

“You can do without Finnish but I’m not sure I would want to” – Working migrants’
perceptions of the use and importance of English in Finland

Bachelor’s Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Nykyajan globalisoituneessa maailmassa, jossa työperäinen maahanmuutto on avainasemassa, englannin kielen merkitys kommunikaatiossa on korostunut. Kielitaito on avainasemassa maahanmuuttajien integraatiossa ja englantia toimii usein kommunikaation välineenä erityisesti integraation alkuvaiheessa, kun maahanmuuttajan taidot paikallisissa kielissä ovat vielä heikot. Suomi kilpailee muiden maiden joukossa kansainvälisistä osaajista ja englannin kielen aseman parantamista on ehdotettu mahdolliseksi toimeksi Suomen kansainvälisen vetovoimaisuuden lisäämiseksi. Tämä tutkimus pyrki valaisemaan maahanmuuttajien näkökulmaa aiheeseen ja selvittämään, millaiseksi he kokevat englannin kielen roolin elämässään ja integraatiossaan.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittavat, että tutkimukseen osallistuneet käyttivät englantia keskimäärin muita kieliä enemmän lähes kaikilla elämänsä osa-alueilla ja kokivat englannin kielellä kommunikoimisen Suomessa melko vaivattomaksi ja englannin tärkeäksi osaksi integraatioprosessiaan erityisesti sen alkuvaiheessa. Suurin osa uskoi myös, että englannin kielen aseman parantaminen voisi tehdä Suomesta vetovoimaisemman ja moni toivoi erityisesti, että työelämään pääsy ilman vahvaa suomen kielen taitoa olisi helpompaa. Lähes kaikki osallistujat kuitenkin halusivat, moni jopa koki velvollisuudekseen, oppia suomen kieltä, ei ainoastaan omaa arkeaan helpottaakseen, mutta myös kunnioituksesta maata kohtaan, ymmärtääkseen paremmin sen kulttuuria sekä tullakseen vahvemmin osaksi suomalaista yhteiskuntaa.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

As the world is becoming increasingly globalized and the need for skilled workforce is growing, many countries have started to think about ways to make their country more attractive to migrants. Finland, like many other countries, “competes for foreign entrepreneurs and other talents” (Ministry of the Interior n.d.). The Program of Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s Government 2019 also states that Finland needs active work-based immigration and that the government aims to increase it (Finnish Government 2019: 137), which is one of the reasons why studying the migrant experience in Finland is relevant, not only on an individual but also on a societal level. As language is a crucial part of the human experience and at the same time, one of the biggest challenges most migrants seem to face, it is important to study its role in the life and integration of migrants, in the kind of challenges they face, and in the host country’s appeal and status outside of its borders.

Migrant as a term is often understood to mean a person who moves to another place of residence, either terminally or permanently for one or many of various possible reasons (International Organization for Migration 2019: 132), I go into deeper detail about the term in section 2.1. The current study aims to better understand the role of English in the life of migrants in Finland. English has become the global default lingua franca (ELF), a tool for communication between people of different language backgrounds all around the world, being frequently used, among others, by migrants (Mauranen 2017: 7). ELF seems to be especially important for migrants in Finland since Finnish is seen as a very difficult language by most learners (Leinonen 2012: 214, 217), probably at least partly because languages that have a big linguistic difference from the learner’s first language are often seen as difficult to learn (Chiswick and Miller 2005: 3–4).

Migrant language use in Finland has been studied earlier at least by Iikkanen (2020) who conducted a longitudinal study on the integration trajectories of migrant stay-at-home parents, Habti (2012) who studied highly-skilled North-African and Middle-Eastern migrants, and Haque (2011) who studied migrant family language practices and policies. The current study aims to fill the research gap there is in the study of working migrants and to shed light on their experiences of the use of English in Finland and its possible effects on their integration. It seeks to better understand the working migrant perspective on issues like ELF communication with Finnish people, language discrimination, and the attractiveness of

Finland from the migrant point of view. Also differing from most of the earlier research, the current study uses a survey questionnaire to collect data from a large number of participants.

The thesis is organized in a way that first, in the theoretical background, the relevant terms for the current study are defined (subsections 2.1 and 2.2), the current migrant and language situation in Finland is described and some results of similar studies are presented (subsections 2.3 and 2.4). In the present study section (section 3), the aims, research questions, and ethical considerations, as well as the data collection and analysis methods of the study are presented. The questionnaire is also described in more detail and the motivations behind the questions are explained. Section 4 provides relevant information about the participants (subsection 4.1), presents the results of the current study (subsection 4.2), and compares them to the results of similar studies. Section 5 summarizes the main points of the study, discusses its limitations, and makes suggestions for further research.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Migrants, integration, and language

According to Duchêne et al. (2013: 6-7) the word immigrant, by definition, a person who enters a region they were not born in, has acquired a more specific meaning of someone who moves from a developing area to a more developed one, and therefore they suggest that the term is not broad enough to include all migrant people in the modern world. In the context of Finland, the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland 2010: 1) defines an immigrant as “a person who has moved to Finland, who resides in the country with a permit issued for purposes other than tourism or similar residence of short duration, whose right of residence has been registered or who has been issued with a residence card”. I have decided to use the possibly broader and more neutral term ‘migrant’ to describe a person who is mobile long-term, in the context of the present study, a person who has moved to and currently lives in Finland.

Integration is a process where both the migrant and the host society have duties toward one another. Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland 2010: 1) defines integration as an interactional process between the migrant and the host society, the aim of which is to provide the migrant with knowledge and skills needed in the society and working life while also promoting their chances to maintain their own language and culture. This information and skills, for example working life skills, knowledge about the culture, and language skills, can be seen as resources that help the

individual to adapt to the society. The idea of skills and information as resources is typical for the human-capital perspective, according to which, migrant adaptation to the host country tends to happen through the gathering of these skills and information, in other words, human capital. (Williams and Baláž 2008: 29).

One important form of human capital and a crucial part of integration is language proficiency (Canagarajah 2017: 3). European Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 states that learning the host country's language is crucial for successful integration (European Commission 2020: 9). By enabling communication, skills in the host country's language promote, for instance, migrants' social and economic integration by increasing their chances of getting employed and making it easier to communicate and form relationships with the locals (Isphording 2015: 2, 8). Consistently Heponiemi et al. (2018: 5) found in their study of foreign-born physicians in Finland that having problems with language was linked to higher levels of integration stress.

2.2 Migrants and English as a lingua franca

In international and intercultural contexts, there is a need for a tool of communication for people of different native languages. A language that is used to meet this need is called a lingua franca, defined by Mauranen (2017: 7-8) as a contact language, any language – dead or alive – that serves as a vehicle of communication between two people who do not share a first language. English has been used as a lingua franca in various contexts throughout history before becoming the current global default lingua franca that is widely used in the communication of people from all around the world (Jenkins 2017: 1-2, Mauranen 2017: 7). Nowadays the number of speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL) is almost twice as large as the number of native English speakers (Eberhard et al. 2022), and English as a lingua franca (ELF) is used much more in communication between two non-native speakers than between a native and a non-native speaker (Mauranen 2017: 7).

In the globalized world, ELF has become an important tool for migrants and other mobile individuals. According to Canagarajah (2017: 19), mobile professionals have an important role in the neoliberal economy, and as the importance of highly-skilled migration has grown, so has the research interest in the correlation between migrants' language skills and employment success in the new country. For example, Dustmann and van Soest (2002) found a positive correlation between migrants' host-country language skills and their earnings. According to Canagarajah (2017: 19), many studies also support the importance of English as

the global professional language and suggest that migrants from countries with strong English exposure tend to be more successful in the new country. For instance, a study conducted by Chiswick and Miller (2002) also showed a positive correlation between migrants' English language skills and employment success.

2.3 Migrants and English in Finland

Finland aims to become more attractive to skilled workforce, and in comparison with many other countries, it seems to rank over the average in attractiveness. In the Migration Policy Index 2020, Finland placed second out of 52 countries, receiving 86 points out of 100 and being evaluated as "favorable" (Solano and Huddleston 2020). In OECD Indicators of Talent Attractiveness 2019, Finland placed in the middle on attractiveness to workers with master's or doctoral degrees, 8th to entrepreneurs, and 4th to university students (OECD 2019). Even though Finland is seen as quite attractive and the share of migrants in the Finnish population is growing, it is still one of the smallest among the countries of the European Union (Eurostat 2022). At the end of 2020, there were a little over 420 000 migrants in Finland, accounting for approximately 7.5 percent of the population (Statistics Finland 2021). At the same point in time, 7.8 % of the population of Finland were native speakers of languages other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sami, the biggest language groups being Russian, Estonian, Arabic, English, and Somali (Statistics Finland 2021).

The possibilities to use English seem to be an important factor in a country's attractiveness to migrants, since countries where English is widely spoken, tend to score higher in attractiveness, especially before taking into consideration the admission possibilities (OECD 2019: 6). The English skills of the Finnish population are high and the general Finnish attitude towards the English language seems to be fairly positive. An extensive national survey by Leppänen et al. (2009) shows a positive attitude towards the English language; for instance, most of the participants thought that young and working-aged Finnish people should know English, and over half of the participants thought that society's services should also be available in English. In the EF English Proficiency Index 2021, Finland placed 9th of 112 countries, ranking with "very high proficiency" (EF Education First 2022).

Reasons to migrate to Finland are diverse, and these different reasons to migrate seem to at least somewhat correlate with differences in the migrants' skills in Finland's national languages. According to the results of the UTH survey 2014, the most common reason to migrate to Finland was family reasons which accounted for over half of the answers, with

work reasons being the second most common one accounting for a little under fifth part (Sutela and Larja 2015: 16). When it comes to language skills, the migrants who had come to Finland because of work or studying estimated their Finnish or Swedish language skills on average lower than those who had come because of other reasons (Nieminen and Larja 2015: 44-45). When comparing migrants by their level of education, people with higher education estimated their Finnish or Swedish skills the lowest (Nieminen and Larja 2015: 46). In the same study, 75 % of the participants reported speaking at least some English (Nieminen and Larja 2015: 45), which highlights the relevance of studying migrants' English use in Finland.

Some earlier studies suggest that English is useful in the lives of especially recent migrants in Finland and the neighboring country Sweden, but local languages are still needed. Bolton and Meierkord (2013) studied migrants' language use in Sweden and discovered that many migrants saw English as a useful alternative to Swedish and used English as a lingua franca especially at the beginning of their stay when their Swedish skill level was still quite low. Similarly, in her longitudinal study about migrant parents in Finland, Iikkanen (2020) discovered that her participants managed quite well with English in the beginning but used it less as time passed and their Finnish proficiency increased. It seems that Finnish was necessary for the participants' social integration and that the participants linked learning Finnish closely with integration into Finland (Iikkanen 2020: 104).

2.4 Language planning and policy in Finland

Cooper (1989: 45) defines language planning as “deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes”. Language planning produces language policy that includes practice, values, and management, occurring not only on the level of nation-states but in all speech communities and domains (Spolsky 2012: 5-10). In the life of migrants in Finland, language policy is shown, for instance, in the requirement for at least satisfactory skills in Finnish, Swedish, Finnish sign language, or Finland-Swedish sign language when applying for citizenship (Finnish Immigration Service n.d.). This kind of language testing in its current form is often criticized, for instance, Shohamy (2017: 587) argues that forcing language learning is not always fruitful and that many migrants do not possess the time or resources necessary for learning a new language. Similarly, as opposed to many countries' language policies, Beacco et al. (2017: 4) claim that goodwill and linguistic tolerance are in a crucial role when it comes to effective communication with migrants and state that there is a need for a balance between

helping migrants to learn the host language and welcoming their diverse language backgrounds.

As of May 2022, the Finnish language legislation does not mention English, but the Strategy for National Languages of Finland (Finnish Government 2021: 132) acknowledges its importance in Finland and mentions the coexistence of English and the national languages as one of its goals. Even though the Finnish constitution gives everyone the right to maintain their language and it seems like English is becoming a language of service along with the national languages, the Finnish authorities are not obliged to use any other language than Finnish, Swedish, and Sámi and can instead use interpretation or translation (Finnish Government 2021: 95). However, the language strategy also argues that providing services in English could help recruit skilled workforce from outside of Finland and make Finland better known internationally (Finnish Government 2021: 132). One of the aims of the present study is to better understand the migrant perspective on this issue.

3 PRESENT STUDY

3.1 The aims of the study and research questions

The present study aims to better understand the role of the English language in the life and integration of working migrants in Finland. I want to gain some understanding of what kind of problems migrants face because of language barriers and get some ideas on what could be done for example in terms of language policies to make their integration process easier and Finland more attractive to skilled workforce. The aim is not to get generalizable results, but to shed light on the issues in question. I will focus on the following questions:

1. In which contexts and to what extent do working migrants believe English skills are useful in Finland?
2. How and to what extent do working migrants think English has affected their integration into Finland?

3.2 Participants and data collection

The target group was working migrants that had lived in Finland for 1-10 years, had at least sufficient English skills to complete the survey questionnaire in English, and were not native Finnish speakers. The decision to target migrants that had stayed in Finland for 1-10 years was to make sure they would have enough experience in the country but also remember the beginning of their journey in Finland. I decided to focus on working migrants because Finland

has a big need for them and the group has not been studied much before. Another reason was that by targeting participants that were involved in working life, I would be sure that they had successfully started their integration journey and would be able to share their experiences. According to Tubergen (2006: 73,193), participating in the job market is the first step toward economic integration, while a certain length of stay does not necessarily mean a certain point in the process of integration.

Semi-structured interviews were considered when looking for the ideal data collection method for the current study since according to Denscombe (2014: 186) interviews work well in small-scale research that studies for example opinions, feelings, and experiences. However, since interviews as a research method allow only a small number of participants and because most of the earlier studies on the topic collected their data using them, I decided to use a survey. I also believed that a survey questionnaire would be a better method to answer my research questions since the aim was to get views from a big target group instead of going into detail with a few individuals. My decision was confirmed by Peer et al. (2012: 94), according to whom, surveys work well in explorative research when asking a big group of people about for example their opinions, habits, or attitudes. Therefore, as recommended by Denscombe (2014: 163), the decision to use a survey was based on usefulness.

I decided to use a self-completion questionnaire, since according to Sapsford (2007) it has advantages such as the questionnaire being identical to each respondent and saving the researcher's time, therefore enabling a large, standardizable sample. Some of the disadvantages of a self-completion questionnaire, and therefore also limitations of my study, are that it cannot be confirmed that the respondents belong to the target group, understand the questions the way they are intended, give the questionnaire their full attention, and answer truthfully (Sapsford 2007). However, as Denscombe (2014: 178) states, internet-based surveys are appropriate in small-scale social research, such as the current study.

The link to the survey questionnaire was posted on several Facebook groups aimed at migrants in Finland since as Denscombe (2014: 18) states, Facebook groups can offer an already existing research population. Participant recruitment through social media allowed a high level of anonymity since it enabled reaching a large number of people regardless of their physical location and the participants were not required to have any contact with the researcher. According to Denscombe (2014: 15), this kind of self-selection to an internet-based survey works well since it allows quite easily finding respondents relevant to the

research. This, however, is another limitation of the study since only a certain type of people might be inclined to respond to the questionnaire. The sample is not representative and in the light of all these limitations, the findings of the current study cannot be generalized or thought to describe a wider population.

3.3 Pilot study

According to Denscombe (2014: 165), the data collection method of a study should always be tested in the field with participants to avoid problems in the data collection phase. The questionnaire for this study was tested in a small-scale pilot study with a participant that belonged to the target group but was asked not to answer the final questionnaire. The pilot study revealed some points for improvement both in technical issues and question-formatting. After observing the pilot participant and getting his comments, I made some changes to the questionnaire, for example, rephrased some of the questions, deleted a question, and added the possibility to add information at the end of the survey.

3.4 Final questionnaire

The final questionnaire was divided into three parts and consisted of 24 questions, some of which were optional. In the first part, the participants were asked about the size of the place they live in, the duration of their stay in Finland, and their native language(s). They were also asked to evaluate their oral communication skills in English, Finnish, and possible additional languages by using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the Council of Europe's reference instrument that among other things provides a framework for evaluating an individual's language skills (Council of Europe 2020). I also added the option "no skills" in case there would be participants who believed their skills to be below level A1.

The rest of the survey was organized in a way that first, the participants were asked about their language use in different situations and then about their opinions and attitudes when it comes to language use in Finland. The organization of the survey was based on Peer et al. (2012: 118), who suggest that it might be a good idea to place the most non-threatening questions at the beginning of the questionnaire, and the more threatening and difficult ones at the end. In the same way, Denscombe (2014: 175) suggests that by gradually moving to more complex and sensitive questions, the risk of the respondent quitting before submitting the answers can be reduced.

In the second part, the participants were asked to estimate how much they use English, Finnish, their native language(s), and other languages in different situations, using a six-step rating scale from “never” to “always”. I aimed to cover the main situations where language is used in a small number of questions and the final questionnaire had five categories: “at work”, “with family”, “with friends”, “in stores, restaurants, etc.”, and “when communicating with government agencies (e.g. Kela, Finnish Immigration Service) or when using public services (e. g. health care, social welfare services)”. The second part aimed to learn about the participants’ language use in different areas of life and to get information that could answer the first research question.

The third part of the survey measured attitudes using different statements and a Likert scale, which is one of the most used techniques when measuring attitudes (Peer et al. 2012: 114). I added the possibility to elaborate after each statement because by not limiting the respondents, open-ended questions are more likely to provide data that shows the complexity of their views (Ruel et al. 2016, Denscombe 2014: 176). However, since open-ended questions also require more effort from the respondents and can therefore cause respondent fatigue (Denscombe 2014: 176), I decided to make them optional. This way, each respondent would be able to express their views more broadly on the topics they wanted to but not be obliged to do so on each statement. This part aimed to better understand the migrant experience of the use of English in Finland and the role of English in their integration, thereby trying to answer the second research question. The final questionnaire had seven statements that focused on the participants’ experiences of and views on English use in Finland and were based on my research questions, background literature, and earlier findings on the topic.

The first statement, “I think it is easy to communicate with Finnish people in English” draws directly from the first research question and aims to get the migrant perspective on Finnish people’s skills and willingness to communicate in English. The second statement, “English has helped me to form friendships and be socially active in Finland” continues with the theme of communication, focusing on the use of English in forming social relationships. It draws from OECD European Union’s indicators of immigrant integration (2018: 121), according to which, social cohesion between migrants and the host society is a critical factor in integration. Apart from interactions between native-born citizens and migrants, the publication uses perceived discrimination against migrants as an indicator of social integration (OECD European Union 2018: 136), which is why the statement “I often face negative attitudes or discrimination when trying to communicate with Finnish people in English” is relevant for the

current study. The second and third statements aim to get information for the second research question and see if the respondents have similar experiences as Iikkanen's (2020) participants, who had had trouble connecting with the locals and regularly experienced discrimination and exclusion.

The statements "I can get by in English well enough, so I don't need to learn Finnish" and "I want to learn more English because it is useful in Finland" aim to shed light on the migrant perspective on how well one can manage with only English in Finland and how useful the participants think it is. The statements also aim to reveal if the subjects see English as an alternative to the majority language, as Bolton and Meierkord's (2013) participants in Sweden did. As a continuation of this, the last two statements aim to get migrant views and ideas on how things should be. The statements "I think I should be able to receive service in English everywhere in Finland" and "I think Finland would be more attractive to migrants if it was easier to get by in English" draw from the Finnish language policies and government publications. They aim to get migrants' views on their statements, for instance, the Finnish language strategy's (Finnish Government 2021) suggestion that providing services in English could help to recruit workers and raise Finland's status internationally. On the last page of the survey, there was a possibility to add information.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The research was conducted following the Jyväskylä University Human Sciences Ethics Committee's instructions. The survey was completely anonymous and did not ask for any personal data such as name, gender, or age. It was made sure that no unnecessary information was collected and that all the data would be stored in the university's Google Drive and disposed of as soon as the thesis would be published. Especially because of the personal nature of some of the questions, it was important that the responses could not be linked to any personal data. As is required by the University of Jyväskylä's privacy instructions, the data controller was identified and the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntariness and anonymity of participation, and the fact that the data collected would be stored and handled confidentially following the data protection legislation's requirements (University of Jyväskylä 2021). In order to start answering the survey, the participants were required to confirm that they were at least 18 years old and to agree to the privacy notice described above.

3.6 Method of analysis

Since the survey questionnaire had both open- and closed-ended questions, it produced both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data was provided by the questions asking for basic information in the first part of the questionnaire, the questions on language use in the second part, and the Likert scale questions in the last part. The quantitative data will be presented using percentages and summaries of relevant statistical measures, as according to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009: 96-97) a summary with range, mean, and standard variation of scores provides a good enough description of numerical questionnaire data for most purposes. The mean, or the arithmetic average, measures central tendency and is calculated by adding the values together and dividing the result by the number of cases (Denscombe 2014: 253). The range and the standard deviation describe the spread of the data, the range by expressing the difference between the minimum and the maximum value, and the standard deviation by telling how much, on average, the response values varied from the mean (Denscombe 2014:255-257). I decided to also include the median, which expresses the middle of the range because it expresses central tendency without being affected by extreme values (Denscombe 2014: 253-254).

The qualitative data was produced by the optional elaborations for the statements in the third part of the questionnaire. Since there was so much data that it would have been impossible to present all of it, the text responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which is an analysis method that aims to reduce and systematically describe the meaning of the data (Schreier 2012: 3-5). In qualitative content analysis, the data is broken into small units, categorized, and then analyzed for frequency, making it possible to quantify qualitative data (Denscombe 2014: 283-284). Since the study is exploratory, the qualitative analysis was mostly inductive, in other words, data-driven, meaning that the coding process consisted of paraphrasing relevant parts of the data, summarizing similar paraphrases, and using them as category names (Elo and Kyngäs 2008: 109, Schreier 2012: 87-88). Last, the frequencies in which the themes of the categories occurred were counted and the data was collected in tables to help with interpretation.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Participants

The online questionnaire was open for approximately 36 hours and got 156 answers during that time. In total, the survey was opened 672 times and started 223 times. The answers of 11

respondents were discarded because they did not belong to the target group according to their reported length of stay in Finland. The remaining 145 respondents had in total 37 different native languages, English, Spanish, and Russian being the most common ones (Figure 1), and had stayed in Finland on average for approximately six years (Figure 2). Most of the participants lived in a city with a population of over 100 000 people (Figure 3), and about 85 % of them evaluated their oral communication skills in English to be at least C1 (Figure 4). There was more variation in the participants' evaluation of their oral communication skills in Finnish, the most common answers being A1 (24.1%), B1 (22.8%), and A2 (21.4%), while 16.5% of the respondents said they had no skills (Figure 5). 97 participants reported having oral communication skills in at least one, 56 respondents at least two, and 25 three additional languages.

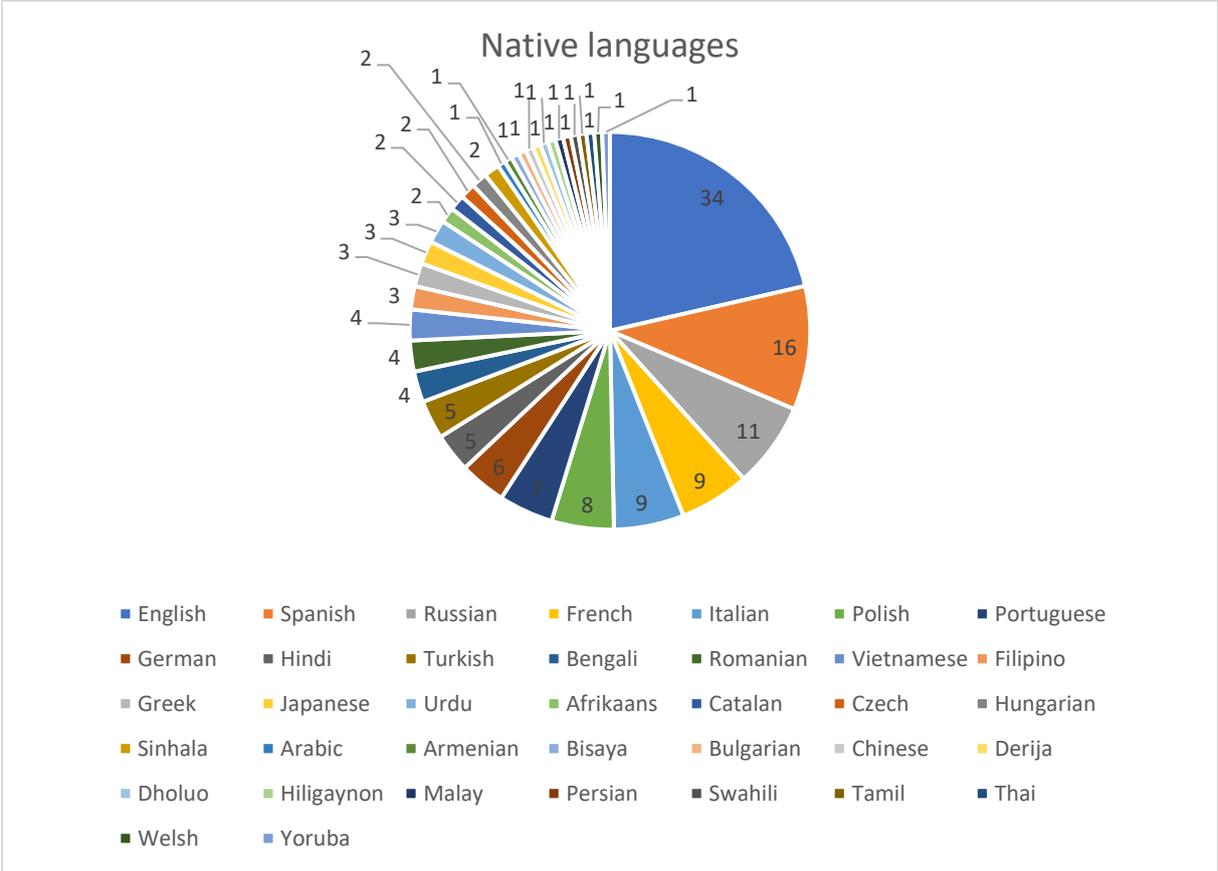


Figure 1, the participants' native languages



Figure 2, How long the participants had stayed in Finland (rounded to the closest year)

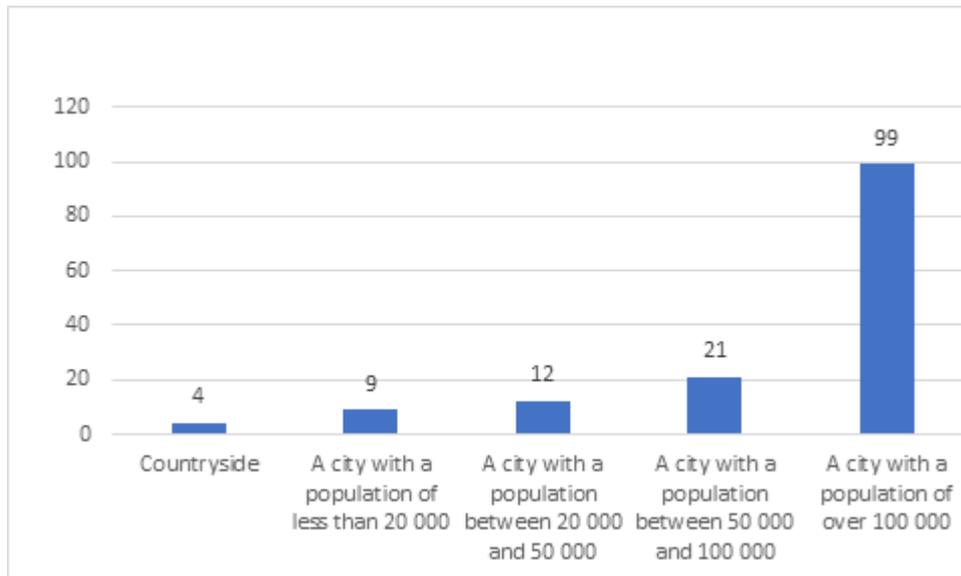


Figure 3, The types of places where the participants lived

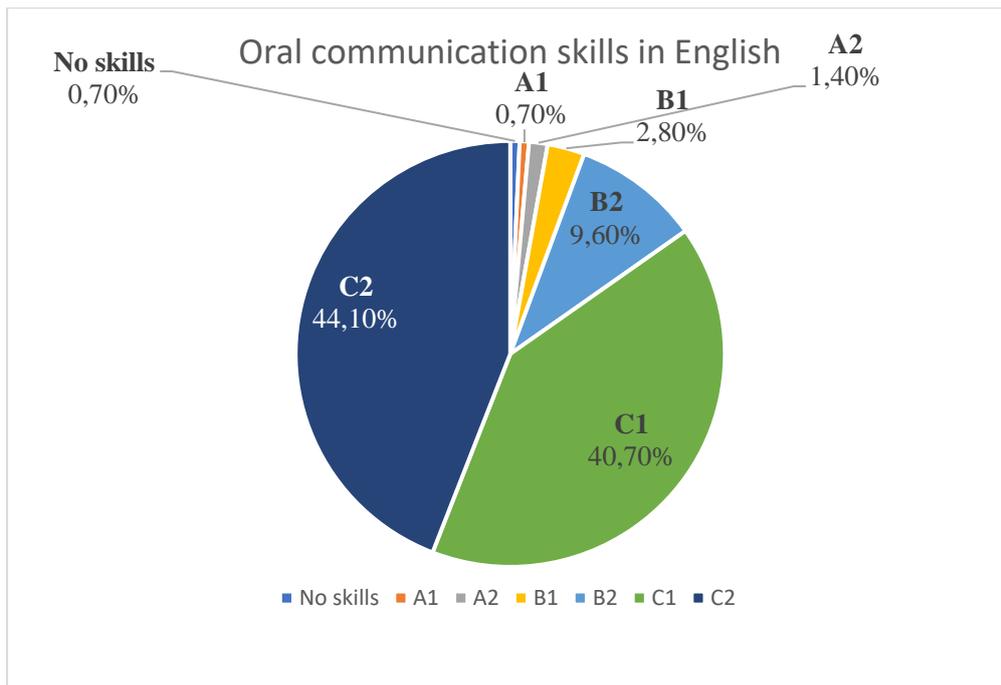


Figure 3, The participants' self-evaluations of their oral communication skills in English

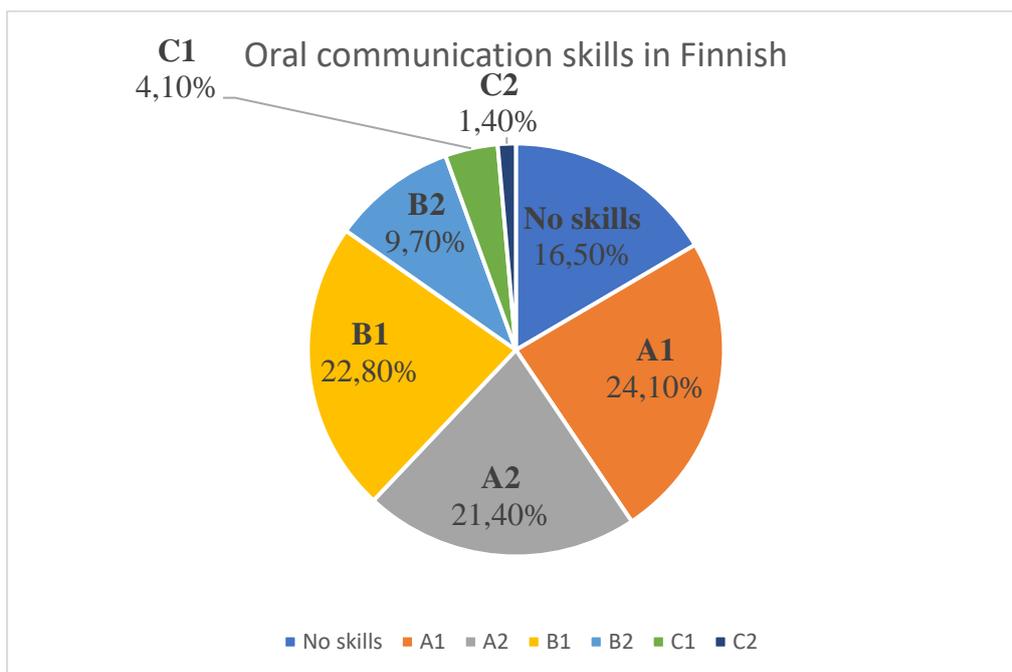


Figure 4, The participants' self-evaluations of their oral communication skills in Finnish

4.2. Language use in different situations

In the second part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to estimate how much they used different languages in different situations. On average, English was the most used language in all described situations except “with family”, where the participants’ native languages were used most (Figure 6). In general, the participants also used their native

languages quite a lot with their friends. The situations where Finnish was most used were “in stores, restaurants, etc.”, “at work”, and “when communicating with government agencies or using public services”. Based on the answers, it seems that English was the most used language in almost every situation. Similarly, Finnish seemed to be used mostly to manage everyday life and necessary tasks but little with family and friends, which suggests that it is not used much in the respondents’ closest relationships. This correlates with Iikkanen’s (2020) results, according to which the participants used English in situations where they wanted to relax even as they gained proficiency in Finnish (Iikkanen 2020: 104).

When the respondents were compared by the population of their place of residence, the respondents living in the countryside were the only group that reported using Finnish on average more than English, while those living in cities with a population of over 100 000 reported using Finnish less than other groups in all the mentioned situations. Even though only a small part of the respondents lived in the countryside or a small city, their responses correlate with the results of the Finnish national survey conducted by Leppänen et al. (2009). According to them, the Finnish respondents living in the countryside or small cities had on average a more negative attitude toward English and used it less than the respondents living in big cities (Leppänen et al. 2009: 43,67).

Some differences could also be found when comparing the respondents of the ten most common native languages. For instance, in communication with family, the Turkish-speaking respondents seemed to use their native language on average the most, with every respondent reporting that they ‘always’ used their native language with their family. English was used on average most by Portuguese, Hindi, and English native speakers, while English, Spanish, and Hindi speakers used their native language more than the other groups. The Polish speakers used on average both English and their native language less and Finnish more than the other groups. The differences between different groups merely describe the data of the current study and cannot be generalized since the sample is not representative.

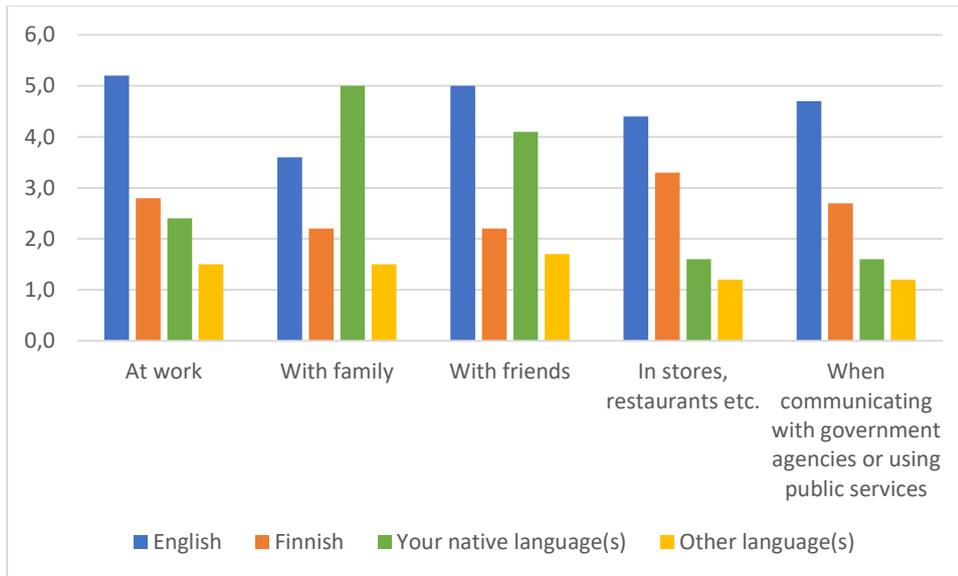


Figure 5, Language use in different situations (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=usually, 6=always)

4.3 English use and integration in Finland: Working migrants' experiences and views

In the third part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to express their opinion on seven statements about the use of English in Finland using an eleven-step Likert scale that produced values from 0 to 10. In each question, the range was from 0 to 10, meaning that in each one, at least one participant answered “strongly disagree” and at least one “strongly agree”. On average, the respondents disagreed the most with the third statement and agreed the most with the seventh one. After each statement, as well as at the end of the survey, there was an optional question where the participants could elaborate on their answers. These 8 optional questions received a total of 381 responses, which is on average approximately 2.6 optional responses per respondent.

Statement	Range	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
I think it is easy to communicate with Finnish people in English.	0-10	7.2	8	2.4
English has helped me to form friendships and be socially active in Finland	0-10	6.9	8	3.1
I often face negative attitudes or discrimination when trying to communicate with Finnish people in English	0-10	3.7	3	2.8

I can get by in English well enough, so I don't need to learn Finnish.	0-10	4.5	4	3.1
I want to learn more English because it is useful in Finland.	0-10	4.3	3	3.5
I think I should be able to receive service in English everywhere in Finland	0-10	6.6	7	3.1
I think Finland would be more attractive to migrants if it was easier to get by in English.	0-10	7.6	8	2.8

Most of the participants agreed with the first statement, “I think it is easy to communicate with Finnish people in English”, the mean on the scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) was 7.25/10.00 and the median was 8. In the 68 elaborations provided by the respondents, one of the most recurring themes was believing that the easiness or difficulty of communication depends on the age or the educational background of the Finnish person, with young and highly educated Finns being considered the easiest to communicate with. Another common theme was the effect of the size of the city: big cities and the capital area were mentioned as easy places to use English. The results make sense in the light of the Finnish national survey conducted by Leppänen et al. (2009: 48), according to which, age, size of the place one lives in, and level of education were the most significant factors that affected how much the Finnish participants were in contact with English. In their survey, the participants who lived in big cities, were highly educated, or under 45 years old also evaluated their English skills the highest and deemed it most important to them personally (Leppänen et al. 2009: 49-50, 100-101).

Even though the respondents on average agreed with the statement and most of the experiences reported in the elaborations were positive, 29 respondents wrote that many Finnish people cannot or do not want to speak English and especially problems with medical professionals were reported frequently. 9 respondents mentioned insecurity or doubting one’s skills as a possible reason for Finnish people not wanting to speak English. This correlates with the results of Paakki (2020), who studied Japanese and Finnish adult English students and found that the Finns felt more anxiety, insecurity, and pressure when speaking English than the Japanese, despite having more experience (Paakki 2020: 37-39). She suggests that the anxiety may be caused by the normative ideology, lack of speech practice, and the especially earlier used grammar-translation method in teaching (Paakki 2020: 37). 6

respondents mentioned that there are differences between different contexts and 4 wrote that it is sometimes so easy to communicate in English that they find it hard to practice Finnish or are unmotivated to learn it.

Category	Number of mentions	Example
Finnish people's low English skills	9	"My experience of general English in the Finnish population is that it is not as good as people think, and often people in key positions such as healthcare, social systems, tax and administration have no more than A2-B1 levels of English."
Finnish people not wanting to speak English because of their insecurity	9	"they do not want to speak english as they usually think they are not good enough."
Finnish people refusing to communicate in English for some other reason	11	"It is easy to communicate with Finns who CAN speak english. The difficulty is that some of them refuse to speak English"
Depending on the size of the city	10	"Dpends on where you live. In big cities ypu can communicate in English with finnish people, bit rarely in the countryside."
Depending on the Finnish person's educational level or age	12	"It depends on the person. With elderly people is more difficult."
Finnish people's good English skills	34	"Finns speak the best English I have ever seen."
Depending on the context	6	"Socially, it's quite easy to communicate in English. But in some place like at the hospital, it could be tricky."
Thinking it is too easy	4	"I would say it is even a bit too easy, as it would be nice to be "forced" to speak Finnish sometimes"

The second statement, “English has helped me to form friendships and be socially active in Finland”, was also generally agreed with, its mean was 6.87/10.00, median 8, and 55 people elaborated on their answer. 14 respondents reported having mostly migrant friends and/or no or only a few Finnish friends, 5 people thought that Finnish skills are useful or necessary when forming friendships with Finnish people, and another 5 that English helped in the beginning. There were also mentions of trouble connecting with people because of the language barrier and experiences of being left out. This correlates with Iikkanen’s (2020) findings that suggest that in the long run Finnish is necessary for integration in the terms of everyday encounters and forming relationships with Finnish people (Iikkanen 2020: 55-56). Similarly, Habti (2012) found that his participants, despite their willingness, had difficulties connecting with Finns in informal contexts, partly because of language barriers, and had formed friendships and social communities with other migrants (Habti 2012: 167,-169,176-177,184).

Category	Number of mentions	Example
A migrant community that communicates in English	10	“My social circle consists mainly from international people, thus English is our link here and enables communication no matter what the level of fluency”
No or almost no Finnish friends	8	“(…) However, I have zero Finnish friends due to the language barrier”
Having Finnish friends	5	“Even with my Finnish friends they get to practice their English when they speak with me”
English helped at the beginning	5	“As in the first years I was here I couldn't speak much Finnish then I had to rely on my English skills. The friendships I have build until now started during that time and therefore to a certain degree English has helped me to form friendships and be socially active in Finland.”

Finnish is needed or very helpful	4	“I do understand that I could get more socially involved if I understood and spoke Finnish better (...)”
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The mean on the third statement, “I often face negative attitudes or discrimination when trying to communicate with Finnish people in English”, was 3.66/10.00 and the median was 3, meaning that the participants, in general, disagreed with the statement. 49 respondents elaborated on their answers, most of them either writing that they only had positive experiences or elaborating on the negative experiences they had. The negative experiences described in the answers were often rudeness, insults, or being ignored or left out for speaking English. Similarly, Iikkanen’s (2020: 64,131) participants had also faced rudeness and been ignored or excluded for speaking English.

On the other hand, many respondents highlighted the positivity of their experience in Finland, and some also wrote that they felt a responsibility to learn Finnish. In the current study, there were no significant differences when the respondents were compared by the population of their place of residence, but some respondents wrote that they believe there is more language-based discrimination in the countryside and small cities than in big cities. Some respondents also mentioned that in their experience it can feel like discrimination when Finnish people are uncomfortable speaking English.

Category	Number of mentions	Example
Only positive experiences	13	“Finnish people are super friendly and try their best to answer in English even if they do not know it that well”
Negative experiences	14	“I can see people have a condescending attitude or desperation when I speak the language”
Finnish people feeling uncomfortable speaking English	6	“Sometimes it feels like discrimination, but I realized it was more they are uncomfortable.”
Depending on the size of the city	3	“I would say this not so much in the city. But I heard from friends that it does happen in the more rural areas in Finland”

Feeling a responsibility to learn Finnish	3	“As a foreigner it's my duty to learn the language of the country I have chosen to come to. So I don't mind facing some attitude about me not having the learnt the language because I believe its my responsibility”
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The fourth statement, “I can get by in English well enough, so I don't need to learn Finnish” was also generally disagreed with, the mean was 4.52/10.00, and the median was 4. In the 65 elaborations provided by the respondents, the most common theme was feeling a responsibility to learn the local language or wanting to learn it out of respect. Another recurring theme was thinking that Finnish skills are necessary for full integration and understanding of Finnish people and culture. Many respondents also wrote that even though they could manage in English, knowing Finnish would make life easier or that Finnish skills were needed to find a job or manage at work. The elaborations seemed to mostly describe the different motivators the respondents had for learning Finnish.

Category	Number of mentions	Example
Wanting to learn the language out of respect, feeling responsibility or feeling that it is important	17	“I want to learn Finnish, out of respect for the people. And quite often I miss the chance to speak to nice older Finnish citizens, due to my lack of language skills. Besides it's important to know the language of the country you live in”
Believing it is important to learn Finnish to be part of the society and to understand the culture	15	“You can get by with just English, but to truly live and understand the culture Finnish is mandatory”
Knowing Finnish would make life easier	12	“I have the impression that knowing Finnish gives you a significant advantage in terms of saving time and navigating administrative matters”

Finnish is necessary for getting a job or surviving at work	10	“If you want to work you have to know a basic finnish level, at least B1”
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Most of the participants disagreed with the fifth statement, “I want to learn more English because it is useful in Finland”, the mean was 2.11/10.00, the median was 3, and 73 responded “not relevant”. This question got only 19 elaborations, only one respondent wrote that they would like to improve their English, 7 that they already spoke English well and the question was therefore irrelevant to them, and 8 that they want to learn Finnish. One respondent also mentioned preferring learning Swedish over English since it would be useful in Finland. This question and especially its elaborations link closely to the previous one, where the respondents showed quite a strong motivation to learn Finnish. Similarly, in Bolton and Meierkord’s study in Sweden, the official uses of Swedish motivated the migrant participants to learn Swedish instead of English, even though English was seen as a useful alternative to Swedish in many contexts (Bolton and Meierkord 2013: 9-12).

Category	Number of mentions	Example
Wanting to learn Finnish	8	“I need to learn more Finnish not English”
Already speaking English well enough	7	“I speak English just fine as it is”

The mean value on the sixth statement, “I think I should be able to receive service in English everywhere in Finland”, was 6.63/10.00 and the median was 7, meaning that the statement was generally agreed with. 50 respondents elaborated on their answers, and 10 of them thought that it would be convenient to always be able to get service in English, but not necessary. Another 10 respondents drew a line between public and private services, though, hoping that the public ones would be more accessible but not demanding service in English in for example shops or cafeterias. 7 respondents thought that migrants do not have the right to demand service in English. According to the responses, it seems that many of the participants did not see English service in the private sector as something they are entitled to, but hoped for it in public services. Even though Iikkanen’s (2020: 62) participants were able to access

public health care in English, the Finnish authorities are not obliged to offer services in English (Finnish Government 2021: 95).

	Number of mentions	Example
Would be convenient but not necessary	10	“Its nice to have servive in English but not compulsory”
Needed for equality in public services but not in private ones	10	“I think this is true of critical services (medicine, police etc.) but less true of, for example, shops, restaurants, taxi's etc.”
Believing that migrants do not have the right to demand service in English	7	“why would I be entitled receive service in other language over Finnish?”

On average, the participants agreed the most with the last statement “I think Finland would be more attractive to migrants if it was easier to get by in English.”, the mean was 7.56/10.00 and the median 8. The most common theme in the elaborations was hoping that it would be easier to find a job without Finnish skills. Many respondents also mentioned that Finnish is a difficult language and that it takes plenty of time to learn it and wished that it was easier to get by with English while still learning. 4 people wrote that it is already quite easy to survive in English in Finland. The responses suggest that the participants in general agreed with the Finnish national language strategy’s idea of raising Finland’s status internationally by providing services in English (Finnish Government 2021:132).

	Number of mentions	Example
Wishing it would be easier to find a good job without speaking Finnish	12	“Yes main issue is language and not finding jobs without it. What u will do after getting a degree but then not having a job because of language problems.”
Finnish is a difficult language to learn	5	“Finnish is difficult for many to learn. As many Finn’s to speak English, it would attract more people to it if the language was not an issue”
It is already quite easy to get by in English	4	“To my experience and in comparison to some other countries, it is already fairly possible to survive with English.”

Apart from the recurring themes in each question, there were some topics that came up in many different questions, for instance, the problem of not being able to get a good job without speaking Finnish was a recurring theme across the questionnaire. This correlates with the Strategy for National Languages of Finland, according to which, Finnish skills are almost without exception required in the Finnish working life (Finnish Government 2021: 138). Many respondents thought it would be good for migrants to be able to find work as soon as possible after arriving, while they are still learning Finnish. Some also wrote that Finnish skills are often required even to get a job where they are not necessarily needed, for instance, one respondent wrote under the statement number four: “Unfortunately, it is impossible to find a job without speaking Finnish, even if a job does not require Finnish to do the work tasks”.

Several respondents also wrote under different questions that they felt unmotivated to learn Finnish because their environment did not oblige them or thought that it is too easy to manage in English. For instance, the following response was given to elaborate on the answer to the statement “I think it is easy to communicate with Finnish people in English”: “I would say it is even a bit too easy, as it would be nice to be "forced" to speak Finnish sometimes”. There were also mentions of Finnish people immediately switching to English when a respondent tries to communicate in Finnish, which correlates with Dervin’s (2013: 113) study, in which exchange students had similar experiences. Also consistently, Iikkanen (2020: 13,138) argues that even though English can be an important asset, relying on it can slow down migrants’ integration and limit their opportunities to use the local languages.

However, some respondents expressed the opposite opinion, wishing not to be pressured so much to learn Finnish. For instance, one respondent elaborated on their answer to the last statement: “(..) Being able to communicate in English would make their lives easier and support their choice to stay, find a job they like and not a conventional one, and eventually learn also Finnish if they like and not feel forced to”. Similarly, Iikkanen (2020:104) states based on the results of her longitudinal study that it is essential to let the integration process, including learning local languages, proceed naturally, at its own speed. Some respondents mentioned that language learning is not the only process they have ongoing and that especially migrants who work and study do not have much time or energy to invest in learning the local language.

Returning to the research questions of the current study, it seems that the participants used English regularly in different situations and found it quite useful. It was on average, the participants' most used language at work, with friends, when communicating with government agencies, and when using both public and private services, with their native languages being used more than English only with family. In the open questions, the importance of English especially at the beginning of the participants' stay in Finland was emphasized, most of all when forming social relationships, which are an important part of integration. The data suggests that in general, the participants found it fairly easy to communicate with Finnish people in English, and some thought that it is even possible to manage in the country without knowing any Finnish. However, many participants had not been able to make Finnish friends using English, and many had faced problems, negative attitudes, or even discrimination when speaking English. Even though English was generally seen as useful in the integration, most of the participants believed that they needed to learn Finnish.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of the current study was to better understand the role of the English language in the lives of working migrants in Finland and to shed light on the questions of in which contexts and to what extent working migrants believe English skills are useful in Finland and how and to what extent they think English has affected their integration to Finland. It seems that in general, the participants found English useful, especially at the beginning of their stay in Finland, and even though many had some negative experiences related to it, a big part also thought that it is possible to manage in Finland with only English. However, in general, the participants seemed to be quite motivated to learn Finnish, not only because it would make their life easier or help them manage better at work, but also out of respect for the country and will to better understand its culture and society and be part of it. It was clear that in general, being able to communicate in English had helped the participants' integration process.

As stated earlier, the current study has several limitations and therefore its results cannot be generalized but are supposed to merely shed light on the issues in question. Even though the sample was quite large, it was not representative, nor could it be confirmed that all the respondents belonged to the target group or that they answered the questions truthfully. In future research, the participants could be reached differently, for example through international workplaces or multicultural centers. There are also limitations to the survey

questionnaire as a data collection method, as data collected by it is fairly superficial and limited by the way the questionnaire is constructed (Dörnyei et al. 2010: 6-7), which is why in future research, interviews could be included to get more in-depth information. Similarly, the coding process in qualitative content analysis requires interpretation and can therefore not produce completely neutral or impartial information. There were also mentions of the survey not taking into account Swedish, the role of which as one of Finland's national languages should be taken into consideration in future research.

Given the number of participants reached in a short time, the number of responses given to the optional questions, and the positive feedback received at the end of the survey, this seems to be an important topic that needs to be studied more, especially from the perspective of migrants. It is clear that settling into a new country is not an easy process, which is why studying the topic, especially from the migrant perspective is important. The topic continues to be increasingly relevant, as Finland competes for foreign talents and the number of migrants in Europe is predicted to grow. It is worth noting that language is not the only factor that affects integration, but there is still plenty of research to be done on its role in migrant integration. For instance, it would be interesting to study how English teaching affects the attitudes toward migrants and the ability to communicate with them, compare the experiences of people of different educational backgrounds and working fields, and look more into the differences between different language groups, people living in different cities, and the effect of the length of the stay on their views.

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