

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN
FINLAND:

The role of English from the point of view of entrepreneurs in the
metal industry in Southern Ostrobothnia

Bachelor's Thesis

By

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Englannin kielen käyttö yleisenä yhteisenä kielenä, *lingua francana*, on lisääntynyt niin maailmalla kuin Suomessakin erityisesti muutaman viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana. Globalisaation myötä muutos on ollut kiivasta myös yritysmaailmassa. Ulkomaalaisen työvoiman käyttö Suomessa, esimerkiksi rakennus- ja metallialalla, on lisääntynyt, minkä johdosta englannin kielen käyttö yhteisenä kielenä metallialan yrityksissä on selvästi kasvanut. Työyhteisöjen lisääntynyt englannin kielen käyttö ei siis koske vain suomalaisia monikansallisia yrityksiä.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, kuinka aikanaan 1970- ja 1980-luvuilla ammattikoulupohjaisella tai pelkällä peruskoulupohjaisella koulutuksella suorittavaan työhön suuntautuneet tämän päivän metallialan yrittäjät selviävät mahdollisesta lisääntyneestä englannin kielen käytöstä omassa työssään. Lähtökohtana tutkimukselle oli 1970- ja 1980-lukujen yleinen asenneilmapiiri englannin kieltä kohtaan, jonka mukaan englannin kieltä ei välttämättä tarvitse ammattikouluun suuntautuessa. Tutkimuksen toisena tavoitteena oli selvittää sen aikaisten englannin kielen opetusmetodien ja oppimistulosten mahdollista yhteyttä sekä saatuihin tuloksiin verraten pohtia sitä, ollaanko nykyisten opetusmetodien kanssa oikeilla jäljillä.

Tutkimuksessa haastateltiin viittä metallialan yrittäjää, jotka työskentelevät joko peruskoulu- tai ammattikoulupohjalta. Kyselyssä oli 34 kysymystä, joista kahdeksan oli Likert-skaalaan perustuvaa kysymystä; loput kysymykset olivat avoimia kysymyksiä. Kyselyn tulokset analysoitiin sisällönanalyysimetodia käyttäen ryhmitellen, tiivistäen ja eroja ja yhtäläisyyksiä aineistosta etsien.

Tulosten mukaan haastatelluilla yrittäjillä oli eriasteisia vaikeuksia käyttää englannin kieltä työssään. Useimmat heistä eivät käytä mielellään englantia työssään, mutta toisaalta englannin kielen käyttö nähtiin välttämättömäksi nykypäivänä. Apuina englannin kielessä yrittäjät käyttivät Google Kääntäjää, nettisanakirjoja, englannin kieltä taitavaa henkilökuntaa, tulkkeja tai muita ammattilaisia. Englannin kielen merkitys yritystoiminnassa ja heidän alallaan oli yrittäjien mukaan kasvanut joko merkittävästi tai erittäin merkittävästi. 1970- ja 1980-lukujen englannin kielen opetusmenet, kielioppiin, sanastoihin ja tylsiin oppikirjoihin keskittyminen sekä liian nopea etenemistähti olivat aikanaan selvästi laskeneet haastateltujen opiskelumotivaatiota.

Tutkimuksen tuloksilla on selkeä viesti: nykypäivänä englannin kieltä tarvitaan joka sektorilla. Kyse ei ole pelkästään korkeakoulutettujen ”etuoikeus”, vaan englannin kieltä käytetään alalla kuin alalla. Tuloksia voidaan soveltaa esimerkiksi perusteltaessa nykypäivän oppilaille, miksi kannattaa panostaa englannin kielen taitoon. Hyvä englannin kielen taito näyttäisi tutkimusten valossa säästävän aikaa, rahaa ja vaivaa.

Asiasanat – Keywords: Uses of English, globalization, BELF as Business English Lingua Franca, metal industry, manual work, proficiency in English, English education, demotivation

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1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the presence of the English language in Finland is both visible and audible. Indeed, during the last few decades, English has noticeably permeated Finnish society (Leppänen et al. 2009). In the business sector, along with globalization and the introduction of a foreign work force, English has become a *lingua franca* in external and also in internal communication in many companies (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 402; Virkkula 2008: 382). English language skills are currently considered important or even a necessity in many work fields, influencing workers from top to bottom within the corporate organization (Virkkula 2008: 383). In parallel, changes can be detected in education: English is conquering foreign language studies in Finland as pupils are increasingly choosing English as their first foreign language (Kärki 2014: 4). Moreover, at universities and in the research field, English is nationally and internationally used as a *lingua franca*. Hence, Finland is closely intertwined with the global phenomenon of English becoming increasingly important and the most commonly used medium of communication between and within societies and corporations (Leppänen et al. 2008: 12).

However, when reflecting on time back to the 1970's or the 1980's, learning English was not necessarily considered important (Korhonen 1986: 7). At those times, according to my personal experience and also according to a recollective interview of a then Junior High teacher "Nah, I'm not gonna need English, so I'm not gonna study it" – this attitude was not unusual at Junior High School (Finnish *yläaste*, now *yläkoulu*) especially amongst those pupils who intended to continue to vocational school after comprehensive school. However, some of those "boys in the back seats" currently run metal manufacturing businesses of their own and some of them also employ foreign workers. This juxtaposition between the circumstances then and now from the sociolinguistic and educational point of view, triggered my interest and was the basis for the research questions of this thesis and led to interviewing five entrepreneurs working in the metal industry.

The research questions and assumptions are divided into two main categories. Firstly, from the English language point of view, one goal of the present study is to find out the English proficiency level the interviewed entrepreneurs perceive themselves having and furthermore, do they need to use English at work, and if yes, how they manage with it and in what kinds of situations they need to use it. According to Korhonen (1986: 11), the relevance of foreign language acquisition was considered less important a few decades ago, especially among those

students who went to vocational school. Thus, the first tentative assumption is that the interviewees of the present study, who continued to vocational school after comprehensive school, most likely lacked proficiency in English when they started their business. That being the case, the entrepreneurs might still encounter difficulties, such as misunderstandings and loss of information at work. The second assumption is that, in the metal industry, the English language is increasingly used as a tool for communication with clients and business partners in Finland as English is nowadays widely referred as the *lingua franca* in business (Bergroth 2007: 6; Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2012: 5; Virkkula 2008: 384).

Secondly, the main goal of this study from the educational point of view is to discover the interviewees' experiences on learning English at school whether there are any connections between contemporary teaching methods and learning outcomes. The assumption is that prevailing teaching methods and attitudes contributed to some of the difficulties the interviewees were having when studying English at school, which would conform to Korhonen's study (1986: 63). Learning, motivation and teaching methods are closely knit together and thus, the entrepreneurs' perceptions of their English education are discussed and evaluated from the point of view whether there was something that ought to have been done differently when they were at comprehensive school.

2 ENGLISH IN FINLAND

In this chapter, the role of the English language in Finland is discussed. While the aim of this study is to find out about implications of the increased national and international use of English for the metal industry, various aspects are scrutinised, such as the spread of English in Finland and the use of English as BELF, *Business English Lingua Franca*. Furthermore, people's attitudes toward English and their various uses of English are considered. In addition, a pedagogical aspect is addressed. This overview on issues in relation to the changing role and use of English in Finland will provide background information for the interviews of the current study. As there is no previous research conducted concerning specifically the metal industry, this study embraces as closely related research to the present framework as possible.

2.1 English as an increasingly common language in Finland

Finland is globalising strongly along with the rest of the world. In the blink of an eye, people of different nationalities are able to reach each other from far distances via the Internet. In the interconnected world, English is the common language, *a lingua franca*, nowadays (Bergroth 2007: 13; Lehtonen 2004: 7; Virkkula 2008: 382–383). Individuals, organizations and nations as well as businesses and worldwide enterprises use English more and more as a common tool for social, cultural, and economical communication (Lehtonen 2004: 3–5). Similarly, an intensive growth of the daily use of English can be clearly detected in Finland (Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 20–21). According to a large survey conducted in 2007, the English language is widely used in Finland and it is also the most used foreign language in Finland. Moreover, the survey points out that Finns see English as an essential means of communication and expertise in today's globalising world and accordingly, attitudes toward English are mostly positive in Finland. (Leppänen et al. 2009). Indeed, the survey was unprecedented in the Finnish scale, as, in Finland, the growing importance of English has not been that widely researched yet.

It was discovered by Leppänen et al. (2009) that there is variation in the uses, perceptions and attitudes on the English language depending on people's age, gender, education, job and geographical location. Higher educated city dwellers' perception toward English was revealed to be more positive and appreciative than their less educated counterparts in rural areas and for example manual workers (Leppänen et al. 2009: 65, 91–97). Furthermore, people living in the city study English more and also use English more at work than the ones who live in the country. It was also noted that especially young people use English widely and enthusiastically and their attitude toward the English language is highly positive (Leppänen et al. 2009: 65, 82). Indeed, the future role of the English language in Finland was likely seen by a good third of the respondents as one of the official languages in Finland, besides Finnish and Swedish (Leppänen et al. 2009: 141).

2.2 English as a Lingua Franca in business

The English language is commonly addressed as ELF, *English Lingua Franca*. In 2005, Louhiala-Salminen et al. introduced a new abbreviation for business English: BELF as a *Business English Lingua Franca*. Accordingly, BELF is characterised as a communication system precisely for the business sector, thus separating it from ELF (Louhiala-Salminen et al 2005: 403–404). BELF is used by the international business communities in order to conduct

business, usually by non-native English speakers (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta 2012: 8). In the Nordic countries, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland, the common language has traditionally been Swedish, or actually a variant of it, so called Skandinavian, which is a combination of Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 402). However, during the last few decades, along the rest of the world, this Nordic *lingua franca* has been influenced by English, or BELF (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 402), as English is increasingly used as a means of communication also in the Nordic countries (Lehtonen 2004: 18; Huusko 2008: 8; Vollstedt 2002: 90). According to Huusko (2008: 8) and Lehtonen (2004: 17) this phenomenon results from international corporates' language practices using English increasingly as a main tool for internal and external communication.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a job in Finland without any international connections or encounters. Due to rapid development of communication and information technology, today's workers are facing new occupational challenges (Virkkula 2008: 383; Lehtonen (2004: 11–12). In Bergroth (2007: 12) and Leppänen and Nikula (2008: 13) it is mentioned that when a few decades ago there were interpreters, translators and staff to manage international affairs, employees are presumed to handle international connections by themselves in today's working environment. This is one infliction of the globalization as the English language has become one of the basic requirements for employees in Finnish internationalising companies (Virkkula 2008: 383). It is noted by several researches that usage of English as a corporate language, unofficially or officially within the organization, can arise problems among workers (Lehtonen 2004: 19; Virkkula 2008: 408–409). Namely, all workers do not consider themselves communicatively proficient in English nor they feel comfortable using English at work. As a consequence, English as a corporate language can cause anxiety or feelings of insecurity, even anger and frustration. (Lehtonen 2004: 50–51). On the other hand, the use of English can be seen as a positive and normal part of one's working life: communicating in English can be seen rewarding and hence, English proficiency as a source of pride. (Virkkula 2008: 406).

2.3 English education in Finland

One of the aims of the present study is to find out, in a rather cursory way, whether any conclusion can be drawn between the past teaching methods and the interviewees' English learning outcomes at the comprehensive school in the 1970's and 1980's. Namely, today's main stream practices in English classrooms include differentiation, multimodal teaching methods, enhanced student involvement and knowledge of different learning styles, among others

(Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014). However, these practices were quite unknown in the English language classes in the 1970's and 1980's (Korhonen 1986; Laine 1977). At those times, learning foreign languages was seen as an individual and cognitive process and moreover, a stable and static one as mentioned in Dufva et al. (2007: 312). Speaking skills were not emphasised; the weight was on grammar and vocabulary learning using text and work books (Korhonen 1986: 17).

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this section, the present study is introduced. The research design is presented by addressing it's the aims and research questions. Also, the selection of methodology and data is presented and explained in order to provide justification for the chosen methods.

3.1 The research aims and questions

Even though the role of English has increased significantly in almost every sector in Finland, the change itself has not been widely researched, especially within the manufacturing industry. When reviewing research from the 1970's and 1980's about foreign language learning and motivation in Finland, including the English language (Laine 1977; Korhonen 1986), English was not yet addressed as a *lingua franca* in Finland at those times. Accordingly, if one's goal was to continue to vocational school after comprehensive school, English was not necessarily highly appreciated or keenly studied at comprehensive school, as there was no English education provided for every age group at vocational school. At that time, foreign language studies were considered practical and in the vocational sector, foreign language skills were seen to be useful only in some occupations (Korhonen 1986: 10). As a result, the pupils continuing to vocational school might have finished comprehensive school with rather poor English skills. However, some of those pupils who graduated as manual workers, plate welders and machinists have, since their vocational school years, established businesses of their own in the metal industry and run companies employing foreign workers. Assumedly, they need to use English at work. This contradictory setting is a starting point for this thesis and is partly based on my personal experience. Additionally, pedagogical aspects are addressed in the study in order to see whether there is something to learn from the interviewees' experiences of the English language teaching when thinking about today's practices in English class rooms.

Five entrepreneurs were interviewed for this research. They all work as entrepreneurs in the metal manufacturing industry located in a rural area in Southern Ostrobothnia in Western Finland. Four of them are acquaintances of mine. Hence, in addition to an academic interest, I am also driven by a personal interest to study this topic. My research aims to answer the following questions:

- How much, and in which kinds of situations, do entrepreneurs in the metal industry use English at work, and what kinds of techniques do they use to manage?
- How do the entrepreneurs perceive the change in the use of English during the past four decades? Is there a detectable change?
- Pedagogically, how do the entrepreneurs perceive the contemporary English education of the 1970' and 1980's and how do they reflect their experiences to the present day English teaching?

3.2 The data

In order to obtain in-depth information and detailed descriptions on the interviewees' experiences and coping methods of their past and present English language encounters, this study was conducted by semi-structured face-to-face and experience-focused interviews. By semi-structured it is meant that the questionnaire consisted of pre-set questions but the order of the questions and discussion was lenient for variation (Brinkmann 2013: 21). Mixed-methods technique was used as the questionnaire included both qualitative and quantitative questions. (Bergman 2008: 4). 28 of the questions are open-ended and six are Likert scale questions. If only Likert form questions were included in the study, valuable information, such as personal ideas and opinions, could have been missed as this specific topic has not been widely researched earlier and thus, it was difficult to predict what to expect for answers. Moreover, these methods provided an opportunity to make more specific questions and ask for further explanations on the answers, if needed.

The interviews of the entrepreneurs were carried out in Finnish. They were recorded and the most relevant parts were transcribed. The entrepreneurs were interviewed one at a time over lunch in order to create relaxed atmosphere and to entice busy businessmen to take part in the research. The questionnaire, which consisted of 34 questions, was filled out by the interviewer. There were four main themes in the questionnaire:

1. The interviewees' personal background information, including evaluation of their present English proficiency.
2. The entrepreneurs' use of the English language in practice at work.
3. The entrepreneurs' perceptions of the change in the use of English during the last decades.
4. The pedagogical section in which the interviewees' erstwhile English education is under scrutiny.

The first step, when starting to conduct the present study, was to interview an elderly English teacher of Junior High School by phone. The short interview was conducted for the purpose of confirming my personal memories and experiences, which were the base and inspiration for the current study's research questions and assumptions.

3.3 Methods of analysis

After transcribing the experience-focused interviews, content analysis was used to analyse the answers. The purpose in content analysis is to increase information value of the data by reducing and organising the data into compound and coherent categories without losing information (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 108–109). Accordingly, as the focus in content analysis is on meaning of the information and what is being said, content analysis was chosen as a method of analysis rather than a discourse analysis, which concentrates more on the nature of interview interaction and is a basis, for instance, for analysing language- and interaction focused interviews (Brinkmann 2013: 43). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 108–113) content analyses can be executed two-dimensionally: either inductively, according to which data is gathered and theories or concepts constructed according to findings, or deductively, where data collection is based on existing theory or theories. As a consequence, inductive content analysis is adopted in this study as there are no exact existing theories or concepts due to lack of research in this specific field.

4 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the findings of the present research are introduced. The findings are divided into three main categories. First of all, the interviewees are introduced by their background and present English skills. Secondly, I will be focusing on the use of the English language of the

interviewees at work. This second section is divided into two parts: 1) in what ways the interviewees' use English in practice at work, and 2) what kinds of changes there have been in the use of English when comparing the beginning of their entrepreneur career to the present day and furthermore, how they perceive the possible change. The third and final section of the questionnaire concentrates on pedagogical issues. This is to find out about the interviewees' opinion on their English learning experience in the comprehensive school they attended in the 1970's and 1980's. Additionally, one figure and 26 interview extracts are added in order to provide insights of the interviewees' narration. In the Finnish transcriptions, strong Southern Ostrobothnian dialect can be detected. As for the translations from Finnish to English in the extracts, they are all mine.

4.1 The interviewees

Five entrepreneurs were interviewed for the present study. The subjects are aged between 40 and 59 as of January 2016. They have lived and gone to school in a rural area in which their businesses are also located. The interviewees, all males, have been working in the metal industry from 8 to 22 years as entrepreneurs. Although, one of the interviewees with an eight-year long entrepreneurship has been working independently in entrepreneur-like circumstances for the last 19 years for the same company to which he has been a subcontractor for the last eight years. Therefore, in this study, his views and experiences are taken into account from the 19-year time period. Four interviewees have studied English for seven years at a nine-year comprehensive school, and the fifth person has four years of English studies at a so-called middle school. Four informants have completed a three-year vocational school qualifying such as plate welders and machinists; one is a self-learner in his occupation. Moreover, one of the four vocational school attendees has studied English for three years whereas there were no English courses offered for the three interviewees at the time they attended vocational school.

Altogether, the total number of years of English studies of the entrepreneurs varied from four years to ten years. No other courses have been attended after vocational school by them except for one person, who has completed an additional welding course, International Welding Specialist, taught in Finnish. The lack of future English studies at vocational school was mentioned to be a definite motivation depriver during their comprehensive school by two informants as their imminent conclusion was that they will not need English skills in their job in the future. Accordingly, it was emphasised by the interviewees that it was one reason why learning English did not interest them.

The following extracts from the interviews portray the entrepreneurs' perceptions about the need of English skills when they were at comprehensive school:

1. *"ei ollu pointtia mitää sillä ikää... että tota... ammattikoulu oli tähtäimes... ja siälä ei kiäliä edes ollu... se ei motivoinu se jatkokaa siihe..."*
- "There was no point at that age... ehh... my aim was vocational school... and there was no language teaching there... so it did not motivate..."
2. *"...jotta emmää mitää tota (englantia) tartte..."*
"...nah, I'm not gonna need it (English)..."
3. *"...se oli sillo aina että mihinkä mää sitä (englantia) tartten... mää oon menos hitsaamaan... mihinkä mää siellä pajas englantia tartten..."*
"...back then it was always like where do I need it (English)... I'm gonna be a plate welder... I'm not gonna need any English in the workshop..."
4. *"...80-luvulla sitä pirettihin ihan merkityksettömänä asiana... notta lopit osaas englantia..."*
"... in the 1980's it (English) was considered no use... that boys should learn English..."
5. *"...mutta ala-asteelta muistan että yläkoulun opettaja opetti myös englantia... mutta yläkoulun opettaja ei ollut opiskellut englantia aikaasemmin... että tuata nii... asenne oli varmaa hyvin samanlaanen kuin meillä... että mihinkä tätä englantia tarvitahan..."*
"...but I remember that in primary school there was a junior high teacher who taught us English... but he had no previous English studies... so ehh... his attitude was very similar to ours... what are we gonna need English for..."

The narrations reveal clearly that English was considered insignificant even by a teacher when contemplating important future occupational competencies of pupils. Along the interviews, indifferent, even opposing and negative, perceptions about English skills could be detected when the entrepreneurs were recalling their comprehensive school years.

Also in the background section, the informants were also enquired to analyse their present English skills, such as speaking, writing, reading and listening skills (See Figure 1, page 11). The results were quite homogenous; the answer was *moderate* to most of the questions, writing skills defined as the poorest. None of the interviewees perceived their English skills either *good* or *excellent* or as *not at all*. Moreover, they were asked to indicate a level that they wanted their English proficiency to be (See Figure 1, page 11). The answers varied from *moderate* to *excellent*: one interviewee hoped to have moderate skills, three to have good skills and one person to have excellent skills. Accordingly, they all strongly agreed that they feel irritated from time to time because of their lack of English proficiency. In addition, four interviewees responded that they feel ashamed of their English skills, whereas one interviewee refused to be ashamed, referring to his age.

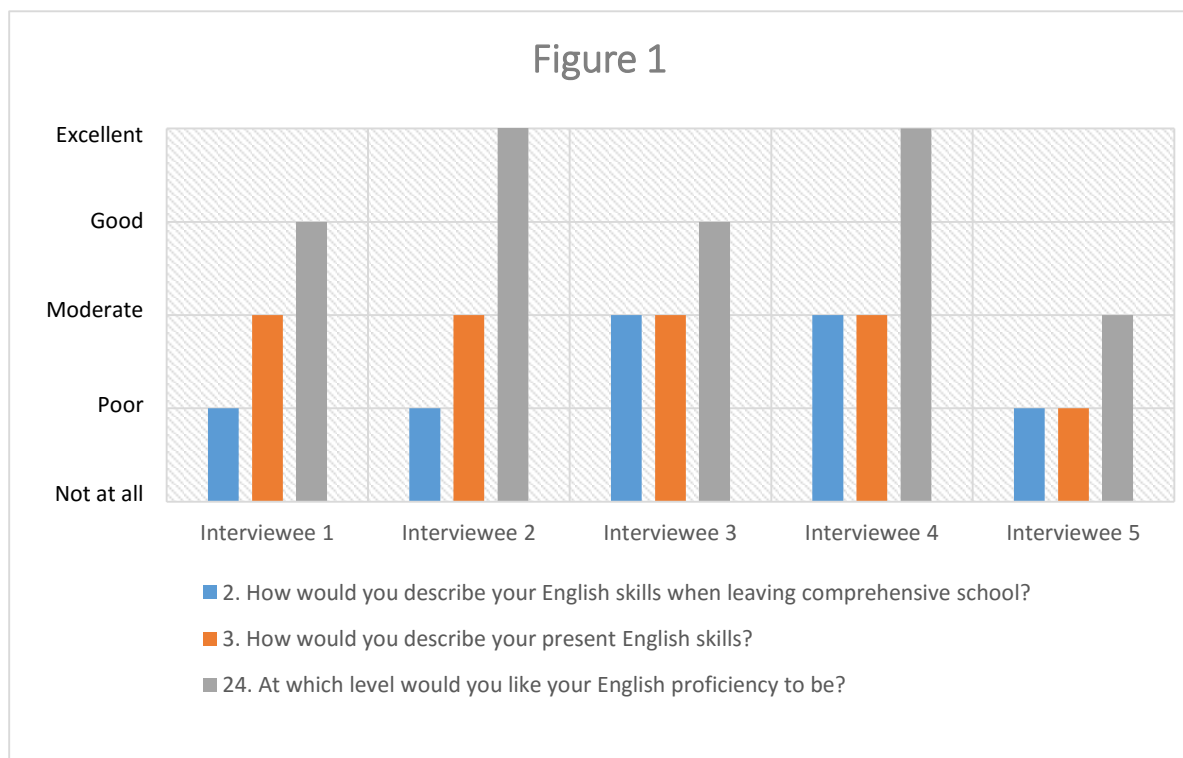
4.2 Use of English at work

4.2.1 In general

The entrepreneurs were interviewed about their use of English at work. The questions revolved around how much they need to use English at their work, how they have managed with the English language at their work and in what kinds of situations. In addition, what kind of aids they use, if they use them. Along their business career, none of the entrepreneurs have studied English at any courses after school. Hence, all of the interviewees described themselves as self-learners of the English language. They have seemingly made an effort to learn English, as they have been listening to tapes in English and reading books in the English language. These means were mentioned by two persons. In addition, one of the interviewees noted that reading and studying manuals in English has helped him in the learning process, especially with a technical vocabulary. “The world has taught me.” was plainly stated by one of the entrepreneurs.

All of the interviewees mentioned that they need to use English at work. The amount of English used at work depends mainly on the ongoing projects, especially by the four entrepreneurs who have installation worksites abroad. English was mentioned to be the *lingua franca* in all international projects, including Swedish business partners, even though Swedish is the second official language in Finland. It is worth acknowledging that none of the interviewed entrepreneurs live, nor are their businesses located, in a bilingual region; this might also explain their rather negative attitudes toward Swedish. Accordingly, English was also used in a business context by one interviewee who revealed having a better command of street Swedish compared

to his English skills due to his lifelong interaction with Swedish relatives. Nevertheless, English is increasingly used as an official language also with Finnish business partners, even if the project's worksites were located solely in Finland. This phenomenon was mentioned to result from the increasing number of foreign workers in the metal industry with, for example, those of Lithuanian, Polish or Hungarian nationality. In addition, some larger business partners of the entrepreneurs have established English as the official language of the corporate. As a consequence, English is used weekly in minimum by four of the interviewees, monthly by one. English is used daily whenever there are overseas installation worksites or projects in Finland in the English language. According to one interviewee, his statement was that he would use English much more if his English skills were better. In the chart below, it can be seen that the interviewees would definitely prefer to more competent in English. Also the entrepreneurs' perceptions of their past and present English skills are shown.



Interviewees' past, present, and preferable English skills.

4.2.2 Linguistic forms of English used at work

All of the entrepreneurs encounter all forms of the language use, that is, reading, listening, speaking, and writing. For the entrepreneurs, the most common forms of using English at work are via e-mails and communicating at worksites. When scrutinising different categories of usage, reading English texts seemed to be perceived the easiest and the most comfortable out of the four. All informants receive e-mails in English from advertisers and four of them receive English emails from business partners. One's business contracts are conducted by their prime contractor. Reading e-mails can be challenging though. For instance, business contracts have to be carefully read through and understood before signing them, otherwise it can lead to costly errors in case of a contractual dispute. This fact was emphasised by two of the informants who make business deals directly with their clients. When addressing listening skills, it was mentioned by one of the interviewees that it can be easy to listen to an English speaking person, but to respond is difficult. All the interviewees occasionally receive phone calls in English, and there are some meetings where English is the official means of communication. Furthermore, three interviewees mentioned that understanding native English speaker's talk is definitely more difficult than to listen and understand to another person for whom English is also a foreign language.

When scrutinising English speaking skills, there were some common features for all of the five interviewees. Feelings of insecurity and frustration were familiar to all of them when needing to communicate in English. They also suffer from the lack of grammar skills when speaking English. This seemed to bother four of the informants in such measure that they rather avoid speaking English or speak linguistically very simple English. Although, it was mentioned by two informants that they prefer speaking to writing. Writing was considered as an uncomfortable mode of using English as all five informants mentioned that they did not like to write in English. This was due to lack of vocabulary and grammar. Simple "yes" and "no" answers or simple sentence structures were used when needing to write in English. Furthermore, English is used for online shopping on the Internet and especially by the one entrepreneur whose customers do their business orders from them entirely via the Internet.

In the following, transcriptions of the entrepreneurs' thoughts about how they see themselves managing with English at work are depicted:

6. *“Kyllä mä ny niinku työmaalla pärjään... mutta niinku ei se hääviä oo... eikä tartte kyllä oikeesti tarinoota ruveta kertomahan...”*
“Well, I kind of manage ok at work... but it isn’t much... and for sure I’m not gonna start telling stories (in English) ...”
7. *“...eihän se ny oo niin jouhevaa ollenkaan...”*
“...it isn’t fluent at all...”
8. *“...pakko se on vaa hyväksyä... pakko sitä (englantia) on vaa käyttää...”*
“...you just have to accept it... you must use it (English)...”
9. *“...sanotaan että käytän vaan jos tarvitaan... vaatis preppaamista lisää jos oikeen haluaisin käyttää...”*
“...let’s say that I use it only if I need it... I would need a lot more practice if I liked to use it more...”
10. *“...kaiken aikaa se tuntuu niinku helepottavan... vaikka on jo tällä ikää...”*
“...it gets easier over time... even at my redundant age...”

Clearly, feelings, such as discomfort and discontent, along feelings of submission and acceptance in the situation, can be detected in the entrepreneurs’ narrations. The situation is what it is and the entrepreneurs comprehend they have no other option than to accept it and to adapt to it.

4.2.3 Coping with English

One of the research questions enquired how the entrepreneurs manage when they have to use English at work. According to the results, none of the informants are self-sufficient when using the English language at work; hence they use various means to cope. First of all, online dictionaries and traditional book and travel dictionaries are used by all of the entrepreneurs in order to manage. All of them are in favour of using the internet website Google Translate. This was clearly the most commonly used source for help and the only source for one of the entrepreneurs. Other online dictionaries, for example Sanakirja.org, are used by three of the informants; one of the five informants used a dictionary. Accordingly, small travel guide books were mentioned by one of the interviewees. Secondly, the entrepreneurs delegate reading and writing emails to their employees; for phone calls and English documents, they get help from

the employees with sufficient English proficiency, for example secretaries or other personnel. Lawyers and other professionals were also consulted for assistance with legal documents, contracts, and business negotiations in general. All of them also mentioned that, in order to improve their own English skills, they glance through materials in English at first and, after that, they forward the materials to personnel. Also, two of the entrepreneurs revealed taking advantage of family members' help and expertise.

Accordingly, in the the following transcriptions, methods and means of the entrepreneurs for coping with English at work are portrayed:

11. *"...mutta pitääs niinku osata paremmin... melekeen niinku tulee delegoitua hyvinki äkkiä..."*

"...but I really should know it (English) better... I delegate quite quickly..."

12. *"...tulee englanninkielisiä tarjouksia... menee eteenpäin.... sellaaasille jotka osaa paremmin..."*

"...I get business offers in English... I forward them... to people who know English better..."

13. *"...tuata... meillon työntekijä siihen... tai itte asias kolomekki sellaaasta jollon hyvä englanti... tuata.. siinon yks juristiopiskelijaki joka käy vielä läpi..."*

"...well... we have personnel for that... as a matter a fact, three persons who know English well... ehh... there is also one law student who goes through everything..."

14. *"...nii kyllä käytän... tulukkia tai tyäkaveria... jos on kerran maharollisuutta..."*

"...yeah I do use... interpreter or colleague... if there is a chance..."

15. *"...mutta paljon mä sitten teen niinki että mä sanon sihteeriille että kirjotan suomeksi ja sanon että no niin käännäppäs tua englanniksi..."*

"...but quite often I do so that I tell my secretary that I write in Finnish and then I tell her to translate it to English..."

16. *"...mä saan apuja englannin kieleen tyttäreltä... ja sitte meillä on henkilökunnas kuitenkin vaikka siinä on ammattikoulupohjasia... no yks opiskelee insinööriksi, niin on ihan hyvä plus kielitaito.... mä googlaan ja sitten käytän näitä translateria ja nettisanakirjaa..."*

“...I get help with English from my daughter... and then we have personnel even though they have only a vocational degree, well one is studying to be an engineer, who have good plus language skills... I google and then I use Google Translate and online dictionary...”

In the transcriptions, the interviewees describe themselves having found several suitable ways to cope with English. However, through the interviewing process, it became clear that problems arise because of the entrepreneurs' English language deficiency. Misunderstandings happen and they can be costly for various reasons, for example, due to wrong measurements or numbers, parts can be wrongly manufactured and delivered to customers. Indeed, three of the entrepreneurs out of five have experienced costly mishaps because lack of mutual understanding. Another means for overcoming language barriers is body language at worksites. Use of hands, charts and documents can be helpful when negotiating work projects.

All four of five entrepreneurs who have employees highly value the English language skills of the employees. When a plate welder goes to work at an installation worksite in Finland or abroad, it is obligatory for them to be able to communicate in English. Similarly, it is essential for office workers at metal plants to be competent in English.

4.2.4 The change

According to the interviews, an increase in the use of the English language in their working life can be detected during the past four decades. In the metal industry, three entrepreneurs out of five have experienced an *increase* whereas two entrepreneurs out of five have experienced a *significant increase* in the use of English in their working environment. In the entrepreneurs' opinion, the role of the English language will continue to strengthen within their industry. All interviewees perceived this trend as a positive phenomenon. According to the entrepreneurs, it facilitates increasing international commerce and business and enables businesses to operate in a larger international scale. All of the entrepreneurs understood the need for greater English proficiency to enhance their business viability.

4.3 Pedagogical issues

When thinking of my earlier school experiences discussed in the introduction, one of the goals of the present study was to find out whether there are any common factors that can be detected in the earlier English learning experiences of the entrepreneurs. Namely, the entrepreneurs'

English learning experiences at school relate directly to their present struggles with the increased use of the English language. There were 13 questions concerning pedagogical aspects in the questionnaire. The questions are categorised into three sections in this chapter: 1) motivation, 2) teaching and learning methods, and 3) entrepreneurs' own perceptions for improving English learning outcomes and motivation at school then and now.

4.3.1 Motivation

First of all, motivation is an important key factor in the learning process. When interviewing the entrepreneurs about their motivation, four entrepreneurs out of the five described themselves as *unmotivated* English language learners whereas one of the interviewees placed himself somewhere in between, not being either a motivated or an unmotivated pupil. A few common factors stood out when enquired reasons behind demotivation. First of all, falling behind in class was experienced by four of the five entrepreneurs. According to them, once a pupil fell behind, it was difficult or, like in their cases, impossible to get back on track again. As a consequence, they lost interest and motivation to learn English.

Falling behind in class was explained by several reasons: most importantly, the pace in the English class was too fast for them to be able to keep up with the rest of the class, also adding another foreign language, which was Swedish for all of them, caused the foreign language learning as a whole to be too complicated. In fact, three of the interviewees strongly opposed obligatory Swedish studies at school. In addition, the interviewees recalled that there were no remedial instruction lessons provided for them, let alone the presence of the present trend of differentiation as one of the supporting methods for struggling pupils. Moreover, contemporary teaching methods in the 1970's and 1980's did not, according to the interviewees, include much of supplementary motivation techniques, as all the interviewees recall not receiving any extra support for falling behind.

In the following extracts, the entrepreneurs discuss their experiences of learning English at comprehensive school:

17. *"...liian pikkutarkkaa.. kiälioppi oli niinku jumalan asemassa.... ei ollu puhumista... kyllä se oli sellasta... kirjasta luettiin... ei siellä ikää juteltu... ehkä opettajan kanssa..."*

“...too meticulous... grammar was considered as godly important... no speaking...it was like... reading from the book... no talking... maybe with the teacher...”

18. *“...no ehkä se oli justihi se kielioppi... eli ku ei siinä pysyny mukana... mentii sitä kirjaa... kirjaa ja siihe keskityttiin...”*

“...well maybe it was that grammar... when you weren't able to follow with the rest of the class... just went through the book... the book and concentrated on it...”

19. *“...niinku tuata... ne oli jotenki kauhistuttavia... ku ruvettihi... nii kiälioppia vääntämähä... ku sai vähä sanoja päähä... sitte ku olit jääny pikkuuse jäläkehe... ja sitte niitä alettihi muuttamaha kiäliopiksi... nii sitte se meniki lopunki sekaasin... että liia nopiasti erettihi...”*

“...well ehh... it was kind of terrifying... when we started... to go through grammar... you learned some vocabulary... and then you fell behind.... and then again we were taught grammar... and then you got all confused... we were proceeding too fast...”

20. *“...se oli sitä kiälioppia...”*

“...it was all grammar...”

21. *“...se oli vaan se määrätty läksy joka käytiin läpi... suomennosta ja sanastoo ja kielioppia... piti suomentaa...”*

“...it was the certain homework that we went through... translating and vocabulary and grammar... we had to translate to Finnish...”

According to the narrations, the main adversary in the English learning process at school seemed to be extensive concentration on grammar. Along with learning vocabulary by heart and practising translations, the entrepreneurs' general view toward learning English seems no other than negative.

4.3.2 Teaching methods

Secondly, during the last few decades improving teaching methods has been under focus in the teachers' education. This trend is not happening in vain as all the interviewees recalled their English classes to have been tediously identical and boring, relying heavily on textbooks and

workbooks. Grammar and vocabulary and translating English texts to Finnish were excessively used as a means of learning English. In addition, speaking skills were not emphasised at all. According to three informants, no interesting teaching methods existed to their memory; although one person mentioned singing as a rare but an interesting method and one informant recalled some interesting listening exercises in a studio.

4.3.3 Then and now, what should be done differently?

All the entrepreneurs emphasised the importance of proficient English speaking skills. They all agree with the idea that teachers ought to stress enhancement tasks for spoken English such as working in groups or in pairs and practising English usage while learning to communicate in real-life situations. Instead of concentrating only on grammar and vocabulary and relying heavily on textbooks and workbooks, the present interest in creating fun, and interesting methods with interesting topics for foreign language acquisition is strongly supported by all of the informants.

The interviewees were enquired what kind of message they would like to send to present-day English teachers. Some of the answers are presented below according to the entrepreneurs' narrative:

22. *"...se on iso terveinen se puhuminen... ei yksistään puhuminen vaa ryhmässä puhuminen..."*

"...there is a big message about speaking... not just talking by yourself but in a group..."

23. *"...kyllähän sitä jollaki lailla pitääs saara... mielenkiintooseksi... että se olis niinku... keskusteltaas sen oppilahan kans että tuata ni... että mikä se on se konsti että mikä saa oppimaha..."*

"...in some way you should make... interesting... that it would be like... talk to the student about that... in what kinds of ways he or she would learn..."

24. *"...siellä pitäis motivoida käyttämään sitä englannin kieltä.... tableteilla... erilaisilla opetusmetodeilla... mielenkiintooset aiheet... mikkä sä joudut kaivelemaan englannin kielellä ja kääntämään ja kertomaan niistä... ja se aihealue tiätysti pitäis olla henkkohtaanen... et se potkii eteenpäin... kannustaa..."*

jos sä oot kiinnostunu jostakin niin sillonhan se menee niinkun sen kiinnostuksen kautta... ei opiskelun kautta... vaan kiinnostuksen kautta... ”

”...one should be motivated to use English... via tablets... through different kinds of teaching methods... interesting topics... for which you have to search information in English and translate and tell about them... and the topic should be personally interesting... then it will kick you forward... encourage... if you are interested in something then it (learning) will happen through that... not just by studying... but through interest.

25. *”...se normaali mitä tarvii että pystyy keskustelemaan... puhuminen että se sujuu... peruskommunikointi... ”*

”...the normal stuff that one needs to be able to discuss in English... speaking... that you can manage it... basic communication... ”

26. *”... just aiheet... nii ja sitte sellasta että päinsä siinä keskustellaan... keskinäistä keskustelua... jos ei toinen osaa niin kyllä toinen korjaa... ”*

”...topics indeed... and then something that you have to talk... with a partner... and if you don't know the other one will correct... ”

It can be seen that all the entrepreneurs strongly emphasise speaking skills. Moreover, diverse and interesting teaching methods and topics are valued greatly. From this point of view, current teaching practices are thus heading in the right direction with multimodal teaching methods and differentiated teaching strategies (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014: 29–31).

5 CONCLUSION

In this concluding section, the main findings and their relevance will be discussed. Also, future research topics will be suggested and the limitations of the present study are acknowledged.

The aim of the present thesis was to find out via face-to-face semi-structured interviews how entrepreneurs in the metal in Western Finland field cope with the possible increase of the use of the English language in their work. The hypothesis of the increase of the use of English in the metal field was predicated with present day globalization and one of its implications: English as a lingua franca in the business sector. The interviewed entrepreneurs were pupils of the 1970's and 1980's with an occupational goal of becoming manual workers in the metal

field. At that time, attitudes toward learning English were very different from the present day: English skills were not necessarily considered important or needed at all, especially when continuing to vocational school after comprehensive school. Hence, the second hypothesis was that the entrepreneurs encounter various challenges due to the lack of English proficiency when needing to use English. Furthermore, a tentative assumption of this thesis was that the lack of motivation for English studies was not only due to the attitudes of that time but also to the prevailing teaching methods.

The findings of the present study indicate that the significance of the English language has, indeed, increased in the metal industry along the rest of the world during the past decade, which conforms to several studies (Virkkula 2008: 384; Lehtonen 2004: 14; Leppänen et al. 2009: 15-16; Huusko 2008: 8). Nowadays, English is commonly used as a *lingua franca*, especially at worksites both in Finland and abroad due to increased amount of foreign work force in the metal industry. Interviewed entrepreneurs find the increased use of English uncomfortable and most of the times difficult because of their lack of proficiency in English; although, it is mentioned by the entrepreneurs that they just have to learn to cope with it, and partly they have. Feelings toward English vary, frustration and insecurities occur, as Bergroth also points out (2007: 59–60). The most common forms of using English at work are via e-mails and communicating at worksites which is stated by Lehtonen (2004: 38) and Virkkula (2008: 389). In contrast to previous research, speaking English was described by two interviewees as an easier means of communication than for example writing (Huusko 2008: 51; Virkkula 2008: 385). Different coping methods are used by the entrepreneurs in able to manage situations involving English, such as using the Internet's Google Translate or using interpreters or translators or delegating tasks to staff. Despite the experienced difficulties, the entrepreneurs see the increasing importance of English as an opportunity for the business life.

One assumption of the present study was that the interviewed entrepreneurs have finished comprehensive school with quite inadequate English skills. This was true on three occasions out of five as three interviewees considered their English as poor and two as moderate; although when proceeding with the interviews, the last two encountered exactly similar difficulties and, in fact, defining their skills as poor in many occasions and hence, conforming to the first three. This contradiction might be explained by a difference in the evaluation process of English skills. The entrepreneurs elaborated that demotivation behind their English studies at school was

explained by boring teaching methods, such as excessive emphasis on grammar and vocabulary, and too quick a pace in the English class. Fortunately, it seems that a lesson has been learned already in the Finnish schools as the prevailing teaching methods include many supportive teaching methods, such as differentiation and multimodal teaching methods. These methods are stated and emphasised by the Finnish National Board of Education in the new national core curriculum for basic education (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014: 29–31).

There are limitations to this study as only five entrepreneurs were interviewed and therefore, the results can hardly be generalised. Moreover, there are disadvantages to the open-ended questions as some answers to the questions were short or missing and, in those cases, the answers do not always provide the information inquired. Open-ended questions also quite easily enable the interviewer to intertwine his or her own opinions into the interviewee's narration while conducting the interview. As a result, the answers might be somewhat steered and altered by the interviewer, which is also pointed out in Bergroth (2007: 38). For further research, there are several topics that could be studied in the future: for instance, in the manual work field such as metal industry or large country farms, both entrepreneurs' and employees' experiences and uses of English and their coping methods at a multicultural working environment could be studied more extensively. Also, teaching methods especially to pupils who are "doers" by their nature and not "sit still and learn" types, could be created. Lastly, creating a teaching package and exercises for BELF, *Business English Lingua Franca*, for the metal industry could be an interesting area to study and work on.

According to the results, there is a lesson to learn. It is not a good idea to think one does not need English in their job, even if they head to vocational school with a goal to work in the metal industry or in other manual labour. Accordingly, whether one would like to work as an entrepreneur, he or she will definitely need English skills; this is proven even by this limited study. It saves working hours to be competent in English; it can also save one from costly errors and a need to pay staff to perform tasks one could do by himself or herself. In addition, it frees one to attend to more important matters than dealing with simple English assignments. As a result of the present study, it can be concluded that a lack of English skills will cost time, money, and effort. And, in today's competitive business environment, can one afford it?

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APPENDIX. Kyselylomake / Questionnaire

Paikka: / Place:

Pvm: / Date:

Nimi: / Name:

Ikä: / Age:

Sukupuoli: / Gender:

Koulutus: Education:

Toiminut yrittäjänä (vuosissa):

-The number of working years as an entrepreneur?

Yrityksen nimi: / Company name:

TAUSTA, NYKYOSAAMINEN / BACKGROUND, PRESENT ENGLISH SKILLS:

1. Kuinka monta vuotta olet yhteensä opiskellut englantia? Missä?

-How many years have you studied English? Where?

2. Millaiseksi kuvailisit englannin kielen taitosi tällä hetkellä?

-How would you describe your present English skills?

Puhuminen ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Speaking not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

Kirjoittaminen ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Writing not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

Lukeminen ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Reading not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

Kuuntelu ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Listening not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

3. Millaisen toivoisit englannin kielen taitotasosi olevan?

-At which level would you like your English proficiency to be?

Puhuminen ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Speaking not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

Kirjoittaminen ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Writing not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

Lukeminen ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Reading not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

Kuuntelu ei lainkaan / heikko / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-Listening not at all / poor / moderate / good / excellent

4. Harmittaako tämän hetkinen englannin kielen taitotasosi?

Do your current English skills bother you?

Ei/Kyllä

-No/Yes

5. Häpeätkö englannin kielen taitotasoasi?

-Are you ashamed of your English skills?

En lainkaan – vähän – kohtalaisesti – paljon – erittäin paljon

-Not at all – a little – moderately – a lot – very much

ENGLANNIN KIELEN KÄYTTÖ YRITYSTOIMINNASSA:

Use of English at work:

6. Oletko opiskellut englantia yritystoimintasi ohessa? Missä ja kuinka kauan?

-Have you studied English along your entrepreneurship? When and for how long?

7. Kaikesta kielenkäytöstä yrityksessäsi, kuinka iso prosenttiosuus/millainen osuus on englannin kielellä kokonaisuudessaan?

-How big of a percentage does the English language cover out of all language use in your company?

8. Käytätkö englannin kieltä työssäsi? Kuinka paljon?

-Do you use English at your work? And how much?

9. Kuinka usein **kommunikoit** englanniksi:

-How often do you communicate in English?

Esimerkiksi – for example

Puhumalla

-By speaking?

Kirjoittamalla

-In writing?

Muulla tavoin?

-In any other ways?

10. Pidätkö englannin kielen käytöstä työssäsi?

-Do you like to use English at work?

11. Tuntuuko englannin kielen käyttö töissä hankalalta? Mikä tuntuu hankalimmalta?

-Does it feel difficult to use English at work?

12. Tuletko ymmärretyksi englannin kielellä?

-Do people understand you when you use English?

13. Kuinka usein ja millä tavalla käytät englantia työntekijöiden kanssa?

-How often and in what kinds of situations do you use English with your employees?

14. Tuleeko työmaalla väärinymmärryksiä siitä syystä, että käytetään englantia?

Do misunderstandings occur for the sake of using English at working sites?

15. Käytätkö apuvälineitä Englannin kielen käytön tueksi? Esimerkiksi Google kääntäjää, sanakirjaa, nettisanakirjaa?

-Do you use any helping applications or devices such as Google Translate, dictionaries or online dictionaries?

16. Arvailenko sanoja välillä vai selvitätkö aina sanojen merkityksen, esim nettisanakirjasta?

-Do you sometimes guess the meaning of the English word or do you always check the meaning?

17. Kuinka moni asiakkaistanne on täysin englanninkieleisiä tai osittain?

-How many of your clients are native English speakers or use English as a foreign language?

18. Kuinka paljon arvostat työntekijän englannin kielen taitoa?

-How much do you value English proficiency of your employees?

MUUTOS / THE CHANGE

19. Aloitettuasi yritystoimintasi kuinka paljon käytit työssäsi englannin kieltä?

-How much English did you use at the beginning of your career as an entrepreneur?

En lainkaan – vähän – kohtalaisesti – paljon – erittäin paljon

-Not at all – little – moderately – plenty – very much

20. Millä tavoin kuvailisit englannin kielen käytön muuttuneen yritystoimintasi aikana?

-Has the amount of the use of English changed in any ways along your entrepreneur career?

Vähentynyt paljon – vähentynyt – pysynyt samana – kasvanut – kasvanut merkittävästi

-A lot less – less – the same – increased – increased significantly

21. Tuleeko englannin kielen asema mielestäsi vahvistumaan / heikkenemään omalla alallasi tulevaisuudessa?

-In your opinion, will the state of the English language strengthen or weaken in metal field in the future?

22. Tuleeko mieleesi mahdollisia mahdollisuuksia tai uhkia liittyen englannin kielen käyttöön työelämässä?

-Can you think of any threats or possibilities concerning the use of English in your work field?

PEDAGOGINEN OSIO:

23. Millainen englannin kielen oppija olit?

What kind of English learner were you?

Aktiivinen – Passiivinen /

Active – Passive /

Motivoitunut – Epämotivoitunut

Motivated / Unmotivated

24. Millaiseksi kuvailisit englannin kielen taitoasi yläkoulusta lähtiessäsi?

-How would you describe your English skills when leaving comprehensive school?

heikko / välttävä / kohtalainen / hyvä / erinomainen

-poor / below average / average / good / excellent

25. Opitko englantia koulun ulkopuolella?

-Did you learn English outside school? If yes, where?

Esimerkiksi / For example

Tv / Radio / Musiikki / Kirjallisuus

-Tv / Radio / Music / Literature

Muu, mikä?

-Else, what?

26. Mikä oli englannin kielen opiskelussa kivointa? Mikä tylsintä?

-What did you like the most when studied English at school?

27. Millaiset asiat motivoivat sinua opiskelemaan englantia koulussa?

-Was there anything that motivated you learning English at school?

28. Millä tavalla sinua motivoitiin opiskelemaan englantia koulussa?

-In which ways were you motivated to study English at school?

29. Oliko joitain aihealueita englannin kielen opiskelussa, jotka sinua erityisesti kiinnostivat tai olisivat kiinnostaneet? Millaiset?

What kinds of topics were you interested in / you would have been interested in at school?

30. Millainen muistikuva sinulla on englannin kielen opetusmetodeista silloin kun olit koulussa?

-What do you remember of the teaching methods in the English class at school?

31. Millaiset olivat mielenkiintoisimmat opetusmenetelmät mielestäsi?

-What kinds of teaching methods did you find most interesting?

32. Jos olisit saanut silloin muuttaa jotain englannin kielen opetuksessa, mitä se olisi ollut?

Had you given a chance to change something about the teaching in the English class, what would that have been?

33. Kun ajattelet tämän hetkistä elämääsi ja saisit uuden mahdollisuuden opiskella englantia koulussa uudestaan, tekisitkö jotain toisin ja mitä se olisi?

-When you reflect your life today and were given a new chance to study English in comprehensive school, would you do anything differently and what would it be?

34. Millaisia terveisiä lähettäisit nykyajan englannin kielen opettajille? Mitä asioita pitäisit tärkeänä oppilaiden oppia?

-What kind of message would you send to today's English teachers? What do you consider important for pupils to learn?