UPPER SECONDARY LANGUAGE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT THE LANGUAGE PROFILE

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Abstract
Syksyllä 2021 käyttöön otettava lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2019 tuo mukanaan uuden lisän lukion kieltenopetukseen, kieliprofiilin. Kieliprofiilin tavoitteena on kasvattaa lukiolaisen kielitietoisuutta, tehdä näkyväksi monikielisyyttä, sekä edistää kieltenopiskelutaitoja ja itsearviointia. Saadaksemme tietoa kieliprofiilista jo ennen sen virallista käyttöönottoa voidaan tutkia opettajien käsityksiä kieliprofiilista. Tutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää opettajien käsityksiä kieliprofiilista, kieliprofiilin mahdolliset hyödyt ja haitat, sekä kieliprofiilin mahdolliset vaikutukset lukiolaisten kielitietoisuuteen ja kielivalintoihin. Tulokset perustuvat neljän lukion kieltenopettajan haastatteluihin ja ne on analysoitu sisällönanalyysin keinoin, keskittyen opettajien käsityksiin aiheesta. Tutkielman teoreettisena taustana toimivat kielitietoisuus, opettajien uskomukset, kieliprofiili ja lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2019.

Tutkimus tarjosi uutta tietoa kieliprofiiliin liittyvistä hyödyistä ja haasteista jo aiemmin tutkittujen tekijöiden korostamisen lisäksi. Kieliprofiilin tuomista hyödyistä opettajat korostivat etenkin kieltenopiskelun motivaation kasvamista ja monikielisten lukiolaisten aseman parantamista. Kieliprofiilin suurimpina haasteina nähtiin lukiolaisten ja opettajien väsymykseen liittyvät tekijät sekä käytännön haasteet, kuten epävarmuus profiilin toteutustavasta. Haastateltavien mukaan kieliprofiili tulee edistämään lukiolaisten kielitietoisuutta, millä voi olla positiivisia vaikutuksia kieltenopiskelulle. Tutkimuksessa selvisi myös, että osa lukiolaisista saattaa jatkaa valinnaisen kielen opiskelua pidempään kieliprofiilin tuoman motivaation avulla, mutta valinnaisia kieliä opiskelevien lukiolaisten määrään ei todennäköisesti saada suurta muutosta kieliprofiililla. Haastatteluiden pohjalta todettiin, että kieliprofiili tulee hyödyttämään ja motivoimaan niitä lukiolaisia, joilla on valmiuksia ottaa vastuuta omasta oppimisestaan, mutta saattaa esiintyä haasteena niille opiskelijoille, joille lukio-opiskelu on haastavaa.

Jotta kieliprofiilista saadaan esille sen täydet hyödyt, tulee opettajille tarjota selkeät ohjeet ja valmiita materiaaleja kieliprofiilin toteutukseen. On myös varmistettava, että resursseja tarjotaan myös tulevina vuosina, jotta kieliprofiilia voidaan kehittää eteenpäin sen alkuperäisen toteutustavan jälkeen. Onnistuessaan kieliprofiili voi muuttaa työnhakuprosesseja ja korkeakouluissa opiskelua, sekä tehdä lukioista ja muista yhteiskunnan instituutioista hyväksyvämpiä yhteisöjä lisääntyneen kielitietoisuuden avulla.

Keywords English, englannin kieli, EFL, language awareness, kielitietoisuus, kieliprofiili, kielten opetus, language teaching, teacher beliefs, opettajien käsitykset
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In Finland, the new National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education was published in 2019 and it will be implemented for the first time in the autumn of 2021 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). The curriculum includes a new addition called the language profile. The main aims of my study are to examine what teachers think of the language profile, and to find out their views of its benefits and challenges. Furthermore, the goal is to find out whether the teachers see possibilities for the language profile to affect students' language awareness or encourage them to study multiple languages.

According to the Finnish National Agency for Education, the aims of the language profile are to promote multilingualism, lifelong learning, and language awareness (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.). It can include samples of the student's work, certificates, self-evaluation, and other appendices. While compiling the language profile, the students learns study strategies and reflects on their learning. The method of implementing the language profile is relatively free, and thus municipalities are able to create their own local plans for the profile. However, each upper secondary school student must create the profile, starting in their first language modules, and update it during their studies. My study focuses on teachers' beliefs about the language profile before its introduction, hoping to give us insight into how the profile will be implemented and how it could impact upper secondary schools and society at large.

The theoretical framework of the study is built upon language awareness and teacher beliefs, as well as the language profile in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education. Furthermore, factors affecting learning languages in Finnish schools are explained in order to provide background information related to the results. An interdisciplinary view is adopted during the research process, as the topic is related to both applied linguistics and pedagogy.

The study focuses on teacher beliefs, as this viewpoint provides us with information about the language profile even before its implementation. As stated by Allen (1996), teacher beliefs often affect the perceptions and beliefs of the learners, thus giving us information on how the students might view the topic. In addition, teacher beliefs have an effect on how one plans their lessons and the classroom practices of

teachers (Pajares 1992:326). Therefore, we can assume that the beliefs teachers have about the language profile before using it with their students reflect how it will be implemented and how the students might view it. This gives us a glance to the future, providing us with information on how the language profile could function at upper secondary schools and giving us the chance to evaluate our teaching methods before using them in practice.

Language awareness functions as one part of the theoretical background, as it is mentioned as one of the main aims of the language profile (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.) as well as in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). The Association for Language Awareness defines language awareness as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (Finkbeiner and White, 2017:7). Similarly to teacher beliefs, teacher language awareness has a significant impact on student learning (Andrews, 2007). Language awareness can impact for instance one's attitudes towards dialects, code-switching, and language choices, and thus they are important in many areas of life, such as education and hiring processes (Finkbeiner and White, 2017). It also widens the learners' knowledge on how language is connected to culture and how meaning is created, as well as deepening their understanding of the surrounding world (Niemeier, 2004). Therefore, if the language profile is to increase students' language awareness, it could affect many areas of life in the near future.

My research questions are the following:

1. What types of beliefs do teachers have about the language profile?

2. What advantages and challenges could the implementation of the language profile have, in the teachers' opinion?

3. Will the implementation of the language profile affect the language awareness of the students, in the teachers' opinion?

4. Could the language profile encourage students to study multiple languages, in the teachers' opinion? If not, what could?

These research questions were chosen in order to gather extensive data on teachers' beliefs about the language profile, allowing us to draw connections between different topics and form a broad view of the possible effects of the profile. In addition to the benefits and challenges presented by the language profile, the profile's connections to students' language awareness and students' willingness to study multiple languages are examined. These choices were made because language awareness is mentioned as one of the main aims of the language profile, thus allowing us to study whether the profile will fulfil its aims. In addition, the decline of Finns' language skills has been a popular topic in the media and among teachers in the recent years (Korpela,

2021; Rautio, 2021; Saarinen, 2019), and thus examining whether changes in the curriculum could have an effect on students' language choices is an important task.

The study was implemented using semi-structured and theme-based interviews of four upper secondary school language teachers from four different schools around Finland. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed by using methods of content analysis. An interdisciplinary view was adopted, as the topic is related to both applied linguistics and pedagogy, thus drawing information from several fields of study and combining them in order to answer the research questions. Extracts from the interviews are presented together with the results, with both the original Finnish extracts and their translations into English being present.

Chapter 2 of the thesis is devoted to the theoretical background, with Section 2.1 focusing on language awareness and 2.2 on teacher beliefs. Section 2.3 explains learning languages in Finnish schools, as some background information on the recent developments of the curricula, admission to higher education, and distance teaching is needed in order to reflect on the results of the study. The last section of the theoretical background, Section 2.4, explains in detail what the language profile is and how it is placed in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education.

The data and methods of the study are presented in Chapter 3, with sections for the research aims, data collection, the participants, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, first giving an overview of the results and explaining the main findings and which research questions were answered in which section. Section 4.1 introduces the benefits of the language profile, with motivation, popularity of language subjects, and acknowledging multilingual students forming the main categories. In Section 4.2, challenges presented by the language profile are discussed, with the main foci being expectations and stress felt by the teachers and students, popularity of language subjects, and planning and implementing the profile. The last section of the chapter, Section 4.3, discusses how language awareness is connected to the language profile.

Chapter 5 presents the discussion and conclusion, with the sections consisting of a summary of the findings, discussion, implications, and the evaluation of the study and ideas for further research. Chapter 6 consists of the references. The interview questions can be found at the end of the thesis as an appendix, with them being presented in both Finnish and English.

2   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The background of my study consists of four main parts: language awareness, teacher beliefs, learning languages in Finnish schools, and the language profile in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education. The topics will be approached in this order, beginning with language awareness in Section 2.1 and continuing with teacher beliefs in Section 2.2. Section 2.3 focuses on learning languages in Finnish schools and recent changes concerning education, and Section 2.4 explains in more depth the language profile and its place in the new National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education.

2.1   Language awareness

Language awareness (LA) is defined as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" by the Association for Language Awareness, which is also known as ALA (Finkbeiner and White, 2017:7). However, the term is sometimes difficult to define (Jessner, 2017). Language awareness has been studied from different perspectives, causing each field of study to define the term to suit their objectives. For instance, the terms *language awareness, linguistic awareness, metalinguistic awareness,* and *knowledge about language* are competing terms that are sometimes used to refer to the same phenomenon (Jessner, 2017). In addition, using the phrase language awareness in different languages causes problems when using materials in other languages or when translating the terms. Defining and separating these terms has been a recent trend in the field of multilingual research (Aronin and Singleton, 2012:164), and therefore we can hope that the terminology will soon be clearer.

With the terminology being confusing, further explanation of the terms is needed in order to avoid confusion. Metalinguistic awareness signifies that the individual is able to reflect on language as an internal process instead of just an external outcome (Baker, 2017). Knowledge about language, also known as KAL, can be viewed as a synonym to language awareness, and it is often used in Britain when referring to language awareness (Andrews, 2007). This is one example of different terms being used in different contexts and languages, further adding to the confusion caused by the terminology. The term linguistic awareness stems from psycholinguistics and unlike KAL, it does not constitute of encyclopaedic knowledge, but of linguistic institutions that have been raised to awareness (James, 1999). According to Masny (1997), language awareness is grounded in pedagogy and applied linguistics, whereas linguistic awareness is related to cognitive theories and psycholinguistics. As my study focuses on teachers and pedagogy in addition to applied linguistics, the term language awareness suits my research aims the best. Sometimes awareness has been equated with knowledge, bringing the definitions of KAL and LA closer to each other (James, 1999). In fact, many researchers use the term language awareness as an all-embracing word for anything related to awareness in languages (Jessner, 2006). Despite the specific definitions given by some researchers, the terms are closely related and sometimes used interchangeably. For instance Andrews (2007) states that the term knowledge about language is often used instead of language awareness in Britain, and continues to use the two terms interchangeably himself.

James (1999) states that as teachers impart language awareness to pupils, they too must have it. Andrews (2007) has researched Teacher Language Awareness, or TLA, focusing on the language awareness of L2 teachers and its effects on grammar teaching. According to him, possessing an adequate level of TLA is essential to any competent L2 teacher and TLA has a positive impact on student learning (Andrews, 2007). As stated by James (1999), teachers convey language awareness to their students, and thus TLA is relevant even when researching the students' levels of language awareness. Furthermore, Andrews (2007:27) emphasises the complexity of TLA and creates a connection between TLA, teachers' subject-matter knowledge, and teachers' language proficiencies. This promotes further the idea of language awareness being a complex topic, which is intertwined with many areas of pedagogical and linguistic knowledge, thus highlighting the need for interdisciplinary research on the topic.

While the terms connected to these phenomena are related and the definitions confusing, the Finnish National Agency for Education has decided to use the Finnish equivalent of the term language awareness, *kielitietoisuus* (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.). Therefore, I will also use the term language awareness, as my study is closely related to the curricula and other material developed and provided by the National Agency for Education. Furthermore, as stated by Masny (1997), language awareness

is grounded in pedagogy and applied linguistics, and thus the term describes my research aims the best.

There are many reasons for teaching language awareness, with some of them being increasingly important in our globalised world. Finkbeiner and White (2017) describe misunderstandings and failures in work processes being avoided if the employees are skilled in language awareness. In addition, LA can have an impact on attitudes towards different dialects, code-switching, and language choices, all of which are important factors that can affect for example hiring processes (Finkbeiner and White, 2017). As LA can affect attitudes towards different languages and varieties, it is possible that increased LA could also have an impact on how willing young people are to study languages. Therefore, LA and the language profile are also related to students choosing elective languages at school. According to Finkbeiner and White (2017), citizens' skills in language awareness could also aid the integration of refugees in the workplace and schools. Due to globalisation, all of these factors have become increasingly important all over the world, including Finland. Similar goals are described in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education, explored further in Section 2.4, making language awareness a logical addition to the curriculum.

According to Niemeier (2004), language awareness provides us with a deeper understanding of the surrounding world, as it widens the learners' knowledge of how meaning is created and how language is connected to culture and to our view of the world. Therefore, LA could even be said to have common ideas with Whorf's theory complex of Linguistic Relativity, where language is related to a particular worldview and where language, culture, and thought are connected (Niemeier, 2004). Pennycook (2007) introduces the concept of performativity, the main idea of which is that language constitutes identity rather than identity being a complete construct expressed through language. If we are to follow the idea of performativity, we can come to the conclusion that increased language awareness could help construct students' identities. Language shapes and reflects our ideologies, and thus knowing multiple languages or multiple varieties of a language could provide the students with new tools and ideas with which they can view the world.

As described and summarised by Finkbeiner and White (2017), LA instruction has had many goals and focuses throughout recent decades. James and Garret (1992) have identified five domains of language awareness, all of which have separate goals. In the cognitive domain, LA has been used to promote learning subjects across the schools' curricula and bridging the gap between different languages. The affective domain has focused on promoting tolerance and attitudes towards different varieties of English and other languages spoken by students. The social domain has concentrated on effective communication and interaction, whereas the power domain has been used to alert people about language being used as an instrument of manipulation.

Lastly, the performance domain has focused on language awareness hopefully having a positive impact on learners' command of the language. Therefore, it can be said that LA has many benefits and its successful implementation into the curricula could have a positive impact on society.

Among other areas, language awareness can be linked to multilingualism, therefore creating the term *multilingual awareness*. Multilingual awareness is a concept that was first applied to mother tongue education and foreign language learning (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015). According to Melo-Pfeifer (2015), multilingual awareness is collective and socio-constructive, with the social context impacting an individual's views and consciousness of linguistic landscapes, linguistic communities and power, and relationships between languages and communities. In order to avoid monolingual bias when describing and analysing multilingualism, a heteroglossic perspective can be adopted (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015). Therefore, in order to fully understand multilingual individuals in Finnish schools, we too must strive to acknowledge the monolingual bias that may be present in our current models of thinking. Melo-Pfeifer (2015) has studied the multilingual awareness of children with a Portuguese migrant background in Germany by analysing drawings made by the children. The children were enrolled in Portuguese Heritage Language classes and it was established that the heritage language classroom could function as a place for debating language power and the social nature of language (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015). It was also found that the children had already developed some sort of sensitivity to these issues prior to the study. As the children in Melo-Pfeifer's (2015) study were aged between 6 and 12 years, we can assume that multilingual upper secondary school students are also capable of such reflection of their language use. In fact, a link between multilinguals and enhanced level of metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness has been found, as multilinguals possess skills and qualities that are not found in an inexperienced learner (Jessner, 2017). Therefore, it is possible that multilinguals could find the contents of the language profile easier to create than monolinguals, having more experience with how, when, and where they use different languages.

Educational programmes promoting LA have been successful in many countries, the French *Éveil aux langues* or EVLANG created for school children in the 1990s being a good example of this (Finkbeiner and White, 2017). EVLANG consists of a variety of pedagogical activities aiming to develop positive attitudes towards the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world and creating a desire to learn various languages. The EVLANG approach is supported by the European Union and has been implemented in various countries (Finkbeiner and White, 2017). Similar goals can be observed in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014), with multilingualism, language awareness, and cultural diversity being mentioned in multiple sections of the curriculum.

2.2   Teacher beliefs

According to Haney, Czerniak, and Lumpe (2003:367), teacher beliefs can be described as "one's convictions, philosophy, tenants, or opinions about teaching and learning". They seem to affect both beliefs and perceptions of the students (Allen, 1996) and the planning and classroom practices of the teachers (Pajares, 1992:326). Therefore, revealing the teachers' beliefs about the language profile would provide information on how the teachers will most likely implement the language profile and what the project could look like in different schools. This enables us to identify the aspects of the profile that the teachers find the most beneficial and challenging, thus allowing us to consider these factors when implementing the language profile for the first time or when developing it further.

As told by Kalaja and Barcelos (2006), beliefs have been researched as part of applied linguistics only since the mid-1980s, despite being of importance to the fields of anthropology, psychology, and education for a long period of time. Beliefs are regarded as one area of learner differences that may influence the outcomes and processes of foreign language acquisition (Kalaja and Barcelos, 2006), and thus they are worth researching in detail. Kalaja and Barcelos (2006:1) define beliefs as opinions and ideas that learners and teachers have about the task of learning a second or a foreign language. However, as with language awareness, the definition is unclear and complex.

There are many approaches to teacher beliefs. Barcelos (2006) defines three approaches: the normative, the metacognitive, and the contextual approach. The contextual approach considers beliefs to be embedded in the students' contexts, and in previous research different approaches are combined in order to interpret beliefs in the correct context (Barcelos, 2006). Within the contextual approach, beliefs are defined as contextual, dynamic, and social (Barcelos, 2006:20). I have chosen to use the contextual approach, as it provides space for each individual situation and might provide an interesting viewpoint when comparing the beliefs of different teachers with different situations and experiences. However, due to the scale of the research, I will not combine different approaches but instead focus on the theme-based content analysis of the interviews and an interdisciplinary view of pedagogy and applied linguistics.

According to Allen (1996), teacher beliefs seem to affect the beliefs and perceptions of the students. For example, the students' beliefs about the autonomy of learning became more similar to the teacher's beliefs throughout the term (Allen, 1996). This would support the idea that researching teachers' beliefs of the language profile before its implementation will provide information on how the students will perceive it, and on whether promoting language awareness through projects like these could encourage students to study multiple languages. Therefore, the dynamic and social

view of beliefs that the contextual approach holds (Barcelos, 2006) suit the research goals of this study.

A strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their classroom practices has been found in multiple studies (Pajares, 1992:326; Farrell and Kun, 2008), thus giving me reason to believe that researching teacher beliefs surrounding the language profile will give us information on how the language profile will function in practice. Ideas and models presented in school have long-term effects on learner beliefs, and many students see the model presented by school authorities as the one correct model of learning and correct behaviour (Aro, 2015). According to Aro's (2015) study, activities carried out in English outside of school were seen as less useful than the ones performed at school, and learning the language was strictly tied to the context of school and formal education. We can thus observe that schools affect learner beliefs, and teachers are seen as authorities who model learning. As teacher beliefs affect their classroom practices and classroom practices affect learner beliefs, teacher beliefs can have significant consequences.

As presented by Andrews (2007), the major exposure to the target language for many L2 learners is in the context of the classroom. In Finland, this is especially relevant to languages other than English, as English is often used in popular media and learners normally hear and see English in their spare time. However, when the language is not used in one's spare time, the three main sources of target language input are other learners, materials, and the teacher themselves (Andrews, 2007). Based on this and research done on teacher beliefs (Aro, 2015; Farrell and Kun, 2008; Pajares, 1992), we can come to the conclusion that a teacher's practices in the classroom have a significant effect on how their students view learning and the target language. This is likely to be even more relevant with languages that the students do not use as much in their free time. As teacher beliefs affect the planning and practices of the teachers as well as learner beliefs, it is important to attain information on them before implementing new additions such as the language profile.

Despite Aro's (2015) findings on the school environment being the ultimate model for pupils in their language learning journeys, she also notes that these beliefs might change over time as the students gain more experiences outside of schools and old role models and authorities are replaced by new ones. This provides proof for the idea that while teachers themselves have inherited some beliefs from their teachers, they have also gained new ones through their life experiences. It is also an interesting viewpoint when considering that the language profile has been designed to be used even after students leave their upper secondary schools. Even if the profile is useful for the students during their school journey, it might not reflect their beliefs and ideas at a later date, demanding constant updating and self-reflection.

Ruohotie-Lyhty (2016a) identifies guiding norms that enable certain activities and make others impossible for teachers. In the context of Finnish upper secondary schools, norms and therefore teaching methods are often shaped by the matriculation examination, as exemplified by Ruohotie-Lyhty (2016a). The importance of succeeding in the matriculation examination, now more important than ever due to the changes in applying to higher education (Saarinen, 2019), puts pressure on teachers to focus on the exams rather than other factors they deem important. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2016a) explains that the beliefs and identities of teachers are guided by norms, authorities, expectations, and circumstances. In addition to teaching methods, beliefs are closely related to teacher motivation and the process of forming a professional identity (Barcelos, 2016). Thus, they are shaped by education the teachers themselves have received and by the experiences they have lived through when forming their professional identities.

Teacher beliefs are often moulded early, and although developing and possibly changing one's beliefs during teacher education programmes would be beneficial, it is often challenging (Lundeberg and Levin, 2003). According to Ashton and Gregoire-Gill (2003), beliefs often limit teachers in fostering their students' learning, as they affect all areas of teaching. However, it is also established that identities, and thus beliefs, can change throughout the teachers' careers (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2016b). Various circumstances and experiences guide the teachers towards different beliefs. Encounters with students are mentioned multiple times in Ruohotie-Lyhty's (2016b) work, as they seem to affect how the teachers view their role at the school. Considering these factors, it is highly possible that teachers from different schools might have differing opinions on the language profile and that teachers in different phases of their working life have various experiences that guide their beliefs about the language profile.

Beliefs formed during teacher education programmes might also differ with the reality of teaching. As stated by Barcelos (2016), teacher education programmes sometimes fail to prepare students for dealing with the reality of teaching. Some factors affecting teacher beliefs, identity building, and motivation are the status of the profession in surrounding society and the status of the subject they teach (Barcelos, 2016). Considering that teaching has a relatively high status in Finland and that teachers have Master's degrees in their subjects, Finnish teachers are likely to be motivated towards teaching their subjects. However, individual experiences vary, as although teachers are listed as one of the most appreciated professions in Finland, less than half of teachers feel that their work is valued (OAJ, 2021). It is also worth pondering whether the status given for certain subjects in the model of certificate-based admission and its effects could impact teachers' beliefs and motivation, thus impacting the learning effectiveness of their students.

2.3 Learning languages in Finnish schools

In order to fulfil the interdisciplinary and holistic goals of the study, the current situation of learning languages in Finnish schools and the challenges upper secondary school students and staff face need to be considered. In this section, I will explain different factors that currently affect language teaching at upper secondary schools.

In Finland, the lack of studying multiple foreign languages has been a popular topic in mainstream media in recent years and it can even be seen in the statistics provided by the Matriculation Examination Board. Between the years 2014 and 2018, the number students choosing optional languages has decreased by 10 per cent (Statistics Finland, 2019). The reasons for these changes have been researched by for instance the Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL (Saarinen, 2019), Kiehelä (2021), and Pyykkö (2017). The worry for Finns not knowing many foreign languages has been expressed in the media by experts in different fields such as pedagogy, business, and industry (Korpela, 2021; Rautio, 2021; Saarinen, 2019). According to Pyykkö (2017), approximately 90 per cent of pupils choose English to be the first foreign language they study, and the popularity of elective languages has declined over the years in both comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools.

Finnish upper secondary school students currently need to take courses in three languages: their L1, which is most often Finnish or Swedish, along with a language such as English which starts in early education, and one language that starts in year 6 which is either Swedish or Finnish (Finnish National Board of Education, 2015). Thus, the student has lessons in both official languages of the country in addition to one foreign language. The most common situation is Finnish as L1, English as the first foreign language, and Swedish as the second national language. However, variations to these do exist and for example Spanish has gained popularity in some municipalities (Korpela, 2021).

According to a questionnaire made for teachers by SUKOL, the Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland, the groups of language students have decreased in size, with some opportunities for language learning having disappeared entirely due to the low number of students enrolling on the courses (Saarinen, 2019). According to Saarinen's (2019) study, over 80 per cent of teachers estimate that the reform of certificate-based admission when applying to higher education is to blame. As the new system rewards students for gaining high marks in mathematical subjects and Finnish, the students have less time and motivation for studying foreign languages. According to the respondents, the effects of the reform can even lead to the disappearance of some languages in Finnish schools (Saarinen, 2019). Thus, a source of motivation for studying languages is needed urgently. The language profile could be seen as one solution to these problems, as it could encourage students to observe

and reflect upon their language use and find more motivation towards learning languages.

The increasing importance of English in the modern and globalised world has affected schools and language teaching. According to Statistics Finland (2020), English is the most studied subject in upper secondary schools. In Finland, English is often heard and seen in popular media as well as in other domains. This has most likely affected students' motivation towards studying English, as consuming popular media in the target language can have a positive effect on one's motivation towards the language (Chan and Chi, 2011). It could even be said that English has become the unofficial second national language. This has also affected the status of other languages in Finland. This can be seen for instance in how increasingly many Nordic people use English when travelling within the Nordic region, although this has been difficult to study due to the changing conditions and many aspects of the phenomenon (Brink Theilgaard, 2016).

There have been many reforms that have had an effect on upper secondary schools in the recent years. Three of the most significant changes are the introductions of the new national curricula in 2015 and 2019, the digitalisation of the matriculation examinations, and the changes done in applying to higher education, with students now being able to receive a place at a higher education institution with their matriculation examination marks. These reforms have caused changes in the schools' everyday lives and modified learning and teaching.

The model of certificate-based admission, with students receiving points for certain marks in their matriculation examination, was adopted in 2020 and a separate quota for those who are applying for their first higher-education programme was introduced in 2016 (Nori et al., 2021). As the basic ideas of the new model were introduced before its implementation, some effects of the certificate-based admission can already be seen despite its recent implementation. The current system of giving points for marks in certain subjects has awoken much discussion among teachers and students, as they seem to value subjects differently. In addition to being a popular topic at schools, the reform has been discussed and criticised in national media outlets (Korpela, 2021; Martikainen and Niemonen, 2021; Rautio, 2021). The subject giving students the most points for several fields is advanced mathematics, the popularity of which, along with other natural sciences, has risen exponentially in the recent years (Martikainen and Niemonen, 2021; Rautio, 2021). Each institution of higher education decides how many points they will offer for a certain mark from a certain subject, but ready-made charts and recommendations for point-setting are used by many universities and universities of applied sciences. However, is important to note that even after the introductions of these reforms, it is possible to enter universities or

universities of applied sciences through entrance exams or by studying the subject at an open university or other institution.

Another topic often discussed in the media in the recent years has been the fatigue and stress felt by Finnish upper secondary students. According to an inquiry made by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture in 2017, fatigue felt by the students had increased from the previous inquiry, with approximately 17 per cent of girls and 10 per cent of boys reporting fatigue connected to school (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2017). The students' feelings of fatigue and lack of motivation and enthusiasm are likely to affect their study plans, as Salmela-Aro and Hietajärvi (2020) have found that the group of students who are the most excited about their studies is twice more likely to apply to university than other students. According to Salmela-Aro and Hietajärvi (2020), the feelings of inadequacy and fatigue have increased among upper-secondary school students, and the phenomena can be seen in the academic world as well as discussions in the mainstream media. Their suggestion is to plan upper secondary studies so that the students have enough time for other aspects of life, as many of the important areas of identity-building and finding one's place in the world should be attained during the individual's school years (Salmela-Aro and Hietajärvi, 2020). In fact, students' well-being has been addressed in the newest National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education, as the first module of each advanced syllabus language subject has been dedicated to developing the students' skills related to well-being at school, learning study strategies, developing one's language awareness, and finding one's language identity, as well as help them in finding the courage to use the language (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019).

A notable recent change in upper secondary school education is the covid-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, schools have operated both at distance and in the classroom. Depending on the area, upper secondary school students have had varying amounts of face-to-face teaching, with some schools staying closed for long periods of time. Distance teaching has affected the students' and teachers' everyday lives, teaching methods, and motivation. According to Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, and Hietajärvi (2020), the well-being of both teachers and administrative staff at school declined during the spring of 2020 when schools first moved to distance teaching. In addition to the increased stress and fatigue felt by the staff, pupils were faced with challenges and placed in inequal positions due varying circumstances at home. Similarly to teacher beliefs being reflected in the students' beliefs about a variety of topics, fatigue and stress felt by teachers has an effect on the performance of students, with teachers reporting high levels of emotional exhaustion having students with lower levels of academic achievement (Arens and Morin, 2016). The preliminary results of a research project conducted by the University of Turku and University of Helsinki show that the distance learning of spring 2020 was experienced in a variety of ways by different

individuals (Ahtiainen et al. 2020). As the phenomenon of distance learning due to covid-19 is relatively new, more research is expected to be done on the topic and the long-term effects are likely to be revealed later.

Considering that the choices students make in school affect their futures significantly, it is important to examine the different factors affecting one's study choices and how reforms such as the language profile could affect them. With many aspects affecting the students' motivation towards choosing language subjects, it is important to consider them in order to understand the phenomenon fully. Some reasons for students not choosing elective languages might be the value given to languages in the model of certification-based admission, the hegemony of English over other languages, and the fatigue felt by students. Furthermore, one of the factors possibly affecting motivation could be the students' self-efficacy, with weak self-efficacy being associated with low motivation and avoidance of challenging tasks (Brown, 2014). This might explain some students not choosing elective language subjects, as their self-efficacy might be based partly on success in the obligatory language subjects, such as English and Swedish, at school. Low marks and weak self-efficacy in for instance Swedish might direct one to not choose German courses despite interest towards the language or culture, as the student might think that if they struggle with one Germanic language, they will not be able to learn another one. All in all, the reasons for the low popularity of language subjects and opportunities for change are many and complex, and thus this topic will be covered in the interviews.

2.4 The language profile and National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education

As explained above, the language profile is a new addition to the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). The implementation methods of the profile are relatively free, but it could be compared to a portfolio that includes information on all the languages the student knows and uses. In addition, it can include projects, certificates, self-evaluation, and other samples of the student's learning. It also includes a language CV, a tool for reporting one's language skills and international competence, which can accompany the student's resume (Kieliprofiili.com, n.d.). The purpose of the language profile is to promote multilingualism, lifelong learning, and language awareness. Furthermore, it is used as a tool for self-reflection and self-evaluation as well as for learning different study strategies (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.). Municipalities can specify how they want to implement the language profile in their surrounding linguistic landscape. Schools are also able to choose where their students will create the

profile. Although a national internet-based platform for the profile has not yet been created, the Finnish National Agency for Education is investigating a variety of options for where it could be compiled (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.). Teachers in Finland have traditionally had a high level of autonomy (Paradis, 2019), and thus it is likely that the schools' language teachers are able to plan how they will implement the language profile. However, the national curriculum states that the profile must be introduced and filled at minimum on the first and last obligatory module, previously known as course, of each language subject. It is thus possible to implement a narrow version of the profile, only guiding students in creating and updating it during the first and last modules, or to focus on the profile in multiple modules, creating an extensive portfolio covering all the language skills the student has acquired during their upper secondary school years.

While benefiting the students, the language profile will also alter how language teachers work, as they will most likely need to cooperate in order to implement a project that is shared among all language subjects. Furthermore, when implementing the language profile, the teachers will receive information about the language skills of the students, thus being able to take students' linguistic backgrounds and skill levels into account when teaching. The language profile can also function as a tool for the teacher to get to know the student better, despite being created mainly for self-assessment and self-reflection. Thus, the effects of the profile appear to concern many areas of education and might have an impact on the daily lives of upper secondary teachers and students.

The language profile is also closely linked to other parts of the curriculum. It is stated in the curriculum that upper secondary schools should develop the multilingual competence of the students, which consists of the languages of the different fields of study, different L1s, the command of dialects and registers, and the command of different languages (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). Thus, the language profile could be viewed as a concrete tool for attaining these goals. However, with municipalities having the choice to implement the profile in the method of their choosing, it is possible that different teachers and municipalities have different opinions of these changes and that the profile will be implemented in various ways across the country.

According to the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education, the schools should also prepare the student for higher education, including instructing them in attaining communication skills and global and cultural knowledge (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). In addition to these, the curriculum states that one of the aims of upper secondary education is to guide the students in appreciating multilingualism and multiculturalism, to promote bilingualism and multilingualism, and thus strengthen the language awareness and metalinguistic skills of

the student. Furthermore, the linguistic skills and cultural identity of the student should be taken into account and their cultural and linguistic identities should be supported in various ways. The student should be instructed in understanding and respecting the individual's rights to their own language and culture, which are stated in the constitution. The student should also be instructed in understanding their own linguistic and cultural rights in a variety of situations. These goals presented in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education are connected to the aims of the language profile.

The goals of the language profile are to make visible the multilingualism of the student and the school community, to raise language awareness, to assess one's language skills and learning strategies, and to strengthen the student's capabilities of the lifelong learning of languages (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.). As the language profile develops the students' language awareness, it can work as a practical tool to promote these ideas and fulfil the aims set in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education. As can be seen, different parts of the curriculum support similar goals to those of language awareness and the language profile, thus making the new addition a natural part of the curriculum.

Language awareness and multilingualism in schools is a wide-spread phenomenon and is implemented in many countries, for instance through the EVLANG approach, as explained by Finkbeiner and White (2017). The European Union has declared multilingualism an important goal for all its member states in order to protect language diversity and teaching languages (Finkbeiner and White, 2017). In addition, the Nordic Council of Ministers declared in 2006 that each Nordic citizen should be able to communicate with other Nordic citizens in a Scandinavian language and that they should have very good skills in at least one internationally significant language and good skills in at least one more foreign language (Deklaration om nordisk språkpolitik, 2006), making multilingualism the standard for Finnish citizens. Thus, the additional emphasis of multilingualism that the language profile brings should not be a radical nor a surprising change in the Finnish context.

Similar projects have been carried out before, with the European Language Portfolio, also known as ELP, being created in the early 2000s as a companion piece to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2011). The ELP was created by the Language Policy Programme of the Council of Europe in order to support the development of learner autonomy, plurilingualism, and intercultural awareness and competence, in addition to allowing users to record their experience of learning and using languages and their achievements related to language learning (Council of Europe, 2011). However, the ELP has not been implemented in most national education systems (Little, 2012), thus making the idea of a language profile an unfamiliar territory for some despite similar projects already existing.

A Finnish version of the ELP, *Kielisalkku*, was published in 2012 by the National Agency for Education (Kantelinen and Hildén, 2012). Contrary to the language profile, the Finnish language portfolio is carried out in comprehensive schools, leaving upper secondary schools out of the project. Furthermore, the Finnish language portfolio is not an obligatory project, with municipalities, schools, or individual teachers having the decision to carry out the project or not. In the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014), the language portfolio is mentioned as one alternative for assessing the student's learning, leaving the decision of using it for the teachers and administration of the schools. Therefore, the obligatory character of the language profile in upper secondary school is something completely new in Finland, driving each language teacher to think about how to implement it.

3   DATA AND METHODS

3.1   Research aims

My research questions are the following:

1. What types of beliefs do teachers have about the language profile?

2. What advantages and challenges could the implementation of the language profile have, in the teachers' opinion?

3. Will the implementation of the language profile affect the language awareness of the students, in the teachers' opinion?

4. Could the language profile encourage students to study multiple languages, in the teachers' opinion? If not, what could?

These research questions were chosen in order to gain an extensive understanding of the topic, with answers to the first question giving us a broad view of teachers' beliefs and opinions about the language profile. The second research question was formulated with the aim of finding the beneficial and challenging factors of the language profile, as these could help teachers when first implementing the profile at their school and give us a broad understanding of different factors affecting upper secondary schools that are connected to the language profile. As one of the main aims of the language profile is to develop students' language awareness, the third research question focuses on LA. Finally, the fourth research question was chosen as a means to address the topic of Finns not studying many languages and whether the language profile could function as a solution to this. As can be seen, all the research questions focus on the teachers' opinions and beliefs as a means of keeping the focus of the research on teacher beliefs.

In order to answer the research questions above, semi-structured and theme-based interviews were used. As the first question is a broad one, answers to it were gathered using a set of questions related to the remaining research questions, by asking the participants about their first reactions to the language profile, and by giving the participants space to express their thoughts freely. Answers to the remaining three research questions were attained by asking more specific interview questions, such as "What benefits and good sides could the language profile have, in your opinion?". The interview questions can be found in the Appendix. As the interviews were semi-structured, elaborate questions were asked and a conversational take was adopted in order to gather relevant data. The research process and the participants are described in more detail in the sections below.

3.2   Data collection

Four teachers from four different schools were interviewed for the study in February and March 2021. The teachers teach language subjects at upper secondary schools in different parts of Finland. I chose to use interviews as opposed to a questionnaire because I want to focus on the qualitative aspects of the topic and believe interviews to reveal the many topics related to the profile and its implementation. Interviews were chosen as the data gathering method in order to gather quantitative data and to answer the research questions as accurately as possible. As stated in Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008), interviews are suitable when the interviewee is seen as an active counterpart and when the researcher wants to place the topics brought up by the interviewee into a larger context. In addition, interviews are a great option when the topic has not been explored in depth, thus making the answers unpredictable. It provides the researcher with the opportunity to ask elaborate questions and draw connections between different topics, thus providing a detailed and thorough understanding of the topic. As my topic is connected to many themes and has not been explored before, these factors support the choice of the research method.

The interviews were semi-structured and theme-based, making the conversation more natural and allowing the participants to tell about different factors related to the questions. The theme-based interview is regarded as a semi-structured interview because each interview revolves around the same topic, but the interview questions can be presented in a different order or with slightly differing word choices (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2008). This suits my research purposes the best, as different teachers can be expected to have differing opinions and observations on the language profile, thus making slightly varied interviews the most natural choice. The main interview questions were planned, but the conversation was allowed to flow naturally, and the order

of the questions sometimes changed depending on the interviewee and the topics already discussed during the interview. Before the official interviews, the interview was practised once with a peer in order to ensure the understandability of the questions and gain feedback on the formatting and order of the questions.

Interview invitations were sent to both L1 teachers and teachers of foreign languages, as the language profile includes all language subjects, but no L1 teachers participated. The interviews were carried out individually, providing each teacher with the opportunity to express their opinions freely. The duration of an interview was approximately 30 minutes, giving the interviewee enough time to express their opinions on all the topics related to the language profile. The interviews were carried out in Finnish, and thus the data analysis was done based on the Finnish data. However, the extracts were translated into English for reporting the results.

The interviewees were contacted by reaching out to the administration of different upper secondary schools, hoping for them to ask the language teachers of the school whether they would be interested in taking part in the study. Some invitations were also sent to the teachers directly. At a later stage of the study, the invitation was also posted in a Facebook group for Swedish teachers, as not enough interviewees were found through the email invitations. Two of the four interviewees were reached via email, and two were contacted via Facebook. The interviews were planned to be done either face-to-face or via a video call, but all the interviews were carried out using the video-conference platform Zoom due to covid-19 recommendations.

Before the interviews, a data privacy notice and a consent form were sent to the participants and they agreed to the terms at the beginning of the interviews. The interviews were recorded using recorders borrowed from the university and stored on a computer without uploading them to any internet-based platforms in order to keep the recordings safe. After the interviews, the data were transcribed and anonymised and the original data destroyed in order to protect the interviewees' privacy. Pseudonyms are used when reporting the results. These steps are taken in order to ensure the anonymity of the data (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2008).

As stated by Thompson and Dooley (2019), applied linguistics research is often concluded and reported in cross-linguistic contexts. This applies to the current study, as the interviews were conducted in Finnish, but the results are reported in English. Therefore, the translation processes must be done cautiously in order to report and analyse the results truthfully. The equivalency of the source and the target text must be ensured (Thompson and Dooley, 2019). Thus, the interview data were translated as closely to the original as possible, taking into account cross-linguistic differences and idiomatic equivalency. While translating all the interview data would have been very challenging and time consuming (Thompson and Dooley, 2019), only the most

relevant parts of the interview were translated in order to present the results in both languages. However, the original, Finnish data was used for the initial analysis.

The so-called "cultural translation" method, as mentioned by Thompson and Dooley (2019), is utilised when explaining terms and phrases related to Finnish schools and specifically Finnish phenomena. Due to time restraints, forward-translation is used, but comparisons between the original and the target texts were done by the researcher and peers. In addition, the original Finnish quotes are included in the thesis, ensuring that the reader is able to read the original words used by the interviewees. As mentioned above, the analysis has been done based on the original, Finnish versions of the transcriptions. It should be noted that some of the extracts include figurative language that would be very challenging to translate directly into English, and that the translation is done with focus on meaning instead of specific words. Thus, the Finnish and English versions might differ slightly, but the meaning of the original utterance has remained the same.

3.3   The participants

Four teachers were interviewed for the study. As the genders of the teachers are not relevant to the research questions, the gender-neutral pronoun *they* is used when describing the participants and their answers. The table below introduces the teachers and the school subjects they teach at upper secondary level.

Teacher pseudonym	Subjects
Teacher A	English, Swedish
Teacher B	English, travel industry
Teacher C	English, Swedish
Teacher D	German, Russian

Teacher C had already participated in implementing one version of the language profile as a part of some English courses during this school year. Thus, they have experience with using a version of the language profile before its actual implementation as a part of the curriculum. This was taken into account during the interview in order to gather varied and in-depth data on the topic.

3.4 Data analysis

Content analysis was used when analysing the data, allowing for finding similarities and differences and revealing common traits. The interview data were treated as a group of individual interviews where similarities and differences were analysed. After the interviews and the transcription process, the data were categorised and similarities, differences and main topics were colour-coded as a form of aiding the analysis process. The categorisation of the data creates the framework upon which the data were analysed (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2009). Some categories were for example language awareness, popularity of language subjects, challenges, opportunities, and other beliefs. The main themes were identified in order to reveal which themes are connected and relevant to the language profile and how often they are mentioned. Original Finnish extracts and their English translations are used when reporting the results, thus providing proof for the analysis.

Considering that the research questions are related to both applied linguistics and pedagogical knowledge, certain factors of interdisciplinary research must be considered. As stated by Pun (2019), the word "interdisciplinary" in applied linguistics implies that the results have implications for several fields of study. The research draws on different disciplines, combining relevant information in order to reveal all the important factors related to the topic. In order to answer my research questions, information based on applied linguistics, pedagogical theories, and the Finnish National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education was used and the interview data were analysed through these different points of view.

The results are presented together with extracts from the interviews while drawing connections between the results and previous research. The results are categorised following the contents and order of the research questions, thus making it clear how each research question is answered.

4   FINDINGS

At the beginning of the interviews, the teachers were asked about their first impressions of the language profile. The four teachers had varying answers, with all the participants finding both positive and negative factors about the profile. Overall, the language profile seemed to awaken mixed feelings in the participants, with the theoretical ideas behind it receiving positive remarks but the practical implementation worrying them. This chapter focuses on the findings made on the basis of the analysis of the interviews.

The findings will be presented in the following order: Section 4.1 answers a part of the second research question by introducing the beneficial aspects of the language profile, with motivation, popularity of language subjects, and students with different language backgrounds being the main themes. Challenges presented by the language profile, also a part of the second research question, will be introduced in Section 4.2, with the main foci being the expectations and stress felt by teachers and students, the profile's effect on the popularity of language subjects, and planning and implementing the profile. Section 4.3 is centred around the third research question, explaining how the language profile could affect students' language awareness. Answers to the final research question, whether the language profile could encourage students to study multiple languages, are presented in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.2.2, as the answers are connected to the beneficial and challenging factors of the language profile. As the first research question is relatively broad, answers to it are found in all the sections below, as well as in the discussion. Each section discusses the findings with illustrative extracts from the interviews. The extracts are presented in both Finnish and English.

4.1 Benefits of the language profile

When asked about the benefits and positive aspects of the language profile, three main factors were introduced by the participants: motivation towards studying and learning languages, the popularity of language subjects, and acknowledging multilingual students. These aspects are discussed below in three sections.

4.1.1 Motivation

According to the participants, the language profile might benefit some students and increase their motivation towards studying languages. The profile is seen as a method of exhibiting one's language skills, and thus it has the potential to become a tool for increasing motivation towards learning and using languages. Writing up how the students use their language skills in both school and other settings could increase their awareness of how and why they learn languages. Teacher C demonstrates this by expressing their thoughts on students' motivation towards Swedish, a fairly unpopular yet obligatory language in Finnish schools:

> (1) Teacher C: I wish that it could help in at least Swedish, where the motivation is constantly decreasing, so that students would realise "oh, I use this language quite little, I'm going to set new goals for myself".
>
> Teacher C: Toivon että ainakin niinku ruotsiin jossa motivaatio vaan laskee koko ajan kaikilla, nii että se siihen ehkä auttais että "oho tuleepa käytettyä vähän, laitanpa itselleni uusia tavoitteita".

As Teacher C describes, the profile could help students in self-reflection and aid them in thinking about how they use different languages in more depth. A similar sentiment was expressed by many of the participants, and it was suggested that reflecting on one's language skills might drive students to use the language more in their free time and to consciously look for situations in which they could use the said language, as exemplified in Extract 1. This could have a notable effect on the students' language skills, as using a language in one's free time has been proven to affect one's learning and increase their language skills greatly. According to Pietilä and Merikivi (2014), reading literature in English aids young people in acquiring English lexicon and students' spare time activities affect their language learning significantly. In addition, consuming popular media in the target language can lead to increased motivation towards learning more (Chan and Chi, 2011). Therefore, if the participants' beliefs about the profile encouraging students to use different languages more in their free time is found to be true, it could have a considerable impact on students' language skills. The profile could lead students to use the language more in their spare time, which could lead into higher motivation towards learning the language, creating a circular model

of increasing motivation. This could also cause students to merge subjects that they learn at school with topics they learn about in their free time. Being able to exhibit different sources of education and methods of learning in the language profile enables us to see these learning experiences as valid and might give more recognition to language skills built up outside the school environment. This would aid language learning processes as well as fulfil some of the goals set in the curriculum, such as cross-subject learning and using the information one has learnt in multiple settings.

Despite the profile having the possibility to affect students' motivation positively, whether the profile will lead to more students choosing to elect optional language subjects is debated by the participants. Therefore, the challenging factors of motivation-building will be explored in more detail in Section 4.2.

The profile could also have other positive practical implications. As brought up by both Teacher A and Teacher D, students who have decided to learn multiple languages and have recorded their language skills in the profile could benefit from this when finding work:

(2) Teacher A: So it would be good that you have something like that ready, if you apply for a job abroad or even when applying for Finnish companies in Finland, it would be extremely good to have a certificate like this, showing everything you have done.

Teacher A: Niin kyllähän se on hyvä et sulla olis plakkaris joku semmonen et jos haet työpaikkaa vaikka ulkomailta tai ihan suomalaisiskin yrityksis Suomessa niin tota kylhän se olis äärimmäisen hyvä et sul olis joku tämmönen todistus että mitä kaikkee sä oot tehny.

(3) Teacher D: Well everyone asks for your CV, so it would become automatic that you ask for a CV and a language profile.

Teacher D: Että kun kaikki pyytää sitä CV:tä niin tulisi automaatioks että hei CV ja kieliprofiili.

Employers could use the language profile to view the applicant's language skills, with the profile including a set of certificates and samples exhibiting the applicant's language knowledge. Teacher A continues in Extract 4 by explaining that the language profile would offer employers standardised knowledge instead of the vague adjectives often used in applications:

(4) Teacher A: We are often used to the CVs and applications having the *native language* or *good skills* or *excellent skills* or something else and they do not really tell anyone anything because they are up to interpretation, so now we would have some standardised material behind it.

Teacher A: Nyt me yleensä ollaan totuttu siihen et niissä CV:issä ja hakemuksis aina pistetään se *äidinkieli* tai *hyvä taito* tai *kiitettävä* tai muuta nii nehän ei kerro kellekään mitään ku se on tulkinnallinen, et nyt kun olis sit vähä tämmöst standardoituu se aineisto sen takana.

Being able to utilise the language profile when seeking work might encourage and motivate students to focus on creating and updating the profile as well as expand their language skills. If used when applying for work, the language profile could be useful even after graduating from upper secondary school, giving us reasons to believe that the language profile could really promote lifelong learning.

However, there are reasons to doubt whether the profile will fulfil all these goals and whether all possibilities will be taken into account in society at large. Furthermore, it might take society a large amount of time to learn to utilise the language profile and its benefits may not be visible immediately, as the account by Teacher A illustrates:

> (5) Teacher A: So you can only tell the final answer when the whole curriculum has been taken into use and when the generations who have actually made the language profile… So let's say that we can really see the actual benefits in maybe 10 years' time.
>
> Teacher A: Et sit vasta pystyy sanoon sen lopullisen sit kun se on ehkä jalkautettu se koko opsi ja ku ne ikäluokat jotka on sen kieliprofiilin aidosti tehny, ja on ollu… Et sanotaan et se me voidaan 10 vuoden päästä sanoo semmosii todellisii hyötyi.

As Teacher A states in Extract 5, it might take up to ten years until we can fully evaluate whether the profile has attained its goals. In addition, the language profile, its contents, and its uses should be introduced to employers before it becomes a practical tool in finding suitable employees. The implementation of the profile in society at large would demand an extensive amount of effort and education, and thus it is probable that using the profile after leaving school becomes a difficult task.

In addition to the profile increasing one's motivation towards using the languages they know, the profile could also encourage students to see languages as belonging to one group instead of placing every language they know into a separate box. Teacher C introduces the idea of comparing different languages when asked about cooperation between teachers of language subjects:

> (6) Teacher C: You could cooperate with other teachers, so you would maybe have a lesson where there are two teachers and you could look at the two languages, comparing them and so on, so I really think it would be useful.
>
> Teacher C: Et vois just tehä yhteistyötä, et ois vaikka joku tunti missä on kaksi opea ja sitten katsottaisiin vaikka ne kaks eri kieltä ja vertailtais ja tämmöistä, että nään kyllä ehdottomasti että siitä olisi hyötyä.

As indicated in Extract 6, the language profile introduces opportunities for cooperation between teachers and finding similarities and differences between languages. If implemented in a certain manner, the profile prompts the student to evaluate, compare, and analyse each language and how they use it. This increases the students' language awareness and might create realisations of similarities between languages, thus helping students to utilise their already existing language skills when learning parts

of a language that is new to them. As explained in Extract 7 by Teacher D, seeing languages as one unity might help students recognise that they do not have to master each area of grammar in order to use the language effectively:

(7) Teacher D: But in languages everything is connected to each other so… So that it is a whole entity, so it doesn't matter if one skill is weaker, then it's compensated with some other skill, so you look at the whole picture.

Teacher D: Mutta kielissäkin kun ne kaikki liittyy kaikkeen niin... Että se niinku, se on koko kimppu, et ei se haittaa jos yks lanka on vähän löysemmässä niin sit kompensoidaan jollain toisella taidolla, että se on se yhteispeli.

Teacher D continues later with the same topic, explaining that the language profile might make students realise that they are able to use the language without having the typical language-learning experiences of going abroad and using the target language in its native environment:

(8) Teacher D: Like "I will never travel abroad, so I don't need it". But then when we start to think that ok, I watch television programmes from these countries, on the radio I heard an interview in this language, we would start to notice how much – that language learning is something else than just learning the endings of plural forms or something like that.

Teacher D: Että "ku en mä ikinä mihinkään matkusta ulkomaille en mä tarvi". Mut sitku ruvetaan miettiin et okei mä katon telkkarist ton maalasia ohjelmia, sit radiosta mä kuulen ton haastattelun tolla kielellä, sit alettais niinku huomaamaan et kuin paljon se – et se kielitaito on nyt jotain muuta kun niinku monikon päätteiden opetteluu tai jotain muuta sellasta.

As stated in Extract 8, exposure to different languages happens in multiple settings. This idea could be introduced and explored with teachers and peers when creating the language profile, thus allowing students to find contexts in which they learn, use, and need different languages. In Extract 9, Teacher C brings up the possibilities connected to cooperation between students:

(9) Teacher C: I see many opportunities in this, for example opportunities for working in groups or pairs, comparing the profiles and through that enriching the "hey cool, you know so many languages" and "I should do that too".

Teacher C: Paljon näkisin tossa ehkä mahdollisuuksia vaikkapa niinku johonkin ryhmä- tai parityöskentelylle että vertaillaan profiileja ja sitä kautta tavallaan rikastamaan sitten sitä että "hei siistiä sä osaat vaikka noin montaa kieltä" ja "pitäspä itekin".

As demonstrated in Extract 9, peers working together on the language profile could help them realise the possibilities connected to knowing many languages, as the peers could encourage each other to use the languages they know in different settings. There are many possibilities connected to working in groups or pairs and students might be inspired by each other's profiles, leading them to pay more attention to their own language learning and use.

It was recognised by multiple participants that the profile might be a challenge for some students, but that it has the possibility of increasing the motivation of those students who are already motivated at school and who are capable of taking responsibility for their studies. As expressed by Teacher A, the group of students who is already motivated and doing well at school might find more motivation in compiling the language profile:

(10)
Teacher A: Those who are talented and maybe know that they clearly want to get into a certain field and aim for it, they might see this as a resource and an opportunity, and they might also be motivated by it.

Teacher A: Ne jotka on niinku etevii ja ehkä tähtää ja tietää selkeesti et haluu johonkin tiettyyn opiskelupaikkaan ja sit voi nähä tän resurssina ja mahdollisuutena niin sit he voi ehkä myöski motivoituu.

According to Kerpelman and Mosher (2004), there is a strong linkage between self-efficacy and future orientation. Therefore, it is likely that the groups of talented and motivated students that Teacher A brings up in Extract 10 are the ones with strong feelings of self-efficacy and clear plans for their future. Kerpelman and Mosher (2004) also explain that students who take responsibility and control of their future plans are more likely to take part in school activities promoting career preparation and job opportunities. If the language profile is to be introduced as a means of growing one's chances of receiving a career opportunity or succeeding in higher education, it is very likely that this specific group of students feels more motivated towards completing the profile and compiling it with focus on detail. Therefore, the language profile can be seen as a chance of affecting one's future by the group of students with high self-efficacy and control of their studies, which in turn could motivate them into paying particular attention to the project throughout their studies.

However, the phenomenon is two-edged and, according to the participants, although the language profile could motivate one group of students, other groups could feel indifferent towards the profile or even see it as a source of additional stress. This will be explored in more detail in Section 4.2.

4.1.2   Popularity of language subjects – opportunities

When asked about whether the language profile could affect students' language choices, the participants' views seem to be conflicting. On the one hand, the profile might lessen the number of students who drop a language subject after completing a couple of courses or modules. In addition, it could create motivation due to the new possibilities created by the profile. On the other hand, the participants express that the structural problems in society cannot be fixed by the addition of the language profile

alone and that other factors than the language profile are much more important when creating motivation. The challenges will be explored further in Section 4.3.

In favour of the language profile affecting the students' language choices is the fact that the profile creates a positive, upward-moving presentation of the students' language skills instead of the traditional marks, which usually decline as the courses proceed, as expressed by Teacher B:

(11)
Teacher B: I wish the student could see their progress better and through a more positive view, that is probably the idea behind the language profile as well. So it's very easy to build a, well it does not have to be a climbing model but like that, you rise to the next stage. Because in reality the assessment the student sees on Wilma is based on marks, it is very rarely ascending, it is often descending even though you possess more skills than in the previous course.

Teacher B: Mä toivon että opiskelija näkee oman kehittymisensä niinku paremmin ja ja tietyllä tavalla niinku positiivisemman kautta että siihen kieliprofiili on, varmaan se ajatuskin siinä on. Et niinku hyvin helppo rakentaa tavallaan semmonen niinku, ei nyt tarvi tietty olla mikään porrasmalli mutta ikään kun, et siinä noustaan seuraavalle tasolle. Kun periaatteessa se arvosanallinen arviointi mikä sit näkyy opiskelijalle niinku Wilmassa vaikka, nii hyvin harvoin on nouseva, se on useimmiten niinku laskeva vaikka osaamista onkin enemmän kuin edellisessä kurssissa.

As seen in Extract 11, compiling the profile might make the student perceive their progress, which could make them realise that they are learning more about the target language and improving their skills in it despite receiving low marks in exams. This creates an alternative for the often declining development of marks the student sees on their report card or Wilma, the online platform used by most Finnish schools. Therefore, they might decide to continue studying the language and taking the courses despite the marks. Teacher B continues with the theme later:

(12)
Teacher B: It will possibly bring one or two students per a hundred students more when they notice that, if it's implemented in a sensible way, that this is also a way of assessing and exhibiting your own skills and learning for yourself. So it's possible that there won't be so many drop-outs anymore.

Teacher B: Kyl se tuo ehkä sen 1-2 opiskelijaa per 100 sitten mahdollisesti lisää kun huomaa, et jos se on toteutettu järkevästi, et tälleenkin tätä niinku pystyy tätä omaa osaamista ja tota oppimista niinku arvioimaan ja havainnollistamaan itelle. Niin voihan se olla että sellaisia pudokkait ei ehkä sit tule sitten niin paljon.

Despite the profile having the chance to prevent some students from dropping out of language courses during their studies, Teacher B suggests in Extract 12 that this might affect one or two students out of a hundred students, and thus the effect might not be extensive. However, a notable finding in this respect is that the students would focus on their skills instead of choosing subjects in which they can receive high marks. This would be a significant factor affecting the students' lives and their motivation, as they would rely on intrinsic motivation stemming from learning and being able to use the

language instead of the extrinsic motivation of receiving good marks. As discussed above, the new method of certificate-based admission has caused upper secondary school students to focus on their exam results more and to choose subjects through which they can receive higher points (Rautio, 2021), and thus this aspect of focusing on one's learning without looking at the official results would be a refreshing change.

Some more suggestions on how the language profile could affect students' language choices are made by the teachers. The profile's importance in the students' lives after school is seen as an important factor, with ideas on how employers and higher education providers could utilise the profile being brought forward by many of the participants. In Extract 13, Teacher A introduces the idea of the language profile including a larger and elective project that could be used to receive study credits at higher education institutions:

(13)
Teacher A: You would be able to create a longer essay or a research project, or a more challenging listening task, following a debate in Swedish or in English or something, and then making a summary and answering some questions. That could be counted as a part of your further studies, for 1-2 ECTS.

Teacher A: Sä pystyisit sit sinne kieliprofiiliin tekeen jonkun pidemmän esseen tai tutkielman tai jonkun haastavamman tämmösen kuuntelutehtävän, et seuraat jonkun väittelyn ruotsiks tai englanniks tai jotain, ja teet siit jonkun tiivistelmän ja vastaat johonkin kysymyksiin. Se voitais sit laskee sit sinne jatko-opintoihin 1-2 op edestä.

Seen as students' future plans often have an impact on which subjects they choose to study at upper secondary school (Rautio, 2021), they are likely to appreciate other factors affecting their future as well. Therefore, the reform suggested by Teacher A in Extract 13 could be a useful approach to making the profile more motivating. Allowing students to receive study credits used in higher education might motivate certain students, giving them the chance to take a head start on their future studies, therefore making the language profile truly useful for their futures. In order for this to be carried out, it would demand the National Agency for Education to co-operate with higher education institutions, such as universities and universities of applied sciences. It is also possible that demands and opportunities connected to the language profile could vary depending on the institution or change in the course of a few years, making it difficult to predict what the student should focus on when compiling their profile at school. Therefore, the innovative ideas presented by the teachers might be difficult to enforce in real life.

4.1.3 Acknowledging multilingual students

One positive factor mentioned by the participants is that students with knowledge in multiple languages or less-known languages can exhibit their knowledge through the language profile. This could benefit those of monolingual family backgrounds who

have chosen to study other languages at school, as well as those who come from multilingual backgrounds and use multiple languages in their daily lives. Despite having no experience of teaching students who do not have Finnish as their first language, Teacher C expects that the language profile could have a positive effect on those who use multiple languages in their day-to-day lives:

(14)
Teacher C: It is quite an amazing opportunity if your mother tongue is something else besides Finnish, then you can ask the student to fill it in about Finnish and then also about the language that is their first language, or if they are bilingual or so.

Teacher C: Sehän on aika mahtava tilaisuus sitten jos on äidinkielenä vaikka muu kun suomi, niin sitten laittaa täyttään sen ihan vaikka suomen kielestä ja sitten täyttää myös siitä mikä on vaikka se ensikieli tai jos on vaikka kaksikielisyyttä tai tälleen.

Teacher C continues on the theme, recognising that those who have started studying other languages before entering upper secondary school would be able to exhibit those skills using the language profile:

(15)
Teacher C: If you have studied some – I don't know how much someone who is just starting upper secondary school has studied any other languages than the basic ones, but maybe some more unusual languages get recognition there too.

Teacher C: Jos on vaikka opiskellu jotain - en tiedä kuinka paljon nyt lukiota aloittavan ehkä opiskellu jotain muita kieliä kuin ne perus, mutta saa ehkä jotain erikoisemmatki kielet tavallaan vähän niinku tunnustusta sitten sieltä.

As seen in Extracts 14 and 15, rarer languages get recognition in the profile, no matter where they are learnt. This is an important observation, as students who speak and use languages that are not offered in most schools might find it difficult to exhibit their knowledge and utilise their skills in those languages in the school environment. With the number of young people of multilingual and multicultural backgrounds constantly increasing in Finland (Kotouttaminen.fi), the language profile provides them with a place to display their skills and reflect on their multilingual identities. If language is to constitute identity (Pennycook, 2007), this could have significant effects on young people seeking their place in the world. This aspect of the language profile also fulfils its aim of promoting multilingualism. In addition, the language profile offers students who decide to take courses in different languages or use multiple languages in their spare time an opportunity to see their language skills as a real asset, as they rarely benefit from the choice when applying to higher education in the current system. Therefore, the language profile can highlight and exhibit everyone's individual identities, skills, and methods of learning while connecting them to the surrounding society.

In conclusion, the language profile has three main benefits: increasing motivation, encouraging students to continue studying languages, and acknowledging multilingual students. As multiple languages and contexts can be introduced and analysed in the language profile, it adapts to the specific situation of each learner, giving them the chance to exhibit their skills and develop their understanding of language learning. In addition, if implemented in a certain manner, the language profile could be very useful for the students' futures, therefore promoting lifelong learning and building motivation.

4.2 Challenges presented by the language profile

Despite the positive sides and possibilities presented by the language profile, there are also challenges the participants worry about. The challenges and negative factors the participants had observed have been categorised into three main sections: stress felt by the teachers and students, challenges related to the popularity of language subjects, and planning and implementing the profile. When reading the results, it is important to remember that the teachers have built their beliefs upon the information they have received on the profile by the spring of 2021. Thus, the beliefs and interpretations of teachers might change slightly after additional resources for the profile have been published.

4.2.1 Expectations and stress felt by the teachers and students

The possible positive impact brought by the language profile seemed to be buried under the strain and worries of other challenging aspects influencing Finnish upper secondary schools at the moment. Some of the factors currently taking teachers' time and energy are for instance the covid-19 pandemic and the possibility of distance teaching, the renewed matriculation examinations, and the new national curriculum. As Teacher A explains, teachers might not be able to focus on planning the language profile with so many other factors affecting their workload:

> (16)
>
> Teacher A: Now this comes at a bad time when thinking about corona as well – it takes huge resources from teachers, students, and administration, headteachers and others. Because now the fact that plans can change in a day, that in a week you're in a whole other situation, I claim that all of this eats up a huge amount of energy from it and this distance teaching kind of cripples it, so that teachers do not have their full power in order to work on new stuff. Because this is completely new and nothing like this has been done before.
>
> Teacher A: Nyt tää tulee niinku siinäki mieles huonoon saumaan koska korona – niin se vie niinku ihan hirveesti resurssei sekä opettajilta, opiskelijoilta että sit niinku hallintopuolelt, rehtoreilt ja muilta. Koska nyt se et suunnitelmat saattaa

muuttuu niinku päivässä et viikon päästä iollaanki ihan muussa, mä väitän et niinku kaikki tämmönen syö nyt hirveesti energiaa siitä ja sit ku tää etäopetus niinku rampauttaa sen että ei oo ihan niin täysii powereit ehkä opettajil lähtee työstään niinku myöskää sit uutta, koska tää on kokonaan ihan uutta ja tämmöst ei oo aikasemmin tehty.

The challenging timing might affect the language profile permanently. In Extract 16, Teacher A introduces the idea that teachers are already too stressed and busy in order to plan and develop the language profile to its full potential. Teacher B expresses similar sentiments in Extract 17, offering their ideas on how the introduction of the language profile could have functioned better in the current situation and expressing worry about whether the language profile will reach its full potential:

(17)
Teacher B: I personally wished that it had been either a kind of a tip, saying that you could do this and try this, or that they had simply postponed it a bit. I'm afraid it's going to stay very incomplete, it would have potential, but if it stays incomplete in the beginning, is it going to be incomplete forever?

Teacher B: Mä olisin toivonut ite että se olisi sitten ollut niinku joku joko vähän niinku sellaisen vinkkinä tällaista vois vois niinku tehdä ja kokeilla, tai sitten et ois tylysti siirtänyt sitä vähän eteenpäin. Et mä pelkään että se jää tosi raakileeks ja siinä olisi potentiaalia mutta et jos se jää heti alkuun ihan raakileeks niin onko se sit aina raakile?

In fact, the Finnish word *raakile*, meaning a thing that is incomplete, was mentioned by three out of four participants when referring to the language profile. Fears about the language profile never reaching its full potential due to not having enough time or energy to plan it were expressed by many of the participants, with some of them wishing for more clear instructions and ready-made platforms on which to implement the profile. Teacher C, who had taken part in a trial for one version of the language profile, expresses their wishes for how the materials and platform could be developed before the start of the autumn term:

(18)
Teacher C: I wish that they would get it to function and that it would be a complete and clear entity for the teacher, like "this is how you do it" and that they would have taken into account what year ones in upper secondary schools actually understand and are able to do, so that they can fill it in and make it. And that it would be clear, motivating why this is done and its benefits, so developed as far as possible. So they don't just throw you a half-functioning programme that keeps on crashing and hope that "well, you teachers can solve the problems and develop this further and we just give you this half-complete thing". So you would actually have a complete framework and something that would be nice to implement, so I hope it could be developed to that stage, possibly.

Teacher C: Mä toivon kyllä et se saatas toimimaan ja että se olisi mahdollisimman semmoinen tavallaan valmis selkeä paketti opettajalle että "näin teet sen" ja olisi otettu niinku huomioon että mitä lukion ykköset oikeasti ymmärtää ja osaa, että ne osaa sen täyttää ja tehdä. Ja ois joku selkee et perustelut miksi näin tehdään ja mitä hyötyä siitä on että niinku mahdollisimman tavallaan pitkälle kehitelty. Että ei vaan nakata semmoista puoliksi toimivaa crashailevää ohjelmaa ja toivota että "no niin

33

opettajat nyt ratkaiskaa ongelmat ja kehittäkääpä tätä eteenpäin että tämmönen puo-liraakile lyödään teille vaan". Että ois oikeesti jotkut valmiit raamit ja semmonen jota oisi tekin sit kiva lähteä toteuttaan, niin toivon että sais siihen vaiheeseen ma-hollisesti.

The wish for ready-made platforms and instructions from multiple participants is an interesting observation, as teachers normally have a high level of autonomy in Finland, with teachers describing the autonomy as for instance freedom from control and as a form of trust (Paradis, 2019). However, with the current situation putting a strain on the teachers, it is not surprising that they wish for more clear instructions to ease their workload.

The fear of the language profile staying incomplete is worth exploring further, as the current stressful situation at schools might indeed have a long-lasting impact on the future of the language profile and other parts of the new curriculum. The teach-ers' attitudes towards the language profile will most probably affect how the students receive the project and how motivated they are when working on it. As stated by Allen (1996), teacher beliefs affect students' perceptions and beliefs, and thus it is of utmost importance that teachers have enough motivation and support to implement different parts of the curriculum. However, when the participants were asked about whether they had received enough support and resources for planning the profile, they gave mixed answers, with the amount of support needed clearly varying between partici-pants. It also seems that newer teachers might need more support when planning the profile, as they are more likely to rely on already existing material when planning their teaching. This is brought up by Teacher D, who states that as a newer teacher, they are still in the process of finding courage to make choices that differ from their usual teaching style:

(19)
Teacher D: I'm still a new teacher so I don't – my focus is on the textbooks and well, I have learnt a good working method from the book and I venture out of it quite a little.

Teacher D: Kun mä olen vielä uus ope niin mulla ei niinku – mä oon aikalailla op-pikirjapainotteinen ja tuota mä oon sieltä nyt oppinu ittelleni semmosen hyvän työs-kentelytavan että mä vielä aika vähän uskallan poiketa siltä polulta.

Teacher D's answer in Extract 19 is very typical for Finnish teachers, as textbooks have a very strong status in Finland and guide teaching despite the teachers' auton-omy (Luukka et al., 2008). The lack of clear instructions and materials for the language profile might thus cause problems for some teachers. Therefore, the individual needs of schools and individual teachers should be taken into account when planning re-sources.

In addition to the stress felt by the teachers and students due to the current situation, expectations directed at students cause worry among teachers. In upper secondary schools, students are expected to take responsibility of their studies and to sometimes work independently. For some, this might be a drastic change to how they studied at secondary school. Some of the interviewees express worry in how the schools are slowly transforming into institutions where the students are expected to take more responsibility than they can manage at their age.

(20)
Teacher C: It feels like the goal is to make upper secondary schools into miniature versions of universities, where everything is so interdisciplinary and made with a research perspective, and then the reality is that the student cannot check what they has as homework on Wilma.

Teacher C: Vähän lukiosta yritetään tehä ehkä jotain miniyliopistoja jossa kaikki on niin laaja-alaista ja tutkimusotteella tehdään ja sitten todellisuus on sitä että opiske-lija ei osaa katsoa Wilmasta läksyjä.

Similar sentiments are expressed by Teacher A in Extract 21:

(21)
Teacher A: They are quite young after all, so not all of them can take full responsi-bility of their learning, which is what is now wanted and expected. So they still need quite a lot of guidance and reminders of returning books, taking the hat off, ar-riving on time – these practical things – I'm a bit sad about the fact that we put so much responsibility onto the students. Of course you need to give them responsibil-ity but then we have to think about the zone of proximal development, we can't give them everything at once.

Teacher A: Nii ne on aika nuorii sit kumminki nii ei ne ihan hirveesti vielä pysty läheskään kaikki ottaan sitä niin täysvaltasta vastuut siit omast opiskelemisest mitä nii ehkä halutaan ja oletetaan. Et kyllähän heit täytyy aika paljon vielä ohjata ja muistutella et palautahan nyt se kirja ja ota se pipo pois päästä ja tule ajoissa – ihan tällasii käytännön niinku – mua vähän harmittaa ja surettaa se että tosi paljon meil niinku sysätään sitä vastuuta niinku nuorille. Totta kai pitää vastuuttaa joo mut sit siihen tullaan sinne lähikehityksen vyöhyke -ajatteluun, et ei me voida kertalaakista kaikkea.

Teacher A names Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, perhaps the best-known innovation in Vygotsky's work (Brėdikytė, 2011) in Extract 21. The worry about stu-dents not being able to fulfil all the demands of modern upper secondary schools is visible in both Extract 20 and 21, and it seems that balancing between not too much and not too little responsibility is a difficult task. Teacher A also mentions in Extract 21 that it is good to give young people responsibility, but that one cannot give them too much at once. This supports the claim that the many changes facing upper sec-ondary schools in the recent years, such as the new curricula, the digitalisation of the matriculation examinations, and distance teaching, might be too much to add at once despite their positive aspects.

Considering Brown's (2014) theory on self-efficacy leading to avoidance of difficult tasks and Teacher C's comment in Extract 20 about students not checking what they had as homework, it is possible that some students with low self-efficacy avoid making sure that they know their responsibilities, despite the information being easily and readily available on Wilma, the platform most Finnish schools use for communication between schools and homes. However, it is also possible that they do not feel motivated towards the subject or studying as a whole, and thus do not act as they should. Demanding students to take on increasingly challenging, interdisciplinary, and long-haul tasks could prove too difficult for some students with low self-efficacy or many other demanding life factors. In Extract 22, Teacher A describes the challenges some students face in the modern upper secondary school:

(22)
    Teacher A: These types of students who have weak starting levels, low grades when leaving secondary school and so, they need basic guidance, they need word tests and thorough teaching. So if this [language profile] is added to everything else, then the whole situation is all mixed up. Because the fact is that some tasks will not be saved, or material or other things, even if it were useful for the students. But they see the usefulness only when – when it is not useful in the moment, they do not see it as being useful.

    Teacher A: Tämmöset joilla on nää lähtötasot heikot et tullaan vaik peruskoulust jo heikoil arvosanoilla, nii he tarvii ihan sitä perusohjausta et he tarvii sanakokeit ja he tarvii ihan perusteellista opetusta. Et sit jos heil tää [kieliprofiili] ympätään siihen viel yhteen niin sithän se paletti on sit ihan sekasin. Koska sit fakta on se et siin jää tallentamatta niit tehtävii ja tota aineistoo ja muuta vaik se oiski heil itelle hyödyks mut he näkee sen hyödyn sit vasta sit niinku - ku se ei oo niinku täs hetkes niin se ei oo niinku hyödyllist.

A project such as the language profile has the possibility of developing students' skills in many aspects, such as taking responsibility for their studies and taking part in long-term assignments. However, as seen in Teacher A's response in Extract 22, the project might prove much too difficult for some students, from them not seeing the benefits of the profile because they are not immediate, to losing assignments and certificates that should be compiled in the language profile during one's upper secondary school years. It is up to interpretation whether the language profile can develop these skills or whether a task proving too difficult for a student will affect their self-efficacy negatively.

However, as observed in Section 4.1, the profile might benefit those students who do not struggle with taking responsibility for their learning. Thus, the student body is divided on whether the language profile will be beneficial for them or not.

4.2.2 Popularity of language subjects – challenges

Despite the teachers expressing the positive aspects connected to the profile and its potential in increasing students' motivation towards developing their language skills, their attitudes towards the profile influencing students to choose more language subjects are doubtful.

In Extract 1, Teacher C expressed their hopes for students finding motivation towards using more Swedish through the observations made in the language profile. However, they continue by stating that the idea of schools increasing the number of languages students are able to choose seems unlikely:

> (23)
> Teacher C: So I do not see it directly helping in adding to the selection of language subjects, for example.
>
> Teacher C: Että en ehkä näe että se suoraan auttaisi vaikkapa lisäämään kielivalikoimaa.

Therefore, it seems that according to these teachers, the language profile could increase students' motivation towards the languages they already study and know, but it does not solve the problem of decreasing language proficiency among Finns.

In order for the profile to affect language subjects' popularity positively, it should be introduced very early on. According to the participants, motivating students to choose elective languages when they have already begun their first courses at upper secondary school is difficult, as most language subjects start at the beginning of the school year and the choices need to be done before the start of the courses. Teacher D illustrates this as follows:

> (24)
> Teacher D: So if they notice that "wow, this is such a great thing", but then they might not be able to choose the languages anymore.
>
> Teacher D: Et jos ne huomaa että voi vitsi täähän on tosi hieno juttu mutta sitten ne ei ehkä pysty enää valitsemaan niitä kieliä.

Telling the students about the language profile at an early stage is also mentioned by Teacher A:

> (25)
> Teacher A: If they have started marketing this at secondary schools as well, that would be really good.
>
> Teacher A: Jos sitä on lähetty markkinoimaan myös yläkoulus nii sehä olis hirveen hyvä.

As seen in the previous section, the profile introduces many possibilities, but it should be marketed early, perhaps even at secondary schools, in order for it to actually affect the number of students choosing to study elective languages.

According to the participants, the profile might increase motivation slightly, but the main source of motivation towards language learning comes from other sources. Inspiring teachers, supportive attitude from guardians and relatives, friends with a positive attitude towards language learning, and the linguistic landscape of surrounding society are mentioned as some of the most important factors affecting students' motivation. In Extract 26, Teacher A emphasises the importance of motivation in primary school and the effect of peers, family, and teachers:

(26)
Teacher A: The way I see it is that this in itself will not bring motivation, the motivation has to come from other sources. So it starts with inspiring teachers, with the motivation in primary school and from home where the support comes from, and then the interest of if a friend is there, then you'll join too.

Teacher A: Kyl mä näkisin et ei ei tää ei itessään niinku mun mielestä tää ei tuo motivaatioo kyl se motivaatio täytyy tulla jostain muualta. Kyl se lähtee niist inspiroivist opettajista, sit sielt alakoulun motivoinnista ja sielt kotoo tulee se tuki, ja sit semmonen kiinnostus et jos joku kaverikin on sit nii sit ehkä sit mennään myös.

In addition to these aspects, in Extract 27 Teacher C suggests that the societal factors, such as the powerful status of English when compared to other languages, affect students' motivation and opinions on different languages and thus guide their choices at school:

(27)
Teacher C: It should start with culture and society – from there maybe – so when you think about the status of English for example, it does kind of… I teach two languages, but you hear English everywhere and it is kind of easy, you always get information in that language and so on. So if there was a language that was more visible in our society and attitudes towards it were better, then it would obviously come from there. When *Los Serrano* was a popular show on tv, people started to study Spanish, it wasn't because "ok I want to learn something so that I know", well, Spanish as a language with that being the reason for studying it, it was "woah, I want to know more about this show".

Teacher C: Sen pitäisi jotenkin lähteä niinku kulttuurista ja yhteiskunnasta - ehkä niinku sieltä käsin - että juuri kun miettii vaikka enkun asemaa, että kyllähän se niinku… Ihan itsekin opetan kahta kieltä mutta kyllä se niinku enkku, sitä tulee joka tuutista ja se on semmoinen helppo tavallaan sillä kielellä saa aina infoo ja näin edespäin. Et sitten tavallaan jos olisi joku kieli joka ois enemmän näkyvillä yhteiskunnassa ja asenteet olisi paremmat niin totta kai se sieltä tulis sitten. Aikanaan kun *Serranon perhe* oli telkkarissa suosittu niin espanjaa alettiin opiskelemaan, et se ei tullut siksi että "okei haluan oppia jotain että voin" noh, espanjaa kielenä että siksi haluaisi opiskella välttämättä vaan "oo mä haluan jotakin tietää tästä telkkarisarjasta enemmän."

As Teacher C observes, popular media has a powerful impact on young people, and the participant mentions that when the Spanish show *Los Serrano* became popular

in Finland in the late 2000s, many young people chose to learn Spanish. As expressed by Teacher C, if a language is visible in surrounding society and attitudes towards it are positive, students are more likely to study it. This statement and the example of the show *Los Serrano* support the results of Chan and Chi (2011), as consuming popular media in the target language often has a positive impact on one's motivation towards learning the language. As can be seen in Extract 27, the participant believes that while the language profile has its positive sides, a single addition to the curriculum cannot cause permanent change while society's problems and attitudes stay the same.

One factor affecting the small number of students choosing elective languages was mentioned by nearly all the participants. The new model of certificate-based admission does not reward students for choosing language subjects, which directs students to prefer other subjects. Teacher B explains their thoughts on the topic as follows:

(28)
Teacher B: I find the structural problems to be so extensive that one singular thing like this cannot change them. If we really wanted that for example German, French, or Russian were studied more, then we should put them on the same level with for example advanced maths in the chart for certificate-based admission to higher education, then we would have full groups. But the structure has been created so that there is no direct value for the student in it.

Teacher B: Mä koen ne rakenteelliset pulmat niin isoiksi että ei niinku tällaisellä yksittäisellä asialla siihen saada muutosta. Et jos oikeasti haluttaisiin että vaikka jotain saksaa, ranskaa, venäjää - että sitä luettaisiin enemmän, niin lyödään se vaikka samalle samalle tasolle korkeakoulupistetaulukossa ku pitkä matikka niin kuule alkaa olla ryhmät täynnä. Mutta kun se rakenne on luotu silleen että sille ei oo suoraa arvoa opiskelijalle.

Teacher D shares similar ideas and also references mathematics in comparison to languages:

(29)
Teacher D: There should probably be a stronger effort in addition to the other factors, some sort of a system of giving points, that they would be given for languages for real so that maths would not walk over absolutely everything.

Teacher D: Kyllä siihen varmaan tarvitsisi olla vähän joku isompi ponnistus vielä sitten niinku joku pisteytyssysteemi, että niitä nyt oikeasti ruvettaisiin nostamaan noihin vieraisiin kieliin ettei matikka jyräis nyt ihan kaikkea.

As explained in Chapter 2, the method of certificate-based admission was first introduced in 2020, although some fields have used similar methods even before its introduction to all fields. It has been a widely discussed topic in the media (Korpela, 2021; Martikainen and Niemonen, 2021; Rautio, 2021) as well as among teachers. As seen above, the participants find that the current system undervalues languages, thus giving students reasons to choose mathematics and other natural sciences over them. This is not surprising, as according to Saarinen (2019), over 80 per cent of the teachers

blame certificate-based admission for students' lower motivation towards language subjects.

While the language profile can provide some students with additional motivation, the participants agree on other factors, such as the attitudes of different aspects of society, the media, and the certificate-based admission being more important in encouraging the students' language learning. As stated in Section 4.1, the language profile has the opportunity to affect some students' motivation and self-efficacy positively. However, a risk for some students to experience it as an additional source of stress exists, which should be considered when leading the process of creating and updating the language profile.

4.2.3 Planning and implementing the profile

Another problem the teachers are facing are the varying methods of how to implement the language profile. According to the teachers, the current instructions are unclear and thus add to the teachers' stress. As there are many options for how and where the profile will be carried out, the teachers are faced with a myriad of choices. Textbook publishers might offer ready-made platforms for the profile, but as stated by Teacher A in Extract 30, students might have textbooks from different publishers in different language subjects, making the creation of a single profile very difficult:

> (30)
> Teacher A: I'm a teacher of English and Swedish, so if I have material from Otava in English and material from Studeo in Swedish for example, then they will of course have their own platforms for the language profile where students can gather their material. And then if we have different courses when the curricula change suddenly again, if we move on from Otava to Sanomapro or to something else, then you will have to think about how to combine the materials from there.
>
> Teacher A: Mäkin on enkun ja ruotsin ope, et jos mulla on vaikka enkussa esim. Otavan materiaali ja ruotsis sit vaikka nyt Studeon materiaalit, niin heillähän on tietysti omat kieliprofiilialustat mihin voi sit oppilaat kerätä. Ja sit taas jos meillä on eri kurssit kun OPSit vaihtuu taas kesken kaiken sit taas, jos siirrytäänkin Otavasta vaikka Sanomaprohon tai jotain muuta niin sit sun pitää miettii mites sit taas saadaan materiaalit yhdistettyy sieltä.

This highlights a practical worry the teachers have. Having a high level of autonomy in how the profile will be managed and where it will be saved causes confusion among the participants, although clearer instructions for this will probably be given by municipalities and other authorities before the start of the next school year. As individual schools and municipalities can create their own plans for the language profile, the methods of implementation might vary greatly, and problems might arise if a student moves to another municipality or changes schools during their upper secondary school years. With municipalities, schools, and teachers having a high level of autonomy in how the profile is introduced and carried out, Teacher C expresses their worry

about whether all students will receive the same amount of guidance when making the profile:

(31)
> Teacher C: The spectrum is probably going to be quite large, thinking about what kinds of implementations there are going to be, and through that the student's, well, I wouldn't say legal protection but equal treatment concerning the language profile, well it doesn't exist. I mean of course it is mainly the student's tool but how much guidance they get will vary a great deal. On the national level, I mean.

> Teacher C: Kirjo tulee olemaan varmaan aika iso, siitä että millasii toteutuksii siihen tulee ja ja sitä kautta sitten ehkä se opiskelijan niinku - mä en nyt puhuis ehkä oikeusturvasta mutta niinkun tasapuolinen kohtelu tuon kieliprofiili suhteen niin eihän sitä oo. Et tietysti se on opiskelijan oma työkalu lähinnä mutta se että kuinka paljon hän saa siihen tukee niin tulee kyllä vaihtelemaan huikeasti. Niinku kansallisesti.

The varying amount of guidance and possible inequal treatment of students expressed in Extract 31 is a relevant observation, as the high level of autonomy concerning the language profile will surely lead to different types of implementations. This is a significant cause of worry and should be considered, as everyone should receive equal education despite living in different parts of the country. However, as expressed in Extract 31, the language profile is mainly created by the student, for the student, and therefore the students too can have autonomy related to it. It should also be noted that even with a standardised amount of guidance, the profiles would be different depending on the school and municipality as not all schools offer courses in all language subjects.

As emphasised by all the participants, clear instructions and practical examples make planning and using the language profile easier, thus reducing the stress felt by teachers. Teacher C, who had already experimented with a version of the language profile with their students, states in Extract 32 that the idea is good, but that the first version of the profile was confusing for both the teacher and the students:

(32)
> Teacher C: So before I even knew what it was in reality, I thought that it was a nice idea, but then when we tried out the version they had, it was a bit, maybe messy, not very easy to understand for a student, I think.

> Teacher C: Niin ennen kuin tavallaan ees tiesin mitä se käytännössä on niin sitten just ajattelin että sehän on ihan kiva idea, mutta sit kun nyt sitä tavallaan testattiin se sen version mikä heillä oli niin opiskelijoiden kanssa niin oli sen vähän semmonen, ehkä sekava, ei opiskelijalle kauheen helposti ymmärrettävä mun mielestä.

Teacher C continues by describing the version of the language profile they used and emphasising the importance of clear instructions and a well-designed platform:

(33)
> Teacher C: So maybe the understandability and clearness and that it would be as independent as possible so that the teacher doesn't have to be constantly explaining

that this means this and that means that, instead it should be quite independent and clear, so there's maybe a practical challenge.

Teacher C: Että ehkä se niinku ymmärrettävyys ja selkeys ja se että se saisi olla mahdollisimman omatoiminen, että siihen ei tarvitsisi olla koko ajan open lisäämässä että niin tuo tarkoittaa sitä ja tää tarkoittaa tätä, vaan että sais olla aika omatoiminen ja selkee, ehkä siinä ihan käytännön haaste.

Some wishes for the Finnish National Agency for Education concerning the language profile are that the websites describing the profile should be clearer. The websites are constantly being developed, but as the teachers have been introduced to them while they are still being updated, the first impression for some of them has been negative. Teacher D explains in Extract 34 how the design of the website has made planning the language profile difficult for the teachers at their school and how it has caused feelings of anxiety:

(34)
Teacher D: We talked among the teachers that is still seems quite unfinished, that the language profile website was distressing, when we tried to follow the links we could not really figure out where they were going, it was really disorderly. It should not be like "hi well here's the website, now do something with it". Then nobody bothers to do anything other than the obligatory things, it should be a logical and a nice thing so that it would be a pleasant tool for everyone. So you're like "oh no the language profile, it's such a messy site" and "where did you go there and where was that thing filled in and where's that and…"

Teacher D: Opettajien kaa puhuttiin et se vaikuttaa aika keskeneräiseltä vielä, että se oli ahdistava se kieliprofiili-sivusto, kun siellä koitettiin niitä linkkejä seurata niin niistä ei oikein päässy kärryille että mikä nyt johdattaa mihinkin että se oli tosi sekava. Ettei se ois semmonen että "hei no tääl on nyt tää sivusto et tehkää nyt jotain tämän kanssa". Että sithän sen kans ei viitti kukaan tehdä kun ne pakolliset jutut, vaan et siit oikeesti sit tulis joku järkevä ja kiva juttu niin se ois kaikille mieluisa työväline. Sit semmonen et "voi ei toi kieliprofiili, se on niin sotkunen sivusto" et "mistä sinne mentiinkään ja missä se juttu täytettiin ja missä toi juttu ja…"

As can be seen in Extract 34, the visual layout and design of the page informing teachers about the language profile awakes a myriad of feelings. This can also be connected to the fact that the websites are still being updated, possibly making finding previous information again more challenging. Nonetheless, Teacher D is optimistic about the website still improving and remains positive about the language profile despite the challenges they have faced:

(35)
Teacher D: But let's keep our fingers crossed that it becomes a fine system that everyone bothers to fill in and that it would really be a functional tool.

Teacher D: Mutta pidetään peukkuja että siitä tulee semmonen hieno systeemi mitä kaikki viittii täyttää ja että se ois oikeesti toimiva työkalu.

As with all new elements of the curriculum, there are some practical challenges that need to be solved in order to reach the full potential of the new addition, and the participants seem to acknowledge this. It is possible and highly probable that some of the challenges brought forward by the participants, such as the unclear instructions, will be solved during the late spring or summer of 2021, giving the teachers an easier start to the new school year. However, it is clear that these factors should be acknowledged early on, as teachers look for information about the new requirements and expectations much before their implementations.

As discovered in this section, the language profile could present schools with several challenges. Stress felt by teachers and students, a multitude of reforms and changes affecting schools, society's attitudes towards languages, and unclear instructions for implementing the language profile are all named as factors that could have a negative impact on planning and using the profile. In order to avoid or alleviate many of these problems, teachers should be offered support and clear instructions for implementing the profile, thus making its introduction easier for both teachers and students.

4.3   Language awareness and the language profile

With increased language awareness being one of the main goals of the language profile, the participants were asked about whether they feel the profile would add to the language awareness of the students. All four participants agreed on the language profile being beneficial for the students' language awareness through its focus on the different languages the students use and know. Teacher B explains this in the following manner:

(36)
Teacher B: About language awareness I am quite sure because you have to mark all of the languages there somehow.

Teacher B: Et kielitietosuudesta mä oon aika varma koska se on pakko sinne jollain tapaa kirjata ne kaikki kielet.

As Teacher B states, in the language profile the students must mark and reflect on the languages they know, which will inevitably develop their language awareness if done properly and according to the instructions. This part of the interviews awoke perhaps the least discussion due to the participants' opinions being strongly in favour of the profile's beneficial factors for LA. However, as expressed by Teacher D in Extract 37, language awareness is seen as useful and important:

(37)
> Teacher D: Language awareness exactly, I also realised during my teacher studies that If I could supply the students with even the main point of language awareness, that would be so great!

> Teacher D: Juuri se kielitietoisuus, et siihen itte kans noissa opeopinnoissa hoksas sen että ku sais edes niinku sen kielitietoisuuden pointin niinku noille lukiolaisille niin se ois ihan sairaan hienoa!

In this part of the interview, the participants named some reasons for why the profile will be beneficial and how it could be used in order to increase the students' language awareness. These will be explored in this section.

As explained by Teacher D in Extract 7, the language profile might help the students to see a language as a unity and to understand that finding one area of language learning difficult does not prevent one from using the language. In addition to this improving students' feelings of self-efficacy and widening their views of what it is to know and use a language, it allows them to reflect on which parts of language learning are easier for them and which ones they should pay special attention to. Analysing one's strengths and weaknesses could lead to more effective learning and better results, as the student could decide to spend time on improving a certain skill or develop strategies to learn more effectively. Finding new and suitable study strategies can in turn affect the students' sensitivity in language learning, one of the main pillars of language awareness according to the ALA (Finkbeiner and White, 2017).

Teacher D also talks about how they wish the language profile would help students understand how many skills they have even if the young people themselves feel like they do not have high language skills:

(38)
> Teacher D: I hope it would help to open the students' eyes to see first of all – how many things they know and are able to do even though in their own opinion they might not know anything – but that they would understand that well, they are quite good at quite many things.

> Teacher D: Mä toivon että sillä niinku saatais avattua näiden nuorten silmät että kuinka paljon ensinnäkin – kuin paljon he osaa vaikka he omast mielest ei välttämättä osaa mitään – mutta se että he niinku tajuais sen et no kyl he nyt kuitenkin aika hyvin osaa montakin asiaa.

As exemplified by Teacher D in Extracts 7 and 38, the language profile provides many opportunities for improving students' self-efficacy as well as developing their language awareness. In fact, it seems that the two phenomena are connected, with the students recognising and understanding their skills presumably leading to higher self-efficacy as well. The participant also brings up the fact that some students think that they do not possess any skills, highlighting the need for activities and projects that would improve their views of themselves and their accomplishments. The language profile could fill this void in the current school environment.

In addition to the language profile helping students see languages as a unity, it could improve their skills in finding similarities and differences between languages. Teacher C explains in Extract 39 how the language profile as well as the manner in which modules are formatted in the new curriculum could foster these factors:

(39)
Teacher C: Especially now if the first few courses of English and Swedish are going to be more united, well then there would be a bit of comparison and finding similarities between English and Swedish. So I feel that collaboration is very desirable and I wish we would have more of it.

Teacher C: Varsinkin jos tulee nyt vähän niinku enemmän yhistymään sitten noita enkun ja ruotsin alkupään kursseja niin siinä just sitten vaikka vähän olisi semmoista vertailua ja yhtäläisyyksien löytämistä sitten enkusta ja ruotsista. Että kyllä mä nään et sellanen yhteistyö olis tosi toivottavaa ja toivoisin että sitä saatas niinku enemmän.

Finding similarities and differences between the languages students know could help them develop their language awareness. This resembles the goals in the cognitive domain of language awareness explained by James and Garret (1992), as it promotes learning subjects across the curricula and bridges the gap between languages. As well as finding similarities and differences in the grammatical systems and vocabularies of the languages, the students could be guided in finding different registers and differences connected to culture, for example the importance of polite words in English or comparing the Swedish gender-neutral pronoun *hen* with its English counterpart *they*. Thus, the comparative approach enabled by the new curriculum provides teachers with a multitude of opportunities for covering different themes. Furthermore, in Extract 39 Teacher C takes up the possibility of working together with other language teachers, making the comparison of different languages easier.

As language awareness is a phenomenon related to a myriad of topics, some of the findings in the earlier sections can also be connected to increased LA. The language profile has the possibility to highlight the versatility of how one learns languages and where they can be used (Extracts 8 and 27), thus developing the students' language awareness. Active contemplation can bring subconscious language use to the conscious level and could lead to motivation-building habits or conscious consideration of aspects such as different registers. This could also lead language learning away from a purely school-related phenomenon, as students have the possibility to notice that they hear, see, speak, or write small bits of languages on social media, with relatives, or when communicating with friends. As discussed in Section 4.1, this could lead to a higher level of motivation towards the target language due to popular media affecting one's motivation (Chan and Chi, 2011) and students' spare time activities affecting their learning results (Pietilä and Merikivi, 2014).

As seen in this section, it is very likely that the language profile will develop the students' language awareness and that the phenomenon is linked to many other skills and factors visible in the classroom. While increasing one's language awareness, the students learn study strategies, apply learnt knowledge into practice, use the language in different domains, and improve their learning results. Altogether, improved language awareness can have a significant impact on how languages are taught and learnt, and thus has the opportunity to affect teachers' and students' everyday lives.

5   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter consists of the discussion and conclusion. A summary of the findings is presented in Section 5.1, whereas Section 5.2 consists of the discussion. Section 5.3 introduces the implications of the study, with the effects of the language profile and suggested improvements being the main topics. Finally, Section 5.4 consists of the evaluation of the study and ideas for further research, therefore concluding the thesis.

5.1   Summary of findings

The aim of the study was to examine teachers' beliefs about the language profile, a new addition to the Finnish National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education. My research questions were the following:

1. What types of beliefs do teachers have about the language profile?

2. What advantages and challenges could the implementation of the language profile have, in the teachers' opinion?

3. Will the implementation of the language profile affect the language awareness of the students, in the teachers' opinion?

4. Could the language profile encourage students to study multiple languages, in the teachers' opinion? If not, what could?

The study was carried out using individual semi-structured and theme-based interviews. Four teachers of languages at four different upper secondary schools in Finland were interviewed using the video call platform Zoom. The interviews were then transcribed, and the data analysed using methods of content analysis.

All of the research questions were answered during the study, proving the research project to be a successful one. The study provided new information on the

language profile and highlighted some already-known factors that affect upper secondary schools. The main beliefs expressed by the teachers were that the language profile is a useful tool for developing students' language skills and language awareness, but that there are practical issues connected to it that need to be solved in order to obtain the best possible results. It was found that according to the teachers, the profile will increase some students' motivation towards language learning as well as develop their language awareness. However, it was concluded that not all students would benefit from this, and that the task might prove too challenging for some upper secondary school students. It was also found that while the language profile might encourage some students to not drop a language after studying it for a short amount of time, the language profile alone will most likely not solve the problem of students not studying elective languages at school. Some challenges connected to the language profile were the timing of its introduction, with the difficulties caused by covid-19 and the new curriculum demanding teachers' time, as well as practical issues and worry about the teachers' and students' well-being.

5.2   Discussion

In regard to the second research question, one of the main advantages seen in implementing the language profile was that the students can find a new source of motivation by creating the profile. In the language profile, one's language skills can be seen as a constantly developing set of skills, thus allowing the student to view their progress despite possible downwards-moving marks in exams or the modules. This allows the student to view their growing set of skills in a practical manner, enabling them to understand how much they have learnt at school and in their spare time. Understanding and internalizing one's development might lead to a higher sense of self-efficacy. As self-efficacy has been associated with levels of motivation (Brown, 2014), it is highly possible that these factors connected to the language profile might increase some students' motivation towards studying languages. Due to the motivation found when creating the language profile, students might continue studying the language despite low academic performance. This highlights intrinsic motivation, as the student decides to study a language for their future, free time activities, or other factors instead of the extrinsic motivation of performing well at school.

Another beneficial factor is that possibilities for collaboration between students were found, with the students being able to inspire others to use more languages by presenting their language repertoire and comparing their language profiles with their peers. The language profile also presents us with the possibility of acknowledging multilingual students, with everyone having the chance to exhibit their knowledge in

languages that might not be taught at schools. This highlights the profile fulfilling its goal of making schools' multilingualism visible (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.), as students and teachers will have a practical tool to exhibit the language repertoire of their community. In addition, the language profile allows for recognising all forms of learning as valid, with language learning happening both in educational settings and in the students' spare time. This could have a significant impact on language learning, as students' free time activities have been found to have a considerable effect on their motivation and learning results (Chan and Chi, 2011; Pietilä and Merikivi, 2014). Focusing on the multilingual aspects of the schools also guides us away from the monolingual bias (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015), as the language profile gives the student the chance to present any languages they know in it. The multilingual aspects of the profile and reflecting on one's language use could help students build and understand their identities, as language forms one's identity (Pennycook, 2007). As stated by Jessner (2017), multilinguals possess skills and qualities that are not found in an inexperienced learner, thus making the language profile an especially enriching experience for the multilingual learner, who might already have experience with developing their language awareness. This could shape Finnish upper secondary schools into more accepting and diverse institutions, allowing each student to exhibit their language identity freely and encouraging the students to appreciate the linguistic and cultural knowledge possessed by them and their friends. As the number of multilingual and multicultural youth is constantly increasing in Finland (Kotouttaminen.fi), this could be a step towards becoming a more welcoming society and avoiding the monolingual bias introduced by Melo-Pfeifer (2015).

The language profile could also be used when applying for work or higher education. According to the participants, the language profile would be a practical tool for viewing the applicants' language skills, as it would include a set of certificates, samples, and other tools for showcasing one's skills. It is probable that especially students who have clear plans for their future will be motivated by this aspect of the language profile, as students who take control of their future plans are more likely to engage in school activities related to job opportunities and career preparation (Kerpelman and Mosher, 2004). However, in order for the language profile to function in this manner, employers should receive guidance in how they can use the language profile when choosing employees. Furthermore, universities and universities of applied sciences would have to change their modes of operation in order to utilise the language profile. There is also a risk of the guidelines, recommendations, and the curricula of higher education institutions changing within a few years, giving the upper secondary school students little time to use the language profile before having to update or change it. The language profile can be a useful tool in employment processes

49

and higher education, but the effects and its usefulness can likely only be assessed in the long run, as such changes in society take a great deal of time and effort.

Also concerning the second research question, the main challenges presented by the language profile are those concerning practical arrangements in school and the fatigue felt by some students and teachers. According to the participants, some teachers and students have felt a considerable amount of stress and fatigue in recent times due to the covid-19 pandemic, as well as other factors affecting school and students' well-being. This has been found in studies (Salmela-Aro and Hietajärvi, 2020) and reported in the media, proving it to be a nation-wide problem. The pandemic has taken teachers a great deal of energy, as they have had to adapt their teaching to a virtual environment, take caution of safety guidelines when teaching in the classroom, and prepare for quick and surprising changes between distance and face-to-face education. According to some participants, this hinders teachers from paying attention to new projects and using their creativity to think about how they want to implement the language profile. The worry of many participants is that if the language profile is not implemented well during the first year of its use, it might never reach its full potential. Therefore, this aspect of planning the language profile can have long-lasting effects. Some solutions presented by the participants were clearer instructions and ready-made platforms, easing the teachers' workloads. These measures could decrease teachers' levels of anxiety and fatigue, as well as ensure a functional implementation of the language profile, preventing it from becoming an incomplete project that will never reach its full potential.

In addition to the challenges caused by teachers being too fatigued to think about the language profile, the participants feel that some students might view the language profile as an additional burden instead of an opportunity. The students' lives are busy, and many have expressed being tired and fatigued (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2017), and thus the language profile could be seen as a source of stress by certain groups of students. In addition, many reforms have been made in the recent years, with the new national curricula, the certificate-based admissions, the digitalisation of the matriculation examinations, and the change to distance teaching caused by covid-19 challenging both students and teachers. Therefore, students and staff might feel tired because of the ever-changing requirements and fulfilling all expectations might seem a daunting task. Although the reforms might have positive consequences, introducing many of them within a short period of time might cause too much confusion for both the students and the teachers. The participants also worry about whether some students are able to take enough responsibility of compiling the language profile, as it is likely that some students will lose samples they should add to the profile or that they will not find motivation in creating the profile because they will not benefit from it immediately. Students who need basic guidance and are not able to take

responsibility of their studies are described by the participants, which highlights the worry of the language profile being much too challenging a task for some. In conclusion, while the language profile can be a source of motivation and building one's identity for some students, it can be regarded as an added source of stress and anxiety by others. This gap between the two groups of students seems worrying, as it could lead some students to not benefit from the language profile at upper secondary school or later in life. The problem might be especially relevant in the following school year, as the covid-19 pandemic has complicated studying and threatened the well-being of some teachers and students (Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, and Hietajärvi, 2020; Ahtiainen et al., 2020).

Challenges related to the practical implementation of the language profile were also found. The interviews were conducted in spring 2021, when some instructions for implementing the language profile were yet to be published. In the interviews, the teachers expressed that they wish for clearer instructions for planning the language profile, as some had found its methods of implementation and the websites providing information unclear. Options for platforms on which to create the language profile are extensive, with textbook publishers creating their own versions in addition to other options. Despite the publishers' platforms seeming like a practical solution to the problem, the issue of using materials from different publishers in different language subjects or changing publishers with the rollout of a new curriculum causes teachers to suspect the effectiveness of this option. The problem of students changing schools or moving to another municipality places similar problems, as they should be able to continue using the same language profile throughout their upper secondary school years despite the different platforms. The autonomy of municipalities and teachers in planning and creating the profile was also brought up, as students in different schools can receive a varying amount of guidance, creating an unequal situation.

According to the study, the language profile will fulfil its goal of teaching students language awareness, therefore giving a clear answer to research question number three. Language awareness is seen as an integral part of the profile, with reflecting on one's language skills naturally increasing one's language awareness. Some examples on how increased language awareness could display itself in schools are being able to compare and find similarities between languages, seeing a language as a unity, and realising one's strengths and weaknesses. Finding similarities and differences between different languages are advanced by both the language profile and the new arrangements of how the modules are implemented. These forms of language awareness could lead to increased self-efficacy as well as better learning strategies and learning results. In addition to these, increased language awareness can help students in building their identities. Active reflection on one's language skills and increased language awareness could also bring language learning further from being a school-

related phenomenon happening at formal institutions and help us appreciate informal learning environments more. James and Garrett (1992) defined five domains of LA, all of which are important when considering the effects of teaching LA through the language profile. The affective domain is especially relevant when focusing on the increasing multilingualism and multiculturalism of Finland, as it focuses on promoting tolerance and attitudes towards different varieties of English and other languages spoken by students (James and Garrett, 1992). With the social domain focusing on effective communication, the power domain alerting people to how language can be used as an instrument of manipulation, and the cognitive domain concentrating on learning subjects across the school curricula (James and Garrett, 1992), language awareness will also fulfil some of the goals set in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). Therefore, the language profile works as a suitable tool for reaching some of the aims set in the curriculum.

The answer to the fourth research question, whether the language profile could affect students' willingness to choose more language subjects, was complex. It was clear that according to the participants, the language profile cannot replace other factors in creating motivation towards choosing language subjects or in appreciating languages. Despite this, it was found that some students who start studying a language could continue studying it for longer because of the motivation stemming from one's language profile. In order for the language profile to function as a motivator towards choosing elective languages, it should be introduced early enough so that the students have the possibility to make their choices when starting upper secondary school. It has been noted that upper secondary students tend to choose subjects that will provide them with concrete benefit later in life, such as choosing subjects that will give them a high number of points when applying to higher education institutions (Rautio, 2021). Based on this, the language profile might be a suitable method to make language subjects more popular, if it benefits the students when finding work or choosing their field of study. However, the students should be convinced about the true usefulness of the language profile in order for them to see it as worth pursuing. Instead of the language profile, the participants see motivation as coming from societal factors, supportive family and friends, and the media. The status of language subjects in the model of certificate-based admission is seen as affecting the students' choices, thus guiding young people to study the subjects that they will clearly benefit from when applying to higher education. The participants named the current model of the certificate-based admission as one factor preventing students from choosing elective language subjects, supporting the results of previous research such as Saarinen's (2019) study on students' language choices. The decreasing motivation towards Swedish was also mentioned in one interview, reflecting the current situation of learning and using

foreign Nordic languages (Brink Theilgaard, 2016) and English being the most studied subject in upper secondary schools (Statistics Finland, 2020). However, the language profile could improve attitudes towards for example Swedish, and thus have an effect on the Nordic language repertoire, possibly encouraging more people to use Nordic languages.

5.3 Implications

The results guide us in improving the language profile and preparing for other additions to the future curricula. As the language profile has many beneficial aspects, its successful implementation should be supported, and enough resources provided for schools and teachers. If implemented successfully, the language profile could have a real impact on our society.

Considering that the language profile will improve students' language awareness, it can have a significant impact on society at large. According to Finkbeiner and White (2017), increased language awareness can lead to preventing failures and misunderstandings in work processes, changed attitudes towards dialects, language choices, and code-switching, and easier integration of refugees in workplaces and schools. If we are to assume that the language profile will develop students' language awareness, it could lead to a generation with more positive attitudes towards different languages and multilingualism than the ones who have not focused on their language awareness in this way. Therefore, if implemented in a certain way and taken seriously by the students, the language profile has the potential to slowly change our society into a more accepting one. However, the effects of this are likely to be visible after several years, thus creating need for further research. In order for our society to attain the benefits presented by the language profile, different institutions should invest in creating successful and functional models of the profile, thus aiding teachers and students in increasing young people's language awareness.

As it was found that the language profile will be useful for a certain group of students but might be an additional source of stress for others, it is of utmost importance to develop methods for making the language profile a useful and pleasant experience for all students. Some practical solutions that might make creating the language profile easier for both students and teachers are clear instructions and a simple and user-friendly platform. These factors could reduce feelings of frustration and prevent students from losing samples that should be saved in the profile. As the interviews were conducted in the spring of 2021, more resources for implementing the language profile will probably be published before the start of the autumn term. The updates to the websites and different seminars about how to use the new resources are

very likely to be useful to the teachers. However, based on the interviews, teachers look for information on the new areas of the curriculum well before the introduction of the curriculum, and unclear or incomplete instructions can create feelings of anxiety connected to the profile. Therefore, it is worth considering whether it would be possible to publish more complete and clear instructions already when introducing the new addition instead of updating the websites throughout the school year. It is possible that negative feelings towards the reform could be avoided using this method, allowing each individual to get acquainted with the instructions in good time before the implementation of the reform. Nonetheless, it must be taken into account that strict schedules, stress, and practical challenges are factors not only affecting teachers and students, but also the people who plan the reforms. Therefore, an understanding attitude must be adopted when discussing the suggested improvements that could have been made.

Taking into account the challenging timing and the stress felt by the teachers during the covid-19 pandemic, enough resources for implementing the language profile must be guaranteed even after its initial implementation. Some teachers fear that if the language profile is not implemented successfully next autumn, it will never reach its full potential. This would deprive us of all the benefits offered by a successful execution of the language profile, and thus it is important to ensure that the teachers' fears will not be realised. Suitable methods, such as further training and useful materials, should be used to support teachers who have not had the time or energy to put their heart into planning the language profile in these busy and challenging times. This would enhance teachers' well-being as well as ensure an equal setting for all students around Finland, as their teachers would receive a similar amount of guidance in how to implement the profile. In addition, further resources should be provided for teachers when developing the language profile in the following years. One method of solving some of the problems that were found in the study would be to create a common platform for the language profile that all schools could use. As the Finnish National Agency for Education has stated that the option is not yet realistic, but that different solutions are being investigated (Opetushallitus/kieliprofiili, n.d.), we can hope that a functional tool shared by all schools will be published in the following years.

As the language profile provides us with many new possibilities, it can have a lasting impact on language learning and teaching. The language profile guides us towards appreciating all languages more, with every language and learning opportunity having a place in the students' profiles. Furthermore, it promotes cooperation between teachers, peers, employers, and educational institutions, therefore bringing different areas of society closer to each other and creating new possibilities. These aspects are likely to transform language teaching and learning into more interdisciplinary, accepting, and motivating phenomena, with everyone having the opportunity

to describe their learning experiences in the profile. In order for these wishes and opportunities to become real in all Finnish upper secondary schools, useful material, additional training, and further research on the topic are needed.

5.4   Evaluation and further research

The method of interviews proved to be a suitable one, as qualitative data on the topic were gathered. The decision to use theme-based and semi-structured interviews was a successful one, as the free format of the interviews enabled teachers to introduce topics and ideas connected to the language profile that had not been anticipated at the onset of the study. This allowed for gathering more information on the topic and exploring other areas of education closely related to the language profile, such as the challenges teachers face in the current education system. The participants were able to give more specific information when asked for it and both extensive and detailed answers to the questions were received. Deciding to use the video conference platform Zoom to carry out the interviews was also a successful decision, as no technical problems emerged and people from different areas of Finland were reached effectively.

More interviews could have been carried out in order to gather more extensive data. However, only a very small portion of the people who saw the interview invitations answered the request, and finding participants proved a difficult task. Some possible reasons for this are the stress and fatigue expressed by teachers, thus not many teachers wanting to use their time on being interviewed, and the newness of the topic. It is possible that some teachers decided against participating due to feeling that they do not know enough about the language profile to answer the questions. This worry was taken into account when planning the invitations, in which it was stated that one is welcome to participate even if planning the language profile feels challenging, as this would create truthful data. However, the amount of data gathered in the four interviews was extensive despite the small number of participants, and thus the analysis was carried out with the responses of the four interviewees. The interviewees being from different areas of Finland and teaching different subjects affected the study's reliability positively, as the sampling included teachers in different situations. I was especially content with having participants who teach obligatory languages such as English and Swedish as well as those who teach elective language subjects like German and Russian. Some of the answers being very similar among all the participants despite their different backgrounds gives us reason to believe that even teachers who did not participate in the study have similar thoughts. For instance the language profile developing students' language awareness and the fear of the profile staying incomplete due to other straining aspects of the profession were ideas expressed by

nearly all participants, therefore leading us to believe them to be common opinions among teachers.

Many possibilities for further research exist. As the topic is an interdisciplinary one, it provides us with multiple opportunities for research in the fields of pedagogy and applied linguistics. It would be interesting to create a similar study in the time of a couple of years, with the chance to compare whether the teachers' beliefs have changed after implementing the language profile with multiple groups of students. If the language profile is to be included in the newer versions of the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education, it could be researched whether teachers' beliefs about the profile have changed after growing accustomed to using it with their students or whether the profile has changed from its initial stages. In addition to researching teacher beliefs, upper secondary school students' opinions about the language profile could be studied, with the possibility of comparing them to the answers given by teachers. This would give us information on how much teacher beliefs have affected learner beliefs regarding this specific area of language education. Moreover, the results would aid us in developing the next versions of the language profile. In addition to these factors, the development of the students' language awareness and its effects on society could be studied in several years' time in order to reveal whether creating the language profile has indeed increased citizens' language awareness. Previous research, such as the effects of language awareness described by Finkbeiner and White (2017) could be used to reflect on whether the possible increased language awareness has had a concrete impact on society.

In addition to future research done on the language profile, more research could be done on the possible solutions to the declining language skills of Finns, as many factors connected to applied linguistics, pedagogy, and societal factors affect students' choices. All in all, the language profile, teacher beliefs, and language awareness provide us with many possibilities for further research. Based on the results, it seems that the language profile can become a useful tool and be a step in the right direction. However, it is not enough to solve the problems related to language education by itself, and thus more research on the topic is needed.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Mitä aineita opetat lukiotasolla?
   Which subjects do you teach at upper secondary level?
2. Mikä oli ensivaikutelmasi kieliprofiilista?
   What were your first thoughts about the language profile?
3. Mitä hyötyjä ja hyviä puolia kieliprofiilissa voisi mielestäsi olla?
   What benefits and good sides could the language profile have, in your opinion?
4. Entä minkälaisia haasteita kieliprofiili voi aiheuttaa?
   And what types of challenges could the language profile present?
5. Koetko, että opettajat ovat saaneet tarpeeksi resursseja, kuten tukea ja aikaa, kieliprofiilin suunnitteluun?
   Do you feel that teachers have received enough resources, such as support and time, to plan the language profile?
6. Voisiko kieliprofiili vaikuttaa lukiolaisten kielivalintoihin tai tehdä kielten opiskelusta suositumpaa?
   Could the language profile have an effect on upper-secondary students' language choices or make studying languages more popular?
7. Voisiko kieliprofiili mielestäsi vaikuttaa lukiolaisten kielitietoisuuteen? Entä kieltenopiskelutaitoihin?
   In your opinion, could the language profile have an effect on students' language awareness? How about language learning skills?
8. Mitä mieltä olet eri kielten yhteisopettajuudesta tai yhteistyöstä kieliprofiilia tehdessä?
   What do you think about co-teaching or cooperation between language teachers when creating the language profile?
9. Onko sinulla muita kommentteja aiheeseen liittyen tai kysymyksiä tutkimuksesta?
   Do you have any other comments concerning the topic or any questions about the study?