up, including multiple choice questions and an open question where students could elaborate on their responses if they wished. The questionnaire can be found in the Appendices (Appendix number 1). With the help of the language department secretary, the questionnaire was sent to students of different fields via e-mail, which also included a short description of the questionnaire and why it was sent to them. The prerequisite for students who participated in the study was that they had to have completed all of the compulsory language studies included in their degree. In the next sections both the teacher interviews and the questionnaire sent to students shall be described in detail, starting with the interviews.

3.2.2 Group interviews for teachers

Although the reasons why interviewing was seen as the most suitable way of data collection in order to record the teachers' thoughts on the subject were already briefly touched on in the previous chapter, some further explanation is in order. As Dufva (2011: 131-132) mentions, interviews are essentially a way of getting the interviewees' own opinions and ideas out. The context of an interview allows the research participants to consider the topic that is being discussed and to reflect on it in a much more comprehensive manner than that of a questionnaire. This is what was meant by the freedom of interviews mentioned previously. Furthermore, as Dufva (2011: 131) points out, there is an interactive nature to interviews where both the participants and the person conducting the interview are building knowledge together. This aspect of the form of data collection in question was also intriguing and considered suitable for this study.

The type of interview that was used was a semi-structured theme interview. Prior to a theme interview the person conducting the research has selected a topic for the study, read some background information and considered central themes that he or she hopes are discussed, however without constructing actual specific questions (Dufva 2011: 133). This was not quite

the case regarding the present study, as some interview questions were indeed drawn up before the interview. Dörnyei (2007: 136) describes a semi-structured interview in the following way: “Although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner. In other words, the interviewer provides guidance and direction (hence the ‘-structured’ part in the name), but is also keen to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues (hence the ‘semi-‘ part)”. Based on the descriptions presented above, the type of interview conducted for the present study included elements of both a theme interview and a semi-structured interview, thus a semi-structured theme interview is a logical, appropriate term for it.

Although qualitative interviews may typically be one-to-one conversations (Dörnyei 2007: 134), as previously mentioned group interview as a format was preferred over interviewing participants individually. Each type of interview has its strengths and weaknesses. Individual interviews perhaps better allow things that the interviewee does not at first remember to be discussed, along with those that are not in the interviewee’s comfort zone. Furthermore, one-on-one interviews are likely to offer a better time frame for examining the opinions of individuals in a more comprehensive way, whereas with group interviews there might be an imbalance as to how much each person gets to speak (Dufva 2011: 135). However, as Dufva (2011: 135) points out, a particular advantage of group interviews is that the collective efforts of participants may cause the conversation to be more versatile and elicit differing points of view. Dörnyei (2007: 144) agrees with this statement and adds that interviewees brainstorming together, challenging each other’s comments and getting inspired by them can lead to the emergence of high-quality data. These features of the group interview format were deemed as very suitable for the data collection of this particular study and therefore group interview was the method of choice. As has been established above, it was decided that six teachers is a good number of participants. In order to avoid the conversation becoming too shallow and to allow room for individuals to present their opinions as best as possible, the teachers were divided into two groups of three instead of being interviewed in one large group.

The interviews were conducted in March 2014. Each session was recorded with two separate devices, an audio recorder and a tablet computer, firstly to ensure that the data would definitely be properly recorded and secondly to minimize the risk of losing the recordings.

Furthermore, recording the research interviews is a condition for using them as data for a formal study (Dörnyei 2007: 139). Full transcripts were made of the contents of the recordings. Since the interview questions shall be discussed in detail in the results chapter of this thesis, it is unnecessary to specify their contents here. This concludes the description of the interview process. In the next section the questionnaire sent to the students of the target polytechnic will be discussed.

3.2.3 Questionnaire for students

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of questionnaire research have already been briefly addressed, along with the underlying reasons for choosing to use this data collection method with student participants of this study. However, there are many sides to questionnaire research and some relevant points for the purposes of this study need to be discussed further. As mentioned above, the positive aspect of questionnaire studies that was seen as key to the present study was the ability to conveniently reach a large number of people. The most relevant limitation of questionnaires that was pointed out was that the respondents are not able to answer the questions in a similarly in-depth manner as in an interview format. Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 195) continue on the topic of pros and cons of questionnaires. To the strengths they add e.g. the quick speed at which a questionnaire can be spread and replies collected, the ease at which the data can be analysed and predictability of the time scale of the data collection process. Hirsjärvi et al. do note, however, that serious weaknesses also exist. The ones that are relevant to this study include the uncertainty about how seriously did the respondents regard the survey and the possibility of misunderstandings when interpreting the questions. In spite of the aforementioned limitations, a questionnaire was deemed the most suitable form of data collection in the case of students.

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.1, the only prerequisite for the students who replied the online questionnaire was that they had to have completed the compulsory language studies included in their degree. In addition to this, students whose first language is Swedish were asked not to consider experiences of their possible Swedish studies when answering the questions. No requirements existed as to which field they were studying in. On the contrary; the hope was to have students from as many fields as possible fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent at the same time as the interviews took place, in the beginning of March 2014, and the

period of time the students were given to reply in was until the end of the month. It also warrants a mention that the online program used here to create and conduct the questionnaire survey was Google Drive.

As e.g. Dörnyei (2009: 5) and Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 197) point out, there are a number of things questionnaires can measure, including factual questions, behavioural questions and attitudinal questions. The questionnaire that was drawn up for this study focussed mainly on attitudes and opinions, but at the beginning there were three compulsory yes or no questions that were designed for collecting some essential background information about the participants. In other words, these questions measured factual information. This background information included confirmation that the students have indeed completed their compulsory language studies, that they have done so in the target polytechnic instead of another institution and finally an inquiry if they have participated in any optional language studies. The last question was added to see if there were any differences in attitude between students who had chosen to do extra language studies and those who had just done what was required. The contents of the questions asked in this survey will be discussed further in the results section.

Instead of being yes or no questions, most of the other questions in the questionnaire conducted for the present study were more or less formed according to the model of the so called Likert scale. Wagner (2010: 27) explains that in the Likert scale, a question is usually in the form a statement. This is then often followed by a scale of 1 to 5 where different response options are presented. According to Wagner, normally the options are close to the following: *I strongly agree*, *I agree*, *I do not know* (or no opinion/neutral) *I disagree* and *I strongly disagree*. Wagner continues that there has been some debate among researchers on the no opinion/neutral option and many feel that it should not be offered since participants might choose it just because they do not want to spend time and energy on contemplating the question that was asked. Alanen (2011: 56), for one, expresses a strong view that the middle option in a Likert scale should never be *I do not know*. According to her, all the response options should measure the same thing, which, she states, is a purpose the option *I do not know* does not serve.

In this study the 1 to 5 scale is also used, but there are only two specific response options, 1 being *I strongly disagree* and 5 being *I strongly agree*. The participants then had to choose either one of those or somewhere in the middle according to what best described their

thoughts on the subject. This model was selected partly to avoid the problems presented by Wagner and Alanen and, to be more precise, to make a proper difference between agreement and disagreement in the statements where this is desirable. In other words, in this study if a person selected option number three, it means that they leaned more towards agreeing than disagreeing, since in the case of the questions where five options were given option three would be better described as *I somewhat agree* or *things are OK* than *I do not have an opinion*.

The last question of the online survey conducted for the present study was an open question where respondents were asked to elaborate and expand on their answers or provide other views on the topic if they wished to do so. It was not mandatory to answer this question. However, a large number did in fact provide an answer. The response was left optional because it was thought that the students who want to take the trouble of answering the question will probably provide useful responses, whereas if it was mandatory to do so there would have likely been a large number of answers that were of no use to the present study. The last open question adds a qualitative aspect to the data collected by the questionnaire instead of it being an entirely quantitative data collection method. In the next section the approaches to data analysis used in this research process are explained.

3.3 Methods of data analysis

3.3.1 Interview data analysis

As established in chapter 3.1, the data collection methods used for the present study make it a mixed methods study (e.g. Dörnyei 2007: 42 and Dufva 2011: 134). Therefore, the data analysis methods for the interview data and the questionnaire data should be described separately, as they differ greatly in nature. In this section the approach chosen to the analysis of the data collected during the two interview sessions shall be discussed.

It is typical that contents of interviews such as those conducted for this study are analysed in a qualitative way (Dufva 2011: 139) and as has been mentioned previously on many occasions, it is also the approach taken in this thesis. The underlining feature of qualitative data analysis according to Dörnyei (2007: 242-246) is that there are nearly as many ways to conduct it as

there are conductors. He explains that no real rules for this type of data analysis exist and that it is essentially up to the researcher how one wants to do it. Many consider this freedom to be the central strength of qualitative analysis. Dörnyei (2007: 244-245), however, points out that this is also viewed by some as a great weakness because the lack of detailed guidelines provides no “safeguards against simply *being wrong*”. This being said, Dörnyei concludes that although differing views exist, it is his strong impression that the freedom is mostly embraced and that majority of researchers tend to intentionally avoid committing themselves to a specific analysis method when conducting qualitative research.

Even though the literature on the topic of how to approach qualitative data analysis is quite loose, some instruction and guidance is naturally provided. Dufva (2011: 139) observes that in the case of a research interview, the analysis is usually begun by reading through the transcript multiple times and making notes and observations based on it. In the course of time these observations are arranged to for example themes, classes, types, occurrences or absences. The underlying questions could be e.g. what and how is discussed, do all participants discuss things in the same way, what issues keep emerging, what is not discussed and what is seen as positive or negative by the participants (Dufva 2011: 139). This is a good description of the type of analysis used for the purposes of the present study, the emphasis being on content of discussion, i.e. what is discussed, not so much how.

As Dufva (2011: 139) points out, the kind of analysis outlined above is commonly known as content analysis. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 105) describe content analysis as a method of analysing documents, such as a transcript of a research interview, in a systematic and objective manner and as one that aims to provide a concise description of the phenomenon under research. They continue that it is important to remember that in content analysis the purpose is only to organize the collected data in a form that enables making conclusions based on it. The collected data in itself should not be presented as a ready result; further reflection is required. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 115) further explain that content analysis is based on interpretation and reasoning, where empirical data is processed to form a more concrete view on the phenomenon that is being researched. Dörnyei (2007: 257) adds that this interpretation is ongoing and takes place during the whole process of managing data, starting from collection, even though the main themes are set and final conclusions are made towards the end. The type of content analysis used in this study is referred to as data based content analysis. In this analysis method the framework for analysis is formed by research

methodology and previous knowledge on the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, collected data is processed in a systematic way. As touched on above, in the case of a research interview this includes listening to the recordings made and writing word-for-word transcripts on them, going through the transcripts numerous times and finally forming a concrete view on the phenomenon that was researched. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002: 101-115).

As has been explained above, in the type of data analysis used for this part of the present study the data is arranged or categorized in some manner after a systematic processing phase. The responses that the participant teachers provided for this study were examined in relation to three main themes: the teachers' views on the framework of foreign language teaching in polytechnics, the challenges of foreign language teaching in polytechnics and means used by the teachers to meet the demands of their students and finally, the teachers' understanding of VOLL and LSP and what the teachers emphasise in their teaching. Inside these themes the interview data was further divided into various subthemes according to what was discussed in order to clarify the analysis process. The relevant contributions of the teachers according to the themes outlined above are reported in chapter 4.

Some essential features of the analysis method used for going through the interview data have been pointed out above based on related literature. All in all this section forms a detailed account of what was done when analysing the data collected during the two interview sessions. In the next subchapter the analysis method for the responses to the questionnaire study carried out with the students of the target polytechnic shall be discussed in similar fashion.

3.3.2 Questionnaire data analysis

It has been pointed out on multiple occasions in this thesis that the methodological approach taken to analysing the data collected via the questionnaire is for the most part quantitative. This was mainly because in the case of student participants the focus was primarily not in the opinions of individuals, but in common features of the whole student group, which is a typical feature of quantitative research (Dörnyei 2007: 33). As explained above, however, there was also one question included in the questionnaire responses to which require a more qualitative

approach. The analysis methods used to examine the questionnaire data in the present study shall be described in this section, starting with the quantitative aspect.

Statistical analysis, an archetypal form of quantitative research data analysis, can be divided into two areas, descriptive and inferential. The principal difference between the two is that generalized conclusions should not be drawn based on the results of descriptive analysis due to limitations in the data sample, for example too few research participants (Dörnyei 2007: 209). Based on the fact that there are around 8,500 students in the target polytechnic (checked on the institution's website 15 October 2014, a link not provided to avoid revealing the name) it is fair to argue that data collected from a sample of 163 students does not warrant generalizations. That said, however, it ought to be pointed out that of all 8,500 students many have not even begun their compulsory language studies let alone finished them. Furthermore, a large number are also likely to have completed their language studies elsewhere or otherwise displayed necessary language skills to avoid having to take part in language studies. There are also exchange students to take into account, since they might not be suitable participants for the purposes of this study in any case. Considering all this and that they represent numerous different fields, 163 students is not that small of a number and as mentioned in chapter 3.1 careful, suggestive generalizations are what the present study aimed for when it comes to students' views on language teaching. For this reason, aspects of inferential statistical analysis were employed regarding the questionnaire data in this thesis.

The statistical significance or statistical validity of research data is a particular area of interest in inferential analysis. Phakiti (2010: 45) sums up statistical validity as a question of "whether or not the statistical finding is true or incidental (i.e. found by chance)". Dörnyei (2007: 210) elaborates on the issue by explaining that a result is statistically non-significant e.g. if a researcher cannot be sure if it only occurred in that particular sample because of the possible uniqueness of the participant group. A concrete example of this could be a situation where learning results of students who study in a certain school class are found outstanding. In this example it would be untrue to say that the results of all students in the school are outstanding. In other words, as intriguing as the finding may have been, it is statistically non-significant. Dörnyei (2007: 210) and Phakiti (2010: 45) provide instructions on how to calculate if research results are statistically valid based on the size of the sample and the size of the larger group presented by the sample. However, for the present study it was not reasonable to find out the exact number of students in the target polytechnic who have completed their

compulsory language studies and done so in this particular institution. Therefore, proper calculations could not be made to indicate the official statistical significance of the results of this study. As stated above, while the number of student participants for this study might not be undisputedly extensive, it is not minimal either and due to the sample not being too unique in the sense that it consists of students from many different fields, the liberty of making careful generalizations was taken. A factor that supports doing so is that the results are quite consistent, i.e. a clear majority of students felt similarly about the issues raised.

It should be pointed out here that the questionnaire conducted for this study was fairly straightforward in nature and for this reason many points e.g. about statistical analysis are not relevant here. Therefore, the approach taken to analysing the data was fairly simple. The purposes of the present study did not require, for instance, cross-tabulation or examining correlations (Dörnyei 2007: 223-230). What is more, as there was a specific desire not to differentiate between students of different fields, the participant group was quite homogenous, which added to the straightforwardness of the analysis process. The 1 to 5 questions were analysed based on the frequency each response option was chosen at. The relative frequency of responses, i.e. the percentages at which each five options were selected, is presented (Alanen 2011: 157). The students' views and attitudes were then interpreted according to these numbers. The responses of those students who have taken voluntary language studies were also compared to those who have not, to see if there was a difference in attitude towards compulsory language studies and VOLL.

The analysis of the contributions students provided to the open-ended question, as has been noted, required a different, more qualitative approach. The type of open question used in this case is a clarification question (Dörnyei 2009: 38), only instead of requesting clarification to a specific question, it focuses on the entire questionnaire and provides the chance to express one's thoughts on the subject matter as a whole. The broad nature of the responses required the use of similar content analysis methods as described in chapter 3.3.1, where the content of the contributions, in other words what was said, was systematically processed to discover issues of interest. Accordingly to what is discussed by Dörnyei (2009: 99), these findings were then reduced to a pool of key issues and roughly categorized to be compared. The most interesting points were finally selected to be raised in the results section.

As mentioned above, the program used for carrying out the questionnaire survey was Google Drive. The program has a tool for displaying responses in a neat and appropriately analyzable form at least for the purposes of this study, which ruled out having to go through the arduous task of feeding the responses into a separate computer program and calculating percentages etc., which e.g. Dörnyei (2009: 83) has lamented. It also adds to the reliability of the results, since the human element of making mistakes when recording responses due to e.g. tiredness is eliminated. As e.g. Dörnyei (2009: 93) and Alanen (in Kalaja et al. 2011: 159) state, the reliability and validity of questionnaire data are crucially important to consider when analysing the data. Overall it can be argued that the reliability and validity of this particular questionnaire survey are very high, since it measures attitudes and opinions instead of, for example, behaviour or proficiency of some kind, and as to the questionnaire format and context, there is no reason to assume that the opinions expressed by the respondents are anything other than those of their own. After all, the respondents are grown-up students who filled in the questionnaire using a computer device of some sort in a room of their choice where e.g. any kind of peer influence was unlikely to have existed, compared to, say, a teenager filling in a paper questionnaire in a classroom context sitting next to one's peers. Furthermore, the questions were constructed in such a way that they really measure what they were meant to measure and there is arguably also a good internal consistency to the questions, i.e. they measure the same desired target area (Dörnyei 2009: 93-96).

In chapter 3 the methods of data collection and analysis used for the purposes of the present study were described, along with the thought process of forming the research questions. As was established, the phases that were gone through in order to get to the results of the research interview and the questionnaire survey were manifold. The focus of the next chapters is to showcase these results, starting from the interview sessions conducted with teachers.

4 POLYTECHNIC FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' THOUGHTS ON TEACHING AND VOLL

4.1 Teachers' views on the framework of foreign language teaching in polytechnics

4.1.1 Teachers' understanding of the polytechnic decree

In this chapter the most interesting and relevant points that arose from the interview data are reported according to the themes described in chapter 3.3.1. This is done by providing excerpts of the data in which relevant issues are enlarged upon and issuing brief explanations as to what is discussed. The examples have been numbered for reference in the chapter of this thesis where the results are discussed and analyzed. To avoid confusing these data samples later on with excerpts of the contributions of students, the examples presented in this chapter have been marked with the letter *t* (as in teacher). The teachers were given pseudonyms in order to both ease referring to their contributions and to maintain their anonymity.

The first subject matter to be examined here is how the teachers felt about the framework set for foreign language teaching in polytechnics, which was comprehensively described in chapter 1. The interviews began with a question about the polytechnic decree, explained in chapter 1.1. The teachers were read the decree and it was pointed out to them that the goals set for teaching in the decree appear quite demanding for teachers, considering that there might only be one or two courses in which to help students achieve the required level of proficiency and that teachers might teach students of many different fields. The teachers were then asked what kind of thoughts the things mentioned above provoked in them and if they felt it is possible in practice to achieve what is asked in the polytechnic decree. Some of the teachers' thoughts on the topic are exemplified in the data excerpts below.

- (t1) *Saku*: Kyllä se siis sillä tavalla [on toteutettavissa] että ainakin tuohon suuntaan me ollaan koko ajan kursseja suunniteltu...
 (*Saku*: It is [possible to achieve] at least in the sense that we have been planning courses in that way all along...)

(t2) *Elisa*: ...englanti on sellainen jossa pystytään tähän, ruotsi...ehkä huonommin, mutta sitten nää meidän vapaasti valittavat [kielet] jotka lähtee monta kertaa nollassa niin sehän on täyttä utopia tietenkin.

(*Elisa*: ...in the case of English this can be achieved, Swedish...maybe not as well, but then our optional [languages], which often start with students having zero ability in the language, then it is of course pure utopia.)

(t3) *Maria*: ...minulla...on pakollisista kursseista...venäjän kulttuuri ja kieli, ja se on erittäin haastava, koska minulla on vain 30...tuntia, ja minun pitää opettaa kulttuuria ja kieltä, että he [opiskelijat] voivat palvella venäläisiä asiakkaita, ja minun mielestäni se on aika utopistista [olettaa että laki toteutuu kirjaimellisesti], että jos aloitetaan kirjaimista... tärkeää on saavuttaa se...että he haluavat jatkossa opiskella venäjää...sitten he tulevat tavallaan saavuttamaan sitä oikeaa kielitaitoa...

(*Maria*: Out of the compulsory courses, I teach...Russian Language and Culture and it is a very challenging one, because I only have 30...lessons and I have to teach culture and language so that they [the students] can serve Russian customers, and I think it is pretty unrealistic [to presume that the goals in the decree could be achieved literally] if the students start by learning the letters...what is important to achieve is...that they want to continue studying Russian...then they will, in a way, gain real language skills...)

As the issue discussed here is quite multidimensional in itself, it was to be expected that many different points would arise and the examples above show that this was indeed the case. In example t1 Saku explained that course planning has aimed at carrying out the instructions given in the polytechnic decree all along and that in this sense it is realistic to say that the goals set in the decree can be achieved in practice. In the following excerpt t2 Elisa took a more detailed approach and said that in English studies the goals can be achieved, but that it is not as likely with Swedish, not to mention the optional languages which students have no ability in when they begin their studies. It should be mentioned again here that, as explained in chapter 1.1, Swedish is a national language of Finland and so the polytechnic decree does not apply to it in this aspect, thus it is not necessary to discuss Swedish further in relation to this particular issue. It is said in the decree that a sufficient skill level should be demonstrated in one or two foreign languages, but it is not further specified. Presumably the decree does not apply to optional languages mentioned by Elisa, particularly if students complete only few courses with no previous ability, in which case a very high skill level cannot be expected.

The situation is slightly more complex in the case of compulsory Russian studies that were described by Maria in sample t3. During the interview, Maria explained that students in the degree programme of Tourism and Hospitality have one compulsory Russian course, which, as stated in the example above, almost all students start without any ability in the language. Seeing that the course is compulsory, at least some ability in the language is clearly thought to be necessary for coping in future working life for graduates of the degree programme in question. However, as Maria explained in sample t3, within the limits of a single course

nothing very advanced can be achieved, especially when the students have to start by learning the Cyrillic alphabet. This introduces a separate issue, which Essi and Maria commented on in examples t4 and t5 presented below.

- (t4) *Essi*: ...se nyt on vähän tulkinnanvarainen se että mikä se tarvittava taso on...
(*Essi*: It is somewhat up for interpretation what the required skill level is...)
- (t5) *Maria*: ...se mitä [lakiasetus] paperissa lukee on yksi asia (Teemu ja Essi nauravat) mutta sitten opettaja tekee paikan päällä omia ratkaisuja tietysti.
(*Maria*: ...what is written [in the polytechnic decree] is one thing (Teemu and Essi laugh), but teachers of course make their own decisions in the classroom.)

As Essi and Maria pointed out in these excerpts, it has not been really specified what the skill level required in the polytechnic decree actually is and it is mainly left to the teachers' discretion what kind of course requirements they place. For example Maria, as she said in example 3, also emphasises the studying of Russian culture instead of merely teaching language and vocabulary related to tourism and she stresses the importance of inspiring students to continue studying Russian so that they can truly learn the language. Therefore and particularly since for most students English is likely to be the one foreign language that they have to demonstrate the kind of ability in that is described in the polytechnic decree, it could be said that there was a feeling among teachers that the requirements of the decree are at least somewhat realistic.

The last data samples presented in relation to the topic discussed in this section introduce yet another important point about students' language skills. The quotes in examples t6 and t7 were provided by Essi and Teemu.

- (t6) *Essi*: Minusta...hirveen paljon näillä resurssimäärillä ja tuntimäärillä mitä meillä on, on kiinni siitä että minkälainen se taso on jo siinä vaiheessa kun ne tulee tänne...
(*Essi*: I think...with the resources and number of lessons we have, terribly much depends on what the skill level is already when they [students] come here...)
- (t7) *Teemu*: Me ei voida semmosta hirveää tasonnostoa välttämättä suorittaa, että se työ on oikeestaan tehty jo tänne tullessa...
(*Teemu*: We cannot necessarily improve students' skills to a great extent, the work is already done before they come here, really...)

Both teachers expressed the view that as far as students' language proficiency is considered as such, with the quite limited amount of language studies most students take or are obligated to complete, a lot depends on what the skill level of students is already when they start their studies in the target polytechnic. As explained in chapter 2.5.1, it is possible that there are

even quite significant differences in the proficiency of students at the beginning of their polytechnic studies. In these two teachers' experience not much can necessarily be done to improve students' language proficiency within the constraints of compulsory courses, which there is oftentimes only one of per language. By saying this, however, Essi and Teemu presumably meant improving proficiency in a completely literal sense, as in e.g. learning new grammar items. On the grounds of the above comments and everything that was discussed in this section, it can be concluded that the overall feeling of teachers concerning the requirements of the polytechnic decree is that they can be achieved in practice, provided that the interpretation of the requirements is not too strict and literal.

4.1.2 The influence in course planning of guidelines and the EHEA project

In relation to the framework of foreign language teaching in polytechnics, the teachers were asked if they are familiar with the Council of Europe's EHEA project and the Bologna Declaration, explained in detail in chapter 1.3, and whether teachers considered such matters when planning courses. The primary values that the EHEA project promotes, which are internationality, foreign language skills and intercultural competence, were also read to the teachers in order to demonstrate what a central role language teachers have in carrying out the EHEA agenda. The answers given to this question were quite similar and they are illustrated in examples t8, t9 and t10.

(t8) *Raili*: ...ne [arvot] on ehkä meillä niin automaattisesti selkäytimessä et niitä miettii aina kun tekee jonkun kurssin, ne on aina siellä. Ja viime vuosina vielä korostuu kansainvälisyys, ehdottomasti.

(*Raili*: ... those [values] are perhaps so automatically deep-rooted in us that you consider them every time you plan a course, they are always there. And for the last few years internationality has been emphasised more, absolutely.)

(t9) *Elisa*: ...mun mielestä kieltä ei voi opettaa irrallaan näistä asioista, että se on niinku automaatti.

(*Elisa*: ...I think language cannot be taught separately from these issues, it is like automatic.)

(t10) *Essi*: ...nääh asiat mitä luettelit niin totta kai ne kuuluu kielten opetukseen ja automaattisesti kulkee siinä mukana. Ja on kansainvälisiä opiskelijaryhmiä ja näin. Mutta ihan Bolognan prosessi niinkun prosessina ei ehkä [ole mielessä]...

Haastattelija: Joo en mä suoranaisesti niin sitä [tarkoittanut kysyä], että sen kanssa valvois yönsä.

Essi: (naurua)

(*Essi*: ...these things you listed, of course they are a part of teaching languages and automatically go along with that. And there are international student groups and so on. But the Bologna Declaration, as a Declaration, is maybe not [so much in mind]...)

Interviewer: Yeah I did not mean [to ask] if you lose sleep over it.

Essi: (laughs.)

The idea behind the question was to find out if these kinds of guidelines and regulations that are provided by a body as distant to polytechnics as the Council of Europe directly affect the work of polytechnic foreign language teachers. As demonstrated in the excerpts above, this is not something that teachers spend time thinking about when planning courses. All three teachers quoted here were of the opinion that the values listed above cannot be neglected when teaching foreign languages in any case, and the word *automatic* was used by all of them when discussing including these values in teaching. In fact, when this question was asked from the teachers, Teemu stated that he had not even heard about the Bologna Declaration, which probably best describes how much teachers think about it when they plan courses.

The teachers did have more to say as far as other kinds of guidelines were considered. They were asked if they had received any other kind of guidance or support in general for course planning, similar to e.g. schools of compulsory education and upper secondary schools, where the National Curriculum for Finnish Schools, introduced in chapter 1.1, along with the textbooks that are used largely define what the contents of a certain foreign language course should be. This question was accompanied by a follow-up question as to whether the teachers actually needed or even wanted such further guidance. Some of the answers provided to these questions are quoted below.

- (t11) *Teemu*: Mä en tiedä että olis enkä kyllä kaipaakaan, että mä nautin siitä vapaudesta...mikä meillä on.
Essi: ...ne tietyt semmoset yleisraamit on, että näitä ja näitä asioita [sisällytettävä kursseihin] suunnilleen, mutta...se alakohtainen osio...saattaa mulla olla joka ryhmän kanssa erilainen.
Teemu: ...onhan meillä niinkun opettajien kesken...englanti-ruotsitiimi, jossa on sovittu mitä asioita ne opintojaksot...vähintään pitää sisällään, että meillä on joku yhteinen linja...et ei me aivan villinä sooloilla kuitenkaan.
(Teemu: I am not aware of any [other kind of guidance], and I do not want any. I enjoy the freedom...that we have.
Essi: ...the certain general frames [for course planning] are there, that these and these things [should be included in courses] roughly, but...the field specific part...in my case might be different with every group.
Teemu: ...we do have with other teachers...the English-Swedish team, where we have agreed what courses should include by default, so we do have a certain common policy...so we are not completely improvising as far as our teaching goes.)
- (t12) *Raili*: ...nyt kun meille tulee tää OPS uudistus...uudet OPS:it tulee ens syksynä voimaan, niin siellä saattaa olla jotain tämmösiä yleis [ohjeita]
(Raili: ...now that we are getting a new curriculum...new curriculums will come into effect next autumn, there might be some general [instructions].)

(t13) *Saku*: ...meidän yks tämmönen tuki tai semmonen on...et mehän ollaan laadittu opetussuunnitelmat siten, et meillä on tota [AMK:n kieliopintolaki] tarkemmat...et kyllähän esimerkiks uus opettaja varsinkin niin hänen kannattaa lähteä sitä opetustaan suunnittelemaan nimenomaan sieltä käsin...mut että niinku muuta tukee...tää voi olla ihan henkilökohtainen tuntemus, mut että jos mulle lyödään oppikirja käteen niin mä jotenkin ahdistun...

Raili: Kuin myös.

(*Saku*: ...a kind of support for us is...that we have planned the syllabi so that we have more accurate [guidelines than given in the polytechnic decree]...so for example a new teacher in particular, he or she should start planning their teaching from there...but as far as other support...this might just be my personal feeling, but if someone sticks a textbook in my hand I get distressed somehow...

Raili: likewise.)

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.2, the interviews took place in March 2014. In example t12 Raili explained that a new curriculum would come into effect the next autumn that might include some general guidelines as to what should be included in language courses, implying that the curriculum in use at the time of interviewing did not include such instructions, or at least nothing very significant. This idea was supported by Teemu in example t11, who said that he was not aware of any general guidance similar to what is described above. What is more, Teemu was adamant that he sees this as a solely positive thing and enjoys the freedom of polytechnic language teachers. This view was quite clearly echoed by Saku and Raili in data sample t13, where they stated that textbooks in fact make them distressed. In excerpts t11 and t13 Essi, Teemu and Saku did elaborate that the teachers themselves have collaborated on syllabi and agreed on content that courses should include by default, so there are some general frames for course planning, but they were created by the teachers themselves.

4.2 The challenges of foreign language teaching in polytechnics and means used by teachers to meet the demands of students

4.2.1 Polytechnic language teachers' approaches to course planning

In order to gain insight on the process of course planning the teachers were asked what means and tools they have used to be able to provide teaching that meets the demands of students of all the different fields they teach. Some examples of what these tools might be like were provided in chapters 2.2 and 2.3. Discussing the answers given to the question presented above has been separated into two sections; in section 4.2.1 more general ways of approaching course planning are examined and in section 4.2.2 the focus will be on the

cooperation between polytechnic language teachers and vocational subject teachers. In data excerpts t14, t15 and t16 below some examples are given of teachers' course planning process.

- (t14) *Saku*: ...tutustumalla...siltä alalta julkaistuihin kielen oppikirjoihin...
Elisa ja Raili: (myötäilyä)
Saku: ...se on varmasti ensimmäinen [kurssisuunnittelun keino], että sellasia tulee selailtua ja sitte rupee niinku sit sitä kautta paneen sitä omaa kokonaisuutta kasaan...
Raili: ...moneenhan alaan ei oo olemassa oppikirjoja, jolloin meidän täytyy se materiaali työstää täysin ite...Googlataan sitten.
Saku: Joo Google, siis haetaan paljon tekstiä...ja tällasia erilaisia kokonaisuuksia just, eri ammattien kuvauksia esimerkiks...myöskin se että tuota, ne tietyt...peruselementit on aina...edelleen mun mielestä kuitenkin samoja että, alasta riippumatta opiskelijan pitää oppia viestimään, esimerkiks käyttämään sähköpostia...
Raili: (myötäilee)
Saku: ...käymään kokouksia, pitämään esitelmiä, käymään puhelinkeskusteluja jne., että aika monet tämmöset asiat on sitten myöskin universaaleja...
(Saku: ...by getting to know...the foreign language textbooks published in that field...
Elisa and Raili: (expressing agreement)
Saku: ...that is surely the first [tool of course planning], that you browse through those and then begin to build your own ensemble...
Raili: ...for many fields there are no textbooks, in which case we have to create the material completely by ourselves...then we Google.
Saku: Yeah Google, we search for a lot of text...and these different kinds of ensembles, descriptions of different professions for example...there is also the point that, those certain...basic elements are always...still the same, that, no matter what the field a student needs to learn how to communicate, for example to use e-mail...
Raili: (expressing agreement)
Saku: ...to have meetings, give presentations, have telephone conversations etc., so quite many of these things are universal as well...)
- (t15) *Raili*: Joo sit yks kanssa on et käytetään, tehdään paljon yhteistyötä kollegoiden [kieltenopettajien] kesken.
Elisa: Joo se on kyllä ihan hyvä huomio että kollegoilta saa tosi paljon apua.
(Raili: Yeah then one thing we use is that, we collaborate a lot with colleagues [language teachers].
Elisa: Yeah that is a good point that you receive a lot of help from colleagues.)
- (t16) *Essi*: ...ihan ensimmäinen askel [kurssisuunnittelussa] itelle oli silloin kun tänne tuli niin ihan näiden lähikollegoiden apu...
(Essi: ...there very first step [in course planning] for me when I came here was the help of close [language teacher] colleagues...)

In example t14 Saku and Raili explained that an important tool in course planning for them has been consulting foreign language textbooks that have been published in the field the students of which they are planning a course for. A difference should be made here between consulting textbooks like Saku and Raili do and using a textbook that has been specifically designed for the course being taught and basing one's teaching on it, as is often done e.g. in schools of compulsory education. As Saku and Raili mentioned in excerpt t13, they in fact dislike having to base a course on a textbook designed for it. What they said they like to do is searching for material e.g. by using Google, as stated in example t14, and building their

courses that way. In the same data sample Saku provided an interesting further view, which Raili expressed agreement with, that course planning in polytechnics always includes certain universal elements that students have to learn no matter what the field, such as communicating via e-mail and on the telephone.

Another important source of help in planning courses that was named by Raili, Elisa and Essi in excerpts t15 and t16 is the help of fellow language teachers. This matter was also brought forward in chapter 2.4 and it was stressed that it is not only important for language teachers to cooperate with vocational subject teachers, but also with their colleagues. Essi highlighted the point that when she first started working in the target polytechnic consulting the experience and knowledge of more senior teachers was the first step for her in the process of planning courses. The quotes by Raili and Elisa also show that the collaboration between language teachers is ongoing and the nature of it is not just that experienced teachers give advice to novice teachers.

Maria in turn provided a comment where she introduced yet another very interesting aspect to planning the Russian courses she teaches. The data excerpt in which this topic is discussed can be found below.

(t17) *Maria*: ...minä olin työelämässä [Venäjällä] ennen kuin tulin Suomeen...[minulla on] tosi laaja semmonen työkokemus...totta kai minä pystyn niitä [kokemuksiani] käyttämään erittäin hyvin ja heitä [opiskelijoita] juuri kiinnostaa tämmönen oikee tieto [työelämästä Venäjällä]...pitää [myös kurssisuunnittelua varten] koko ajan seurata mitä yhteiskunnassa tapahtuu...tänä päivänä varmasti tuo Ukraina ja Venäjä tulee esille, ja se on erittäin tärkeä koska se on koko ajan tavallaan elävä kurssi...heidän kanssa me puhutaan ihan kaikesta koska ne myös liittyvät, vaikka se on ehkä kaukana asiakaspalvelusta mutta heidän suhtautuminen ja ymmärtäminen on tosi tärkeää, miksi esim. homoliittoja meillä [Venäjällä] ei ole sallittu ja näin eteenpäin...
(Maria: ...I was in working life [in Russia] before I came to Finland...[I have] a very broad kind of working experience...of course I can use them [my experiences] very well and they [the students] are interested in this kind of real knowledge [about working life in Russia]... I also have to follow [for course planning] constantly what is going on in society...at the moment [the conflict between] Ukraine and Russia emerges, and it is very important to follow because the course sort of changes constantly...we discuss everything with the students because they are related to, even though it might be far away from customer service, but their attitude and understanding is extremely important, why e.g. gay marriages are not allowed [in Russia] and so forth...

First of all, Maria explained that her own background and broad working experience from the time she still lived in Russia has an important role in her course planning, because she felt that students are interested in hearing stories from real life. Secondly, she stressed the significance of keeping up with the events taking place in society and discussing even difficult topics, such

as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and gay rights issues in Russia, with her students. The reason for this, she felt, is that students' attitudes towards Russia and Russians and their understanding of Russian culture are crucially related to their ability to serve Russian customers in their future profession in the field of tourism. This is related to what Maria said in example t3 about making students want to continue studying Russian after the compulsory course. In other words, it is also related to the part in the polytechnic decree about providing students with language skills that enable future development, which Maria felt should be the main focus of the compulsory Russian course she is teaching, where students have no previous ability in the language.

One last point about the general subject area discussed in this section that should receive a mention here is the possibility of teachers collaborating with students, the method which was introduced briefly in chapter 2.2. In the examples below Teemu and Elisa described their experiences about using this particular method.

(t18) *Teemu*: Ja joskus ihan turvautuu sitten opiskelijoihin...

Essi: (myötäilee)

Teemu: ...että antakaapa vinkkejä vaikka niinku seuraavaa toteutusta varten, että jättetekö kaipaamaan jotain, että mikä vielä vois olla semmosta niinku keskeistä teidän alalla.

(*Teemu*: And sometimes you rely on students...

Essi: (expressing agreement)

Teemu: ...that well, give some tips for example, like, for next time the course is carried out, that did you miss something, what else could be, like, central in your field.)

(t19) *Elisa*: ...yhteistyö opiskelijoiden kanssa...he on oman alansa asiantuntijoita ja me toivottavasti ees jonkunlaisia kieliasiantuntijoita, jolloin se yhteistyö on aika mukavaa, eli he varmaan kokee aika kivana sen, että tuo mollikka ei nyt tiiä yhtään mitään mitä se nyt puhuu, ja voi vähän niinku opettaa opettajaa sitten niistä asioista.

(*Elisa*: ...collaboration with students...they are experts in their own field and we are hopefully at least some sort of language experts, which makes the cooperation pretty nice, so they probably think it is quite nice that, OK well that fool does not have a clue what she is talking about, and they can almost like teach the teacher about those things.)

In excerpt t18 Teemu explained that sometimes, presumably at the end of a course, he asks the students for things that they perhaps would have liked to be included in the course in case he missed something, so that he can add it in the next time he teaches that course. Elisa has taken the collaboration with students a bit further, as she described in example t19. According to her, she sometimes relies on the students' expertise of the field they are studying and lets them teach her, as it were, about the essential things in their field. This, she thought, is seen as pleasant and motivating by the students. The matter of polytechnic students and language teachers collaborating will be returned to in later chapters, along with other essential results

that arose from the data. In the next section the focus is on another kind of collaboration relevant to the present study.

4.2.2 Collaboration between language teachers and vocational subject teachers

Even though collaboration among language teachers has been deemed important as well, a particular point of interest for the present study about the means foreign language teachers use to gain expertise in the fields their students study was if they cooperate with vocational subject teachers, a subject matter which was discussed in chapter 2.4. The teachers gave differing responses for this question. The first data samples to exemplify this are presented below.

(t20) *Raili*: ...tässähän varmaan kannattaa ottaa huomioon se, et silloin kun kielikeskus perustettiin vuonna 2001...niin sitä ennen kaikki kielenopettajat oli...niin sanotusti aloilla...eli silloin se yhteistyö oli tiiviimpää, lähes vois sanoa että päivittäistä...kielikeskuksen perustamisen jälkeen se yhteistyö on vähentynyt oleellisista syistä johtuen...että...ainakaan mä en hirveen paljon tee yhteistyötä.

(*Raili*: ...it should probably be taken into account here that when the language centre was established in 2001...before that all language teachers were...as it were, working in the field [students of which they were teaching languages to]...then the cooperation [with vocational subject teachers] was more frequent, it could almost be said daily...after the language centre was established that cooperation has decreased due to essential reasons...so...at least I do not collaborate that much.)

(t21) *Saku*: ...se on varmasti totta joo et sitä [yhteistyötä] ei oo sillä tavalla ja tuota, kielikeskuksen perustamisvaiheessa...jossakin määrin laitettiin painetta myöskin meidän kurssisuunnitteluun liittyen...että ne kurssit pitäis pääosiltaan olla enemmän sellasia...jonne kuka tahansa...opiskelija alasta riippumatta voisi tulla.

(*Saku*: ...it is probably true that it [cooperation with vocational subject teachers] does not take place so much, and when the language centre was established...also some pressure was put on our course planning...that the courses should largely be such...that any...student could attend them no matter what the field.)

Raili introduced an interesting matter in example t20 that before the establishment of the language centre in 2001 all language teachers had specialized in the fields the students of which they were teaching languages to, which caused collaboration with vocational subject teachers to be very active. She continued that since then that collaboration has decreased due to reasons that she did not really elaborate on, but presumably one of them was the one that Saku referred to in example t21, which was the hope of the administration that courses were planned in a way that, to a certain extent, enabled the attendance of any student in any compulsory language course. Saku also expressed agreement with Raili's statement that cooperation does not take place in a significant amount. Furthermore, Raili confirmed that she herself does not cooperate with vocational subject teachers very much anymore either.

However, as was mentioned above, differing experiences were also brought forward, and they are illustrated in the following examples.

(t22) *Essi*: ...se [yhteistyö ammattiaineiden opettajien kanssa] ...riippuu vähän alastakin, et mulla on itellä nyt, käyn tuolla...siellä on...biotalousinstituutti, ja siellä oon ...samassa tilassa niiden opettajien ja sen henkilökunnan kanssa niin on tosi läheisiäkin...yhteistyökuvioita syntynyt...mut jos on niinkun hirveen monella alalla [opettamassa] niin eihän siihen tietysti ihan aika riitä...perusteelliseen [yhteistyöhön].

(*Essi*: ...it [cooperating with vocational subject teachers]...depends a bit on the field, I myself go...where there is...the Institute of Bioeconomy and in there I am...in the same room with those teachers and the staff, so I have collaborated [with those teachers] even quite closely...but if one is [teaching] in a lot of different fields, of course then there is no time [to cooperate] very thoroughly.)

(t23) *Teemu*: ...tällä hetkellä itellä on aika paljon semmosia opintojaksoja mistä on...semmonen olo et ymmärtää myöskin sitä alaa sen verran, että pystyy ihan hyvin fiiliksin sitä opettamaan, mutta mä muistan joskus nuorena poikana mä opetin esimerkiks hyvinvointiteknologiaa...ja rakennustekniikkaakin...silloin mä kyselin aika paljon niiden niinku substanssiaineiden opettajilta neuvoja, että mitä oikeesti teidän alalla on...ja sit ku sai siitä pienen käsityksen...pysty...sen turvin jatkamaan ite...esim. noiden laboranttien, mitä silloin vielä oli, käytiin ihan niiden omissa labroissa ja tehtiin siellä juttuja ruotsiks, jotain keitoksia ja savu nousi ja tämmöstä ihan mukavaa.

(*Teemu*: ...at the moment I have quite a lot of courses that I have...a feeling about that I understand the field enough to feel good about teaching it, but I remember as a young boy I taught for example wellness technology...and construction engineering...then I asked quite a lot of advice from the, like, vocational subject teachers, that what is really included in their field...and after I got a slight idea about it...I could continue by myself based on that...e.g. with the lab workers that were still around at the time, we visited their labs and did things in Swedish, some kind of cooking and there was smoke, this kind of nice stuff.)

Both Essi and Teemu had experienced quite close cooperation with vocational subject teachers and Teemu in particular stressed the importance of it in the process of evolving as a teacher. However, Teemu did state that the cooperation had taken place more in the past when he was more inexperienced as a teacher and that he is currently not collaborating notably. Essi, on the other hand, stated that the amount of cooperation in some ways depends on the field of the students that are being taught. It should be pointed out that the situation she described at the Institute of Bioeconomy seems to have been somewhat exceptional in the sense that she had to travel to a different town, the name of which was left out of the quote to avoid compromising the anonymity of the target polytechnic, and to a completely separate campus. Therefore, it might have been more automatic for her to have discussions and trade knowledge with vocational subject teachers there than in the building she normally works in. The reason for pointing out these matters in the quotes was by no means to belittle the experiences of collaboration Teemu and Essi described; on the contrary, the quotes were chosen to highlight that collaboration indeed does take place. The point was merely to avoid creating an idea that there is a great contrast between these views and the ones provided by

Saku and Raili, when that is not the case. For example, as can be seen when comparing data samples t20 and t23, both Raili and Teemu stated that they have collaborated with vocational subject teachers a lot in the past but not as much at the moment. So even though there were interesting differences in the two sets of quotes, there were similarities as well.

4.2.3 Challenges of polytechnic language teachers' work

Another question that the teachers were asked was what is most challenging about their work and how challenging they consider their work to be in general. Once again, there were similarities but also great differences in the answers, which can be concluded from the examples below.

- (t24) *Saku*: Ajan riittävyys varmaan.
Raili: ...Ja semmonen ajoittainen hirvee kiire.
Saku: Joo, töitten kasaantuminen sitten tietyille ajanjaksoille.
Raili: Joo, joille itse ei voi mitään. Se on ehkä se hankalin.
 (*Saku*: Having enough time I suppose.
Raili: ...And the occasional terrible haste.
Saku: Yeah, work piling up at certain periods of time.
Raili: Yeah, that you cannot do anything about yourself. That is probably most difficult.)
- (t25) *Teemu*: Uskaltaako tunnustaa? Tää on tosi mukavaa ja helppoa, ei oo mitään murheita mulla.
Essi, Maria ja haastattelija: (naurua)
Teemu: En tee ilta- enkä viikonlopputöitä.
Essi: Teemu on kyllä niin taitava.
 (*Teemu*: Dare I confess? This is really nice and easy, I have got no worries at all.
Essi, Maria and the interviewer: (laughter)
Teemu: I do not work in the evenings or during the weekends.
Essi: Teemu is so good at that.)
- (t26) *Essi*: ...jotenkin toivois että sitä suht pientä resurssimäärää mitä on aina yhtä opintojaksoa kohti, niin vois enemmän käyttää [aikaa] ohjaukseen ja opetukseen...
 (*Essi*: ...somehow you wish that you could use the quite small amount of resources [time] that we have per one course more on teaching and guidance.)
- (t27) *Teemu*: Jos miettii jotain aloittelevaa AMK-opettajaa...se kun tyyliin tyhjästä A4:sta lähetään liikkeelle [kurssisuunnittelussa]...
Essi ja Maria: (myötäilevät)
Teemu: ...niin sen oman materiaalipankin kasvattaminen ja rakentaminen ja ehkä sitten se, että jaksaa joka vuosi ees jollain tapaa ees vähän uudistua, se voi olla vähän sitä haastetta.
 (*Teemu*: If you consider a polytechnic teacher who is just starting work...when you begin [course planning] from a blank A4 sheet...
Essi and Maria: (expressing agreement)
Teemu: ...building up your own material reserves and having the energy to think of at least something new to your teaching every year, that might be a bit of a challenge.)

(t28) *Essi*: ...englannin suhteen on se, että...opiskelijoiden kielitaito...samassa ryhmässä voi olla semmosia, jotka puhuu todella hyvin ja kirjoittaa todella hyvin ja sitten on niitä joille tuottaa tuskaa esitellä itsensä. Et semmonen haaste siinä kyllä on.

Teemu: Niin ja sitten opettaa niitä kahta joukkoa niinku samaan aikaan.

(*Essi*: ...with English there is [the thing] that...the language skills of students...in the same group there can be those who speak and write really well and then those who can barely introduce themselves. So there is that kind of a challenge.

Teemu: Yes and then you, like, teach those two groups at the same time.)

In excerpts t24 and t26 Saku, Raili and Essi named not having as much time as they would like to follow through with their teaching as a challenge. The first two of these teachers specifically stated that it is the most challenging aspect of their work. Interestingly, however, Teemu in example t25 revealed that he feels his work is free of troubles and that he enjoys every aspect of it. Even though all the teachers that were interviewed generally gave the impression that they truly enjoy their work, Teemu was the only one who felt there is nothing about it that is challenging in a bad way or otherwise unpleasant. Essi's comment in the same example, in which she implied that Teemu is exceptionally skilled in organizing his workload, supported the notion that Teemu is somewhat unique in this sense. That said, even Teemu did express the opinion in example t27 that for novice polytechnic foreign language teachers the work could prove challenging due to them not having accumulated their own material reserves yet. Teemu continued that for the same reason some might also find it demanding to renew and develop their teaching materials or methods. Essi in turn pointed out an additional challenge in example t28, which dealt with the issue of polytechnic students' varying backgrounds mentioned in chapter 2.5.1. As Essi duly noted in the example, it can be challenging for a teacher to take into account the needs of all students in the classroom when they might have such different levels of language proficiency already at the start of the course.

Maria and Elisa brought forward some challenges that are more related to administrative issues than actual teaching work. These issues are discussed in data samples t29 and t30. It ought to be mentioned here that Elisa's comment was actually an answer to the question about collaborating with vocational subject teachers, but it is more suited to be reported in relation to the challenges of teachers' work.

(t29) *Elisa*: ...mua ainakin pelottaa että kun meille...tulee uudet OPS:it että mennään siihen, että meillä tarjotaan vaan niinku jotakin opintojaksoja, johon voi tulla mistä tahansa samaan ryhmään, jolloin se [yhteistyö ammattiaineiden opettajien kanssa] tulee yhä vaikeammaks...silloin kun me aloitettiin [opettamaan] ammattikorkeakoulua...mä oon ite opettanu liiketaloudessa koko ajan, niin siellähän...kaikki oli integroitu...joka oli mun mielestä se ihanne. Jolloin myöskin se yhteistyö oli niinku luontevaa.

(*Elisa*: ...at least I am afraid that when we...get new curriculums the trend is that we only offer, like, courses where groups consist of students of any field and anybody can attend, in which case it [collaboration with vocational subject teachers] becomes even more difficult...when we started [teaching] in polytechnic...I have taught business economics students all along, there...all courses were field specific...which I thought was ideal. That also made the cooperation more natural.)

(t30) *Maria*: ...minä pidän suurimpana haasteena sitä, että varsinkin tänä vuonna meillä on neljän jälkeen alkaa opetus...Ja opiskelijat eivät välttämättä pääse, koska heillä on muita pakollisia, siis ammattikursseja päällekkäin, eli siinä on haaste...muuten on tosi mukavaa.

(*Maria*: ...I consider the biggest challenge to be that especially this year we have, teaching starts after four o'clock...And students cannot necessarily come, because they have other compulsory, I mean vocational subject courses at the same time, so there is a challenge... otherwise work is really nice.)

In example t29 Elisa expressed concern that the new curriculum will change the content of the courses in a way that they are suitable for students of all fields. She carried on to say that at the time she started teaching in the target polytechnic, students in her area of responsibility, which has all along been business economics, only studied in groups where teaching focussed on their field of expertise. Elisa stated that in her opinion this is the ideal way of arranging teaching and was unhappy that this has not been the case anymore for a period of time which she did not specify. In excerpt t30 Maria introduced a challenge that she has had concerning her Russian courses, which was that they overlapped with other courses that were compulsory to students. She found this problematic and understandably so, since it can be difficult to plan teaching when one does not know when students can come to class. However, Maria continued that apart from the issue mentioned above, she likes her work a lot, which, as mentioned above, was the overall impression all teachers respectively gave during the interviews, a few challenges notwithstanding.

4.3 Teachers' understanding of VOLL and LSP and emphasis in teaching

In the last part of the interview the teachers were asked what VOLL or LSP actually mean to them in terms of practical teaching work. To be more precise, the object was to find out whether vocationally oriented language learning in the teachers' opinion is mainly about studying specified professional language and vocabulary or if they feel practising so called

general language skills plays an important role in it as well. Furthermore, a point of interest was if the teachers emphasize either one of these areas in their teaching. As was pointed out in chapter 2.1, some quite differing views have been presented in the past about the meaning and nature of VOLL and LSP. The respondents, however, seemed to be very much of the same opinion on this issue, which can be concluded from the data samples below.

- (t31) *Saku*: No mun, voisko sanoo tällöinen filosofinen näkemys tähän on se, että tuota, jos ihmisellä on hyvä yleis- ja peruskielitaito niin minkään alan erikoiskielen omaksuminen ei tuota silloin vaikeuksia.
Elisa: Mä oon Sakun kanssa tossa ihan samaa mieltä.
Raili: Joo.
Saku: ...et...sanotaanko nyt vaikka sitten et insinööriopiskelija kävis sairaanhoitajille tarkoitettuna englannin kurssin, jos siellä painotukset on oikein niin kyllä se kehittää myöskin sen insinööriopiskelijan englannin taitoa...mä haluaisin nähdä sen alakohtaisuuden enemmän sellasena niinkun lisänä ja mahdollisuutena, mut ei sellasena että, se niinku rajoittais hirveesti...sitä kurssin suunnittelua...
(Saku: Well my philosophical viewpoint, if you will, on this is that if a person has good general and basic language skills, then acquiring specified professional language in any field will not be a problem.
Elisa: I completely agree with Saku on that.
Raili: Yeah.
Saku: ...so if...shall we say an engineering student attended an English course aimed at nurses, if the course contents are emphasised correctly then it will also develop the English skills of that engineering student...I would like to see the field specific part as more like a bonus and an opportunity but not as something that somehow...terribly limits course planning.)
- (t32) *Saku*: Se ammatillisuus...nimenomaan jos aatellaan, niinkun kielitaitoaspektia siinä niin se on todellakin paljon enemmän kuin pelkästään sitä että tietää mikä on pinsetit englanniks...
(Saku: ...the professional competence...precisely if we are thinking about the language skill aspect in it, it absolutely is so much more than just knowing what tweezers are in English...)
- (t33) *Elisa*: ...meillä varmaan painotetaan kaikessa ennen kaikkea...rohkeutta puhua...
Saku ja Raili: (myötäilevät)
Elisa: ...joka sitten on taas...ala mikä hyvänsä niin on hyvin tärkeä, eli...jos se pystytään antamaan, niin silloin on annettu ammatillista osaamista jo aika paljon. Se kielenkäytön, niinku asenne siihen.
(Elisa: ...probably in everything we emphasize first and foremost...the courage to speak...
Saku and Raili: (expressing agreement)
Elisa: ...which is...no matter what the field it is very important, so...if we can provide that, then we have provided [students with] quite a lot of professional competence already. The, like, [positive] attitude to language use.)
- (t34) *Essi*: ...Että kyl se yleinen kommunikointivalmius ja halukkuus, niin on se [tärkein asia]...
(Essi: ...So that general ability and willingness to communicate, that is [the most important thing...)

The excerpts reported above represent very well the whole discussion on the topic and they showed quite clearly what the teachers' viewpoint on the matter is. Saku successfully captured the essence of the issue in example t31 when he pointed out that if a person's basic general language skills are good enough, then it will not be a problem for that person to

develop his or her ability later on. Elisa and Raili directly agreed with Saku's statement and if one compares it to the part in the polytechnic decree that dictates students should have abilities for professional development, they correspond quite perfectly.

In the following data sample, t32, Saku provided further justification that vocationally oriented language learning is not merely about memorizing field specific vocabulary. He argued, very reasonably, that being professionally competent, as far as ability in a foreign language is concerned, means a lot more than knowing some difficult words. As Essi put it in example t34, having the general ability to communicate and not being timid about it is the most essential thing about foreign language competence. Elisa further elaborated on this in example t33 by stressing the importance of being able to communicate orally and having the courage for it, which she explained is a particular focus of attention in the target polytechnic's foreign language teaching. Overall, the positive attitude towards communicating in languages other than one's mother tongue was seen as key and the main thing that teachers wanted to give to their students.

One more point will be reported here that was made during the interviews about the nature of VOLL teaching in Finnish polytechnics, which is related to the future employment prospects of students. Similar thoughts were expressed by other teachers as well, but in the discussion quoted below Elisa summed up the issue well.

(t35) *Elisa*: ...ammattillisesti ajatellen niin sehän on täysin mahdottomuus [opettaa erityiskieltä ja sanastoa, joka sellaisenaan tarjoaisi jokaiselle opiskelijalle kattavat valmiudet tulevaan ammattiin] kun ajattelee, he [saman alan opiskelijat] menee hyvin, hyvin erilaisiin työpaikkoihin, eli se perusta voidaan antaa. Mutta saman alan eri työpaikoissa voi olla käytössä ihan eri termit.

Saku ja Raili: Totta.

Elisa: Eli siinä niinku ruvettais kuuta kurkottaan jos ajattelis et tämmönen...olis ylipäätänsä mun mielestä mahdollista, mutta valmius ettiä sitä tietoa...

Saku ja Raili: (myötäilevät)

Elisa: ...on mun mielestä se mitä me pystytään antamaan.

(*Elisa*: ...thinking about it in a field specific sense it is completely impossible [to teach field specific language and vocabulary that as such would provide every student with comprehensive skills for their future profession] if you consider that they [students of the same field] will work in very, very different jobs, so we can provide the basis. But in work places in the same field completely different terminology can be in use.

Saku and Raili: True.

Elisa: So you would be reaching for the moon if you thought that it...was generally even possible I think, but the ability to search for that knowledge [required for coping in working life]...

Saku ja Raili: (expressing agreement)

Elisa: ...is what I think we can provide.)

In example t35 Elisa explained that it is not reasonable to even try to completely focus one's foreign language teaching according to a specific job description, because students who study the same field may work in very different kinds of jobs in the future. What is more, as Elisa pointed out and Raili and Saku confirmed, in different companies or other work places the terminology being used might be nothing like the one in use in others. As mentioned above, the same point was made by other teachers as well and this further enhanced the view that in the teachers' perspective language teaching in polytechnics should not be specified to excess according to the field of students.

In chapter 4 the most intriguing points that arose during the interview sessions conducted for the purposes of the present study were reported. As the data excerpts that were presented illustrate, the teachers had a lot to say about the topics that were discussed and their contributions were commendable. The results of the research interviews will be discussed in chapter 6. In the next chapter, the most noteworthy occurrences from the data collected via the questionnaire sent to students of the target polytechnic shall be reported.

5 POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS' VIEWS ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES

5.1 Student background and general satisfaction concerning teaching

As explained in chapter 3.2.3, the first two questions of the questionnaire created for this study were designed to ensure all the replies that were received are valid. The students were instructed to only answer the questionnaire if they had completed the foreign language studies that are compulsory to them and if they had done so in the target polytechnic. In spite of these instructions, 8 students who indicated that they did not meet the aforementioned criteria provided answers. Thus, the total number of respondents had to be narrowed from the original 171 to 163 in order to maintain the validity of the results. The total number of participants shall be marked in the following way: $N=163$. As previously mentioned, the third background information question about respondents' possible optional language studies was included to be able to compare the views of those students who had taken extra studies to those who had not. The number of students who had not taken extra studies was 70 ($n_1=70$) and the number of those who had 93 ($n_2=93$). In this section the results of the questionnaire survey are presented so that the overall situation as to the views of students in relation to each question is

displayed first, followed by a comparison between the answers provided by students who had taken optional language studies and those who had not.

The first 1 to 5 question (question 1) dealt with students' overall satisfaction concerning the foreign language teaching they have received in their current polytechnic. As previously explained, in all the 1 to 5 questions the only specific response options were 1 *I strongly disagree* and 5 *I strongly agree* and the participants had to choose the option that best described their feelings out of the five given. It should be repeated here that in this questionnaire option number 3 was not *I do not know* or *I do not have an opinion*, but rather *I somewhat agree* or *things are OK*. The statement presented in question 1 can be translated as follows: *the polytechnic decree (352/2003, 8 §) dictates that a polytechnic student has to demonstrate, either in relation to the language studies included in their degree or by other acceptable means, that he or she has such oral and writing skills in one or two foreign languages that are required in order to cope in future working life and enable professional development. I feel that the foreign language teaching I have received in my polytechnic has served the aforementioned purpose.* It should be pointed out here that, as the questionnaire survey was originally conducted in Finnish, all question statements are translated from Finnish to English. The overall responses to question 1 are displayed in Figure 1. All figures include the number of times each option was chosen along with the percentage that number represents out of all responses.

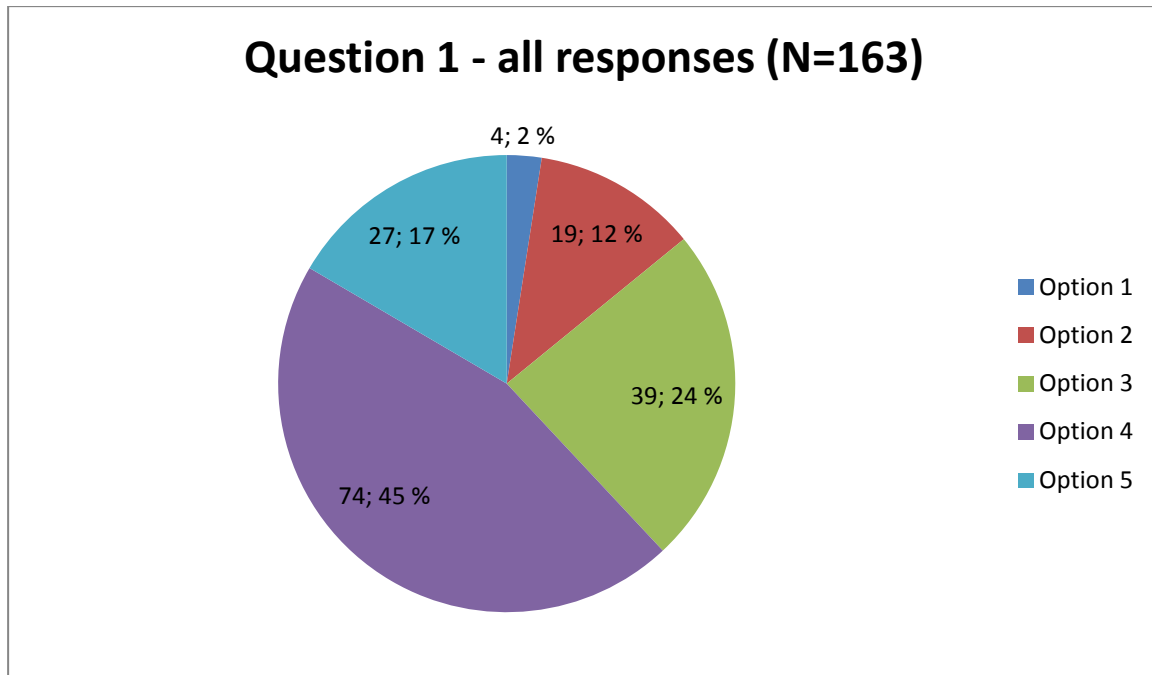


Figure 1. All responses to question 1. General satisfaction of students concerning teaching.

As can be seen above, a clear majority of students agreed with the statement on some level. Only 14% of the respondents expressed disagreement, whereas 62% agreed either strongly or moderately strongly. Figures 2 and 3 show how the responses were divided between students who had taken extra language studies and those who had only completed the compulsory courses. From here on, the figures that represent the answers of students who had not chosen to take optional language courses shall be titled *compulsory* and the figures that showcase the views of those that had done shall be titled *optional*. The same names are also used to refer to the two groups of students.

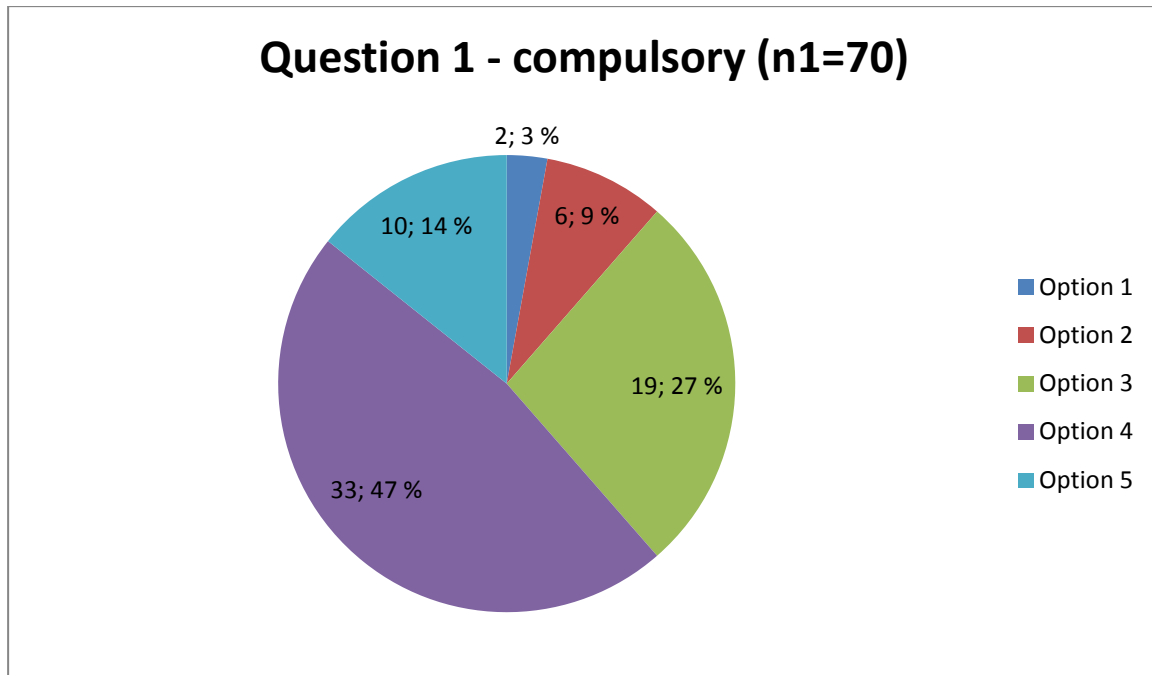


Figure 2. Responses to question 1 of students with no optional language studies.

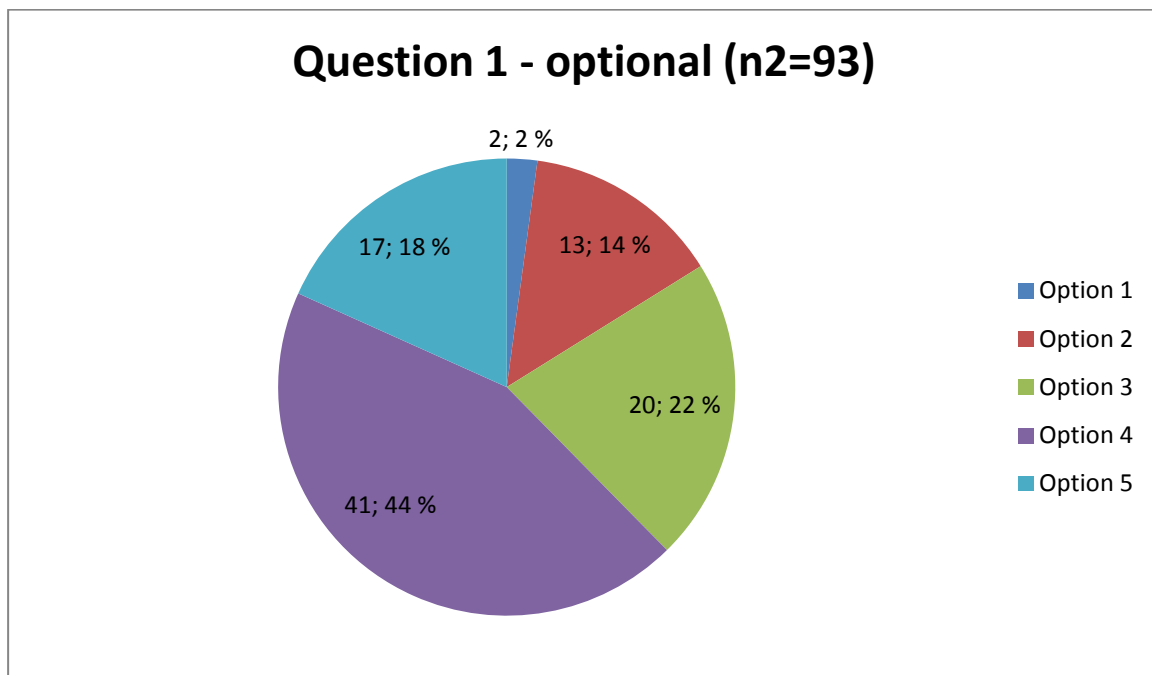


Figure 3. Responses to question 1 of students who had taken optional language studies.

Figures 2 and 3 do not display any major differences between the responses of the two groups. On one hand it could be pointed out that the percentage of those expressing disagreement is somewhat larger in the *optional* group (16% to 12%), but on the other hand the same applies to the number of those who strongly agree (18% to 14%). Perhaps the clearest distinction is the smaller portion of students who chose option 3 in the *optional*

group, but a difference of 5 percentage points between two relatively small groups is not enough to base conclusions on. On the whole, no notable differences can be found in the two figures.

5.2 Student satisfaction concerning emphasis of foreign language teaching

Whereas question one focused on the general level of satisfaction of students, questions 2, 3 and 4 deal with student satisfaction regarding the emphasis of the foreign language teaching they have received. What is meant by emphasis here is the relation of the so called general language or everyday language and field specific language and vocabulary. In other words, did the students feel that the extent to which each of these two aspects of foreign language skills were included in their studies was sufficient and appropriate. The statement in question 2 was *I feel that the foreign language teaching I have received in my polytechnic has focused sufficiently and to an appropriate extent on the field specific language and vocabulary relevant to me*. All responses to question 2 can be seen below in Figure 4.

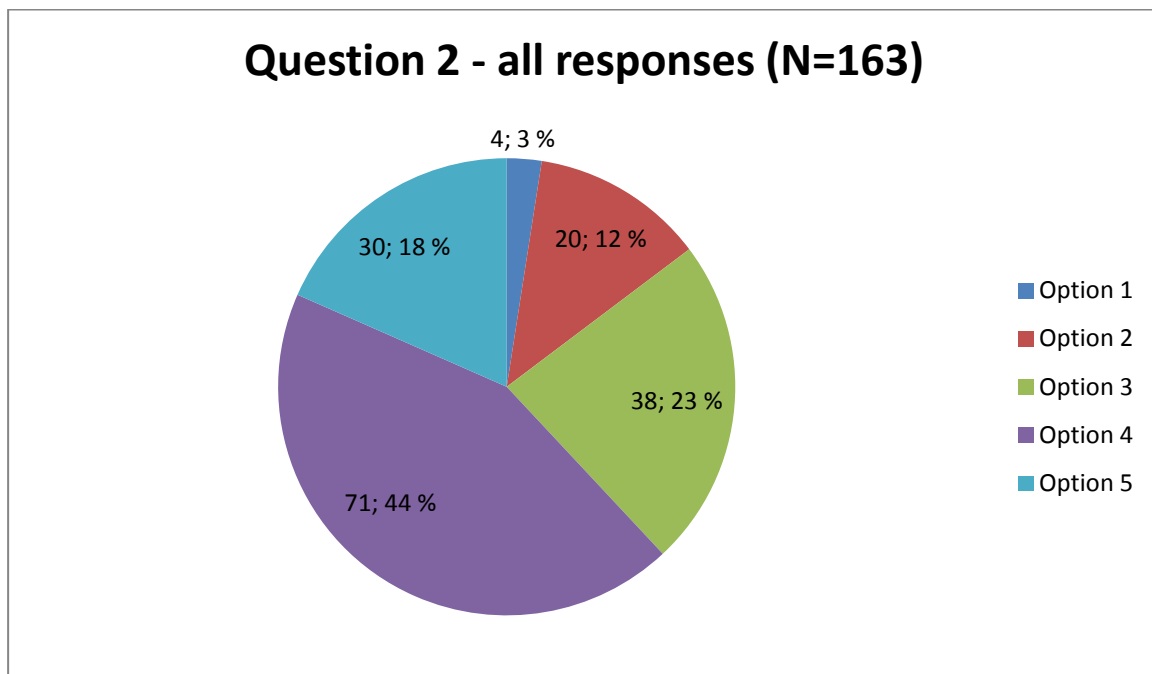


Figure 4. All responses to question 2. Student satisfaction concerning the emphasis of teaching.

As was the case with question 1, students mainly agreed with the statement and only 15% expressed that they disagree. 62% agreed either strongly or moderately strongly and 23%

somewhat agreed. Figures 5 and 6 show whether there was a difference in contentment between group *compulsory* and group *optional*.

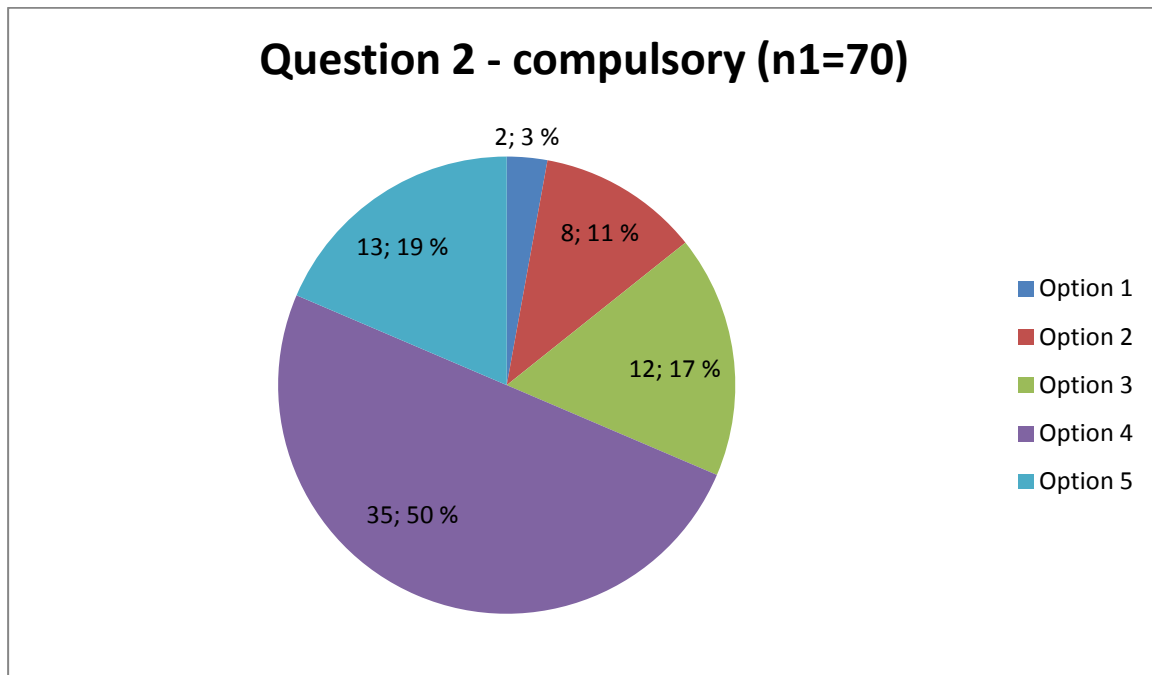


Figure 5. Responses to question 2 of students with no optional language studies.

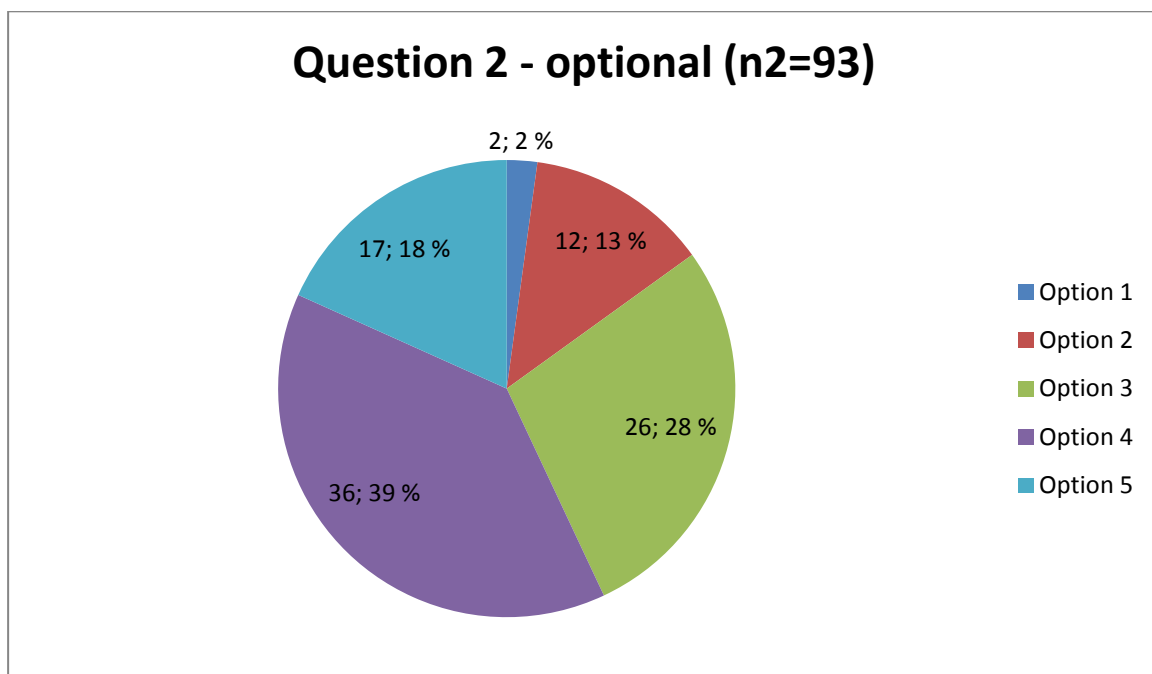


Figure 6. Responses to question 2 of students who had taken optional language studies.

As displayed in the figures, the amounts of, as it were, extreme views are almost identical. The number of students that strongly agreed in group *compulsory* was 19% and 18% in group

optional, whereas 14% of the former group disagreed and 15% of the latter. On this occasion, however, there is also a noteworthy difference between the two groups. 28% of students in group *optional* chose option 3, 11 percentage points more than in the other group. Since there was a similar amount of extreme opinions, this difference correlates with the amount of students that chose option 4 in the *compulsory* group, which is 11 percentage points higher than in the comparison group. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a slightly higher level of satisfaction in group *compulsory*.

Question 3 dealt with the other aspect of foreign language skills discussed here, i.e. general or everyday language and vocabulary. The statement was *I feel that the foreign language teaching I have received in my polytechnic has focused sufficiently and to an appropriate extent on everyday language*. The statement was followed by a brief explanation as to what was meant by everyday language. All responses to question 3 are showcased in Figure 7.

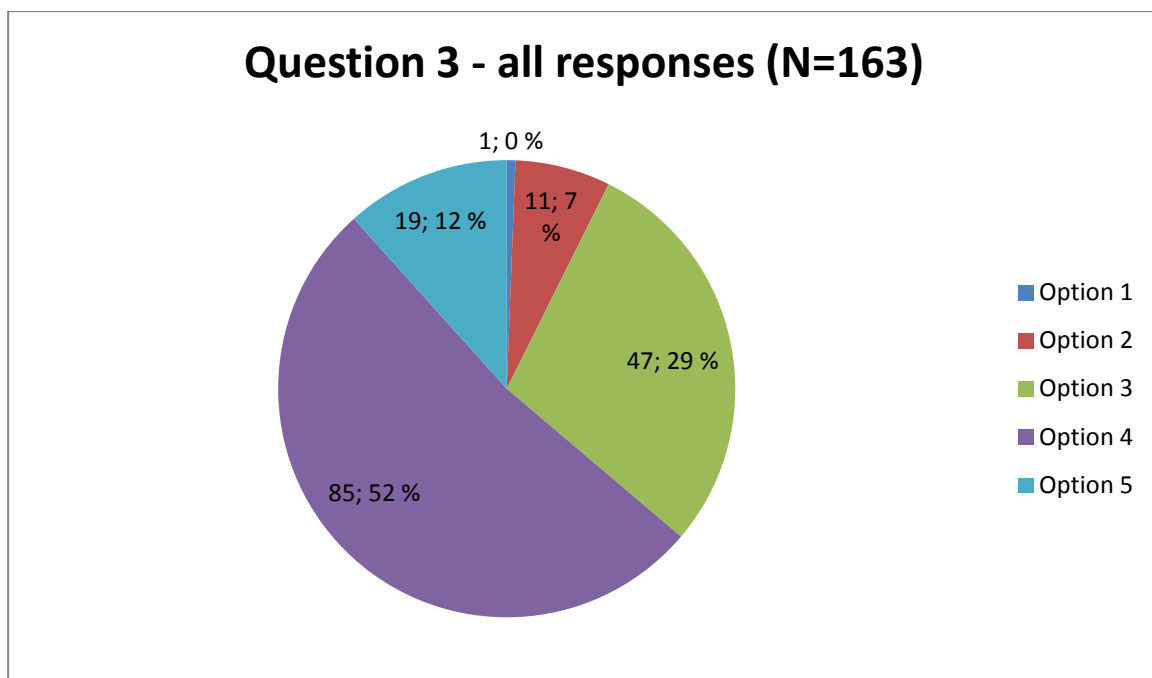


Figure 7. All responses to question 3. Student satisfaction concerning the emphasis of teaching.

Based on the figure, it can be said that satisfaction in relation to this issue is very high. 52% of all respondents chose option 4, while 12% expressed that they strongly agree with the statement, choosing option 5. Only 7% disagreed and 29% somewhat agreed. In Figures 8 and 9 a similar trend is shown in the respective responses of the two student groups.

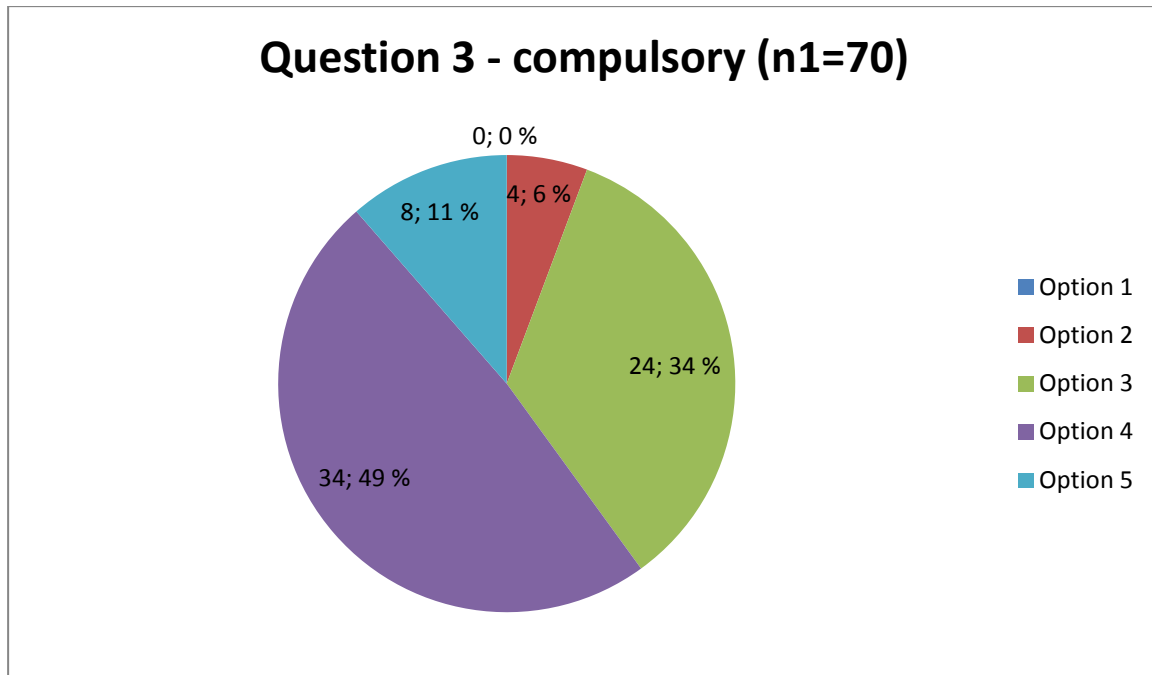


Figure 8. Responses to question 3 of students with no optional language studies.

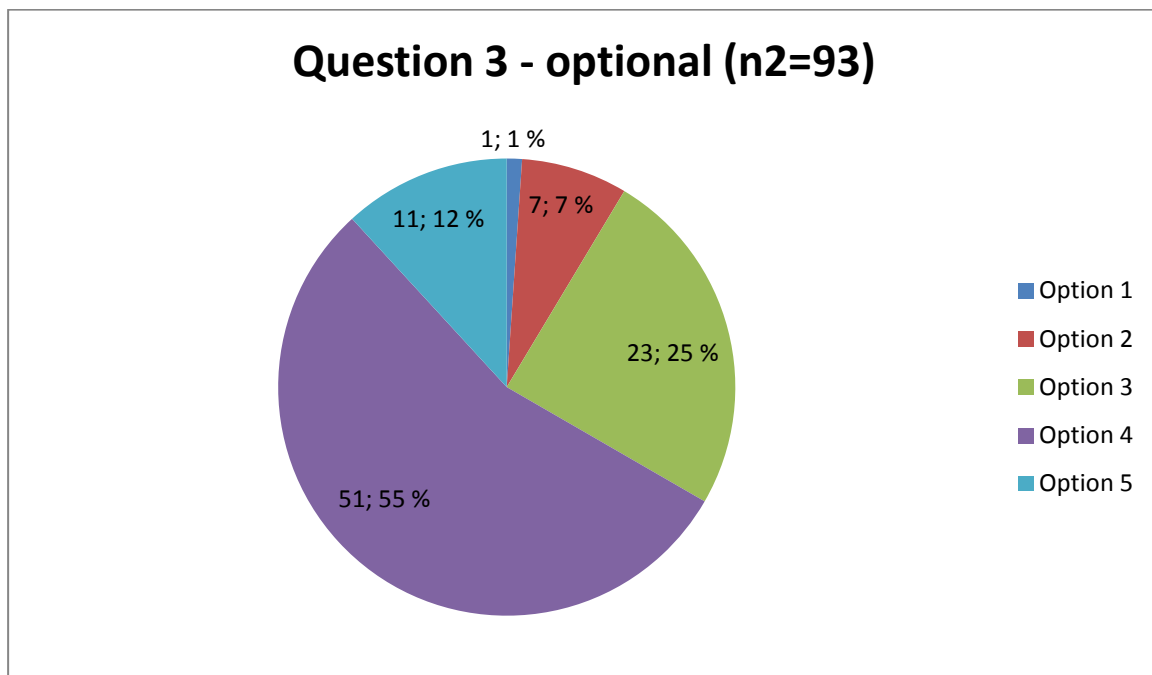


Figure 9. Responses to question 3 of students who had taken optional language studies.

As mentioned above, the responses of neither group deviate much from the overall situation. The amount of disagreement with the statement is low, while the majority chose option 4. However, again there is a rather clear difference in the *I somewhat agree* section, only this time it is the other way around; 25% of students in the *optional* group selected option 3, which is 9 percentage points less than in the other group. Furthermore, a total of 67% chose

either option 4 or 5 in group *optional*, whereas the corresponding number in group compulsory is 60%. Comparisons of these numbers reveal that students who have taken extra language studies are more content with the amount of everyday language and vocabulary included in foreign language teaching.

The final question dealing with the topic of student satisfaction concerning what is emphasised in foreign language teaching, question 4, was designed to elaborate on the contents of questions 2 and 3 by inquiring what students' think about the balance of field specific language and everyday language. The statement was *the field specific language relevant to me and everyday language have been in the right proportion to each other in the foreign language teaching I have received in my polytechnic*. To what extent students agreed with the above statement can be seen in Figure 10.

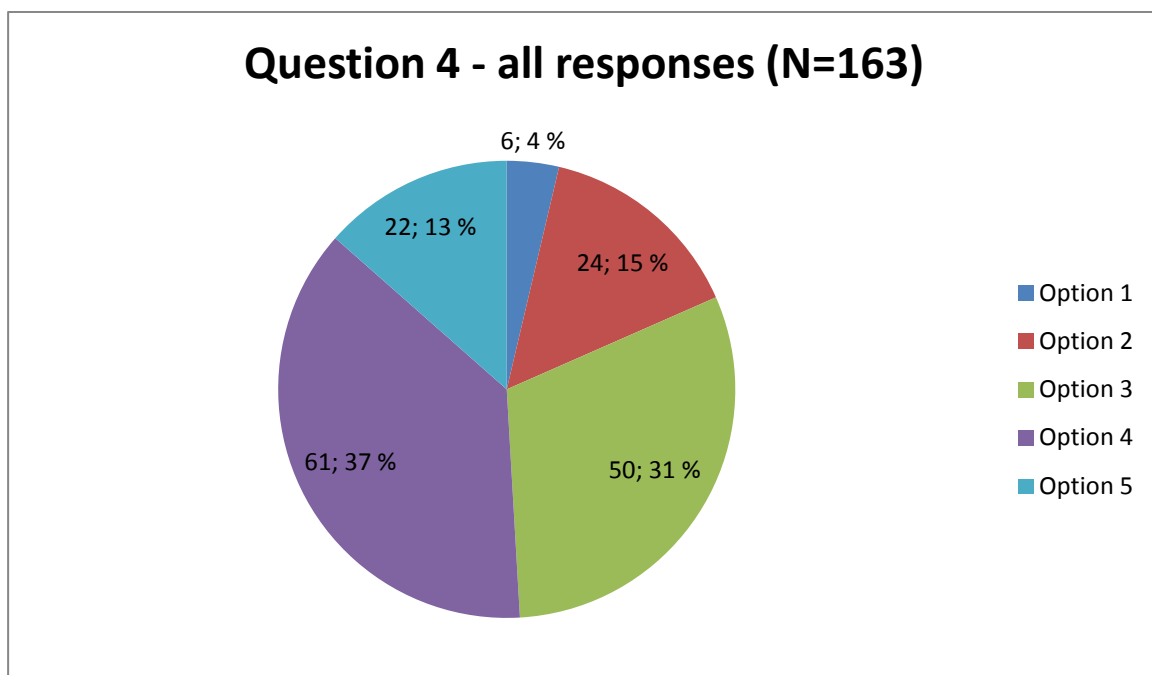


Figure 10. All responses to question 4. Student satisfaction concerning the emphasis of teaching.

As to the subject matter of student satisfaction, the responses to this question showed the lowest level of strong or relatively strong agreement. That said, 50% of students chose either option 4 or 5, and only 19% disagreed, so the amount of respondents who expressed disagreement was not dramatic. However, it is the sizeable number of students who only somewhat agreed combined with those who disagreed that draws attention. Although option 3 is considered as agreement more than disagreement in the present study, it still implies that a

respondent who chose that option in relation to this particular statement felt that there is room for improvement. Therefore, a rough estimation could be made that 50% of students felt improvement should take place and 50% were satisfied. Naturally, it is not quite as simplistic as that, but there was a significant difference to the other three questions measuring student satisfaction, in all of which over 60% chose either option 4 or 5. This issue, along with other results, shall be discussed more extensively in later chapters of this thesis. The division of responses to question 4 between groups *optional* and *compulsory* are showcased in Figures 11 and 12.

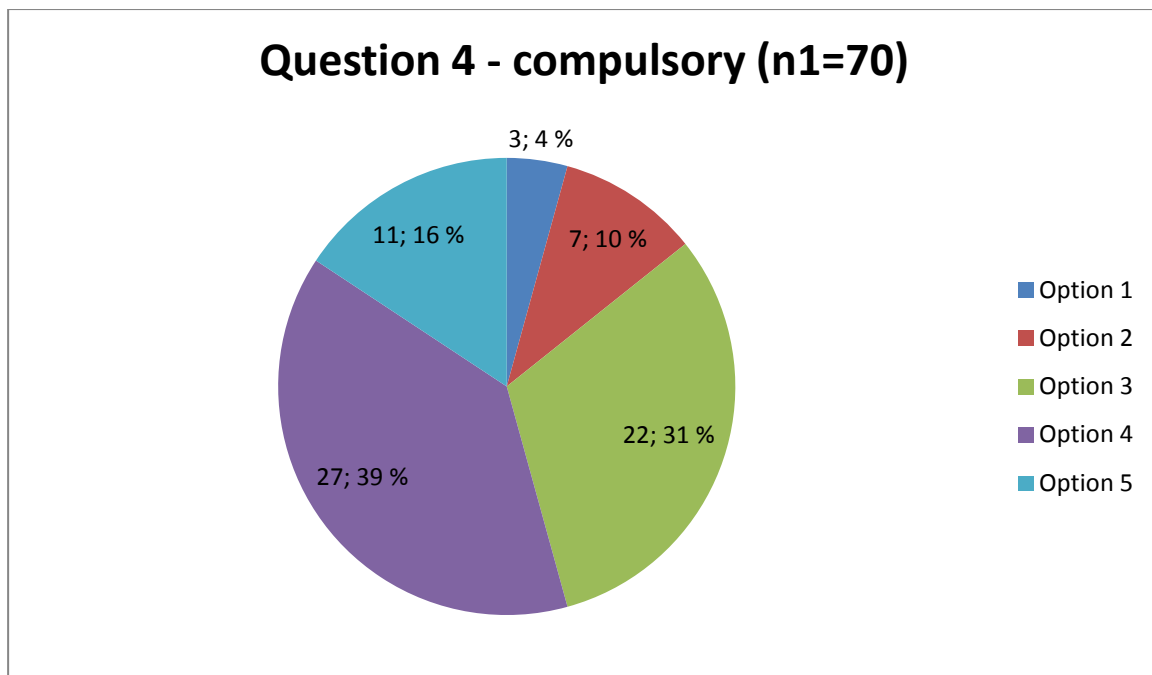


Figure 11. Responses to question 4 of students with no optional language studies.

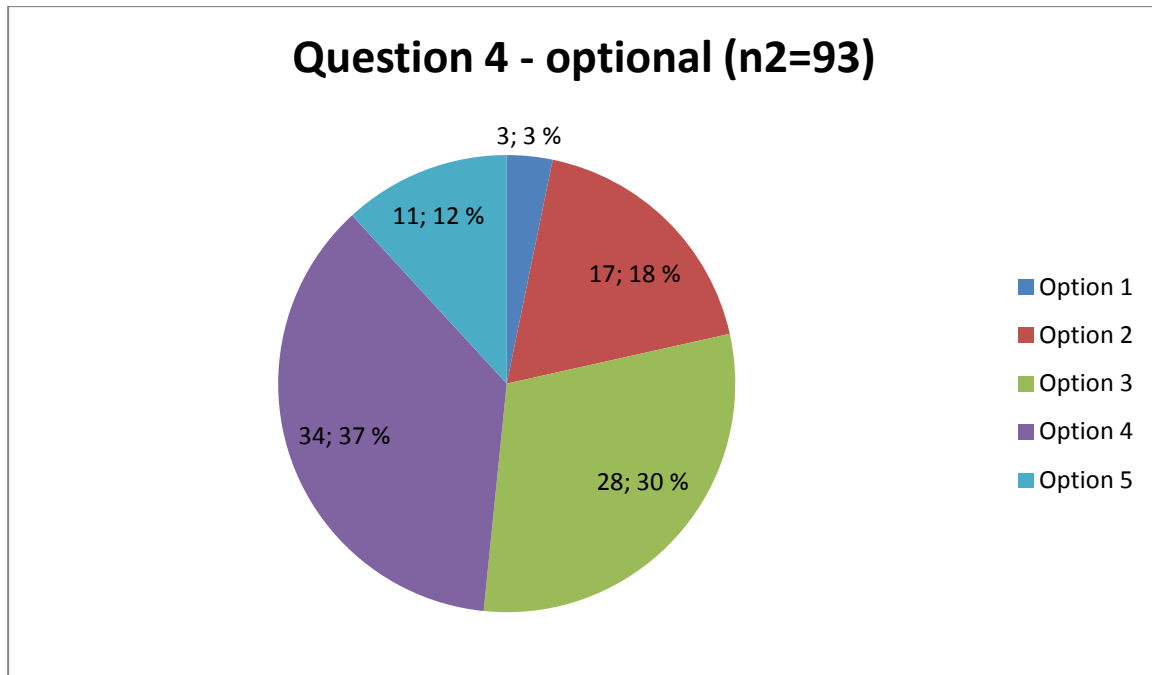


Figure 12. Responses to question 4 of students who had taken optional language studies.

The figures reveal that there was more dissatisfaction with the balance of field specific language and everyday language in teaching among students who had taken optional language studies. 49% chose option 4 or 5, in other words 51% felt improvement should take place. What is more, 21% expressed disagreement with the statement. Out of the students in group *compulsory* 55% agreed strongly or moderately strongly and only 14% disagreed. Even though the other group was slightly more satisfied with the situation, there was notable desire for improvement among the students as a whole. This concludes the reporting of student satisfaction. In the next section students' ideas on what they should be taught are reported.

5.3 Students' views on what is important to teach in polytechnics' foreign language classes

The last two Likert scale questions measured the students' appreciation for learning the two aspects of foreign language skills examined here, field specific language and everyday language. The responses to these questions provide an idea as to how the participants actually perceived vocationally oriented language learning. In question 5 the statement was *I consider learning field specific language and vocabulary to be important in order to gain such proficiency in a foreign language that is required in order to cope in (future) working life and*

enables professional development. Students' reactions to this statement are presented in Figure 13.

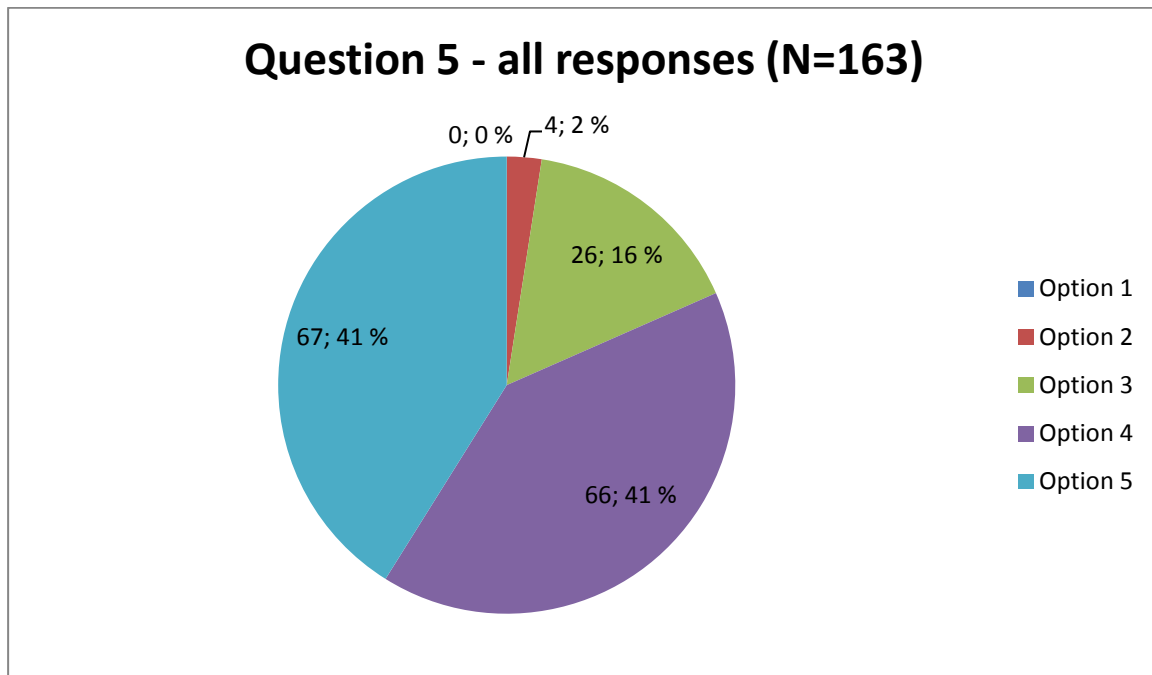


Figure 13. All responses to question 5. Students' appreciation for learning field specific language.

As one can tell, the students felt quite similarly about this issue. An overwhelming 82% agreed either strongly or moderately strongly. No student chose option 1 and only 2% disagreed at all. Based on these numbers it can be said that students clearly felt learning field specific language and vocabulary is important. The responses of the two comparison groups are separated below in Figures 14 and 15.

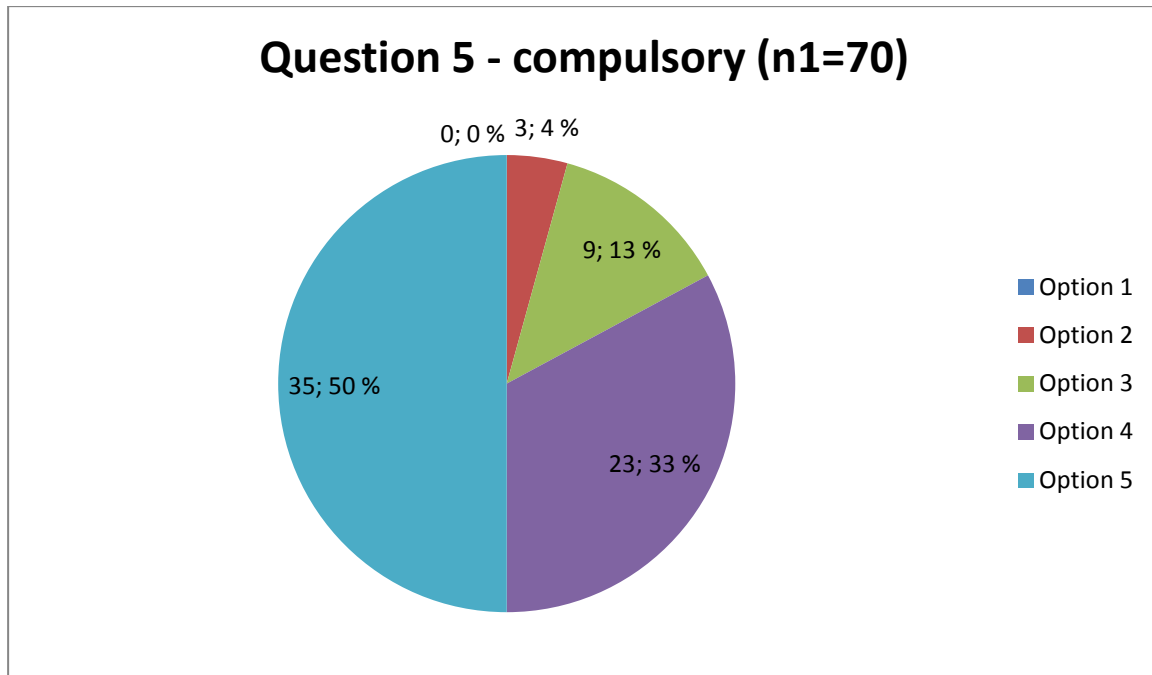


Figure 14. Responses to question 5 of students with no optional language studies.

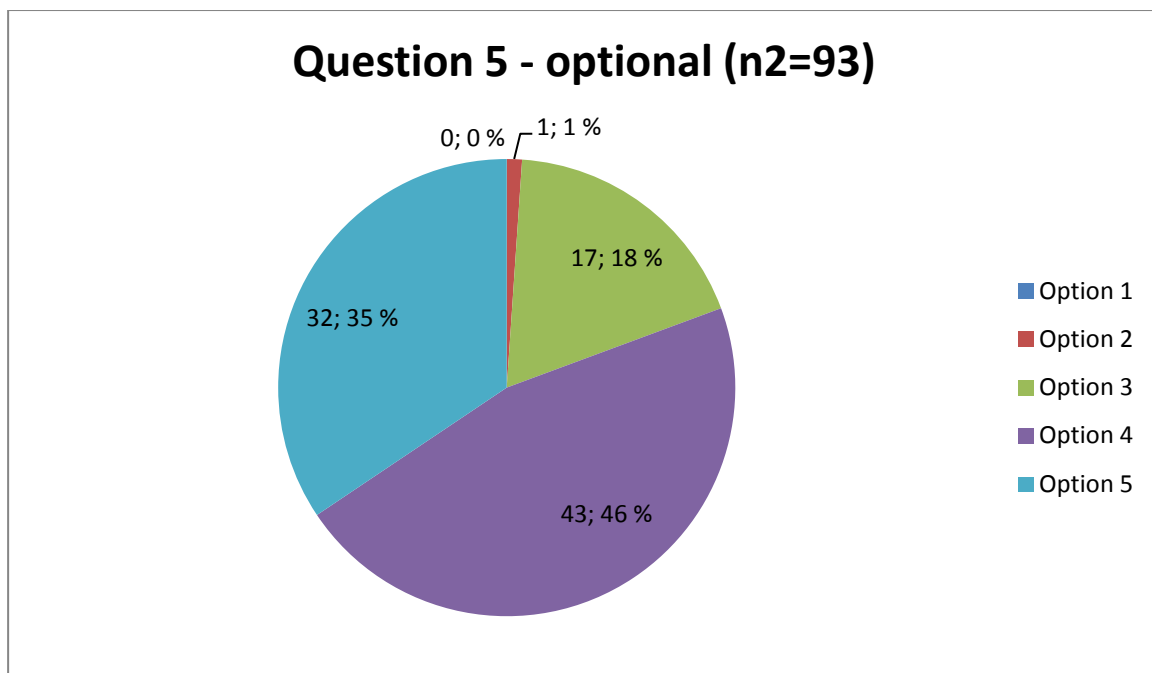


Figure 15. Responses to question 5 of students who had taken optional language studies.

Interestingly, there was a clear difference in appreciation of learning field specific language between group *compulsory* and group *optional*. Even though the appreciation was high in both groups, 50% of the former agreed strongly, whereas the corresponding number in the latter group was 35%. There was little disagreement in either group (4% and 1%), but the difference in the frequency at which option 5 was selected correlated mainly with the

popularity of option 4. 46% of the *optional* group chose option 4, while 33% of group *compulsory* made the same choice. The investigation of the numbers presented above reveals that students who have not chosen to take extra language studies felt more strongly that it is important to study field specific language and vocabulary than those who have, although both groups did show their appreciation.

Finally, as one might have predicted, question 6 measured students' appreciation for learning everyday language. The last statement was *I consider learning so called everyday language and vocabulary to be important in order to gain such proficiency in a foreign language that is required in order to cope in (future) working life and enables professional development.* Students' answers to question 6 are on display in Figure 16 below.

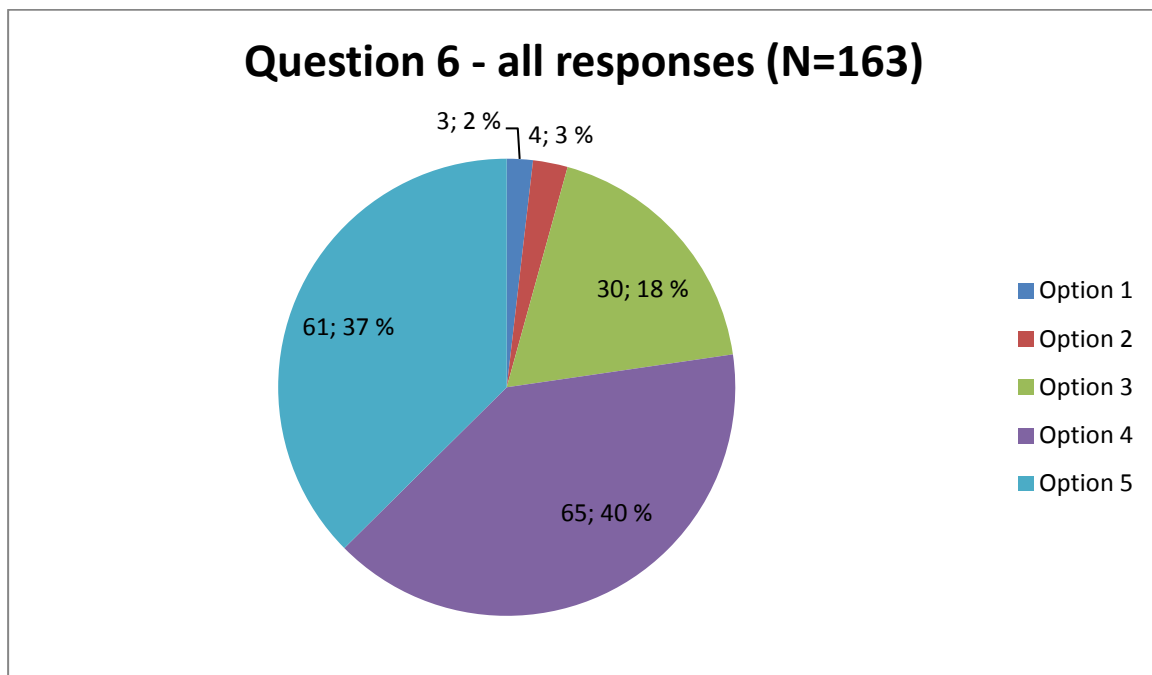


Figure 16. All responses to question 6. Students' appreciation for learning everyday language skills.

Again, the vast majority of students, 77% to be precise, chose either option 4 or 5. Only 5% disagreed with the statement and 18% somewhat agreed. As was the case with learning field specific language, students clearly considered studying everyday language important. Once more, the respective responses of group *compulsory* and group *optional* are separated below (see Figures 17 and 18).

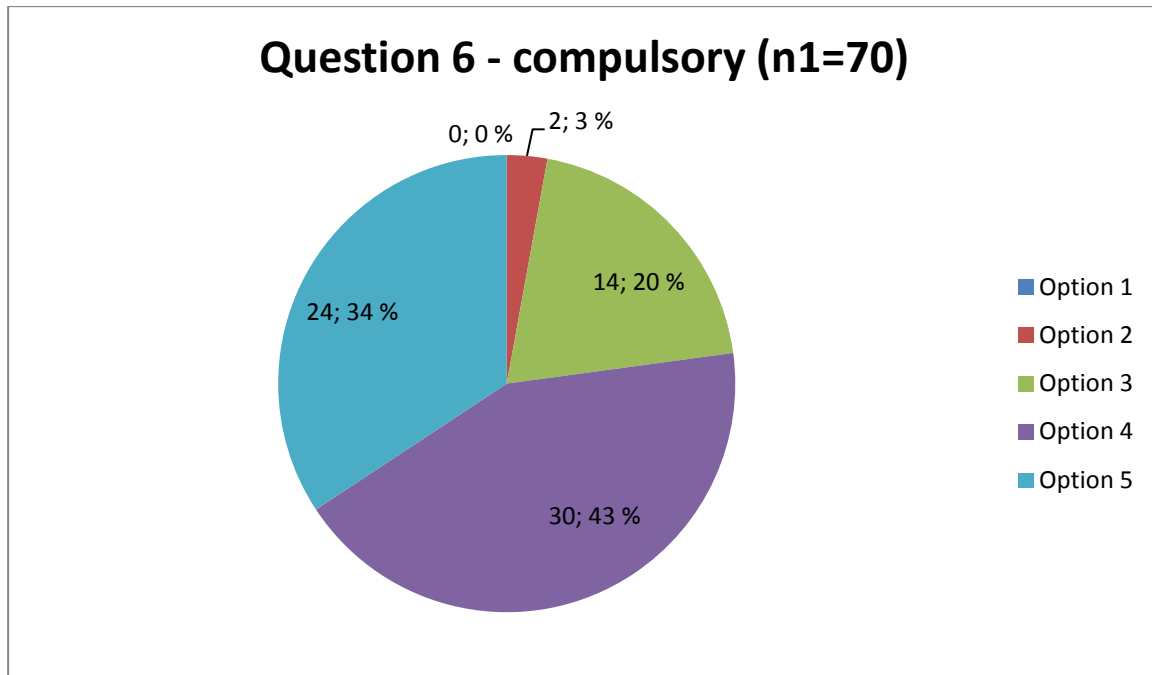


Figure 17. Responses to question 6 of students with no optional language studies.

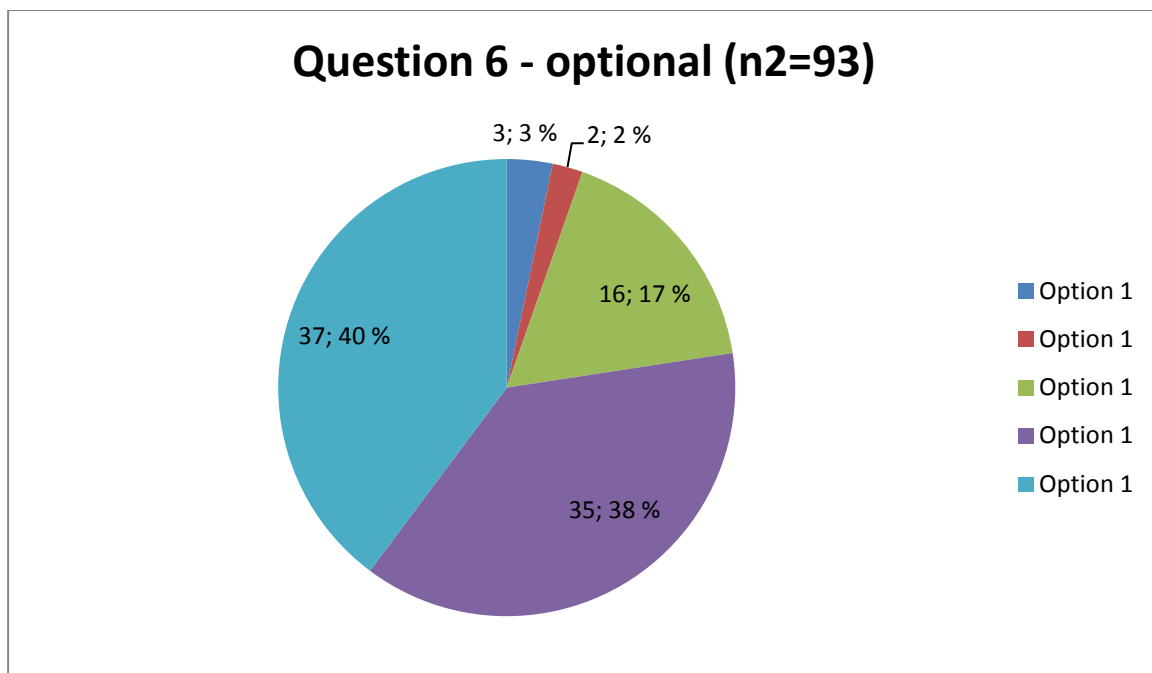


Figure 18. Responses to question 6 of students who had taken optional language studies.

On this occasion, there were no great differences between the groups. The amount of students who agreed either strongly or moderately strongly was almost identical, since the number was 77% in group *compulsory* and 78% in group *optional*. There was also no significant variation in the way the responses divided within options 4 and 5. 3% disagreed in group *compulsory*

and 5% in group *optional*. Overall, the two groups felt very similarly about the issue in question.

In this chapter the results of the quantitative data collected via the questionnaire created for the purposes of the present study have been reported. As has been mentioned multiple times in this thesis, the questionnaire also included an open question, the responses to which should be placed under the category of qualitative data. Therefore, the reporting of this data requires a different approach to what has been used so far in this chapter. In the next section the responses received to the open question are reported and an explanation of the manner in which this was done is provided.

5.4 Students' general views on foreign language teaching in their polytechnic

5.4.1 Students' opinions about how foreign language teaching is organized

The last part of the questionnaire that students could provide contributions to, as mentioned above, was an open question. As explained in chapter 3.3.2, question 7 was a clarification question which focused on the entire questionnaire instead of requesting clarification to a specific question and provided the students with a chance to express their thoughts on the subject matter as a whole. For the sake of clarity it should be noted again here that it was optional for the respondents to answer this question. However, altogether 35 out of 163 students chose to do so regardless, which tells about their motivation to contribute and provide useful answers. Even though a very satisfactory amount of responses was received, the number was relatively small compared to the total number of participants for the present study, which is why it was deemed unnecessary to separate the responses according to whether they were provided by a student who has or has not taken extra language studies.

The instructions to question 7 could be translated as follows: *if the above questions provoked thoughts, hopes or ideas for improvement in you concerning foreign language teaching in your polytechnic or related issues, please comment freely in the space below*. In this section the students' most relevant and interesting comments are presented. The essential parts of these contributions are reported in their original form followed by a translation. Each reported quote is accompanied by an explanation as to what it is related to. The data examples

presented here were numbered for later reference. To avoid confusing the students' contributions with the teachers', these examples were marked with the letter *s* (as in student).

An issue that a number of students remarked on was the amount of foreign language studies. There seemed to be a consensus among the students that mentioned the issue that there should be more foreign language studies available. This topic is commented on in examples s1, s2 and s3 below.

- (s1) Ainakin englantia voisi olla pakollisena enemmän kuin yksi kurssi!
(At least there could be more than one compulsory English course!)
- (s2) Kieliopintoja voisi olla lisääkin.
(There could be more language studies.)
- (s3) Kieliopetus on melko vähäistä ja raapaisee vain pintaa...
(There is fairly little language teaching and it only scratches the surface...)

None of the students who answered question 7 indicated that they have had to complete too many foreign language courses. Based on this and statements such as the ones presented above it could be said that respondents were generally of the opinion that their foreign language studies have been at least somewhat useful and some of them even expressed a desire for more studies. Another matter related to the amount of studies that was touched on by the respondents is whether courses are so called distance learning courses, usually meaning they are carried out online, or traditional courses with classroom lessons. Courses can also be mixtures of both, i.e. there are a few in-class lessons and the rest of the studying is done online. Students' takes on the topic are exemplified in samples s4, s5, s6 and s7.

- (s4) Enemmän kontaktiopetustunteja kiitos!
(More in-class lessons please!)
- (s5) ...kurssit olisi hyvä olla kontaktikursseja, jolloin puhumista pääsisi oikeasti harjoittelemaan ja oman alan sanasto jäisi paremmin mieleen.
(...it would be good if courses were in-class, because then one could really practice speaking and the field specific vocabulary would stick in mind better.)
- (s6) Olen hyvin tyytyväinen siihen, että ruotsin kurssi oli mahdollista suorittaa pääosin verkossa. Olen aikuisopiskelija ja asun kaukana...opetuspisteistä.
(I am very satisfied that it was possible to do the Swedish course mainly online. I am a mature student and I live far away from the...campus.)

- (s7) kielikahvilatyyppejä mahdollisuuksia tulisi tarjota enemmän ja sekoittaa vaihto-opiskelijoita suomalaisten kanssa, jotta kielen käyttäminen tuntuisi luontevammalta ja tilanne olisi "aito".
(Opportunities similar to language cafés should be provided more and exchange students should be mixed with Finns in order to make using the [foreign] language feel more natural and to create an "authentic" situation.)

As shown above, students had mixed views on the subject. Some felt strongly that teaching should be organized in a classroom context, but the student in example s6 was very pleased with the possibility of studying online because of the inconvenient distance between the target polytechnic campus and the location where he or she lives. The student quoted in example s5 raised the point that classroom interaction is beneficial for the purposes of oral language exercises and that saying words out loud helps remembering them. On a general level it can be concluded that the physical presence of teachers and peers is valued by students, even though there can also be a demand for alternative studying methods. Adding an interesting further aspect to this discussion was the student in example s7. The respondent called for more events such as language cafés. In short, language cafés are events where language students and native speakers or simply people of different nationalities meet to socialize, the idea being to practise foreign languages in a light hearted and motivating way (languagecafe.eu n.d.). The student in question clearly values oral communication as a form of foreign language learning and not only wants to practise it with peers, but with people who are not native speakers of Finnish. Overall, it seems that practising oral communication is particularly appreciated by students.

5.4.2 Student's appreciation of studying field specific language and practising general language skills

The next topic to be examined is one of those that were of key interest for the present study, in other words students' appreciation for learning field specific language and everyday language. Again, the participants provided strong opinions regarding the issue. Comments dealing with field specific language shall be addressed first. First data samples related to this matter can be found below.

- (s8) rakennustekniikan englanti ei sisällä todellista ammattisanastoa juuri lainkaan.
(hardly any real professional vocabulary is included in English for Construction Engineers.)

- (s9) Erikoiskielten opiskeluun voitaisiin kannustaa opiskelijoita enemmän. Erikoiskielistä on aina hyötyä, oli opiskeluala mikä tahansa!
(Students could be encouraged to study more field specific language. Field specific language is always useful, no matter what the field!)
- (s10) ...kaikista mielekkäintä ”työelämän...”- kursseilla on juuri erikoiskielen opiskelu.
(...the most worthwhile thing about “...for Working Life” courses is precisely studying field specific language.)
- (s11) Sekä ruotsin että englannin kielen opiskelussa tulisi kiinnittää enemmän huomiota alakohtaisten erikoiskielen opiskeluun. Esim. fysioterapeutin on osattava tutkia ja ohjeistaa asiakasta vieraalla kielellä...
(Both in Swedish and English studies more attention should be paid to studying field specific language. For example a physiotherapist needs to be able to examine and give instructions to a client in a foreign language...)
- (s12) ...Työelämän englanti ja ruotsi toimivat hyvin ja opettajat osaavat opettaa (ammattisanasto)...
(...Both English and Swedish for Working Life are good courses and the teachers know how to teach (professional vocabulary).)

Interesting points were raised in these comments. First of all, the respondents seemed to have a strong idea that field specific language should be the focus of attention in polytechnic level foreign language teaching. In fact, in none of the contributions provided to question 7 was it stated that practising general language skills should be the priority. Secondly, in examples s8 and s12 it shows that emphasising field specific language in teaching was even associated with teachers’ professional competence and not emphasising it can leave students feeling disappointed. These are truly strong statements and show an extreme appreciation for learning field specific languages. What is more, the student commenting in sample s11 stated that studying field specific language is important specifically because it is needed to be able to communicate with clients. The feeling in this case seemed to be that a physiotherapist, which the respondent named as an example occupation, is not sufficiently able to give instructions to and examine clients without learning extensive professional vocabulary. From all that is explained above it can be concluded that students value the studying of field specific language especially because they find it provides them with tools for surviving in practical working life situations.

The comments that dealt with studying everyday language skills were no less interesting than the ones discussed in the previous paragraph. The participants were quite unanimous regarding the topic, although there were some slight variations in the responses as well. Examples s13, s14, s15 and s16 below represent the majority of comments given on this issue quite well.

- (s13) Koen, että ns. yleiskielen opiskelulla ei ole niin suurta merkitystä...kuin...oman alan erikoiskielen opiskelulla. Tähän amk:ssa tulisi panostaa...kielen opiskelu ei vastannut erikoistumisalan opintoja...[kieliopinnoissa] omaan erikoistumisalaan ei saanut minkäänlaisia valmiuksia...
(I think that studying so called everyday language is not as important...as studying field specific language...This is what should be emphasized in polytechnics...the language studies did not correspond with studies of my field of expertise...[from foreign language studies] I did not acquire any competence for my field.)
- (s14) Uskoisin yleiskielen olevan ammattikorkeakoulussa jo aika hyvin hallussa...
(I would think that students already have good ability as to general language skills in polytechnics...)
- (s15) Yleiskielen taitaminen on tärkeää. Koen vain, että yleistaito taso täytyisi olla jo jokaisella AMK aloittavalla hallussa. Jos ei ole, niin tarjolla voisi olla heille omia syventäviä kursseja...
(It is important to have good general language skills. I just feel that everyone beginning their studies in a polytechnic should already have good enough general language skills. If not, then there could be separate preparatory courses for those people...)
- (s16) Lukion käyneenä aika paljon toistoa kielten opiskelussa tuon yleiskielen kanssa...
(As an upper secondary school graduate I feel there has been quite a lot of repetition concerning everyday language skills...)

The contents of the four data samples presented above illustrate a clear consensus among students that studying general language skills should not be a priority in foreign language teaching at a polytechnic level. The student in example s13 felt that the foreign language studies he or she had completed were not beneficial for him or her due to a lack of learning field specific language and vocabulary, implying that the emphasis had been on practising everyday language use, which the student previously argued is not so important to study in polytechnics. Respondents in examples s14 and s15 expressed the belief that polytechnic students already have or should have sufficient general language skills from previous studies and, apparently, they feel there is no real need to practise these skills anymore. It was stated in example s15, however, that the respondent thought it is important to be skilled in everyday language use in general.

Finally, the student who is quoted in sample s16 raised the same issue that was addressed in chapter 2.5.1, which is that students in polytechnic foreign language classes can have extremely versatile backgrounds. This particular student had studied in upper secondary school and said that the foreign language teaching regarding general language skills in his or her current polytechnic had been quite repetitive of the contents already gone over in previous studies. However, the student seemed to acknowledge that peers with a different background might not be as skilled as him or her. In example s15 it was proposed that separate preparatory courses could be arranged for such students whose language skills are below the

respondent's perceived standard of polytechnic studies. Overall, the dominant opinion was that compulsory foreign language courses in polytechnics should strictly focus on providing students with field specific language knowledge and practising relevant vocabulary.

5.4.3 Students' perspectives on miscellaneous issues related to polytechnic foreign language teaching

To close this section some matters that the students' brought forward will be reported that were not necessarily mentioned by a large group of respondents but were otherwise interesting and noteworthy. The first example given below was an opinion that only one student expressed.

(s17) Englannin ja ruotsin kursseilla opettajat kyselivät meiltä opiskelijoilta, millaiset sanat ja termit liittyvät alaamme (mediatekniikka). Joten siinä kohtaan mentiin hieman puihin.
(During English and Swedish courses teachers asked us students what kind of words and terminology are related to our field (media technology). So there things went a bit wrong.

The student quoted in example s17 expressed the feeling that teachers should not be asking students for advice concerning for example the terminology of their field. Presumably the student in question felt it was unprofessional of the teachers and that they should know all terminology before beginning a course. This response was quoted because it is interesting to compare it to some of the comments made by the teachers. This comparison, however, shall be made and discussed in the next chapter.

The last data samples reported in this section relate to a more practical aspect of organizing foreign language teaching, which is dividing students of different fields into separate teaching groups. Even though the topic was again brought up by only a few participants, the essence of the matter is worthy of mentioning in the context of this thesis. The comments in examples s18 and s19 sum up students' feelings about the issue.

(s18) ...opiskeluryhmät voisi pilkkoa alakohtaisiksi, jotta yksilöllinen ja alakohtainen opetus mahdollistuisi.
(...teaching groups could be made field exclusive so that individual and field specific teaching would be possible.)

- (s19) Kielten opetus tulisi järjestää koulutusohjelmittain jotta ammattisanaston ym. opiskelu kohdistuisi oikeasti omaan alaan. En koe saaneeni kielten opiskelusta mitään uutta lukion oppimääriin verrattuna.
(Language teaching should be arranged field exclusively so that studying professional vocabulary and alike would be truly field specific. I do not feel like I have gained anything new from foreign language studies that I had not already learned in upper secondary school.)

The respondents quoted above expressed disappointment that they have had to study foreign languages with students who are studying for a different profession because they felt it had hampered their learning, since teachers could not focus solely on creating material that is relevant for their field. The student who wrote the comment in example s19 even went as far as to say that he or she had not learned anything new during language courses because of this. In example s18 it was hinted that placing students of different fields in the same classroom also caused the group sizes to become too large. This can be concluded from the part in the quote where it was said that teaching has not been individual enough. As mentioned above, the matter of language teaching not being field exclusive was not mentioned by many students. However, these comments were still worthy of reporting, for the topic is of relevance for the purposes of this thesis.

In chapter 5 the results of the questionnaire survey conducted for the present study were reported extensively. Close examination of the data led to the emergence of many interesting points. In the next chapter these findings shall be discussed further, along with the most important results of the interview carried out with the language teachers.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 The connections between the framework set for polytechnic foreign language teaching and teachers' work in practice

It was explained in the introduction of this thesis that the underlying purpose of the work done in polytechnics is to train professionals for the needs of the labour market. As described in the polytechnic decree, which was explained in chapter 1.1, as far as foreign language teaching is considered this means ensuring that students have such skills in one or two foreign languages that are required for coping in future working life and that enable professional development. The results discovered in the process of data analysis for the present study quite clearly show

that the teachers' perspective on the issue is, at least with the current amount of teaching they have, that the aspect of enabling professional development is what should be the focus of attention in polytechnic foreign language teaching. This viewpoint was expressed e.g. in data excerpts t3, t14, t31 and t35.

When examining the framework of polytechnic foreign language teaching, which is described in detail in chapter 1, it can be concluded that the regulations and guidelines provided for language teaching support the view of the teachers. As was mentioned in chapters 1.3 and 1.4, for example in the EHEA project and in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages the importance of lifelong learning is emphasized. Lifelong learning, in turn, is precisely what professional development is all about. What is more, it was further stated in chapter 1.3 that according to the report prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture about the progress of the EHEA project in Finland, a particular strength of Finnish higher education has been the accomplished supporting of lifelong learning. Thus, not only is it appropriate to focus on providing students with skills that enable professional development, it has generally also been executed very well in Finland.

Another justification for the teachers' viewpoint is the pedagogical framework of polytechnics, portrayed in chapter 1.2, which also promotes lifelong learning and students' independent thinking. As mentioned in the chapter referred to above, the role of teachers according to polytechnic pedagogy is to facilitate the learning process of students in required ways and, to be more precise, to teach students to solve problems independently. This is arguably one of the most important and essential skills teachers can provide their students with as to improving their professional competence. In relation to foreign language teaching this could be interpreted to mean enhancing students' overall communication skills so that that they can, for example, express themselves when they do not know a certain word they are looking for. In e.g. data samples t32, t33 and t34 the teachers interviewed for this study state that this is indeed the sort of mentoring that they have been aiming to practise. A further point presented in chapter 1.2 about polytechnic pedagogy is the significance of teachers' own professional development and avoiding stagnation. This matter was not presented for discussion to the teachers as such and therefore it was not widely brought forward, but Teemu did indirectly state in example t27 that in his opinion all teachers should update their teaching every year at least to some extent. What is more, Teemu quite seemed to take it for granted that teachers renew their teaching. Therefore, it could be speculated that teachers' own

professional development is also generally considered to be one of the underlying values in the work of polytechnic foreign language teachers.

It should be pointed out here that, despite expressing certain differing views, which will be further discussed later, the majority of students also agreed with the statement that the foreign language teaching they have received has been according to the polytechnic decree and added to their professional competence. Furthermore, looking at the results of the questionnaire it can be noted, some displays of disagreement notwithstanding, that the overall satisfaction of students with the language teaching they had received was at a relatively high level. Thus, considering all that has been said above, the language teachers in the polytechnic under study have arguably been very successful in fulfilling all the requirements set for their work.

To conclude this section, the writer would also like to make a personal remark about emphasizing professional development and lifelong learning in foreign language teaching. It is not very often that the moment they receive their graduation diploma, people are completely ready to begin working in their new profession. What is meant by this is that there is usually some degree of accustoming oneself to e.g. the customs and procedures of a new workplace involved, as well as catching up with the expertise and knowledge of senior colleagues. Furthermore, even people who have worked in their profession for years normally have to adapt to the developments taking place in their field. The point here is that no matter what the field, people constantly have to search for new information and update their knowledge. No one is ever ready as a professional, so similarly it cannot be assumed that polytechnic students would have all the language skills they will ever need after graduation, particularly seeing as they are not language students and language studies are only a small part of their degree. Besides, even people who are language experts need to update their skills all the time, as mentioned above and also by Teemu in example t27. Therefore, it is sensible for polytechnic language teachers to focus their limited teaching hours on enhancing their students' lifelong learning skills, instead of making sure, as Saku said in example t32, that every student learns as many obscure words as possible.

6.2 The views on VOLL of polytechnic language teachers and students

Although this issue was already touched on in the previous section, it is worthy of discussing further separately. As explained in chapter 2.1, it has not been at all unequivocal what is understood by the terms LSP and VOLL, and there has also been some disagreement as to what should be included in the type of foreign language studying practised in institutions of vocational education. It would appear that the general understanding of what VOLL should be among the language teachers in the target polytechnic is similar to the characterization presented by Vogt (2009) in chapter 2.1; VOLL is learning languages for work and life. It is language that people use in professional contexts, not purely general language or language that is specified for a particular professional task. As Saku said in example t14, every student no matter what the field should learn to use the target language e.g. in the following situations: having phone conversations, giving presentations, having meetings and using e-mail. This corresponds quite perfectly with Vogt's (2009) description of VOLL. Enhancing students' general ability and willingness to communicate, as Essi put it in excerpt t34, was seen by the teachers as the priority, along with giving students other tools for developing their language skills, as mentioned in the previous section. Saku captured the essence of the matter in example t31 by stating that if students have good basic language skills, it will not be problematic for them to learn new professional vocabulary and terminology when they need it later. It should be pointed out here that naturally in the case of language studies where students have no previous ability in the language, as was the case e.g. with the compulsory Russian course taught by Maria, the nature of teaching becomes slightly different for obvious reasons, but even then the core of teaching is to improve students' skills so that they can acquire new ones.

A number of students, however, appeared to disagree with what is said above. In fact, the results discovered from the questionnaire survey data are somewhat contradicting. Figure 4 shows that 85% agreed on some level with the statement that the foreign language teaching they have received has focussed sufficiently on field specific language. Yet there were several complaints about the lack of it in the section where students could comment freely, as examples s8, s11, s13 and s19 show. The *compulsory* group was somewhat more satisfied

with the amount of field specific language included in teaching. The situation was the other way around with the statement that said foreign language teaching has focussed sufficiently on general language skills. In this case the students who had taken extra language studies agreed more strongly, with a minute 7% of all respondents disagreeing, as displayed in Figure 7. Based on the complaints about the lack of field specific language, it could be speculated whether the situation is such that a bigger number of students were content with the amount of everyday language in teaching because they do not think it is that important and they do not want to practice it more. In addition, it is also up for speculation whether it is for the same reason that students in group *optional* were more content than others with the amount of everyday language included. Since they have studied languages more in the target polytechnic, it might be that their attitude is even stronger about wanting the focus of teaching to be on field specific language and not hoping for more practice on general language skills.

What does not support the theory presented above, however, are the responses to the statements dealing with the significance of studying field specific language and everyday language for gaining professional competence. Although only 2% of all respondents disagreed with the significance of field specific language, the amount of students who expressed the strongest level of agreement was notably lower in group *optional* than in group *compulsory*. Therefore, it cannot be said conclusively that students who have taken extra language studies felt more strongly that the focus of foreign language teaching should be on field specific language. What is more, it also needs to be noted that since the questions presented in the questionnaire were not specified further, it cannot be known for sure whether students who had taken optional language studies had continued studying the same languages they were obligated to study earlier or if they had begun studying different languages, in which case the theory would not apply either.

One thing that can be said with certainty about the questionnaire data is that there indeed were several students who were not satisfied with the amount of field specific language teaching they had received. In addition, as showcased in examples s13, s14, s15 and s16, there was a feeling among some students that practicing general language skills is not very important at polytechnic level. Furthermore, when asked whether they thought that field specific language and everyday language had been in the right proportion to each other in the foreign language teaching they had received, 50% felt there is room for improvement, as displayed in Figure 10. As explained in chapter 5.2, although only 19% clearly disagreed with the statement, the

level of strong or moderately strong agreement was the lowest of all the questions at 50%. In other words, 50% felt improvement should take place. Based on the other evidence presented above, an assumption can be made that this hope for improvement is in fact hope for more emphasis on field specific language, even if 77% of respondents had chosen either option 5 or 4 when asked about the significance of practicing general language skills in relation to them gaining professional competence, as reported in Figure 16.

Overall, a number of students seemed to be very strongly of the opinion that studying foreign languages at polytechnic level should be learning vocabulary and jargon specified for particular professional tasks. The student quoted in excerpt s12 even connected the teaching of professional vocabulary with the proficiency of teachers, presumably meaning that if this was not the focus of teaching in a foreign language course, the student in question would consider the teacher incompetent. This rather considerable difference in perception between the language teachers and the students who felt this way is the most significant discovery from the questionnaire data and it is one that leaves the writer feeling somewhat confused as to what to think about it. On one hand it would be easy to say that the students just do not have sufficient understanding on the subject matter and that teachers are experts who know best. On the other hand, students at polytechnic level are not children anymore and it would feel slightly arrogant to merely disregard their opinions on the issue.

Perhaps this kind of juxtaposition is, however, all too dramatic and even unnecessary. After all, as was explained in chapter 2.2, normally when students start compulsory foreign language courses in polytechnics they do not yet have significant experience in the profession they are studying for and so, perfectly understandably, what students value at the time of studying and what it is that they eventually really need in working life might differ. This is arguably not a very uncommon situation in any aspect of vocational education because of its nature. The students have a specific goal, which is acquiring an occupation, and therefore they often appreciate advice and instruction that they can directly apply in practice, such as task specific vocabulary. It could be further argued that in the case of studying languages students may have even stronger ideas regarding what is useful for them to learn since they have already studied languages for several years and are more assured about their expertise in the area, compared to, for example, a situation where a group of engineering students with no previous knowledge on the topic begin a course on strength calculation. Furthermore, the point made by Elisa in data excerpt t35, which both Saku and Raili agreed with, about

students of the same field eventually working in very different tasks, which makes it impossible to effectively teach task specific jargon in the first place, is likely to be something that most students who raised the issue at hand have not taken into account. Again, this is all perfectly understandable and the point here was not to call the students inconsiderate. On the contrary, critical thinking is always something to be cherished. In fact, it is the students' job to question things and the teachers' job is to construct the best teaching ensemble they can. The reason why language experts, or any experts for that matter, even exist to begin with is that people cannot know everything about everything or qualify themselves for a profession just by using Google; they need someone to guide them in the right direction.

Another reason why the juxtaposition described above is not completely truthful is that the idea of teachers only wanting to teach general language skills and students only wanting to learn professional vocabulary is not at all accurate. First of all, the majority of students did not directly complain about the lack of field specific language in the teaching they had received and the general impression that the results of the questionnaire give is that students were quite happy with the teaching. Secondly, it is not as if teachers in the target polytechnic are teaching skills that are completely irrelevant to the students' professional competence. As has been established, general language skills in this context mean things such as being able to have work-related telephone conversations in the target language or to attend meetings. While practising such skills, a student is also likely to pick up some professional vocabulary, even if that had not been the focus of the exercise as such. What is more, the teachers did not state that they have altogether excluded exercises focussing on learning professional vocabulary, it is just that normally they are not the main priority on courses. There was also an area of studying languages that both teachers and students highly valued, which was practising oral communication. The students' appreciation for oral communication skills was established in chapter 5.4.1. Elisa, in turn, expressed the belief in example t33 that all language teachers in the target polytechnic emphasize in their teaching the courage to communicate orally.

In this section the views of both teachers and students as to what should be the emphasis in polytechnic foreign language teaching has been discussed. All in all it could be said that there were certain aspects of foreign language skills that some students saw as bigger priorities than the teachers and vice versa. It was explained above, however, that differing perceptions of VOLL between language experts and students of other fields are completely natural and even to be expected. What is more, as explained earlier in this section and in chapter 2.1, even

language experts have expressed differing views on what VOLL means to them. That said, it is interesting and worthwhile to examine what learners feel is essential about VOLL in order to gain better understanding of how they experience foreign language studying. Both teachers and students showing appreciation towards oral communication skills was a particularly pleasant discovery, as the writer personally considers it to be the most important aspect of foreign language competence. In the next section more general issues that emerged from the data collected for the present study shall be reviewed.

6.3 General points and challenges related to polytechnic foreign language teaching

6.3.1 Issues concerning the amount of compulsory language studies

The study introduced in chapter 2.5.2 by Huovinen and Rusanen (1996) showed that students in the polytechnic they conducted research in valued internationality along with having good foreign language skills and considered the two English courses that were compulsory for them to be necessary, even as much so that most respondents had in fact expressed a desire for further courses. Some of the students that participated in the present study also expressed a similar desire, as reported in data samples s1, s2 and s3. Along with hoping for more language studies, the students clearly felt a general need for practising foreign language skills during their polytechnic studies and there seemed to be a specific appreciation for instruction by an expert in a classroom setting, as noted in chapter 5.4.1.

As for the language teachers' views on the topic, even though none of the interviewees directly stated that they would like students to have more compulsory language studies, Essi in example t26 mentioned that she would like to spend more of her time on teaching and counselling her students, which could be interpreted to mean that she would like to have a greater number of lessons per group. Saku and Raili also complained about periodic lack of time, which they even named as the most challenging aspect of their work, but this was more related to work accumulating and it cannot be linked to them wanting more teaching hours per group, although this possibility should not be excluded either.

The matter of there being a feeling among students and possibly to some extent among teachers as well that there should be more language studies included in polytechnic degrees is

something that warrants further discussion. It is presumable that the students who raised the issue did not mean they want to begin studying languages they have not studied before, but to enhance their existing language skills. Therefore, the assumption here is that the students were mostly talking about Swedish and particularly English, as they are the languages that the majority of Finns study in school. Increasing the amount of language lessons, not to mention full courses, is always a question of resources and other administrative factors that often extend to bodies beyond individual polytechnics and the process takes long consideration. That said, students' desire for more instruction should not be merely overlooked and it would be interesting to at least examine how strong a will the students really have to receive further language teaching. In addition, educated estimations could be made about how Finnish polytechnic graduates on average cope with their language skills in working life and whether there in fact is a need for further studies, although perhaps making such estimations might prove challenging.

Although it is important to acknowledge students' want for more language instruction, there is something that should be taken into account in relation to the issue. As reported in chapter 2.5.2, Huovinen and Rusanen (1996) made an interesting observation that even though most students who participated in their study felt two compulsory English courses is not enough, not as many were willing to take optional courses. The student quoted in data example s1 of the present study similarly stated a wish for specifically more compulsory English studies. The idea of not being willing to do something, for example attending a foreign language course, if it is not something one has to do, but at the same time specifically expressing desire for being obligated to do it, is extremely peculiar yet inherently human. Oftentimes a person does not mind being obligated to e.g. perform a task of some sort, they might even quite enjoy it, but still they would not be doing it if they did not have to. This matter was brought forward for two reasons. The first one was to demonstrate that if increasing the amount of language studies was to be considered, it should be carefully thought over whether the new studies should specifically be compulsory. The second reason was to further explain why the comparison between students who had taken extra language studies and those who had not was included in the present study. Albeit the comparison did not yield very significant results, the justification behind it was that there might be a difference in the way those students who have chosen to take the trouble of attending optional courses think about matters related to foreign language teaching compared to those who have not. Furthermore, being able to perform the comparison was by no means the main purpose of conducting the questionnaire survey, as the

underlying idea was to gain general insight on how students in the polytechnic under study have experienced the language teaching they have received.

6.3.2 Students' differing language proficiency and problems in the way teaching groups are formed

It was explained in chapter 2.5.1 that students in Finnish polytechnics may have backgrounds that differ enormously, which in turn can lead to different levels of language proficiency at the time they begin studying languages. In addition, even students who have similar histories regarding their studying of languages are often not at the same level with their language skills, and naturally, when students with greatly differing skill levels are in the same teaching group, it can lead to certain problems. It can of course be argued that all language teachers have to struggle with the issue of some students being less skilled than others, but many times the situation can be particularly problematic in a polytechnic language classroom.

Both teacher and student participants of this study mentioned that teaching groups consisting of students whose levels of language proficiency differ significantly can cause challenging situations. The student quoted in example s15 made the point that students who do not fulfil the skill requirements of polytechnic language courses should complete preparatory courses before they are accepted to the actual courses. Of the teachers Essi and Teemu explained in data excerpt t28 that especially in the case of English courses there sometimes are, as it were, separate groups in the classroom that the teacher is teaching simultaneously, with some students having trouble introducing themselves and others being somewhat fluent. This was specifically acknowledged by them as a challenging aspect of their work. In data samples t6 and t7 Essi and Teemu also added that in their opinion, as far as language proficiency in a literal sense is considered, the students who are good were already good before they began their polytechnic studies and that no major improvement, apart from skills more related to lifelong learning, could be achieved within the confines of single courses.

The point about students who are placed in groups with peers that are either significantly less skilled or more proficient than them suffering disadvantage is certainly tenable, as argued by Jaatinen and Juuso (2008), whose research was described in chapter 2.5.1. According to them, polytechnics in Finland do not have a joint policy on whether or not students should take skill

level tests before beginning their language studies and whether students who are less skilled than others should attend preparatory courses. As also stated in chapter 2.5.1, Kantelinen and Heiskanen (2004) add to this by explaining that even in some institutions that organize skill level tests there are no clear policies on what to do with the test results and that in some cases the tests are only taken by students of certain fields. This is also a part of the autonomy of polytechnics which was introduced in chapter 1.1. In the institution that Jaatinen and Juuso conducted their research in proficiency tests were in use and they revealed that many students required preparatory studies in Swedish and some also in English. It was not asked from the teachers who were interviewed for the present study if their students take proficiency tests and the topic was not mentioned during the sessions, but judging by the comments made by Essi and Teemu, which are referred to above, students in the target polytechnic are not required to complete preparatory courses. Jaatinen and Juuso (2008) further argued that if the differences in students' proficiency levels are not equalized in some way prior to them beginning their studies, the goals set for polytechnic language teaching and what is achieved in reality do not match. This, according to them, is the case at the moment in some polytechnics.

While Jaatinen and Juuso (2008) do make a strong case and are right about the situation not being perfect, the writer partly disagrees with the statement that in polytechnics which do not organize preparatory courses or require less skilled students to enhance their proficiency in other ways the goals of polytechnic language teaching are not being achieved. As explained in previous chapters, it is a matter of how regulations are interpreted and if the emphasis of teaching is on lifelong learning and enabling professional development, as it should be with the current resources in the writer's opinion, then the goals are achievable. It was described in chapter 6.1 how at least in the polytechnic under study the aspect of enabling professional development has in fact been carried out very well, even though the students apparently do not take preparatory studies. Of course the aim should always be to improve and as stated above the situation is certainly not ideal, but teaching can arguably still be effective and according to regulations even if less skilled students do not improve their proficiency beforehand.

Another issue concerning the way teaching groups are formed that was brought forward by students as well as teachers was that on some occasions there are students of different fields in the same group. Although, as has been established, the teachers justifiably felt that many language skills related to lifelong learning and professional development are universally

useful to all students, there was also a sense that at least some of them thought it would be better if the groups were field exclusive. Elisa, for one, directly stated in example t29 that in her opinion a situation where all groups consist of students of the same field is ideal. The students quoted in examples s18 and s19 stated a similar view, albeit their motivation for saying this was more strongly related to being able to study vocabulary and jargon that is clearly task specific. They are, however, making a fair point and as mentioned above, also at least one teacher agrees with them. As was the case with increasing the amount of language studies, making teaching groups field exclusive is a matter of resources and other administrative issues and presumably, there is a good reason why the situation is currently different. It is hard to see why anyone would want to mix students of different fields just for the sake of mixing them. Perhaps in the future field exclusive teaching groups can be formed, but for now it is not always the case, and the teachers in the target polytechnic have successfully adapted to this.

6.3.3 Other challenges brought forward by teachers concerning their work

Some challenges of polytechnic language teachers' work that the interviewed teachers named have already been discussed in chapter 6, including lack of time and different proficiency levels of students. There were other interesting ones, however, that were reported in the results section of this thesis and should be further discussed. As described in data excerpt t25, Teemu made those who were present laugh when he confessed, as he himself put it, that he felt free of all work-related troubles. He did say later in example t27, however, that he would imagine course planning is challenging for some novice polytechnic language teachers who have not yet build their material reserve. This, along with lack of time and issues related to teaching group formation, was the type of challenge that was expected to emerge during the interview sessions. Otherwise, the results related to this subject matter were somewhat surprising.

The overall impression that the teachers gave was that, apart from the teaching group issues, their work is not that much more challenging than the work of, say, upper secondary school teachers. Everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy their work and there were no major complaints. For example, none of the respondents felt that the legislation and regulations set for their work described in chapter 1 placed too strict demands on them, and furthermore, the

lack of text books or a course specific curriculum, such as the one for Finnish schools introduced in chapter 1.1, was embraced rather than seen as a cause for stress, as reported in data excerpts t11 and t13. All the different factors related to polytechnic language teaching described throughout chapters 1 and 2 admittedly caused the writer to assume that the teachers might be inclined to name more difficulties that they have experienced. Therefore, the general absence of any major distress in the responses of the teachers was slightly, but pleasantly, surprising.

Even though the teachers did not point out many difficulties about their work as such, there was something very interesting brought forward by Maria in example t17 about her Russian courses. She mentioned the issue more in relation to course planning than specifically naming challenges about her work, but it is something that can potentially cause demanding situations. In the example Maria spoke about the significance of students' images of and attitudes towards the country and people of Russia regarding their studying of Russian language and culture. She stressed how important it is that students understand Russian cultural traits and why some things are the way they are in Russia. In addition, Maria explained that on her courses she constantly discusses topical issues with students in an attempt to minimize the effect prejudice might have on some students' learning and motivation, naming the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and gay rights issues in Russia as examples. It was also implied during the interview that she has indeed encountered prejudice that has needed to be addressed.

Hearing about the subject matter introduced by Maria was extremely interesting and it had not occurred to the writer that such factors could create challenges in the work of language teachers. There are arguably very few languages and cultures that Finnish learners could have similar bias against, but the way Maria described she deals with the problem was inspiring. According to her story, she does not avoid difficult topics but directly addresses them, which the students surely find motivating. As mentioned above, however, Maria did not in fact name possible prejudice towards Russian culture as a challenge. Whether that is because there has not actually been that much prejudice among students or because she has handled it so successfully is unsure, but Maria stated in example t30 that she considers the biggest challenge about her work to be overlapping lessons. She explained that at the time of the interview, her courses often started at four o'clock in the afternoon, which apparently was a bad timeslot because students had other compulsory studies at the same time. The fact that

this was named by Maria as the biggest challenge of her work notwithstanding, the most interesting issue she brought forward was managing the effects of possible prejudice on students' learning.

6.4 Tools and means teachers use in course planning

6.4.1 Teacher collaboration

As was explained in chapter 2.4, the cooperation between language teachers and vocational subject teachers as well as the collaboration of fellow language teachers can function as important assets for language teachers during the process of planning their teaching. It was also mentioned that certain factors can have a strong effect on the quality and amount of collaboration, including the resources allocated for cooperating, teachers' personal qualities and the organizational culture in polytechnics. It was notable that unlike in the study by Savonmäki (2007), which was introduced in chapter 2.4, where polytechnic teachers expressed strong dissatisfaction with the working environment and the organizational culture of their institution, there were no such complaints issued by any of the interviewees of the present study and for instance they all seemed to enjoy the atmosphere in their workplace. As for cooperating with other teachers, in examples t15 and t16 Essi, Raili and Elisa highlighted the significance of exchanging ideas and knowledge with other language teachers. Essi in particular cited the importance of help from more experienced colleagues at the time when she began her work in the polytechnic under study.

There were also interesting stories shared by the interviewees about cooperating with vocational subject teachers. Teemu in data excerpt t23 explained that when he was less experienced than nowadays, he asked vocational subject teachers advice on what is essential information in their field. Then, after he had formed an idea about what the essentials of the field are, he was able to continue on his own. He also described a situation where he had combined language teaching with practical work by taking his Swedish students to a laboratory to conduct chemical experiments in the supervision of laboratory workers. This is a good example of an inspiring and motivating VOLL task, similar to what is described in chapter 2.3. Teemu did say, however, that at the moment he is not cooperating that much with vocational subject teachers, mainly because due to his increased knowledge he is comfortable

about teaching students of the fields currently assigned to him. Raili and Saku had similar reasons for not cooperating as much as previously. Another factor in their decreased amount of cooperation, as stated in excerpts t20 and t21, was the changed circumstances after the establishment of the language centre, which, it should be stressed, they did not appear to mean as a complaint.

Overall it seems that language teachers in the target polytechnic have made good use of the asset that is teacher cooperation, whether it be between fellow language teachers or vocational subject teachers. Most importantly, it appears that teachers feel comfortable asking for advice from each other and no one has to deal with problems alone. The fact that some language teachers said they do not collaborate with vocational subject teachers to a similar extent as they used to is arguably not very relevant, for it is natural that if a person feels confident about being able to do something, they are not as likely to seek help as they would be if they had no idea what is expected of them. What is essential is that accordingly to the demands of modern working life described by Savonmäki (2007), the teachers had practised cooperation and consulted either vocational subject teachers or more experienced colleagues if they were feeling unsure about some aspects of their teaching. Furthermore, even though it is true that teachers should always try to update their knowledge and teaching methods, in the case of experienced language teachers it may be that there is not much that vocational subject teachers can help them with anymore, since they might have discussed central issues of different fields with experts on many occasions and have acquired information that is sufficient to their teaching.

6.4.2 General approaches to course planning

Apart from seeking the advice of other teachers, the so called basic approach to planning a new course included familiarizing oneself with the language textbooks that may have been published in the field the students of which are being taught and in particular searching for information from the internet. These were the main course planning tools that Saku and Raili brought forward in example t14. In the same example Raili also explained that in many cases there are no textbooks to consult and in these instances teachers have to make their material relying entirely on the internet. It should be pointed out that the type of textbooks referred to here are not similar to those used in schools, which oftentimes largely define the contents of

courses, but more general ones that are not specified for any course. The course specific kind of textbook is what Saku in example t13 said he disliked using. As mentioned above, the freedom in course planning was embraced by teachers and the only more specific guidelines they had were drawn up by themselves. It was not specified what sort of things these guidelines include, but presumably they are related to aspects of language proficiency that are, as Saku stated in data sample t14, universally necessary no matter what the field, such as the ability to have telephone conversations or to attend meetings in the target language.

As for other means of course planning used by teachers, in example t17 Maria stated that for her an important asset is her extensive working experience in Russia, which she referred to as real knowledge about working life and culture that students are interested in. This kind of experience is certainly something that is likely to help in the process of planning courses and also in motivating students. Another particularly interesting course planning tool discussed by Elisa and Teemu in data excerpts t18 and t19 was the knowledge of students. It was argued in chapter 2.2 that relying on students' expertise cannot be among the primary ways that course content is created and accordingly, the teachers who mentioned doing this implied it was more of an extra means of approaching the issue. The main reason this topic raises interest in the context of this thesis is the comment made by the student quoted in excerpt s17 about things having gone wrong when teachers had asked students about relevant terminology in their field. No strong conclusions should be made based on a statement by a single student, but apparently there is a possibility that students might consider it to be unprofessional of teachers to rely on students in such matters. One can only speculate as to why that is exactly, but perhaps it is related to the way students in Finnish schools learn to perceive the role of teachers already from a young age. As explained in chapter 1.2, in schools the role of teachers is more controlling and thus, students may just consider teachers to be the experts who tell them what to do and after getting used to this setting for so many years, it might feel strange if a teacher is suddenly asking students for advice. In any case, it is notable that something teachers specifically feel could be motivating for students may be seen by some as unprofessional and this issue is one that would be interesting to study further.

To conclude this section, it should be briefly discussed what the teachers did not bring forward in relation to course planning. First of all, none of the teachers mentioned that they had conducted anything similar to the target situation analysis by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), introduced in chapter 2.2. Secondly, and perhaps more notably, not one teacher said

anything about consulting the CEF professional profiles described in chapter 2.3. It is difficult to believe that the CEF profiles are not being utilized in this particular polytechnic for two reasons, the first one being that the profiles, as previously stated, seem incredibly useful and of high quality, and the second reason being that certain language teachers working in the polytechnic were involved in the making of the profiles. Nothing more shall be said about the latter point in order to maintain the anonymity of the polytechnic, its staff and most essentially, the interviewees, but since teachers who are definitely aware of the profiles work in the institution, it is unlikely that the profiles have not been used by any of the interviewed teachers. Perhaps sharing knowledge about the CEF professional profiles is a part of the support received from fellow language teachers mentioned by the participants, but they just did not think to point it out separately. It should have occurred to the writer to specifically ask the teachers about the profiles and the target situation analysis, as they are interesting and potentially extremely useful course planning tools for polytechnic foreign language teachers, especially novice ones.

In chapter 6 the most relevant issues that emerged during the data analysis process of the present study have been discussed in a detailed manner. Both the teachers and the students brought forward some very interesting views. Certain points that were raised by the students contradicted with what was said by the teachers and vice versa, which enabled some worthwhile deliberation. On the whole, conducting this research arguably led to some valuable findings, which will be summed up in the following chapter.

7 CONCLUSION

The main aim of the present study was to find out what means are used by language teachers in a Finnish polytechnic to meet the demands of students of different fields. Other priorities included gathering information about the teachers' views on vocationally oriented language learning and the guidelines and legislation set for their work. In order to gain an even wider perspective on the subject matter the students of the institution were also asked about their experiences on the foreign language teaching they have received, along with their views on what language teaching in polytechnics should be like.

The results of the research showed that emphasis of language teaching in the polytechnic under study is strongly on enabling lifelong learning and on promoting the general willingness and ability to communicate, especially orally. This is also what the teachers essentially consider VOLL to be about. In other words, teaching highly task specific jargon is not considered a priority. This causes the teaching of languages to students of different fields to have universal elements and thus, it simplifies complying with the guidelines set for language teaching. When asked about means of creating content for courses, the teachers cited e.g. language textbooks published in the field, searching the internet for information and collaborating with other language teachers as well as vocational subject teachers. Overall, the teachers seemed to thoroughly enjoy their work and there was no major distress brought forward.

As for the students' views on the language teaching they have received, the general feeling was that of satisfaction. There were some expressions of discontent regarding the amount of field specific language and vocabulary in teaching, but it was established that certain differences of opinion between language experts and learners are natural and to be expected. The students also communicated a desire for more language studies, which further indicated their appreciation for the expertise and physical presence of teachers and also that of peers so that they can practice oral communication. In chapter 6.3.1 it was speculated that the students' desire for more language studies in many cases might specifically be a desire for more compulsory courses, as previous studies have also shown that appreciation for language studies might not always correlate with intention or willingness to take optional studies. It was therefore concluded that, should there be measures taken to offer students more language studies, it could perhaps be best if the additional courses were compulsory. However, no such decisions should be made without thorough further research on this specific subject matter and as previously mentioned, there are also always factors such as the sufficiency of resources involved along with other administrative issues.

There were certain issues that should have been taken into account during the research process and they need to be pointed out for possible further studies on the topic. First of all, there seemed to be a misunderstanding among a small number of students about what was being studied. These students discussed subject matters related to vocational subject courses they had attended which were taught in a foreign language. This, of course, was not of interest for the present study, as the focus was on foreign language teaching, not teaching that was

conducted in a foreign language. The questionnaire which was sent to students was piloted according to correct research procedure, but this problem did not emerge during the piloting phase. The number of students who had had the misunderstanding was so small that the issue did not jeopardise the results of the study. However, it is something that would need to be considered were future studies on this topic conducted. Secondly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the teachers should have been asked about the possible use of the CEF professional profiles and target situation analysis in relation to course planning, since the profiles in particular are an extremely interesting tool for the process of planning courses.

As for more major limitations of the present study, in order to be able to make stronger generalizations more than one polytechnic should be studied. Furthermore, the comparison that was made between the two student groups did not lead to very noteworthy results and arguably more attention should have been paid to it or, alternatively, it should have been left out altogether. However, as the main focus of the study was on the work of teachers and the questionnaire was included more to get a wider perspective on the topic as a whole, this issue was not something that prevented the rest of the data from being valid. Another point that should be raised here is that the definition given for general language or everyday language in the questionnaire was perhaps not ideal for the purposes of this study and it could have been more precise. The definition given arguably provided a slightly too casual image of the type of language that was meant and therefore it might have caused confusion in some students' responses, i.e. the juxtaposition between general language skills and field specific language skills was too strong. That said, there were also other parts in the questionnaire that gave further indications of what was meant by field specific language and general language and therefore the definitions cannot have been so unclear that the results of this study could not be considered valid and relevant.

As mentioned above, should further research be made on the topic of this thesis, one possibility would be to conduct similar studies in more polytechnics. In relation to the topic at hand it could also be investigated how polytechnic graduates are coping in working life with the language skills they have in order to acquire evidence whether the teaching they have received has been sufficient and if future classes need more, although in this case it should also be kept in mind that, as explained in this thesis, several other factors also contribute to the language proficiency of polytechnic graduates. Furthermore, a comparison could be made between polytechnics where teaching groups are field exclusive, provided that there are any

left, and ones where they are not, to see if there is a difference in the learning experiences of students and possibly even in the learning results. As far as the general quality of polytechnic language teaching is considered, however, perhaps the main priority of further studies should be to investigate the possibility of decreasing the differences in students' language proficiency when they begin their polytechnic studies. Whether or not this would be done by setting entrance requirements for courses and making students who do not fill those requirements complete a preparatory course is a matter that does not need to be discussed here, but it is certainly one possibility. The main thing about the potential solution in the writer's opinion, as also expressed in chapter 2.5.1, is that it should be according to the overall spirit of the Finnish higher education system and students from all strata of society should have an equal opportunity to take part in polytechnic studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Kokemuksesi AMK:n vieraiden kielten opinnoista

Huom! Vaikka ruotsin kieli on toinen kotimainen kieli, voit vastata tässä myös ruotsin kurssien kokemustesi perusteella, ELLEI ruotsi ole sinulle äidinkieli.

***Pakollinen**

Taustatiedot 1. *

Olen suorittanut tutkintooni liittyvät pakolliset vieraiden kielten opinnot.

- Kyllä
- Ei

Taustatiedot 2. *

Olen suorittanut tutkintooni liittyvät pakolliset vieraiden kielten opinnot nykyisessä ammattikorkeakoulussani.

- Kyllä
- Ei

Taustatiedot 3. *

Olen suorittanut valinnaisia vieraiden kielten opintoja nykyisessä ammattikorkeakoulussani.

- Kyllä
- Ei

1. *

1. Laki (352/2003, 8 §) ammattikorkeakoulujen kieliopinnoista määrittää, että opiskelijan tulee tutkintoonsa sisältyvissä kieliopinnoissa tai muulla tavalla osoittaa saavuttaneensa ”sellainen yhden tai kahden vieraan kielen kirjallinen ja suullinen taito, joka ammatin harjoittamisen ja ammatillisen kehityksen kannalta on tarpeellinen.” Koen AMK:ssa saamani vieraiden kielten opetuksen palvelleen tätä tarkoitusta.

1 2 3 4 5

En ole lainkaan samaa mieltä



Olen täysin samaa mieltä

2. *

Koen AMK:ssa saamani vieraiden kielten opetuksen keskittyneen riittävästi/sopivassa määrin oman alani ERIKOISKIELEEN ja termistöön.

	1	2	3	4	5	
En ole lainkaan samaa mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Olen täysin samaa mieltä

3. *

Koen AMK:ssa saamani vieraiden kielten opetuksen keskittyneen riittävästi/sopivassa määrin ns. YLEISKIELEEN (ei keskity tiettyyn aihealueeseen, kieli jota käytät esim. vapaa-ajan keskusteluissa)

	1	2	3	4	5	
En ole lainkaan samaa mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Olen täysin samaa mieltä

4. *

Oman alani erikoiskieli ja ns. yleiskieli ovat olleet oikeassa suhteessa toisiinsa AMK:ssa saamassani vieraiden kielten opetuksessa.

	1	2	3	4	5	
En ole lainkaan samaa mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Olen täysin samaa mieltä

5. *

Pidän alakohtaisen ERIKOISKielen opiskelua tärkeänä jotta saavutan vieraassa kielessä (tulevan) ammattini harjoittamisen ja ammatillisen kehityksen kannalta tarpeellisen taitotason.

	1	2	3	4	5	
En ole lainkaan samaa mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Olen täysin samaa mieltä

6. *

Pidän ns. YLEISKielen opiskelua tärkeänä jotta saavutan vieraassa kielessä (tulevan) ammattini harjoittamisen ja ammatillisen kehityksen kannalta tarpeellisen taitotason.

	1	2	3	4	5	
En ole lainkaan samaa mieltä	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Olen täysin samaa mieltä

7.

Jos yllä olevat kysymykset herättivät sinussa aiheeseen liittyviä ajatuksia, toiveita, kehitysideoita ammattikorkeakoulusi vieraiden kielten opetukseen yms., kommentoihan vapaasti tähän.

Appendix 2. Interview questions

Kysymyksiä opettajille (avoin ryhmähaastattelu)

1. Laki (352/2003, 8 §) ammattikorkeakoulujen kieliopinnoista määrittää, että opiskelijan tulee tutkintoonsa sisältyvissä kieliopinnoissa tai muulla tavalla osoittaa saavuttaneensa ”sellainen yhden tai kahden vieraan kielen kirjallinen ja suullinen taito, joka ammatin harjoittamisen ja ammatillisen kehityksen kannalta on tarpeellinen.” Kuulostaa aika vaativalta opettajia kohtaan, kun miettii, että tavoite tulisi saavuttaa alasta riippuen yhden tai kahden kurssin aikana ja että yksi opettaja opettaa useamman alan opiskelijoita. Mitä ajatuksia tämä pykälä herättää ja koetteko, että se on käytännön tasolla täysin toteutettavissa?
(The polytechnic decree (352/2003, 8 §) dictates that polytechnic students have to demonstrate, either in relation to the language studies included in their degree or by other acceptable means, that they have such oral and writing skills in one or two foreign languages that are required in order to cope in future working life and enable professional development. This sounds somewhat demanding from the point of view of teachers, considering that this goal should be achieved during one or two courses depending on the field and that a teacher can have students from many different fields. What kinds of thoughts does the decree provoke in you and do you feel that the goal set in it is entirely achievable on a practical level?)
2. Mitä keinoja olette löytäneet tarjotaksenne opiskelijoiden tarpeita vastaavaa opetusta eri opettamillanne aloilla? Tapahtuuko esim. yhteistyötä ammattiaineiden opettajien kanssa?
(What means have you thought of for providing teaching that meets the demands of students from the different fields you teach? Does e.g. cooperation with vocational subject teachers take place?)
3. Mitä muuta tukea olette saaneet kurssisuunnitteluun ja koetteko tarvetta sellaiselle?
(What other kind of support have you received for course planning and do you feel the need for it?)
4. Miten yleensä lähдете kurseja suunnittelemaan?
(How do you usually approach course planning?)
5. Oman lisänsä aiemmin mainittuihin haasteisiin tuo Euroopan neuvoston lanseeraama EHEA-projekti, joka asettaa korkeakouluissa ison painon kansainvälisyydelle, kielitaidolle ja kulttuurienväliselle kompetenssille. Vieraiden kielten opetuksella voidaan sanoa olevan merkittävä rooli tässä. Miten paljon tämä on vaikuttanut kurseja suunnitellessa?

(The EHEA project introduced by the council of Europe adds to the demands of polytechnic foreign language teaching by placing emphasis on values such as internationality, language skills and intercultural competence. It can be said that foreign language teaching has a great role in ensuring these values are treasured. How much has this affected your course planning?)

6. Kuinka haastavana ylipäätään koette työnne? Mikä on kaikkein haastavinta?

(How challenging do you feel your work is in general? What is the most challenging thing?)

7. AMK:n kieliopintojen voidaan katsoa kuuluvan LSP/VOLL (ammattillisesti suuntautunut kielten oppiminen) kategoriaan. Mikä on näkemyksenne siitä, onko se ensisijaisesti alakohtaisen erityiskielen opiskelua vai onko ns. yleiskielelläkin suuri rooli?

(Language studies in polytechnics can be included in the category of LSP/VOLL. How do you understand VOLL, is it primarily studying field specific language or do general language skills also play a great role in it?)

8. Painotatteko mielestänne selkeästi enemmän joko alakohtaista erityiskieltä tai ns. yleiskieltä opetuksessanne?

(Do you feel you clearly emphasize either field specific language or general language skills in your teaching?)