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**Title:** Finnish L2 proficiency for working life : towards research-based language education and supervision practices

**Year:** 2021

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

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**Please cite the original version:**

Lehtimaja, I., Virtanen, A., & Suni, M. (2021). Finnish L2 proficiency for working life : towards research-based language education and supervision practices. *Nordand: Nordisk Tidsskrift for Andrespråksforskning*, 16(1), 57-76. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-3381-2021-01-04>

## **Finnish L2 proficiency for working life: towards research-based language education and supervision practices**

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### **Abstract**

In all Nordic countries, the L2 proficiency needed at work has become a key area in the language education provided for adult immigrants. This paper is part of a series of articles that gives an overview of language policies and research activities in the Nordic countries related to L2 in working life, together with a presentation of novel empirical analyses. Here, the focus is on the Finnish perspective. The aims of this paper are twofold. First, it provides an overall picture of the policies and research findings underlying recent tendencies in Finnish L2 language education in/for working life. After this, the article presents two case studies of clinical supervision practices in health care. These studies illustrate how using detailed analysis to capture certain features of workplace interaction in L2 can promote pedagogical development work. The first study explores, in an ecological framework, the intersection of the requirements and the evaluation of international nursing students' performance during their practical training. The focus is on the narratives of clinical supervisors and head nurses. The second study uses conversation analysis to investigate language learning opportunities in authentic supervision encounters. The findings highlight the need for language-aware supervision practices and closer collaboration between education providers and work placements. Finally, the paper discusses pedagogical implications of the case studies and other research on Finnish L2 in/for work. Some future prospects for work-related L2 studies and research-based pedagogical development are also outlined.

## Introduction

It is commonly believed in Finland that inadequate Finnish language proficiency is the explanation for immigrants' relatively common failure to find employment. Immigrants also self-report this in surveys (e.g. Nieminen & Larja, 2015), echoing the voices of authorities, employers and laymen. A closer connection between language education and working life is often suggested as a natural and efficient solution. A similar agenda is also present in the current reform of vocational education and the initiatives concerning the future of the integration training provided for unemployed immigrants (MEAE, 2017). Bringing language learning into workplaces may, at first sight, look like an easy choice, but if this is to become a mainstream solution, pedagogical practices for supporting second language (L2) development in and for working life must be carefully investigated, and suitable mentoring and supervision practices jointly negotiated. Detailed analyses of the linguistic aspects of workplace training are necessary because they can inform work on pedagogical development in many valuable ways.

This paper is one of a series of articles that aims to give a general overview of language policies and research conducted in the Nordic countries in contexts in which L2 is used in the workplace, together with a presentation of novel empirical analyses. Thus, the aims of this paper are twofold. Firstly, there is a state-of-the-art review containing two sections. The policy level reflected in the development of the field *Finnish as a second language in and for working life* and the prior research done in this field will be introduced. In particular, studies that are relevant from the point of view of field-specific language education will be discussed; many of them highlight immigrants' access to social interaction at work. Secondly, two new case studies on actual supervision practices in an L2 context are presented. The data excerpts analysed in the empirical section come from the health sector; this field employs a large number of L2 speakers, and they are required to have some knowledge of at least one national language. By relying on different theoretical and methodological frameworks, these two complementary cases provide new insights into the practical training of nursing students in the clinical environment, and thereby offer tools for supporting L2 learning at work. The first case study uses narrative analysis of interview data in an ecological framework (van Lier 2000), while the second case study uses conversation analysis (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013) at the detailed level of authentic interactions. Supervision practices will thus be examined on both macro and micro levels.

The specific research questions of the empirical part are (1) how does trainees' language proficiency influence requirements and evaluation practices in clinical supervision, and (2) what kind of opportunities for language learning are provided in supervision encounters. Data are brought together from two major research projects in the field, *Finnish as a work language: Socio-cognitive perspectives to work-related language skills of immigrants* (Section 4.1) and *Finnish as a second language and situational learning* (Section 4.2). This is done partly to explore and show the advantages of collaboration between different research teams with shared interests but different starting points. In the final section, the implications

for further pedagogical development in the field are presented on the basis of these analyses and discussed in the framework of L2 in working life. Some future prospects for research on L2 at work will also be discussed.

### **Language policies in Finnish working life**

Both official and unofficial language policies play a role in working life. Since Finland has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, the constitution partly defines their role in this domain. In bilingual municipalities, public services must be available in both languages, so in principle, e.g. doctors and nurses should know both languages (Health Care Act 1326/2010, 6§). In practice, the law can be interpreted as saying that not every individual, but the staff as a whole, must be able to provide services in both languages (see e.g. YLE, 28.11.2016). The same applies to Sámi languages in the bi/multilingual municipalities in Lapland. This interpretation has brought with it certain concerns about the quality of minority language services, but at the same time it has made these regions more realistic employment options for immigrants, who mostly learn only the majority language, Finnish.

In addition to the legislation concerning the provision of public services, there are official language requirements set for certain professions. For example, to be permanently hired as a teacher in basic education, CEFR level C2 is required (Act on Finnish and Swedish language proficiency, 481/2003), which makes this profession inaccessible to most educators with an immigrant background who have foreign degrees, and thus limits the number of such role models in Finnish schools. To become licensed to work in the health services in Finland, on the other hand, those with degrees obtained abroad must pass an official test that shows Finnish or Swedish language proficiency at level B1 (Valvira, 2016), which is relatively low compared with the language requirements in other Nordic countries. It has been jointly suggested by several authorities that a higher level (B2) should be required, and also that professional language proficiency should be assessed in the future (MEC, 2014). The need for this can be both supported (Tervola 2019) and challenged (Seilonen et al. 2016) by empirical research. In any case, employers in the health sector are responsible for ensuring that employees' language proficiency meets the needs of the tasks they will have to carry out, so in practice higher requirements than those imposed by the licensing procedures can already be set. On the other hand, those who have done their nursing training in Finland are licensed to work in Finnish, even if they studied in an English-medium programme with only some basic level courses in Finnish (see Virtanen, 2017; Pyykkö, 2017). Our empirical data analysis (4.1) will highlight the dilemmas that arise with this particular target group.

Instruction in Finnish is available from various quarters: in the integration training provided for unemployed immigrants (target level B1.1), in secondary education, where vocational education attracts a lot of immigrants, and also in higher education (for higher education, see Saarinen, Vaarala, Haapakangas & Kyckling, 2016). Working-life orientation is increasingly present in all of these contexts. Swedish, however, is the default language in the Åland islands, and also of obvious relevance in coastal regions where Swedish is the L1 of the majority or a large minority, and there, integration training and other types of Swedish L2

instruction may be available for immigrants. Although working-life oriented language instruction is seldom available in Swedish, the COMBI project has made a difference in this area: to promote the employment of immigrant nurses in bilingual regions, Swedish was taught to some of those who already knew Finnish (Higham, 2018). There are also other promising examples of L2 Swedish provision and use. Närpes, for instance, is a small coastal town known for its well-functioning model of integrating and employing new immigrants in Swedish; newcomers there usually find employment in market gardening and the metal industry (see e.g. Pyykkö, 2017).

In the private sector, the application of language policies may vary quite widely. Minkkinen (2011) analysed the language and recruitment policies applied in small and intermediate companies, mostly in basic industries, that hire immigrants in a Finnish-speaking region in Western Finland. Not perfect but “sufficient” and socially acceptable Finnish language skills were expected from applicants. Their L1s were often a key factor in recruitment, due to the employers’ interest in promoting exports to certain countries. So far, however, such valuing and recognition of immigrants’ pre-existing language resources has not been as common in Finland as the report (Pyykkö, 2017) ordered by the Ministry of Education and Culture on Finland’s current language resources recommends.

There is also some debate about the role of English in working life. Puranen’s (2019) observations on the public discourse on language policies in the field of logistics are worth noting in this connection. She compares the case of a removals business, where a private company expected new employees to know Finnish quite well, with the case of Finnair, which recently relieved cabin crews of all Finnish language requirements. Conflicting ideologies are at work here: arguments for the provision of services in (proper) Finnish are strong and frequently heard, but at the same time the use of English is rather easily accepted, at least in such contexts as international companies providing global services. Härkönen (2011) noted that even in companies where English is the official corporate language, Finnish is in active use among native Finnish-speaking employees, but the language tends to change when international recruits are involved. Many of them know Finnish, too, but this remains invisible to their Finnish workmates. Mutual politeness leads to unofficial language policies, where the international employee is willing to use and learn more Finnish but unwilling to slow down the smooth flow of interaction by speaking it, and the native Finnish speakers switch to English in order not to exclude them from the interaction – and by doing so, they constrain their opportunities to use and learn Finnish at work. The role of English vis-à-vis the local majority language has been analysed in other Nordic countries, too (see e.g. Mortensen & Lønnsman 2018). All in all, workplaces are increasingly multilingual, and both policies and practices are gradually adjusting to this development.

### **Recent research on Finnish L2 in working life**

Numerous studies have already been carried out in Finland on the language requirements of different professions, second language use in different workplaces, as well as language learning opportunities at work and language-aware pedagogy in vocational education. Finnish

L2 has been studied in both blue-collar and white-collar work contexts; the healthcare sector has been especially well represented in PhD studies (Virtanen 2017, Paananen 2019, Tervola 2019) and several research projects. In this section, we will present some key findings of this research, focusing particularly on how the findings could contribute to a fruitful alliance between language education and working life.

A pioneering work on blue-collar workplaces is the ecological, ethnographic PhD study by Strömmer (2017), who applied nexus analysis to study language learning opportunities in the cleaning industry, which provides typical “survival jobs” for immigrants; these jobs often become a trap from which it is difficult to advance in one’s career. Strömmer points out that when a cleaner is working alone in empty premises, the opportunities for L2 learning and use are quite restricted; the suitable pairing of cleaners would effectively promote the availability of very useful language scaffolding at work. Another key observation concerns the role of material scaffolding: in relatively physical and mobile work such as cleaning, various spaces, artefacts and signs carry a lot of linguistic information, and embodied action, such as showing something manually or moving around together in the premises to be cleaned, is closely connected with the linguistic support available. Ratia (2015) made similar observations on the verbal and material scaffolding utilized by two assistants working in L2 Finnish in a busy restaurant kitchen. Lilja and Tapaninen (2019), in their conversation analytical study of construction work students, illustrated how language use and language learning are tied to the physical environment. They also remarked on the essential role of giving instructions and requesting, which require a good command of terminology. In other Nordic countries, similar studies on blue-collar workplaces have been conducted, e.g. by Kraft (2019) and Svennevig (2017).

In Finland, especially non-graduate immigrants are generally encouraged to choose some kind of vocational education rather than any other educational pathway. This makes the meaningful integration of L2 studies and content studies (CLIL pedagogy; Content and Language Integrated Learning) as well as a language-aware pedagogy a considerable challenge – and also opportunity – there. The concept of language-aware teaching has been established to refer to pedagogy that recognizes students’ linguistic needs and backgrounds and focuses on the intersection of language and content to clarify what field-specific terms, genres and interactional patterns are for and like (e.g. Aalto 2019).

Some pedagogical practices applied in co-teaching between vocational teachers and L2 Finnish teachers have already been analysed, but only in MA theses. Astikainen (2017) found that joint planning was necessary for useful outcomes in a home-help service programme. Koponen (2017) observed and interviewed co-teachers who had no prior experience of immigrant education. They had to invent new, more language-aware pedagogical practices, which also had an effect on their professional identities. They also realized that language is tightly intertwined with content and the concrete artefacts – such as car parts – with which students work. On the other hand, when analysing the self-reported assessment practices of vocational teachers, Laaksonen (2017) found that only a few of them paid any attention to

field-specific language or perceived it as their responsibility to introduce and assess it. More language-aware practices should therefore be developed and adopted in vocational education.

Among the first initiatives for the development of L2 instruction oriented towards working life in higher education were the field-specific frameworks for L2 Finnish constructed in the KOTI project. Not only were typical communication situations and text types presented, but the language skills needed to accomplish typical work tasks were specified in considerable detail and the CEFR levels needed for different jobs were defined. The fields covered were business administration, information technology, social care, care of the elderly, and nursing. (Komppa, Jäppinen, Herva & Hämäläinen, 2014.) This project has served as a breeding ground for research on Finnish L2 use in white-collar jobs.

The Finnish studies on white-collar workplaces have mostly explored the parallel use of different languages, especially the choice between English and Finnish. As mentioned above, the parallel use of different languages is present even in companies with one corporate language, English. Global English is the hegemonic language of information technology, a field which has attracted numerous international experts to Finland since the 1990s. This means that English dominates in meetings, in online communication and all documentation. Jäppinen (2011) interviewed trainees studying business administration and their workplace supervisors, and noted the relevance of time pressure to language choice and the use of L2 at work: English is often preferred to Finnish because it is quicker. Fluency in Finnish is highly rated in important customer meetings and phone calls, so these tasks are not given to intermediate level L2 Finnish speakers. Protracted L2 Finnish use in meetings brings with it a different time pressure and cognitive load. On the other hand, in spite of the higher abstraction level, regular meetings with a pre-set agenda and fixed roles are perceived by L2 speakers as easier to access than multi-party conversations during lunch breaks, when time pressure is combined with unpredictable topics.

The parallel use of languages has also been studied in meeting interaction. Lehtimaja and Kotilainen (2019) analysed in detail how L2 Finnish speakers take part in meeting interactions. Nonlinear sequences – pauses, reformulations and repairs – caused by their limited knowledge of Finnish lead to balancing between discretion and explicit problem solving. Code-switching between languages also appears to be a practical solution when problems arise in comprehension, production or displaying reciprocity (Kotilainen & Lehtimaja 2019). The flexible use of different language resources ensures the smooth accomplishment of tasks even in meetings where the language policy has been explicitly agreed upon in advance.

The health sector offers a lot of work opportunities for highly educated immigrants. Kela and Komppa (2011) were the first researchers to focus on international nursing students and their linguistic needs and challenges. The co-presence of both professional and colloquial language at work and the difficulty of separating general and professional language proficiency were apparent in this research setting. The students found documenting patient care and interacting on the phone to be the most difficult tasks. The same observation was made by Mähönen

(2014) and Heimala-Kääriäinen (2015). In their shared interview data on a medical doctor and his closest colleagues – both nurses and other doctors – written documentation and phone calls were reported to be the most demanding area of L2 use, so even longer-term assistance is needed in these areas. The role of colleagues in providing timely support and scaffolding at work was seen as highly significant (see also Suni, 2017); the most preferred support actually came from people with the same L1 but longer work experience in Finland.

In an ethnographic study, Virtanen (2017) analysed the practical training given to international nursing students in Finland and focused on language use and skills in relation to agency and positioning, as they were manifest in interviews and interactions. The research participants were studying nursing in English but they were doing their training in Finnish-speaking clinical environments. This study shows that the development of language skills can be seen as an expansion of the operational environment: one learns to perceive and utilize more and more affordances in a specific work environment, and this helps one to exercise agency and perform successfully in one's work. Most commonly, however, the lack of opportunities to practise different work tasks during practical training hinders the expansion of the operational environment; supervision practices have a crucial role to play in this. The case study reported in Section 4.1. below uses the same database as this study but from a novel perspective, that of clinical supervisors and head nurses, which has not been in focus before.

Tervola (2019) examined the Finnish language skills of immigrant doctors during their licensing process. The results suggest that the language requirements for medical doctors are too low in relation to their future work tasks, so the test cannot screen out those with inadequate language skills. The study also emphasizes that immigrant doctors still need strong support after entering working life.

Paananen (2019) had access to multicultural clinical consultations in which either the doctor or the patient spoke Finnish as a second language. Some encounters also included interpreted interaction, which is a common situation in any public service, but particularly in health care. This study investigates the interactional resources used in multicultural consultations and how mutual understanding is constructed. By applying conversation analysis and interactional linguistics, the study shows that participants promote co-operation and strive for mutual understanding by facilitating communication in various linguistic, embodied, and material ways. Multicultural interaction is thus not seen as an obstacle.

In the *Health care Finnish* project (Seilonen et al. 2016), a computer-based field-specific Finnish language assessment module was designed for research purposes, with integrative tasks combining oral and written, and productive and receptive skills. The thirty-five internationally educated healthcare professionals who took part in the test had already passed the Finnish National Certificate of Language Proficiency test (level B1 or B2). The findings show that those who have at least one year's work experience in health care in Finland (in Finnish) cope with field-specific language relatively easily, while those with less do not, even if their CEFR level is the same or higher. Those with work experience in Finland also feel



more confident with the field-specific language than with general language, because this is what they mainly encounter in their daily life and therefore what they get to know better. This observation shows that professional language proficiency may actually be developed from an early stage, and may even form the core of one's linguistic repertoire and identity in an L2. This finding also makes it difficult to argue that the suggested minimum level of B2 (see MEC, 2014) is quite necessary from the beginning. Rather, to ensure the smooth development of field-specific language proficiency, access to an authentic work environment should be promoted from early on, and suitable in-service training and mentoring practices should be offered to those who are new to the Finnish work community.

All in all, we can conclude that getting access to an authentic work environment and tailor-made support there are crucial. This is also a key factor in all the practical training provided in health care and other vocational or professional fields of study. The next section presents two novel empirical studies on supervision practices for L2 nursing students. The data were collected in clinical environments.

### **Two case studies on supervision practices and L2 nursing students' language learning**

Supervised training is of key significance from the point of view of L2 at work: during training, the supervisor can evaluate whether or not the L2 student's language proficiency is sufficient and can support their language learning. In order for supervisors to be able to do this in the best possible way, we must explore how supervision practices serve these objectives. In this section, we will scrutinize these practices in the context of practical training of L2 nursing students on both the macro and micro levels. The examination begins with a broad ecological framework (van Lier, 2000) and then takes a conversation analytical approach to explore the subject in more detail, turn by turn (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). The first case offers an insight into the way the trainees' perceived level of Finnish language proficiency affects requirements and evaluation practices in clinical supervision. The second case analyses actual supervision encounters in detail, focusing on the language learning opportunities provided in social interaction.

#### ***Case 1: Requirements and evaluation in the clinical environment***

The first case explores the intersection of requirements and evaluation that international nursing students are faced with while doing their training in clinical environments. It examines the perspectives of both head nurses and clinical supervisors.<sup>1</sup> The Finnish degree programme in focus is administered in English and is intended for both international and local students:<sup>2</sup> the two groups officially have the same requirements as far as the structure of their content studies, practical training and language studies are concerned.

Since these international students complete their degree in Finland, they are qualified to work as registered nurses without needing to go through any (Finnish) language testing (Health Care Professionals Act, 559/1994, 5§). Even though they are studying in an English-mediated programme, the students often do their practical training in what are in practice monolingual

clinical environments. Language needs depend on the clinical environment and work tasks: in care of the elderly, nonverbal communication often plays a crucial role, whereas an operating theatre calls for exact and instant language use (see e.g. Kela & Komppa, 2011). Language use is regulated by law: Finland's national languages must be used because patients have the right to be treated in Finnish or Swedish (Health Care Act 1326/2010 5§). The multivoicedness of legislation, language policies and local practices in wards (Virtanen, 2017) undoubtedly has an effect on what is demanded and evaluated during the students' practical training.

The data examined consist of the oral narratives of thirteen clinical supervisors and four head nurses. The data, collected in the *Finnish as a work language* project, are analysed in an ecological framework (van Lier, 2000) by applying narrative analysis (Vitanova, 2010). This method helps to bring out the many different voices in the interview data: the narratives told are the voices not only of the interlocutors but also of others (Bakhtin, 1981: 293–294).

Both international and local students should have achieved the same level of skills by the end of their studies and should also have the same opportunities to work as nurses in Finland. However, due to their lack of adequate Finnish language skills, the transition to working life is not always smooth for international students. The problems may partly be rooted in the language used in supervision. International students have the right to be supervised in English: they are in an English-mediated programme and are not necessarily able to do their training in Finnish. In the first of a series of excerpts that will be presented, one of the head nurses, Anna, both stands up for students' right to be supervised in English and calls for them to have Finnish language skills:<sup>3</sup>

Excerpt 1.1. Anna, head nurse, infectious diseases ward

I said I like these students, in my opinion stud- international students should be supervised then also in the English language but I suppose the purpose of this education is partly that they'll be able to work in this profession, in this country, also. and it does mean that one should have quite a high level of Finnish language skills. and I think it is, sad to say, but it's true that this, the representatives of the school have maybe not quite listened enough to our feedback about this and then if we can't, well, first of all if there are too many students to supervise, we have to give up because of that, then the supervision is not as good as it should be. so if we have to supervise a non-Finnish speaker in Finnish no one benefits from it. and then on the other hand, as employers we are responsible for the staff that are recruited for us.

Anna highlights that the aim of the programme should be to train future employees who will be able to work as nurses in Finland, and therefore they should know Finnish: *it does mean that one should have quite a high level of Finnish language skills*. In this narrative, the responsibility for guaranteeing adequate Finnish language skills lies with the representatives of the university of applied sciences where they are doing their training, and they have not taken language issues as seriously as could have been hoped: *these representatives of the*

*school have maybe not quite listened enough to our feedback about this.* When speaking in the voice of an employer and for the whole profession (*our feedback, we as employers*), Anna emphasizes her responsibilities when recruiting new members of staff. Head nurses are gatekeepers, in a way, and they echo the importance of patient safety throughout the data (see Virtanen, 2017). On the other hand, Anna also aligns herself with the students and softens her viewpoint by saying how much she likes these students, and by bringing out their right to be supervised in English: *in my opinion international students should be supervised then also in the English language.* As shown here, one narrative may include contradictory voices, depending on whose voice is being reproduced.

Clinical supervision is expected to play a key role in offering opportunities for language learning (see e.g. Virtanen, 2017 and Section 4.2). However, a lack of information about good practices, such as how to evaluate international students' performance, may cause students to be treated unequally: supervisors set higher requirements for local students. This is illustrated in the following excerpt, in which Laura describes her own supervision practices. Laura was meant to be a temporary mentor only, but she ended up supervising Simon for the whole of his period of practical training on the internal medicine ward. She does not have ready-made tools for supervising and evaluating international students, and she finds it particularly challenging to evaluate their communication and documentation skills.

Excerpt 1.2. Laura, supervisor, internal medicine ward

- Laura: [-] I do have at least criteria for what is required of a Finnish student so they certainly are higher at this stage than I can require from him ((Simon, an international student))
- Aija: so in what kind of issues do you notice it
- Laura: well in sort of taking responsibility and, if a Finnish student comes to do their training in internal medicine I do expect him/her to be able to take their own patients at the end of the period, plan their care path, you know take it through to the end. so, so in terms of language skills, I can't expect that from him, if you see what I mean. OK, some sort of small independent tasks but not like on the same scale as with a Finn, or a student who speaks Finnish so there you can tell the difference, and then of course with regard to evaluation there are challenges when thinking of these communication, documentation, reporting skills, I mean, how they could be ((evaluated)) in a way that's what I've been thinking of how to evaluate them then because I haven't evaluated before. I mean, an international student

Laura states that the requirements are higher for local students than for their international peers: *criteria for what is required of a Finnish student so they certainly are higher.* This is the shared voice reiterated by clinical supervisors. Laura cannot demand that Simon works independently because of his lack of Finnish language skills: *in terms of language skills, I can't expect that from him.* Instead of giving him his own patients, Laura allows Simon to perform only some minor tasks by himself. Also, even when performing tasks with the help

of the clinical supervisor, it is not evident that international students have the opportunity to verbalize their own actions: actual (spoken) interaction can be quite minimal (see Section 4.2). This minimal verbal interaction may then complicate the evaluation of the student's language skills.

In spite of the obvious need to practise linguistically more challenging work tasks, international students seldom have access to them. Documentation is one of those work tasks (Virtanen, 2017). It is one of the most demanding of them (Kela & Komppa, 2011) and is also regulated by law (Data Protection Act, 1050/2018; Health Care Act, 2010). The need for Finnish language skills is echoed in the narratives of both head nurses and supervisors. In order to work independently one must have sufficient Finnish language skills but, at the same time, it is unclear who is or should be responsible for ensuring that students have these skills: those in the training environment or those in the educational institution, or both? As a result, international nursing students often feel they have been abandoned, and that the burden of learning Finnish rests entirely on the individuals themselves (Virtanen, 2017). Because of their perceived inadequate Finnish language skills, international students are given fewer responsibilities, fewer learning opportunities and therefore less support for developing the language skills that are nevertheless demanded of them when they try to gain access to the Finnish labour market.

Another intersection of what is required and evaluated is illustrated in the following excerpt, in which Johanna talks about the experiences of local students. While international students have to meet lower demands and are given fewer opportunities to carry out different work tasks, here the feeling of inequality is present as well: local students feel that they need to do more in order to complete their studies.

Excerpt 1.3. Johanna, supervisor, paediatric ward

- Johanna: well in Daniel's class there was a Finnish-speaking girl who said that they feel it's unfair that there are like differing rules for foreign students and for Finnish students
- Aija: what are the differing rules then
- Johanna: well. maybe this level of requirement for what is demanded. because sometimes we've also had ((conversations)) with this teacher about a student we thought couldn't pass this training period and the teacher just said that we've just got to let him/her pass and if there was a Finnish student in a situation like this then he/she wouldn't have been let through

In this excerpt, the multivoicedness of narratives (see Vitanova, 2010: 30–31) is evident when Johanna ventriloquizes the lived experiences of local students: *girl who said that they feel*. According to Excerpt 1.3, there are higher demands for local students – the voice recycled by the supervisors (see Excerpt 1.2), too. This excerpt also points to a conflict in which supervisors and a teacher had a disagreement over evaluation: *the teacher just said that we've just got to let him/her pass*. This makes clear the gap between the school and the

clinical placement: the teacher had the final word, even though there were healthcare professionals who were of a different opinion. This also strengthens the voice of the representative of the clinical placement (see Excerpt 1.1) on feedback that was ignored.

A little later in the interview, Johanna voices the claim of another student who alleged that at nursing school, the rules are tougher for Finnish students than they are for international students: *common rules are agreed on for the whole class but then, nonetheless, the Finns need to do precisely what is said but the foreigners are allowed to bend the rules a bit*. In theory there are the same rules for everyone, but these rules are not applied or even applicable to all students. However, these differences in the rules are not explicit, and this causes growing dissatisfaction with the training.

The results of this study indicate that the practical training of international students and their local peers cannot be evaluated according to exactly the same criteria. However, this policy is not explicitly stated either to the students or to the supervisors. Paradoxically, the aim of treating all students equally may lead to two-way inequality: international students do not receive as many opportunities as their Finnish peers to perform and practise work tasks independently, and at the same time Finnish students have to do more in order to pass their clinical training and other courses. Placements do not necessarily have the appropriate resources to guide and evaluate international students. There is thus a definite need to build a bridge between the environments in which the actual training takes place and the educational organizations that are responsible for giving the qualification, that is, between the clinical placements and the universities of applied sciences. To improve the situation, research-based practices and guidelines, and clearly articulated language policies and evaluation criteria are needed, as well as close collaboration between the various parties involved.

### ***Case 2: Opportunities for language learning in supervision encounters***

Developing research-based practices for supervision also requires a detailed analysis of supervision interaction. This section presents examples of authentic supervision encounters in which an L2 nursing student is guided in Finnish. The focus is on the supervisor's instructions: how she guides the student to perform a specific professional activity, in this case to administer intravenous infusions. These situations have a double function: the immediate objective is to get the student to perform the activity in question, but the long-term objective is to help the student to learn the skills necessary to be able to carry out her work independently in the future.

When the supervision takes place in Finnish, the first challenge for an L2 student is to understand the instructions. The second challenge is to develop her professional language skills further. Even though the activity in itself does not contain a linguistic dimension, a competent nurse must also have the necessary skills to talk about the activity: to name the materials needed, to explain the activity to the patient, to document or report afterwards what has been done, etc. In the analysis, in order to evaluate the affordances offered by the situation for professional language learning, special attention is given to the verbalization of

the activity: how the supervisor shares linguistic resources with the student for her further use.

The data used in this section come from a larger research project on hospital interaction (see e.g. Kurhila & Lehtimaja 2019). The data consist of 2 h 55 min of video-recorded supervision encounters gathered from an in-patient ward in a Finnish hospital. The encounters are part of either the clinical training included in nursing studies or orientation for new employees. The group of participants consists of seven trainees (of whom three are L2 speakers), eight supervisors, and nine patients. The method used to analyse the data is conversation analysis (see e.g. Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). It builds on the meticulous description and systematic interpretation of interactional details, both verbal and non-verbal.

The following examples illustrate how supervisors verbalize the ongoing activity while giving their instructions. The first examples represent a minimal level of verbalization, where the instruction relies mainly on deictic elements and non-verbal action. The focus then gradually moves towards a more substantial verbal description of the ongoing activity. The analysis reveals the factors that influence the verbalization of the activity.

When supervisors guide trainee nurses to perform physical actions, such as changing an IV infusion fluid container or a wound dressing, there are typically very few verbal instructions. The same phenomenon has also been reported in other instructional contexts: for example, surgeons instruct their assistants with minimal, often deictic elements, such as localizations and pronouns, and rely heavily on multimodal resources (Mondada, 2014). In the first example, the L2 trainee (T) and her supervisor (S) are preparing to give a patient medication through an IV catheter. Both the trainee and the supervisor are leaning over the patient's arm. The trainee is trying to find the injection port of the catheter in order to open the port cap. She is holding the catheter with both hands, and the supervisor is helping with one hand. (Unfortunately, some of the hand movements during this example are not visible on the video.)

#### Excerpt 2.1. Injection port

- 01 S: tual pitäs olla tuala- täälä näin se on  
*there should be over there- here it is*
- 02 kato varmaa \*teippailtu tonne noi ni kaiva-  
*you see probably taped there so dig-*  
\* trainee releases one hand from the catheter
- 03 T: joo [\*katotaan (kuink paljon --)  
*yeah let's see (how much --)*  
\* bends further to get hold of the port
- 04 S: [kaiva (.) tual- tossa,

*dig there there*

05 T: \*just joo tämä,  
*right yeah this one*  
 \*straightens her back slightly

06 S: noin?  
*like that?*

The supervisor guides the trainee by using mostly deictic expressions: *tual(a)* (*tuolla*, ‘over there’), *täällä* (*täällä*, ‘here’), *tonne* (*tuonne*, ‘(towards) there’), *tossa* (*tuossa*, ‘there’), *noi(n)* (*noin*, ‘like that’), *näin* (‘like this’). These expressions are connected to gestures (her hand is extended towards the patient’s arm). She is not naming the parts of the hand or arm, nor is she using explicit expressions of localization such as ‘under’ or ‘on the side’. The physical objects present in the situation and the gestures are enough to specify what is meant. The supervisor’s turns are also highly elliptic: for instance, in line 01 she is not explicitly saying what ‘should be there’, and the verb merely expresses a modal function of likelihood. She is using short imperative verb forms (*kaiva*, ‘dig’, lines 02 and 04), again without specifying what should be ‘dug’. This elliptical nature of the turns is related to the fact that the object the trainee is looking for (the injection port) has already been mentioned in a previous turn. The use of deictic elements and ellipses contributes to making her verbal instructions minimal. This is possible since the trainee has professional knowledge of the situation and is therefore capable of interpreting these minimal verbal instructions, supported by the gestures and the physical context. The immediate objective of the situation is thus achieved: the trainee completes the task of finding the injection port. The accomplishment of the long-term objective of learning to talk about the task, however, is not supported, on account of the limited amount of verbal interaction.

However, at one point the supervisor explicitly refers to the injection port and gives verbal information about it. In lines 01–02 she says *se on kato varmaan teippailtu tonne noi* (‘it is you see probably taped over there’). This occurs at the point when the trainee is having problems locating the injection port, and it therefore becomes necessary to give more information on the placing of the port or an explanation of its unexpected placing. The supervisor refers to the port with the pronoun *se* (‘it’), typically used for referents that have already been mentioned. She is not simply telling the trainee where the port probably is, but also describing the way it is attached to the patient’s forearm: she uses the verb *teippailla*, a frequentative version of the verb *teipata* (‘to tape’). This supplementary information is not essential for finding the port, but it gives the trainee a model of how nurses talk about this particular attachment technique. Compared to the neutral version of the verb, the frequentative forms add an informal or friendly flavour to the basic meaning (VISKA, § 1735). It is a feature of professional language that might not often be addressed in formal language teaching. However, it is part of the linguistic competence of a nurse to be able to express subtle nuances of this kind. The explanation triggered by the trainee’s inability to locate the

port thus gives the supervisor an opportunity to produce a linguistic model, supporting the achievement of a long-term objective: learning to talk about nursing tasks.

Sometimes supervisors also insert some accounts or background knowledge into their instructions. The focus then shifts from the immediate action to more general learning. In the next example, the trainee is ready to start administering the medication. The supervisor gives some advice on what to monitor during the next step of the task and why. The trainee and the supervisor are standing next to the patient's chair, facing the infusion stand.

### Excerpt 2.2. Medicine

- 01 S: >ja sitte \*koko ajan katot että< täälä tippuu myös  
*and then all the time you watch that here are dripping too*  
 \* points to the drip bag, both gaze at the bag
- 02 tipat \*samalla ku \*sä laitat sitä lääkettä?  
*the drops at the same time as you're putting the medicine*  
 \* points to the patient's hand, both gaze at the hand  
 \* supervisor gazes at the trainee
- 03 T: \*joo,  
*yeah*  
 \* nods
- 04 ((trainee takes hold of the syringe, supervisor backs away))
- 05 S: \*sillon sä tiedät et se menee sinne \*(.) suoneen  
*then you know that it goes there into the vein*  
 \* looks over the trainee's shoulder at the syringe  
 \* trainee glances at the drip bag
- 06 eikä nouse \*tonne letkuu,  
*and doesn't rise there in the tube*  
 \* points to the tube

The supervisor's turn in lines 01–02 is a rather straightforward instruction for immediate action: the trainee has to keep an eye on the drip bag while giving the medication in order to see that the infusion is functioning properly. This time the instruction takes the form of a full sentence. Since the required action is not only immediate and physical (watching) but will also run on into the future and is cognitive (checking the state of the drip bag at a specific moment), it needs to be verbalized. The target of the observation is named (*tipat* 'drops') as well as what they will be doing in the future (*tippuu* 'dripping'). The future action of the trainee is also verbalized (*sä laitat sitä lääkettä* 'you put the medicine'). Time expressions are



used to indicate when to watch (*koko ajan* ‘all the time’) and to define the temporal relation between the two actions (*samalla ku* ‘at the same time as’).

When the trainee has acknowledged the instruction and taken hold of the syringe, the supervisor elaborates on the reasons why it is important to monitor the drip (lines 05–06). She has placed herself behind the trainee to observe her actions, and the trainee is slowly lowering the plunger of the syringe, as instructed. There is thus no need for further immediate instructions. This creates a natural space to give background information or a rationale for the instructions. The rationale is formulated from the point of view of the trainee, making explicit the connection between her monitoring the drip and her knowing that it is functioning correctly (*sillon sä tiedät*, ‘then you know’). The proper functioning of the drip is also verbalized, as well as the undesired situation: the medicine has to go into the vein and not into the tube. The medicine is referred to with the pronoun *se* (‘it’), and the places (vein and tube) are preceded by deictic adverbs (*sinne / tonne*, ‘there’, the latter accompanied by a pointing gesture). The supervisor is thus extending her instructions to other possible situations, but at the same time tying them to the physical situation at hand (*tonne letkuun*, ‘in the tube (there)’).

This study shows how guiding the immediate action and giving general instructions for future use are closely intertwined in supervision interaction. The former relies heavily on deictic elements and non-verbal action, and the latter demands more extensive verbalization. On the whole, it seems as though instructional talk is regulated by economy: supervisors use the minimum number of words needed in order to be unambiguous. From the point of view of following the supervision in Finnish, this conciseness might make understanding easier for the L2 trainee, but at the same time it might not support the development of professional language skills.

In order to develop supervision practices in the framework of language awareness, supervisors should consider the balance between clarity and sufficient linguistic material: instructions can well be tied to the physical and material context with nonverbal action and deictic elements, but they could also be enriched by giving a running commentary, naming the objects involved or the actions performed, even when the instructions concern immediate and physical actions. In this way the supervisor could provide the trainee with linguistic models for talking about different tasks (see also Lehtimaja, 2019). Nurses need the ability to verbalize the content of their work, for instance when instructing patients, exchanging information with colleagues, or documenting the care in medical records (see also Seilonen et al., 2016).

The supervisor not only uses as few words as possible, but the trainee’s own verbal production also remains minimal: they display understanding solely by means of the accomplished action and minimal verbal feedback. Consequently, the trainee does not get an opportunity to verbalize the supervised action, even though they are expected to have prior knowledge of the activity in question. In order to support the development of professional language skills, the supervisor needs to focus on language issues occasionally and to

consciously provide the trainee with the opportunity to practise verbalization of the action, either beforehand or afterwards. This would also allow the supervisor to better evaluate the trainee's language skills.

These language-related practices should also be openly discussed at the beginning of the training, to minimize the negative impact of the built-in asymmetry – both institutional and linguistic – between the supervisor and the trainee. The making of a “language contract” (Eskildsen & Theodorsdottir, 2017) would allow both the supervisor and the trainee to bring up language issues when necessary, without causing embarrassment on either side.

## **Conclusions**

Working-life orientation has become an integral part of Finnish L2 instruction, and several studies and projects have already been carried out on these themes. Attention has been paid to the role of “others”: other members of the work community can support the development of field-specific language proficiency in significant ways (e.g. Strömmer, 2017; Seilonen et al., 2016). On the other hand, learning opportunities may also remain quite limited if there are only a few interactional encounters (e.g. Strömmer, 2017). As our data analyses suggest, to develop the field further it is necessary to take a close look at real-life interactions in the workplace, too, and listen to those who are engaged in them in different roles.

The findings of the two case studies presented and discussed above can be combined to develop supervision practices from a more language-aware point of view. As was shown in the first section (4.1), the perceived inadequate Finnish language skills of the nursing students easily lead to a reduction in language learning opportunities, since the supervision tends to be carried out in English and/or the students are given fewer responsibilities. In order to avoid this, the supervisors need tools to increase the use of Finnish, as was shown in the second section (4.2), even when the students' starting level is relatively low. This would support the students' language learning and also allow supervisors to evaluate the students' Finnish language skills. The linguistic practices of supervised training have far-reaching consequences, and therefore the language policies for training periods should be carefully planned and clearly laid out.

Situational aspects such as the type of action, the social and material environment and the language skills of the interlocutors must be taken into consideration when the goal is to understand what language is actually needed and used in working life, and what kind of pedagogy needs to be developed to promote L2 learning in and for working life. The data excerpts analysed in the two case studies here have shown that it is not evident that international trainees get the same opportunities to extend their expertise in the work environment as do their local peers. Their niches – their spaces for working and verbalizing action – may thus remain restricted due to positionings rooted in linguistic issues (see also Suni, 2017). Supervision should therefore support trainees' agency: it should help them to expand their immediate operational environment (Virtanen, 2017). Similarly, supervisors could assist students not only by offering them opportunities to practise a range of work tasks

but also by providing space for verbalizing their own actions. To refer to such supervision practices, the concept of language-aware supervision has recently been launched in the context of immigrant education in Finland (see e.g. KIELO, 2018). This kind of approach can be expected to be fruitful in any L2 supervision or mentoring taking place in a work environment (see also Sandwall, 2013).

Language-aware supervision can also challenge the general understanding of different languages as clearly separate resources that should not be used in parallel with each other. Recent research in applied linguistics has recognized the obvious advantages of so-called languaging practices, where different language resources are allowed to intersect in order to facilitate mutual understanding and task accomplishment (Dufva et al., 2011; Lehtonen, 2015); the concept of translanguaging is also commonly used, particularly in the context of younger L2 learners (García, 2009). In both official and unofficial language policies, a clear division of languages is still commonly highlighted, but in real working life people tend to rely on the whole range of their linguistic resources to become understood. The possible consequences of the languaging practices that are applied in supervision and mentoring remain a challenge for future research.

In Finland and other ageing societies, labour migration is seen as a key to sustainable social welfare, and attracting well-educated labour migrants has become a goal for its own sake. However, this may also lead to unexpected consequences: those who arrived in the wave of asylum seekers in 2015 were mainly young working-age men, but they had limited access to both education and working life (MEAE, 2017). In addition to making Nordic countries increasingly diverse, they thus challenged established educational models, which need to more effectively recognize and utilize the potential brought along by newcomers, irrespective of their background. More flexible options for integration training have been launched since then, and there is obvious pressure to bridge the gap between language education and working life (Kokkonen, Pöyhönen, Reiman & Lehtonen, 2019; Ronkainen & Suni, 2019). Research is already in progress on both multilingual academic work communities, and educated migrants aiming to continue their studies in higher education and get employment in their own field in Finland, and one of the current projects is also analysing the educational pathways of former asylum seekers.

The changing nature of work environments also has to be considered: digitalization and robotization are already changing both the distribution of work and ways of working. In all Western welfare societies, the amount of manual work is decreasing, and life-long learning is expected to accompany working life. The language and literacy skills needed for work will be redefined accordingly. These global and Nordic trends inevitably call for more research-based pedagogical development in the field of second language education.

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## Appendix 1. Transcription symbols

[	point of onset of overlapping talk
*	point of onset of a gesture
(.)	micro pause (less than 0.2 seconds)
-	cut-off of the preceding word
? /,	continuing (rising/level) intonation
.	final (falling) intonation
>word<	faster speech rate than surrounding talk
(word --)	unclear fragment of talk
(( ))	transcriber's comment

## Appendix 2. Original interview excerpts

## Excerpt 1.1

- Laura: [- -] **kyllähän mulla niinku ainakin on vaatimuskriteerit niinku suomalaiselle opiskelijalle niin onhan ne paljon kovemmat tässä vaiheessa kun mitä sit voi vaatia häneltä** ((Simonilta, sairaanhoitajaopiskelija))
- Aija: onks se sitten erityisesti minkätyyppisissä asioissa huomaat
- Laura: **no semmosissa niinku vastuunottamisissa** ja siinä että, että kyllä jos sisätautihaarjotteluun tulee suomalainen opiskelija niin **kyllä mä niinku häneltä odotan jo semmosta että hän pystyy siinä jakson loppupuolella ottamaan omia potilaita, suunnittelemaan heidän hoitoonsa, et niinku ja viemään sen läpi. että, et tota niin sit niinku tän kielitaidon suhteen, niin mä en voi oottaa sitä häneltä**, että tota niin niin. että joitakin toki semmosia pieniä itsenäisiä tehtäviä, mutta ei niinku samassa mittakaavassa kyllä, ku mitä suomalaisen, tai suomen kieltä puhuvan opiskelijan kanssa pystyy tekemään et kyllä siinä sen eron huomaa ja, ja sit tietysti ihan se, et **kyllähän siinä arvioinnissa tulee haastetta just siinä kohtaa kun mietitään näitä kommunikointi-, dokumentointi-, raportointitaitoja**, että, et niitä pystys sillä lailla ((arvioimaan)) että **sitä mä oon miettinyki et miten niitä sitten arvioidaan koska en oo aikasemmin arvioinu**. niinku sitten, kansainvälistä opiskelijaa

## Excerpt 1.2

mä sanoin että mä tykkään näistä opiskelijoista, **mun mielestä opisk-kansainvälisen opiskelijan kuuluukin saada ohjausta sitten myös sillä englannin kielellä mutta sen koulutuksen tarkoitus kai on mun mielestä myös osittain se että heistä tulee sitten kykeneviä toimimaan siinä ammatissa, tässä maassa, myös. ja sehän tarkoittaa sitä että pitää olla aika hyvä suomen kielen taito.** ja mun mielestä se, ikävää, mutta oikeasti totta että se, se koulun edus-edustusto ei niin oo ehkä, tarpeeks kuunnellu sitä **meidän palautetta siitä asiasta** ja sithän se menee niin että jos ei me voida,



tota niin niin, ensinnäkin jos sitä niitä ohjattavia tulee liikaa, niin sithän meidän pitää lopettaa se homma sen takia, että siinä ei enää mikään ohjauksen laatu toteudu. et jos me suomea puhumatonta opiskelijaa joudumme ohjaamaan suomen kielellä niin kukaan ei hyödy mitään. ja sit taas toisaalta niin, et **me ollaan työnantajina vastuussa meille rekrytoitavasta henkilökunnasta.**

### Excerpt 1.3

Johanna: no just tässä Danielin [nursing student] luokalta oli suomenkielinen **tyttö joka kerto miten he kokee niinku epäoikeudenmukaiseks et on niinku eri säännöt ulkomaalaisilla opiskelijoilla ja suomalaisilla opiskelijoilla**

Aija: mitkä ne eri säännöt on sitten

Johanna: no. ehkä siis tää **vaatimustaso et mitä vaaditaan.** eli kun joskus meilläkin on ollu tän opettajan kanssa siitä että on oltu jonkun opiskelijan kohalla sitä mieltä et ei hän pääse läpi tätä jaksoo ja opettaja vaan sitten on sanonu et kyl mejän vaan pitää päästää ja **suomalaista opiskelijaa semmosessa tilanteessa ei ois päästetty**

In text:

Johanna: common rules are agreed on for the whole class but then, nonetheless, the Finns need to do precisely what is said but the foreigners are allowed to bend the rules a bit. [sovitaan luokalle yhteiset säännöt mutta sitten kuitenkin suomalaisten pitää täsmälleen tehdä niin mutta sitten ulkomaalaiset saa vähän joustella.]

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘clinical supervisor’ is used in this text, but e.g. ‘mentor’ and ‘preceptor’ are also used elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> In this section, the division into international and local students is applied as these terms are used in the English degree programme.

<sup>3</sup> The interview excerpts are translated into English. See Appendix 2 for the original excerpts.