

**This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.**

**Author(s):** Strömmer, Maiju

**Title:** Physical Work, Customer Service, or Teamwork? : Language Requirements for Seasonal Cleaning Work in the Booming Arctic Tourism Industry

**Year:** 2021

**Version:** Accepted version (Final draft)

**Copyright:** © 2021 Taylor & Francis

**Rights:** In Copyright

**Rights url:** <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

**Please cite the original version:**

Strömmer, M. (2021). Physical Work, Customer Service, or Teamwork? : Language Requirements for Seasonal Cleaning Work in the Booming Arctic Tourism Industry. In K. Gonçalves, & H. Kelly-Holmes (Eds.), *Language, Global Mobilities, Blue-Collar Workers and Blue-Collar Workplaces* (pp. 187-203). Routledge. Routledge Critical Studies in Multilingualism, 24. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429298622-10>

# **Physical work, customer service or teamwork? Language requirements for seasonal cleaning work in the booming Arctic tourism industry**

Maiju Strömmer

## **1. Introduction**

Winter tourism in Arctic destinations is booming. This applies also to Finnish Lapland, the northernmost region of Finland, which has long been understood as a periphery but is now a developing economic hub (Pietikäinen 2018, Pietikäinen and Allan, this volume). In addition to attracting more international tourists every year, Lapland is an expanding winter destination for seasonal workers. Northern ski resorts offer valued work experience and an income for both Finns and migrants. Lapland also appeals to so-called lifestyle migrants (Benson and O'Reilly 2009) due to wellbeing and exotic experiences that the snow, northern lights, polar nights and “the cleanest air in the world” offer (see Tuulentie and Heimtun 2014).

Besides front-stage customer services like tour guiding, the tourism industry involves invisible back-stage blue-collar work crucial for tourism services. For instance, tourist resorts need an abundance of seasonal cleaning workers. However, cleaning is low-status and low-paid work (Seifert and Messing 2006), also in the context of seasonal work in the tourism industry. This has several interrelated implications: difficulties in recruiting a workforce, a high turnover of workers, and reconsideration of the recruitment criteria. Cleaning is often regarded as manual, individual and low-skilled physical work that does not require much linguistic performance or expertise (Brody 2006, Strömmer 2016, Gonçalves and Schluter 2017). The booming Arctic ski resort in focus here is a relevant site in which to explore the discourses of this type of blue collar work because intensifying labour mobilities and the demands of the tourism and hospitality industries set particular requirements for cleaning services. This chapter concentrates on the role of language in seasonal cleaning work.

This study is part of a broader research project, *Cold Rush*<sup>i</sup>, which explores the dynamics of language and identity in the economically expanding Arctic North, drawing on critical discourse studies, critical sociolinguistics and multi-sited ethnography. As the Arctic tourism industry in Finnish Lapland is expanding, recruitment strategies are being reconsidered. This chapter seeks answers to the following questions: What discourses of cleaning work are constructed in the tourism business in this Arctic ski resort? And, how are these discourses of cleaning work used to justify the language requirements for cleaners? Thus, this chapter discusses the role of language in blue-collar work in changing circumstances.

## **2. Language requirements and blue-collar work under the globalized economy**

In the globalizing and competitive markets, there are contradictory trends in the management of workers' linguistic diversity: on the one hand, corporations strive for Taylorist standardization of language practices and, on the other, being distinct from competitors requires creativity and flexibility (Heller 2010). Management often sees linguistic diversity as a communication problem that must be solved by a shared language, either a designated corporate language or a work language shared between team members (for review, see Karhunen et al. 2018). Usually companies manage linguistic diversity by preferring either English or the locally dominant language as a work language (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018, 403, Hess, this volume). Some multinational corporations also include diversity management in their organizational agenda to improve their public image and to take advantage of their employees' varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Park 2013, 559).

In late capitalism, blue-collar workers are in some cases expected to be mobile and address work-related issues in the company's work language, which is often not their first language (see Angouri 2014, 4). It is also commonly required to learn how to be an effective team member in order to participate successfully in (work) activities and interactions (Iedema and Scheeres 2003). The aim of increased teamwork is to standardize work activities and make workers more efficient (Iedema and Scheeres 2003, 318). This indicates that succeeding in blue-collar work requires a higher linguistic competence than before, because teamwork is linguistically and discursively more demanding than the manual work tasks. In recruitment, employers prefer applicants who can already meet the language demands of the work (Duchêne and Heller 2012, 329). Giving orientation to new employees costs companies money, so they aim to keep it as short as possible – especially in sectors where the turnover of employees is high.

In the current competitive labour markets characterized by mobility, privatization and deregulation, many blue-collar jobs, including cleaning work, are described as precarious, temporary and low status (Lønsmann and Kraft 2017). Following global neoliberal trends (see Herod and Aguiar 2006, Seifert and Messing 2006), the cleaning sector in Finland experienced a structural change in the 1990s: most organizations sub-contracted and outsourced their cleaning services, which led to increased competition in the cleaning industry (Trux 2002). This weakened employment terms and conditions: the efficiency norms are now tighter, which results in more work in less time and more unstable and part-time jobs (Trux 2002). As a consequence, cleaning jobs often offer entry to the labour market for newcomers and different categories of migrant (economic, lifestyle) because of the high local demand and ability to do the job without necessarily mastering the local language.

### 3. Data and methodology

The ski resort in focus here is situated in Finnish Lapland. It is one of Finland's biggest tourist resorts and offers different year-round tourism activities, with a wide range of services, restaurants and nightlife. Despite its peripheral location, transport connections are relatively good: the nearby airport has direct flights to Helsinki and many other European cities. Annually it has over 700,000 visitors, and international tourism especially is growing fast. There are almost 30,000 beds in hotels and holiday homes, and the amount is increasing fast. This means an increasing need for cleaning services, too.

In 2017-2018, I spent sixteen weeks in the resort, including four visits between August 2017 and January 2018, two months of fieldwork in February–March 2018, and a month of fieldwork in November–December 2018. I conducted fieldwork partly individually and partly with the team members and the collaborators of the project *Cold Rush*<sup>ii</sup>. The fieldwork concentrated on recruitment and daily work on different field sites. Here, I analyse the data set related to seasonal cleaning work that consists of seventeen observations (141 pages of field notes) and thirteen interviews (50 minutes on average). At the resort, we conducted interviews with crucial actors for the recruitment of seasonal workers: recruiters, managers of tourism businesses, and staff in the employment office. Further, I observed daily work practices in a private cleaning company and in a hotel. In these sites, I had a closer relationship with the participants than with the recruiters and managers that I met only once or twice for the interviews.

To explore the discourses on seasonal cleaning work, I apply the discourse-ethnographic framework of nexus analysis. Nexus analytically oriented research takes situated and historically embedded *social action* as a point of departure and analyses the connections between the crucial discourses, practices, and actors that come together in this action (Scollon 2001, Scollon and Scollon 2004). In this chapter, I look at one of the main analytical elements proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2004), *discourses in place*. They define discourse quite broadly as “the use of language in social interaction”, including also other forms of meaningful semiotic human actions (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 2, 5). To define the concept further for my analysis, discourses are understood here in the Foucauldian sense as relatively stable and culturally shared ways of constructing meanings of different phenomena in the world from a specific viewpoint (Foucault 1972, 80). Discourses have material conditions and consequences because they have the power to shape and change the ways in which the world is seen (Määttä and Pietikäinen 2014). Accordingly, the discourses on seasonal cleaning work act as the rationale behind the decisions and practices of recruiting and managing the seasonal cleaning workforce. The notion *discourses in place*

emphasizes the idea that discourses are constructed and used by social actors in a specific time and place (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 163), meaning here the interview and observation settings in the Arctic ski resort.

#### **4. Discourses of cleaning work behind the recruitment criteria**

The recruitment criteria, such as language requirements, depend on how the nature of the work and essential duties are defined. As mentioned earlier, cleaning is often seen as low-skilled work with only limited requirements in terms of education, work experience and language skills (see Herod and Aguiar 2006, Gonçalves and Schluter 2017). For instance, foreign-born female domestic workers are often not expected to be fluent in their employer's language (see Divida 2014)<sup>iii</sup>. However, within the context of this study, there are still several principles for ranking applicants and successfully recruiting staff. In this section, I will discuss three partly overlapping and competing discourses of cleaning work that circulate in the Lapland tourism industry: 1) cleaning as skilled physical work; 2) cleaning as customer service; and 3) cleaning as teamwork. Illustrations of all of these discourses are represented in an excerpt from a job advertisement put out by a private cleaning company hiring seasonal workers for the ski resort. It was published on the web page of the Employment and Economic Service of Finland, in Finnish only. I have translated the following excerpt and added the bold print to highlight the parts that illustrate the discourses mentioned.

**Example 1.** Job advertisement of a private cleaning company, September 2017 (originally in Finnish)

“We want you to be **an open, lively, happy customer service person**, who has **good teamwork skills** and **can cope with changeable conditions**. Experience of cleaning work is an asset but we will give you a thorough introduction to the work. We hope for adequate Finnish language skills.”

The discourse *cleaning as customer service* is represented in the advertisement by listing the qualities needed to give clients a positive impression. Immediately after that, *teamwork skills* are mentioned. The third discourse, cleaning as *skilled physical work*, is hinted at in this advertisement by promising a thorough orientation to the work. Offering this orientation indicates the assumption that new employees need to be taught cleaning skills, especially if they have no previous cleaning experience. The physically demanding nature of the work is not directly expressed, but there are hints at it in the reference to the changeable conditions of work, which in this context could mean different timetables, length of the work shifts, and changeable temperature. This company sells holiday apartment cleaning and the cleaners need to move from one house to another in freezing conditions carrying heavy loads of cleaning equipment, bedlinen, laundry, and supplies. The

difficulty of the job is expressed in the advertisement only indirectly, probably because job advertisements try to give an attractive image of the organization to attract good applicants (see Walker et al. 2008).

In the advertisement, adequate Finnish-language skills are mentioned. The company's area manager said that they prefer Finnish skills because they believe that it is most efficient to give the orientation in the local language. As the turnover of workers was high even in mid-season and as it took from two to three weeks to train a new employee to work individually, recruiting and training new employees was regarded as a large investment. In the next sections, I will discuss how these three discourses of cleaning work are presented by managers and how these discourses work as the rationale behind recruiting and managing cleaning workers.

#### *4.1 Cleaning as skilled physical work*

The first and most dominant discourse follows quite a typical understanding of cleaning as physical work. However, although seen as physically demanding, it is not presented as low-skilled work but instead as a difficult job requiring technical expertise, efficiency, and physical strength. The next excerpt illustrates how one of the hotel managers in the resort constructs the discourse.

**Example 2.** Interview, Hotel manager, September 2017 (originally in Finnish)

a hotel cleaner's work well it's really very **heavy work** (.) so that you have to be like (.) it's **physically hard work** and it's also (.) they play with detergents and all kinds of stuff there so so it requires (.) **it requires proficiency** (.) in hotel cleaning we have our own gang who manages it and they manage to keep the whole thing together (.) but we use extra hands from other departments (.) so that at that point when it's the busiest day every pair of hands is needed and and well (.) and **anyone can empty a bag of rubbish** or something like that (.) particularly that sort of **support work**

The hotel manager distinguishes between skilled core cleaning personnel ('our own gang'), who have the expertise to carry out the work practices, and 'extra hands', who can manage easy tasks. These "extra hands" work in other jobs at the hotel but they can step in to help the cleaning team on busy days. The manager uses the intensifiers ('really, truly', 'very') and synonymous repetitions ('heavy work' and 'hard work') to challenge the common understanding that anyone can do a cleaning job. She demonstrates this discourse by explaining how anyone can empty a bag of rubbish but not manage the whole range of different tasks requiring expertise and organizational skills. When I observed the work of the cleaning team in the hotel, it was evident that the experienced cleaners were more efficient and better at organizing their work than the younger seasonal workers who had less experience. The head of the cleaning team explained to me that you have to "use your brain" to plan the work routine as efficiently as possible (Field notes 27.3.2018).

The next example is from an interview with the owner of a family business selling cleaning services to the owners of holiday homes. In this family business, they only have local Finnish workers, who work part-time when needed, especially on busy Saturdays when the guests in holiday homes typically check out and new guests check in. Many of their workers are young people studying in the local high school<sup>iv</sup>.

**Example 3.** Interview, Owner of a family cleaning business, January 2018 (originally in Finnish)

Maiju: what is important when you recruit workers so what do you emphasize and what is important in an employee

Manager: well of course it's reliability because we've also had the sort of people who **have only lasted two hours** -- and then of course **the quality of work** (.) because we're a comparatively good company in this field (.) here (.) so we give **a guarantee of quality** (.) so that if we do something we do it well

--

Maiju: so do you have language requirements or what languages must one

Manager: well we don't really need that because at that point **when we go into a holiday house there's nobody there any more** (.) **so it doesn't matter what [language] they're talking**

The manager confirms the understanding of cleaning as a demanding job by giving an example of how some workers have not been able to manage the job for more than two hours. She emphasizes the demand for quality even though it seems that getting workers is so difficult that they need to rely on any networks they have. This example illustrates how the discourse of cleaning as physically skilled work can lead to an understanding that linguistic performance is not relevant – the workforce is not seen as a *wordforce* (see Heller 2010). This understanding is explained by the fact that the holiday homes are empty when the cleaners go in, so there is no need for a multilingual repertoire. In addition to good quality work, the manager emphasizes workers' reliability, meaning mainly the need to come to work when promised. She has had workers who have not turned up for their shift, which also happened in another private cleaning company where I was observing cleaners' workdays. This interview indicates that in this company the main challenge is to get enough able bodies to do the cleaning on the busiest days.

#### 4.2 *Cleaning as customer service*

In addition to the dominant discourse of cleaning as physically skilled work, cleaning is also presented in the data as a form of customer service that includes some linguistic performance. Especially in the two hotels in the resort introduced in this section, the managers include the cleaning staff among the hotels' multilingual customer service team. However, as the next example from a hotel manager's interview illustrates, the linguistic demands for cleaners are not as high as for front-desk workers:

**Example 4.** Interview, Hotel manager, September 2017 (originally in Finnish)

- Manager: well actually yes also in our housekeeping **they have to speak at least passable English**  
Maiju: yeah right  
Manager: so that they can handle customer service situations because **a cleaner has a big role as they go every day into guests' rooms** (.) so anything can happen (.) so they have to  
Maiju: right  
Manager: at least tolerably (.) of course the housekeeping people are never alone at work (.) better to be able to put your heads together and sort things out

The manager explains the English language requirement by cleaners' big role in customer service. The data set suggests that English has a hegemonic status in this workplace – every worker needs to speak some English. However, this example illustrates that the level of English required from the housekeeping staff is not high. The cleaners work in pairs and teams, and so they can rely on their colleagues when communicating with guests. When I was observing them, the youngest one in the team, who was working in Lapland for the season because of his passion for snowboarding, was the one knocking on guests' doors. He spoke either Finnish or English to them, depending on the guests' names on the room list. The other workers, middle-aged Finnish women, seemed not to be as fluent in English: they had to check from their co-workers if they had understood the guests' answers correctly. Therefore, the young seasonal worker was an important member of the team as he had the required language skills to communicate with guests.

The head of the cleaning team emphasized the need for some Finnish language skills because of Finnish guests' demands. The next example comes from a situation when I was watching Kirsi, the head, and Sanna, a cleaner, cleaning a hotel room.

**Example 5.** Field notes 27.3.2018

I ask whether the seasonal workers come from around Finland and Kirsi says, "Yes, indeed around Finland this year. In previous years they've been from around the world." She specifies that that means from Estonia and Russia. I ask if they've had English or Finnish as a work language, and Kirsi replies, "Both."  
Sanna says, "They've spoken Finnish."  
Kirsi said that her principle is to require some Finnish skills because they have Finnish customers too: "We have Finnish customers and they don't like it if you talk only English to them. I've noticed."

Kirsi uses the discourse of cleaning as customer service when explaining the need for Finnish skills for workers also coming from outside Finland. In her experience, Finnish guests react negatively to cleaners who do not speak Finnish. On the wall of the housekeeping staff's coffee room, there was a notice reminding them to greet guests in Finnish, too, because Finns do not like being addressed in English. This issue was discussed in a weekly meeting where supervisors and the hotel managers go through the guests' feedback. In Finland, there is ongoing public discussion about whether



restaurants and cafés should have customer service in Finnish. The recruiters interviewed for this study emphasized the change in language requirements. Having had a history of serving mostly Finnish visitors, the ski resort is now an internationally attractive tourist destination and that is why the role of English is increasing. Before, practically all the seasonal workers in Lapland spoke Finnish, but English is more and more important because its status as “de facto lingua franca” of tourism in Europe (see Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau 2010). This interview thus illustrates the challenges in language policies and practices that Finnish ski resorts face with internationalization.

In some cases, highlighting the multilingualism of workers acts as a way to brand the company as international and its employees as competent. A hotel manager of another hotel in the resort constructed a celebratory discourse of multilingualism throughout the interview, highlighting how multilingual and international their staff were, speaking 20 different languages. When he started listing the languages, he mentioned that they “have the Bulgarian language” in the hotel, too. Introducing the Bulgarian workers by their trilingualism, he is counting them among the hotel’s multilingual customer service staff.

**Example 6.** Interview, Hotel manager, January 2018 (originally in English)

- Manager: most of our housekeeping staff is from recruited from Bulgaria (.) so **they speak Bulgarian and Russian (.) and some English** as well (.) so **we have the Bulgarian language in this hotel** for example now
- Maiju: are they kind of recruited via some other company or?
- Manager: yeah (.) they are through a company (.) and yeah (.) so some of them are actually recruited directly (.) they worked through the company before and then when we’ve seen like they are like amazing people we recruit them after that directly
- Maiju: yeah (.) right
- Sebastian: do they live in [the resort] or?
- Manager: they live in [the resort] yeah (.) we have a big hostel with five two-storeyed buildings and with eight to twelve apartments per building (.) that’s one of those places we put people to live there (.) we also have some houses and so on (.) so actually the Bulgarian community (.) they have two houses (.) and they live in those houses like about fifteen people of them (.) you know sharing rooms and so on (.) so they kind of have their own culture there as well so they can like practise their own holidays and things like that there as well (.) so they are very close to each other and absolutely amazing people

In this excerpt, the manager discursively represents Bulgarian cleaners as competent by stating how they speak Bulgarian, Russian and “some English as well” and by describing them as “amazing people”. Finnish Lapland is not a popular tourism destination for Bulgarians, so none of the recruiters I interviewed mentioned the Bulgarian language as an asset for tourism workers. Russian skills, on the other hand, were valued. However, the Russian Christmas season lasts only a couple of weeks, and during that time Russian travel agencies have desks in the hotel lobbies in the resort,

where their Russian-speaking personnel offer tourism services and act as language brokers between the hotel staff and Russian-speaking visitors. Therefore, in practice there is little need for Russian skills. Representing the cleaners as multilingual can be a strategy to make the hotel staff seem competent, skilled and modern – the manager constructed marketing discourse throughout the interview. Therefore, it is doubtful whether this discourse actually affects the recruitment criteria or not, especially since local Finnish language skills are not mentioned as part of the cleaners' linguistic repertoire. More likely is that importing workers through a company is an easy, cost-efficient solution to the local, regional and national labour shortage. While in other parts of Europe the high season is often summer (except in the Alps, see Dannerer and Franz 2018), in Finnish Lapland it is winter, which makes mobility based on seasonal fluctuation possible.<sup>v</sup> For instance, the Bulgarian company offers housekeeping jobs in hotels for the winter season in Finnish ski resorts and for the summer season in tourist resorts by the Black Sea in Bulgaria.

The hotel manager's way of framing the Bulgarian cleaners as "absolutely amazing people" with "their own culture" and celebrating "their own holidays" in their shared accommodation is part of this celebratory discourse but at the same time indicates that the Bulgarian cleaners are a separate, closed community. Sharing a cultural and especially a linguistic background presumably makes communication amongst the fifteen members of the housekeeping team smooth and efficient.

#### *4.3 Cleaning as teamwork*

Lastly, in the context of the seasonal tourism industry, cleaning is understood as teamwork requiring teamwork skills. This discourse contradicts the dominant discourse of cleaning as individual work (see Brody 2006, Strömmer 2016) and instead emphasizes that it requires shared practices and a shared understanding within the work community. This discourse also has elements of control: both quality and efficiency are strictly measured and monitored when people work in pairs and teams, which is illustrated in the following excerpt. The following comments come in response to my question about what causes staff turnover.

**Example 7.** Interview, Area manager of a private cleaning company, September 2017 (originally in Finnish)

well **chemistry is one thing that has a big effect** (.) what kind of personal chemistry forms here, because there are workers from around Finland (.) different nationalities and everything so how how you **become part of the gang** and (.) and then what kind of **attitude to work** you have (.) it defines it because if others notice that you aren't pulling your weight and then it starts to annoy others and you can see it (.) and when we work in pairs and we always have the list of names and the rooms they've cleaned (.) I follow them and if we get feedback we go through it together (.) and if it's like always the same person you get the feedback with (.) then nobody wants to work with her anymore

This excerpt is from an interview with the area manager of the private cleaning company whose job advertisement includes teamwork skills as a prerequisite for the job (see Example 1). She constructs a discourse of cleaning as teamwork by emphasizing the role of the chemistry between the workers which *has a big effect* on how far one can *become part of the gang*. Further, she explains the negative reactions that co-workers might have if they notice that they always get complaints after working with one particular person whose *attitude to work* is not good enough. This indicates that working in pairs is partly a way to control the quality of work done. This is close to Brody's (2006) finding that different technologies are used to create a culture of uniformity and obedience in cleaning work. When responsibility for the quality and efficient rhythm of work is shared with team members and is dependent on others, the practice of working in teams also acts as a control mechanism (see also Iedema and Scheeres 2003, 318). The area manager told me that in mid-season, after the busy Christmas peak, about half of their cleaners in the resort quit, for several reasons: they may find the work too hard, they find a better job in the resort or they do not manage to follow the quality standards and the hectic timetables of cleaning work.

Further, to manage cleaning work successfully in this context, one needs to build good relations with all the different members of the multinational cleaning team. Soft skills such as ability to relate and a capacity to communicate place greater weight in job selection in the neoliberal era (Allan 2013, 67). Despite the diversity of the work community, the cleaning team used Finnish as a work language. This means that they managed to find enough applicants with sufficient Finnish skills, which was mentioned as a prerequisite in the job advertisement.

Similarly, in a hotel where I observed seasonal workers, the cleaning team worked in teams and pairs that also decided the day's rhythm together. This year in the team, there were only native Finns (see Examples 4 and 5). The next example is a fieldnote excerpt from a situation where I was following their working day.

#### **Example 8.** Fieldnote 28.3.2018

I ask Kirsi [the cleaning supervisor] a bit about the work routine. She says she's worked for 12 years in [the hotel] so she has experience of different practices. She says **they work in pairs**. I comment that they seem to also make the beds together – so that one of them stands at one end of the bed and one at the other end, and they synchronize their movements. Kirsi says that's right, even though **“they” [managers] would like cleaners to make the beds individually**. Kirsi says that actually, it's so much easier to make beds in pairs, **it has reduced the amount of sick leave** – the ergonomics is so much better. She says that earlier there was quite a lot of sick leave and for long periods because of bad ergonomics. She says that **they're allowed to make beds in pairs if it doesn't take any longer than making them individually**.

In this fieldnote, Kirsi challenges the common belief of cleaning as *independent* work performed alone (see Brody 2006). In her experience, cleaning is more efficient and less burdensome when performed in pairs. She supports this by telling me how the amount of sick leave has decreased since starting to make beds in pairs. This presumably must have reduced costs too. Despite this, the hotel management has challenged the practice of working in pairs because of their understanding of time-efficiency (and therefore, cost-efficiency). This is the assumption behind the idea that the cleaning team “is allowed” to work in pairs only if it does not take more time. Therefore, the management controls the work done in pairs by monitoring how long they spend per room, on average. It is common to have allocated time slots for cleaning hotel rooms (see Seifert and Messing 2006), and this team too keeps up an intense rhythm. The cleaning teams take their coffee breaks together, too, and my observations showed that this caused negotiation between the team members to set the pace for the workday.

In these two workplaces, the cleaners used Finnish as a work language although for some of them it was their second language. The managers did not directly rationalize the Finnish language requirement on the grounds of efficient teamwork, but it is probable that having a common language makes work practices more efficient.

## **5. Conclusion**

This chapter analysed what discourses of seasonal cleaning work are constructed in the tourism business and how these discourses are used to justify the language requirements for cleaners.

The analysis indicates that when cleaning work is seen as skilled physical work, language requirements are flexible. In contrast, when cleaning is seen as customer service, multilingual skills are emphasized. When cleaning is seen as teamwork, the organizations seem to prefer a shared work language within the cleaning team. These discourses are overlapping and partly contradictory, but they are used to rationalize the language requirements and practices of seasonal cleaning work in the Finnish Arctic.

Discourses have power: the ways in which seasonal cleaning work is defined affect who applies and who is selected for the jobs. When analysing discourses, there is a risk of missing the unspoken. In the interviews nobody mentioned ethnicity or skin colour as selection criteria, but the seasonal cleaning workers in the ski resort are mainly white Europeans. Despite increasing labour mobility, the seasonal workers are not visibly different from ethnic Finns, which maintains the illusion of Arcticness in the resort. This is in contrast to southern parts of Finland, where many cleaners are from African or Asian countries (Trux 2002). It is possible that by emphasizing the

need for Finnish language skills employers actually justify their policy of hiring certain people and excluding others. However, the recruitment criteria are constantly being reconsidered as international tourism is growing. Finnish Lapland used to have mostly Finnish workers but it is not possible to find enough local workforce anymore, so recruiting foreign workforce is essential.

This study indicates that not only wealthy Western expats but also low-paid workers are in some cases expected to be mobile and multilingual, flexibly adapting to the demands that late capitalist markets impose on workers (see also Lorente 2017, Kraft 2016, Piller and Lising 2014). The analysis supports the previous findings on the increased importance of soft skills and teamwork skills in manual work as well (Lønsmann and Kraft 2018, Lorente 2017, Duchêne 2011, Iedema and Scheeres 2003). Further, teamwork is used as a control mechanism to make cleaning work more standardized and efficient, which is in line with Iedema and Scheeres' (2003) study on a factory where teamwork aimed at streamlining the production. One limitation of the current study is that only the perspective of the management was analysed here. Further research is needed to explore how the mobile precariat perceive, achieve and resist the new conditions and requirements.

## References

- Allan, Kori. "Skilling the self: The Communicability of Immigrants as Flexible Labour." In *Language, Migration and Social Inequalities*, edited by Alexandre Duchêne, Melissa Moyer and Celia Roberts, 56–78. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013.
- Angouri, Jo. "Introduction. Multilingualism in the Workplace: Language Practices in Multilingual Contexts." *Multilingua* 33, no. 1–2 (2014): 1–9.
- Benson, Michaela, and Karen O'Reilly. "Migration and the Search for a Better Way of Life: A Critical Exploration of Lifestyle Migration." *The Sociological Review* 57, no. 4 (2009): 608–625.
- Brody, Alyson. "The Cleaners You Aren't Meant to See: Order, Hygiene and Everyday Politics in a Bangkok Shopping Mall". *Antipode* 38, no. 3 (2006): 534–556.
- Bruyèl-Olmedo, Antonio, and Maria Juan-Garau. "English as a Lingua Franca in the Linguistic Landscape of the Multilingual Resort of S'Arenal in Mallorca". *International Journal of Multilingualism* 6, no. 4 (2009): 386–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710903125010>
- Dannerer, Monika, and Marianne Franz. "Language and Tourism in Austria with a Focus on Tyrol." *Sociolinguistica* 32, no. 1 (2018): 169–184.
- Divida, David. "Language Ideologies Across Time: Household Spanish Handbooks from 1959 to 2012." *Critical Discourse Studies* 11, no. 2 (2014): 194–210.

- Duchêne, Alexandre. "Neoliberalism, Social Inequalities, and Multilingualism: The Exploitation of Linguistic Resources and Speakers." English translation of Néolibéralisme, inégalités sociales et plurilinguisme: l'exploitation des ressources langagières et des locuteurs. *Langage & Société* 136 (2011): 81–108.
- Duchêne, Alexandre, and Monica Heller. "Language Policy in the Workplace." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*, edited by Bernard Spolsky, 323–334. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock, 1972.
- Gonçalves, Kellie, and Anne Schluter. "Please Do Not Leave Any Notes for the Cleaning Lady, as Many Do Not Speak English Fluently": Policy, Power, and Language Brokering in a Multilingual Workplace." *Language Policy* 16, no. 3 (2016): 241–265.
- Heller, Monica. "The Commodification of Language." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 101–114.
- Herod, Andrew, and Luis L. M. Aguiar. "Introduction: Cleaners and the Dirty Work of Neoliberalism." *Antipode* 38, no. 3 (2006): 425–434.
- Iedema, Rick, and Hermine Scheeres. "From Doing Work to Talking Work: Renegotiating Knowing, Doing, and Identity." *Applied Linguistics* 24, no. 3 (2003): 316–337.
- Karhunen, Päivi, Anne Kankaanranta, Leena Louhiala-Salminen, and Rebecca Piekkari. "Let's Talk about Language: A Review of Language-sensitive Research in International Management." *Journal of Management Studies* 55, no. 6 (2018), 980–1013.
- Kraft, Kamilla. *Constructing Migrant Workers: Multilingualism and Communication in the Transnational Construction Site*. PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2016.
- Lorente, Beatriz. *Scripts of Servitude: Language, Labor Migration and Transnational Domestic Work*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters, 2017.
- Lønsmann, Dorte, and Kamilla Kraft. "Language in Blue-Collar Workplaces." In *The Routledge Handbook of Language in the Workplace*, edited by Bernadette Vine, 138–149. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Lønsmann, Dorte, and Kamilla Kraft. "Language Policy and Practice in Multilingual Production Workplaces." *Multilingua* 37, no. 4 (2018): 403–427.
- Määttä, Simo, and Sari Pietikäinen. "Ideology". In *Handbook of Pragmatics: 2014 Installment*, edited by Jan-Ola Östman and Jef Verschueren (2014): 01–24. *Handbook of Pragmatics*, 18. John Benjamins Publishing Company. [doi:10.1075/hop.18.idel](https://doi.org/10.1075/hop.18.idel)
- Park, Joseph Sung-Yul. "Metadiscursive Regimes of Diversity in a Multinational Corporation." *Language in Society* 42, no. 5 (2013): 557–577.

- Pietikäinen, Sari. “Investing in Indigenous Multilingualism in the Arctic.” *Language & Communication* 62, Part B (2018): 184–195.
- Pietikäinen, Sari, Helen Kelly-Holmes, Alexandra Jaffe, and Nik Coupland. *Sociolinguistics from the Periphery: Small Languages in New Circumstances*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Piller, Ingrid, and Loy Lising. “Language, Employment, and Settlement: Temporary Meat Workers in Australia.” *Multilingua* 33, no. 1–2 (2014): 35–59.
- Scollon, Ron. *Mediated Discourse: The Nexus of Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Scollon, Ron, and Suzie Wong Scollon. *Nexus Analysis: Discourse and the Emerging Internet*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Seifert, Ana María, and Karen Messing. “Cleaning up After Globalization: An Ergonomic Analysis of Work Activity of Hotel Cleaners.” In *The dirty work of neoliberalism: Cleaners in the global economy*, edited by Luis L. M. Aguiar and Andrew Herod, 129–149. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- Strömmer, Maiju. “Affordances and Constraints: Second Language Learning in Cleaning Work.” *Multilingua* 35, no. 6 (2016): 697–721.
- Trux, Marja-Liisa. “Diversity Under the Northern Star.” In *Immigration and Economy in the Globalization Process: The Case of Finland*, edited by Annika Forsander, 175–225. Helsinki: Sitra, 2002.
- Tuulentie, Seija, and Bente Heimtun. “New Rural Residents or Working Tourists? Place Attachment of Mobile Tourism Workers in Finnish Lapland and Northern Norway.” *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 14, no. 4 (2014): 367–384.
- Walker, H. Jack, Hubert S. Field, William F. Giles, and Jeremy B. Bernerth. “The Interactive Effects of Job Advertisement Characteristics and Applicant Experience on Reactions to Recruitment Messages.” *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 81 (2008): 619–638.

---

<sup>i</sup> The project is called Cold Rush: Dynamics of Language and Identity in Expanding Arctic Economics (University of Jyväskylä, Department of Language and Communication Studies, PI: prof. Sari Pietikäinen). It is funded by the Academy of Finland (2016–2020).

<sup>ii</sup> In this connection, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Sebastian Muth who collected part of the data with me as well as prof. Sari Pietikäinen and prof. Alexandre Duchêne for their valuable comments on the earlier drafts of this manuscript. Further, I am grateful to Dr. Kori Allan for useful discussions and observations shared with me in the field.

<sup>iii</sup> However, (English) language proficiency of domestic workers is promoted as a selling point, e.g. in the language policy of the Philippines (Lorente 2017).

---

<sup>iv</sup> The company was not able to offer housing for seasonal workers and that is why they had to rely on the local workforce. There is a lack of accommodation during the winter season in the resort, as it is growing so fast and both tourists and seasonal workers need beds. Many companies offer rental apartments for workers who come to work a winter season in Lapland.

<sup>v</sup> I can add here a citation to Gonçalves 2020 study of a hotel kitchen crew in a ski resort in Austria when it's in the proof stage.