

## **Intercultural organizational communication and international employee engagement:**

How prepared are Finnish organizations for culturally  
diverse workforce?

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| <p>In a globalized world where day by day the flow and movement of people increase and every decision made has somehow an impact on each other, it's not rare that many organizations choose to feed their workforce with newcomers from all over the globe. At the same time, many of these international organizations go beyond frontiers to set headquarters or offices.</p> <p>It's known already that miscommunication is a fact which many workers have to experience inside international organizations. But going a bit deeper, setting down an identity can be conflictive when you unify different nationalities to achieve the same goal, so many organizations opt to adjust organizational communication practices that are increasingly global but often modified locally.</p> <p>When it comes to Finland, these all get a complicated scenario due to the lack of adaptation that organizations have for the foreign workforce. In Helsinki, 12% of the population belong to this group and to find a way of making them to feel integrated is a must.</p> <p>This thesis aims to analyze this situation from the perspective of intercultural organization communication and human resources to find out what are the cross-cultural difficulties that immigrants have to experience and what organizations could do to solve this problem.</p> |  |
| <b>Keywords</b><br>diverse workforce, international organizations, cross-cultural management, integration and recruitment, working in English   |  |

## Table of contents

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 1     | Introduction.....  | 1  |
| 1.1   | Research Methods.....  | 2  |
| 1.2   | Thesis subject and data collection.....                                    | 2  |
| 1.3   | Delimitation target group description.....                                 | 3  |
| 1.4   | Thesis limitations.....  | 4  |
| 2     | Theoretical framework.....   | 5  |
| 2.1   | Organizational communication.....  | 6  |
| 2.1.1 | Internal Communication and workplace communication.....                    | 6  |
| 2.1.2 | Intercultural Communication in an organization and diversity strategy..... | 7  |
| 2.2   | Corporate Culture.....   | 9  |
| 2.3   | International Organizational Culture strategy.....                         | 11 |
| 2.4   | Cultural diversity in Finnish organizations.....                           | 12 |
| 2.5   | Hofstede cultural dimensions definition.....                               | 13 |
| 2.5.1 | Hofstede's dimension applied to Finland.....                               | 15 |
| 2.6   | Employee engagement.....   | 16 |
| 2.6.1 | Adaptation, integration and employee engagement.....                       | 17 |
| 2.7   | Unemployment in foreigner population in Finland.....                       | 18 |
| 3     | Findings.....  | 19 |
| 3.1   | Background of the interviewees.....  | 19 |
| 3.2   | Interview findings, quotes and observations.....                           | 20 |
| 3.3   | Hofstede's interviews countries comparison.....                            | 28 |
| 4     | Empirical part.....  | 31 |
| 4.1   | International Talents.....   | 31 |
| 4.2   | Local reflections on cultural inclusion in Finland.....                    | 32 |
| 4.3   | Language barrier.....  | 33 |
| 4.4   | Challenges and opportunities for expatriates.....                          | 35 |
| 4.5   | Discrimination in the recruiting process.....                              | 36 |
| 5     | Discussion.....  | 38 |
| 5.1   | Consideration of results.....  | 39 |
| 5.2   | Trustworthiness of the research.....                                       | 39 |
| 5     | Conclusions.....   | 40 |
| 5.1   | Final Conclusion.....  | 41 |
|       | References.....  | 42 |

## Table of Figures

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 Thesis Research Process.....   | 2  |
| Figure 2 Interviewees general data.....   | 4  |
| Figure 3 Iceberg Theory by Torben 2014 .....  | 11 |
| Figure 4 Hofstede Finland dimensions (Hofstede 2010).....                           | 15 |
| Figure 5 Interviewed findings on diversity inclusion.....                           | 23 |
| Figure 6 (Interview 5, question 1) .....  | 26 |
| Figure 7 Data extracted from Hofstede (Hofstede 2010).....                          | 28 |
| Figure 8 Poll about English as third national language from Foreigner.fi 2019 ..... | 34 |
| Figure 9 Education First. English Proficiency Index, 2019.....                      | 35 |
| Figure 10 Experiment about applicants with foreign backgrounded Yle 2019.....       | 37 |

# 1 Introduction

We all assumed that globalization would remain untouched since we arrived to stay. This fact had forced us to adapt rapidly to the challenges and changes that it might cause in our society. Nowadays, almost all countries have experienced a fast increase in the flow of people migrating. Furthermore, this had been bigger in Western societies.

Today's working environment is suffering the struggles of dealing with a wider variety of cultures immerse in the same atmosphere. Moreover, because of that, it needs to develop an inclusive and open communication strategy that suits everyone and helps expatriates to adapt to their jobs and satisfy them to develop their careers as well as the local's employees.

In the case of Finland rapidly, it had become an attractive destination for living to many foreign backgrounded families because of its high life standard, fair welfare system, guaranteed quality education, well-paid salaries, low criminal statics, low perception of corruption, among other reasons. Even the Happiness Report 2019 had honored Finland as the happiest country in the world, published by United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

This thesis research aims to identify the difficulties and challenges that expatriates go through when it comes to working in Finnish organizations or companies. Through qualitative research, observation, and open question interviews, the author will try to identify how the local context influences the interaction between expatriates and locals working in Finland.

## 1.1 Research Methods

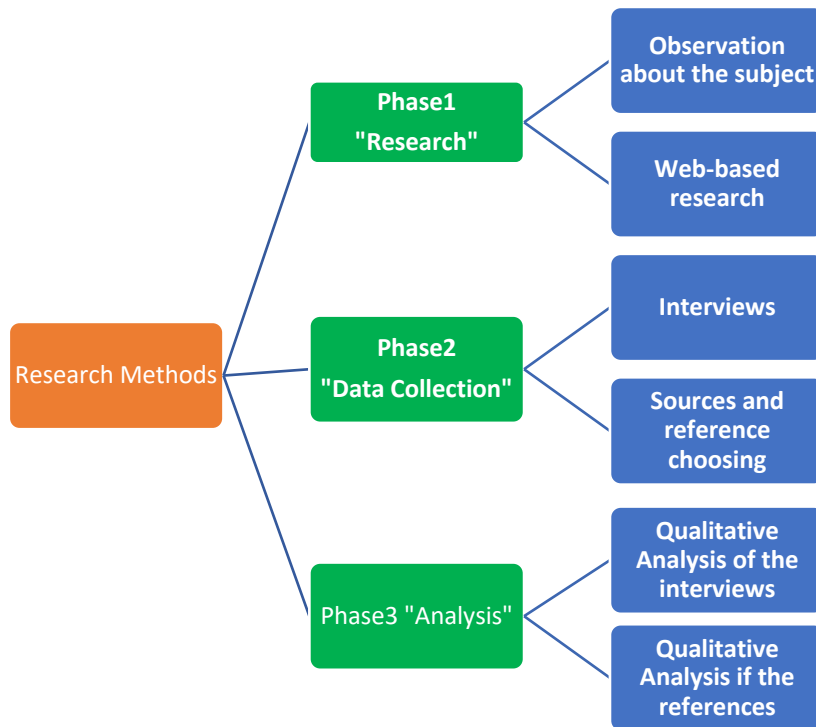


Figure 1 Thesis Research Process

## 1.2 Thesis subject and data collection

The objective of this thesis is to find out what are the difficulties that international work-force deal with when it comes to being inserted in Finnish companies, then to analyze how the local context influence in their performance and their intercultural interaction with their local colleagues.

In order to collect data, qualitative research and observation will take place through five interviews made to international employees residing in Finland.

The questions made to achieve this goal are the following:

- Do you see differences among employees regarding their spoken language at work?
- What is the most complicated of being an expatriate in Finland?
- Regarding your company's team meeting: in which language are those implemented?
- How participative are you in team meetings?
- What are your goals at your company regarding promotions or career development?

Beside of these interviews, the author of this thesis, will research by reading a wide variety of articles provided by the local newspapers available in English. It had been found bibliography that will be necessary to support theories and argumentations made by the author, such as Jakob Luring professor at Aarhus University who did a research based on Intercultural Organizational Communication but focused on Danish workers working abroad.

Professor Akhlaq Ahmad from University of Helsinki has done deep research on the discrimination on the recruiting process in Finland, material that has support the results of the interviews.

Also, Hofstede's research in cultural dimension has support several studies based on cultural diversity. His research was very important for the success of this analysis. This thesis research will use studies related to managing cultural diversity, intercultural communication, cultural diversity and organizational culture. Authors such as Hofstede are essential to understand these concepts.

### **1.3 Delimitation target group description**

The interviews had been done to a specific group of foreigners living and working in Finland from different countries and professional fields.

None of them have lived and worked over ten years in Finland, and their ages are between 22 to 45 years old.

It must be informed that none of them have met each other, and they belong to different companies and countries.

It was necessary to search for a foreigner workforce who is working using English as a primary language in order to differentiate this research to other groups of foreigners who have lived longer in Finland.

|                    |            |                   |            |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Nationality</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Profession</b> | <b>sex</b> |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|

|                    |    |                      |   |
|--------------------|----|----------------------|---|
| Spain              | 40 | Architect            | M |
| Japan              | 29 | Foresight Analyst    | F |
| UK                 | 45 | Architect            | M |
| Dom. Republic/ USA | 22 | Sales Representative | F |
| Chile              | 29 | Graphic Designer     | F |

Figure 2 Interviewees general data

#### 1.4 Thesis limitations

Because of how new the discussion on this topic is, the most significant difficulties for this author had been the limited material that exists about this subject, primarily focused on the Finnish context. Most of the findings had been located in news articles from Finnish newspapers available in English

Also, the implemented qualitative research would give us some insights and opinions about what the experience of five expatriates is working in Finland. Due to the small number of interviews, their answers can vary, and their experiences can be different from each other because their environments, careers and personalities are not the same.

Another limitation is the global context of coronavirus, which limited some of the interviews. So instead of face-to-face, there were by Skype. The risk can be a limitation because it modifies the natural context of flow.



## 2 Theoretical framework

This research is supported by different sources and data prospect collected during this semester. These sources and data had been taken from qualitative interviews conducted to five different experiences from expatriates living in Helsinki, and in which English is the language used on their responsibilities, a specific research about the topic and articles written in English from Foreigner.fi, Yle in English and Helsinki News.

Besides also for the fact that the author herself is an expatriate and had experience working using English in Finland. Based on her own experience and the experience, she can observe living surrounded by foreigners living in Finland.

About the interviews, observation and discursive analysis have been crucial to analyze implicit and explicit speech given by the interviewers.

Previous research about the topic had been crucial to understand how other experts had orientate their research and what had been their conclusions regarding expatriate work experience and integration. Furthermore, the analysis of some study cases is going to be presented in this thesis research intending to support the author's analysis, research and observations.

Articles found in Finnish newspapers, had given a comprehensive and clear perspective about how this topic is applied. It helps to see it from a Finnish perspective, and they have work to support the author's approaches and theories regarding this thesis topic by offering a bigger perspective and specific quantitative research about it.

## **2.1 Organizational communication**

Communication is not just merely transferring communication, but it is as fundamental as a structured process to generate communication of human interaction within and outside the company. It identifies the way as to how the organization communicates.

### **2.1.1 Internal Communication and workplace communication**

Many employees feel that they work do not provide many contributions to the success of the company where they work. Furthermore, the work order does not have a clear structure.

Improving communication strategy opening to employees the possibility of sharing their opinion about what they do, and the company operations would help employees to feel more motivated and included in that development.

Internal communication is the communication within the enterprise with a focus on the employee; this is not something only for large companies, also for small ones. Including better communication channels would provide with high equality and more efficacy of the communication among the employees, and departments.

Advantages are quickly notable, excellent internal communication would not only transmit data, but values, behaviors, feelings, expectations, making employees feel part and belong to the company. Motivation would improve the company's productivity because employees would be more competitive, and they would face problems and difficulties easier and successfully.

Exchanging ideas and advice, encourage continual development, and cooperation among employees would lead a company to success by learning and innovative methods with team collaborations.

A company needs to determine the needs of communication in their workers, and ideally, they would do a follow up of the employees' needs.

For example, forms made every certain period and private meetings with employees would help managers to identify possible problems of motivation, or internal relations.

Having enough information about employees, the company can know what to communicate, and this will help to improve internal communication. Also, having team building activities outside the daily work can help employees to create relations of trust and friendship that would be positively reflexed on the company's success.

A company might make available the information for all employees. For instance, when it comes to team meetings, all people have to collaborate and participate actively in them, no matter to which department they belong (in case of small businesses). In larger companies, most likely, those team meetings are being conducted by department and teams.

Topics might vary from general to particular, going through all employee's performance and tasks. With everyone collaboration, problems must easily find a solution, and understanding about goals and expectations. Understanding also the possibilities, the challenges, and the current business situation would help employees to realize that they belong to that reality and that too on their hands is the company's success.

Implementing internal communication, it is essential proper planning, quality, and creativity are vital. Companies must take into account that this time would generate success in the company, and it is not going to be a loss because employees would appreciate belonging to this kind of company where their thoughts are being listened.

Verbal communication is easy to be implemented, and it has quick results; employees must not feel fear or insecurity to communicate with managers, colleagues, and bosses.

### **2.1.2 Intercultural Communication in an organization and diversity strategy**

The most prominent aspects are that Intercultural Communication is defined as the interaction between individuals or groups based on their language differences and cultural ones.

However, beyond the expected, other factors also affect business when it comes to intercultural communication.

It is known that our world is becoming more interconnected. It is a fact that multiculturalism is increasing rapidly in Finland, that's why being attractive for new customers and partners is fundamental for business development. For this reason, an effective intercultural communication strategy is essential for business success. Companies might look for retaining employees and understand that those are imperative stakeholders for their companies.

Companies must recognize that workforce is becoming more intercultural, but there are still many companies resisting this idea and deciding not to take actions on their communication strategy plan. Such companies might find difficulties in retaining skilled employees, especially foreign ones.

Implementing a diversity strategy must be after improving an intercultural communication plan. What this means is that for understanding critical aspects of communication, it is essential to understand the way how one perceives the world and the environment beyond our own culture.

Individuals who only know their cultural values believe that those are universal, and this can lead to many difficulties in developing team and business success. Requiring from employees and managers an intercultural mindset, and allowing international talents will improve notoriously

To develop effective intercultural communication, managers must have the sufficient skills to recognize and identify what are the characteristics of their team. For instance, there are some guidelines for managers to follow to lead intercultural groups.

A diversity strategy plan aims to improve a company's competence by diversifying workforce backgrounds to achieve growth in their businesses. Having diversity in a company would attract a more extensive range of customers and partners.

When teams are diverse, innovative ideas foster and develop because employees have different experiences and backgrounds, and they can contribute to giving different perspectives on the same issue.

Recruiters are afraid of diversity, thinking that it can cause problems within employees. However, if everyone learn to face the issues and find better solutions, it would reflect positively on the companies' success and reputation.

A diversity management strategy would look for ensuring justice and fair treatment among employees and managers no matter what their cultural background is by providing equal treatment and value. Of course, their diversity are facts, but they should not be seen as unfavorable, but as a contribution and an advantage.

Recognition of cultural diversity, it must cause functional economic consequences for a company because managers would lead to recognize them and utilize it in the best moment. This strategy is useful, but people tend to feel into stereotyping others, ideally managers should be aware of the team and see their differences.

What is valuable in diversity is the fact that everyone might be recognized as an essential element and resource, and as an opportunity for growth. What is expected is that every employee provides what makes them unique based on their knowledge, experiences, values, and so on, not reducing people to their background. It must be used towards the development of the company.

Of course, the way how diversity is perceived can vary from person to person. However, everyone must be aware that this can influence an employee's performance and productivity, and finally, on the company's success.

## **2.2 Corporate Culture**

Corporate Culture refers to the union of ideas, believes, ideologies, principles, and values of the company. Each company reflects its identity based on these faculties because a corporate culture defines the corporate's personality of an organization.

The company's culture delineates the way employees behave and interact within and with the organization, this is important because it decides the way how to implement interactions at the workplace. A healthy corporate culture encourages employees to stay motivated and committed in a way to improve turnover.

Relations are essential in today's team wold environment. It is crucial to know what a company culture is and find the best way to communicate with employees. Corporate Culture promotes healthy competition because employees try their best to perform the best in order to gain recognition.

## **“The Benefits of Strong Culture**

First, there are clear benefits to having a strong, unified company culture underlying your business’s operations:

**Identity.** For starters, culture contributes to the identify and values of your company. For example, if your corporate culture is one that prioritizes setting and meeting goals, your individual workers will be more likely to set and meet goals of their own. It’s a good way to set and maintain the direction of your employees, and without it, it’s hard to keep your company’s values coherent.

**Retention.** A strong company culture attracts better talent and, more importantly, retains that talent. When people feel like they belong to an organization, they’re more likely to stick around for the long term. That means lower turnover, fewer new hires to deal with, and better chemistry among your team.

**Image.** Corporate culture also adds to your brand identity. If you treat your employees well and have a fun-loving corporate atmosphere, your customers will see you as a fun-loving, generous brand. Depending on your target demographics, that could be a major boon for sales and customer loyalty.” (Alton 2017)

Alton, who contributes in Forbes newspapers, get dept into the benefits of a corporate culture. Positively, these benefits can also be applied when it comes to company that want to incorporate diverse workforce within the company because their identity, their image would be diverse and wider, also its retention might increase if they know how to protect and develop those employees.

In addition, a positive corporate culture unites employees from different backgrounds: racial, socioeconomic, and culture. A culture helps to unite all people into one unit towards accomplishing a common goal. The company must express what their goals and values are. So, employees can share them, they can see how what they do drive to the company to its goals, and it is going to give them a strong feeling of contribution.

It also creates the brand image of the company, how the company looks to all stakeholders. A company with a positive corporate culture makes its employees feel valued and would invest in them. By stimulating growth, employees would also feel more engaged, and it would promote a corporate culture that cares about developing employees’ careers by implementing employees’ suggestions and promoting healthy competition.

Creating a positive corporate culture company would see improving on their employee's performance; they will easily retain top talents; they would impulse its leader to develop and drive towards innovative solutions continually. Consequently, it would be reflexed in their productivity.

### 2.3 International Organizational Culture strategy

Each corporation develops its unique identity; these foundations are notoriously based on its core values: those corporate values defined where a company stands on. This unique identity is not only a message; it's a mindset that is developed and put into action and behaviours that guide the organization.



Figure 3 Iceberg Theory by Torben 2014

The most significant characteristics of an organizational culture are under the water. However, those are reflected in the upper part as the results. In order to keep the iceberg balanced, a company must pay attention from below to above it because every act is reflected superficially.

To develop the organization culture, a company must look within their organization beyond the obvious and focus on understanding why they get specific results. Internal actions can affect the structure of the iceberg and finally destroy it.

## **2.4 Cultural diversity in Finnish organizations**

Finland needs diversity. If a company tries to create businesses only based on Finnish talents, companies are missing a beneficial part of the market. International members in teams would provide a higher reachability for business growth.

A study on the diversity of senior management and boards of companies listed on Nasdaq [1] brings up a source on how diverse Finnish companies are called FINDIX. This index presents on statistics diversity based on gender, age, international background, and educational background in Finnish companies, and it would help us to understand how international diversity is seen and applied in Finnish organizations.

As they also mentioned in their report, there is a strong need for research about diversity in Finnish organization beyond the gender aspects; there is still some lack of diversity for age, disability, international background, and educational backgrounded groups.

FINDIX index is a pioneer in Finland in conducting this kind of research, and they make a call to action to encourage researchers to study these issues.

Findix report concludes that diversity in Finnish organizations has the least results on the international diversity group. It is seen that there is not much diversity of nationalities in Finnish organizations because international experts living in Finland can hardly make it to the interviews. The study mention that Finland is not seen as attractive to expatriate to



move in and take managerial positions in Finnish organizations for its geographical location. However, there are still many foreigners living in Finland who are highly educated but are unemployed, as FINDIX 2020 report says. (Halttula & Saikkonen 2020)

What is also significant in this matter is the increase of foreigners studying in Finnish universities and University of Applied Sciences. It shows a clear initiative from foreigners to belong and participate in the Finnish labor market. Also, a vast number of institutions are developing to English-language education programs for bachelor's and master's degrees.

The active participation in universities is allowing many foreigners and Erasmus students to feel attracted to Finland and develop international experience. A press released by Ministry of Interior in April 2019, confirmed that the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of interior, set up a cooperation group to support and encourage the access and cooperation between Finnish universities and international ones, in order to attract more students and researchers to work and study in Finland by retaining them in attractive work positions.

A data collection study made by Facts Express 9B/2018 shows that 6.8% of students from UAS and 7% from universities are people with foreign backgrounds. In conclusion, almost 14% of the students of professional education are from outside of Finland. (Facts Express, 2019. P 2-4)

## **2.5 Hofstede cultural dimensions definition**

Living in a world populated by different people from a different culture, the need to find better strategies for communicating is vital to understand what the national culture is.

There is an evident influence on people's personality and behavior, the place where they were born and grow; it influences people's personality, also the way how people analyze information and how they behave, believe, interact, and so on.

Hofstede says that everyone faces the same problems based on cultural diversity. Specifically, he analyzes this on the following module divided into six-part which are not necessarily separate because all of them are related to each other. This data is easily accessible from Hofstede's insight where people can search and compare countries cultural dimensions.

Here, a summary of the cultural dimension's theory extracted by Hofstede's insights:

“Power distance: this metric is a measure of the intensity of inequality. It presents how power distance is accepted and applied in certain cultures, how superiority and centralization of power is analyzed and seen.

Uncertainty avoidance: this is about risk avoidance and situations which are not anticipated. An Avoiding culture tends to be more preventive and regulators. However, uncertain culture can deal with this uncertainty; it is represented in how society deals with new situations, the level of comfort that people have under uncertain situations.

Individualism vs. collectivism: it represents the degree of what individuals are integrated into groups. A collectivist society identifies itself as a “we”, in opposite an individualist society they would say “I”.

Masculinity and femininity: it refers to how societies identify success, but instance, a feminine society cares more about modesty, teamwork and building relationships, and a masculine society focuses more on values such as competitiveness, winning, material rewards.

Long term vs. short term: it refers to the time orientation. Short orientation people look for immediate results, and goals are fundamental, but in the long-term society, they prefer to work thinking to the long-time results.

Indulgence vs. restraint: it refers to how people perceive their personal needs, how society sees this—for instance, the perception of happiness and how people deal with it. Indulgence society, people feel that they deserve joy and have fun, and doing such as a thing is highly appreciated and accepted in these societies. Those kinds of society tend to be more positive and extrovert in their personalities.” (Hofstede 2010)

On the other hand, restraint societies are being regulated by social rules of behavior, there is a feeling of guilt if they do what they wish. These kinds of societies tend to be more pessimistic, introverted on their personalities.

Since Hofstede's research, it has become essential to understand cultural differences, and its model has been used widely to understand national differences based on his international standard model. This data is easily accessible from Hofstede's insight where people can search and compare countries cultural dimensions.

### 2.5.1 Hofstede's dimension applied to Finland

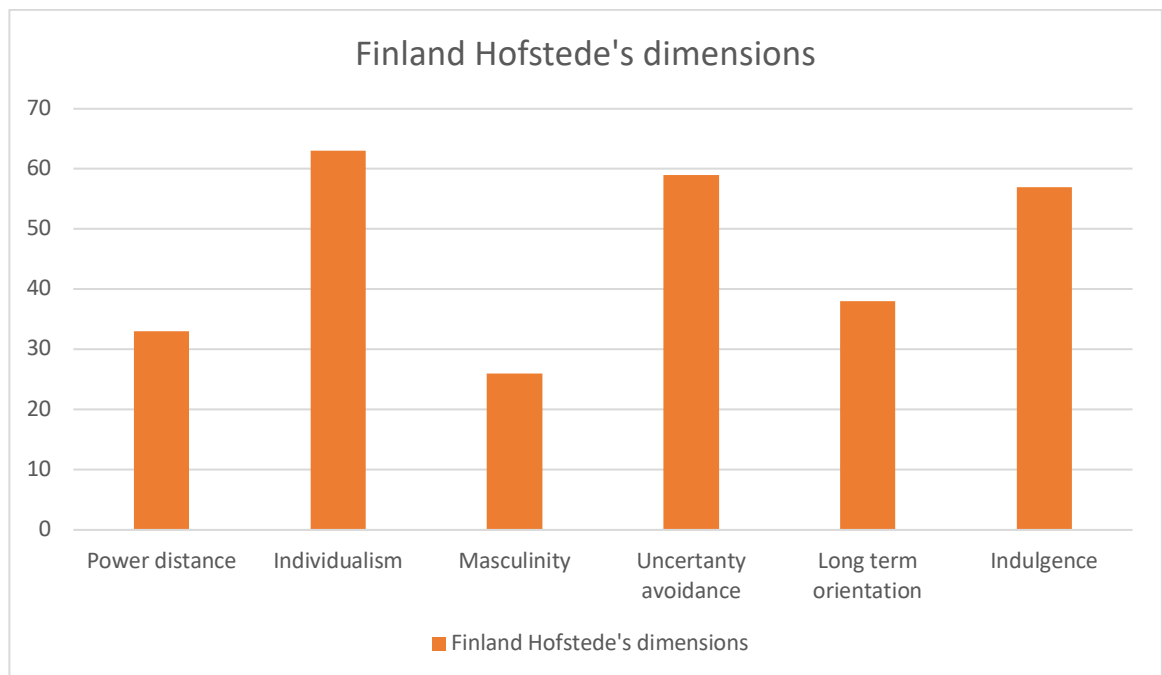


Figure 4 Hofstede Finland dimensions (Hofstede 2010)

Cultural dimensions applied to Finnish working life leaves a clear perspective on how employees behave and relate to each other within an organization. Also, the way how people perceive their positions and expectation are reflected thanks to this model.

How Hofstede sees Finnish culture was explored on this model of the six dimensions. Here a general perspective of his study:

“Power distance: it is scored very low, which means that Finnish society is pretty much equal, and hierarchy used only by convenience and in particular (not detailed) circumstances. The analysis mention that superiors and managers are accessible for the employees, and it has expected a more informal relation towards managers. About the employees, their attitude is expected to be direct and participative.

Individualism over collectivism, Finland, is an individual society. It applies to the work environment is reflected in the fact that individuals must take care of themselves; management sees results base on the individual's performances, as promotions are mainly based on merit.

Regarding the following dimension, Finland had scored 26, which means that Finnish culture is reflected in the Femininity dimensions, meaning that their values are equality, solidarity, consensus, and quality in their work environment.

Finland working life contains lots of incentives that can contribute to making an employee's life more comfortable and happier, focusing strongly on their well-being and personal development. For instance, free time, flexibility is part of the incentives and benefits that are expected for the employees.

Short term orientation is more representative of the Finnish culture, according to Hofstede's model. Here, Finnish society seeks to achieve quick results.

About indulgence, people have a positive attitude towards leisure time and having fun. Finnish people tend to do what they please. Indulgence is widely accepted, and there is not a feeling of guilt when it comes to spending money on impulses or desires." (Hofstede 2010)

## **2.6 Employee engagement**

The company's success is highly connected with the employee's satisfaction and happiness. By increasing their satisfaction and happiness, companies would be able to retain good employees because naturally, people would stay where they feel more comfortable and appreciated.

Companies make more sense to invest in their employees rather than wasting time in the recruiting process. Employee engagement brings many benefits for companies because they increase their productivity and save in recruiting operational costs. Engaged employees feel that a company's success is their success, too, and they help companies to grow.

Nowadays, employees are not only seeking reasonable salaries, but they are also looking for meaningful roles, and attractive rewards mean at the same time they develop their careers. Giving a sincere feel of belonging, trust, and empower workers, companies would drive to better employee engagement.

In conclusion, when employees are engaged, they perform more and better instead of wasting their talents. If people do not feel engaging in a company, they would instead leave their work to find another where they feel more engage and happy.

### 2.6.1 Adaptation, integration and employee engagement

Integration programs for foreigners do exist in Finland, and they are basically orientated to understand Finnish culture, to target B1-2 in the Finnish language, contemporary history, and an overview of current affairs. During those courses, people can be related to others coming from different countries and have different language and economic and social backgrounds in order to build a more extensive multicultural experience.

“An initial-stage service package that meets individual needs and initiates the integration process without delay (...) Their core content comprises strong advisory and guidance services as well as an individual and gender-sensitive integration pathway building on the immigrant’s needs and competence” (Ministry of Economics 32)

Courses are orientated to understand the local culture, traditions, and language, and give a brief knowledge of the possibilities that they can achieve after completing their target level on the Finnish language. Many adults choose to study on an Ammattikoulutus (vocational education and training) where they can skill in trades such as cooking, construction, security, hairdressing, among others. Thanks to this, they can gain sufficient skills for developing their businesses or joining others.

The Government Integration Programme for 2016-2019 aims to develop the participation of immigrants into cultural, working, leisure, and Finnish society. In this document, everyone can access and read it in English.

The focus is on this integration program are situated in:

- Using immigrants’ cultural strengths to develop Finnish innovation capacity
- Assuring the conditions of the initial stages’ services
- Access to further studies and accessing the labor market through integration training.
- Improving labor market positions
- High-quality primary education for young immigrants
- Multi-professional support and welfare services to immigrant families
- Support immigrants participation in leisure activities

Based on this research, Finland’s economic growth and welfare seek for investing in immigrant’s integration plays an essential role in the society.

As it's mentioned previously, immigrants are active in the services sector working area because mainly job opportunities are located in cities, and this is the most available option.

## **2.7 Unemployment in foreigner population in Finland**

On the other hand, those who already have a university or UAS background find some difficulties in adapting to the working life; their studies and work experience are not appreciated in Finnish companies. Finnish employers because it considers that there are enough qualified Finns able to do their jobs using a native level of Finnish (even international jobs).

Unemployment is a reality not only for foreigners but also for Finnish people. February 2020 reflects a percentage of 6.9%.

The last data collection was the first semester of 2019 reflects that the national unemployment rate is 6.2%, according to Statistics Finland, from 124.396 number of foreigners, 29.504 are jobseekers (currently 29.319 in April 2020).

In percentages, another study from the Finnish statistical offices dated August 2019 shows that 23.7% of foreigners in working age are unemployed and actively jobseekers.

An exciting fact blooms when we analyze this data, as mentioned on Foreigner.fi. It says that immigrants quadruple the percentage of unemployment in comparison with Finns.

In February 2020, a poll made by Foreigner.fi about what is the best way for foreigners to find a job reflects the following: based on the final results, from 38 participants, 55% established that the best way is through connections. What became more interesting is that the other options are concrete actions such as TE offices, LinkedIn job applications, and by first being an intern.

An interview made by Yle to Eve Kyntäjä (specialist in immigration and integration issues) and Taina Susiluoto (private sector lobby group EK's); highlight fundamental aspects about why Finnish organizations are not very eager in hiring foreigners' employees:

Taina Sosiluoto says to Yle that foreigners are mainly working on the services and construction sectors; those jobs do not require university and UAS qualifications.

### **3 Findings**

#### **3.1 Background of the interviewees**

##### **Interviewed 1**

He is 45 years old, an architect from Spain, he has completed University education in Spain and abroad and has lived in Finland over six years ago.

The interviewee has worked in only one company in Finland, performing as an architect for over four years. Back in Spain, he worked for around ten years in the same field.

The interview took place in Helsinki in a cafeteria located in Kamppi. It was a long and deep conversation before the interview begun, which gave an extensive understanding of his work and responsibilities within the company. His insights and sharing were essential for this research.

The thesis researcher had translated her transcriptions due to the interview language was Spanish.

##### **Interviewed 2**

She is 29 years old, strong educational background in International Relations and affairs, and sustainability. Four years living and working in Finland, currently as a foresight analyst. Her educational background is highly international; she has got study qualifications in Finland, her native Japan, and other countries.

The interview took place in a café located in Pasila. She was very open and transparent to the interview and has given essential insights into what she does within the company.

The interview was conducted in English.

##### **Interviewed 3**

He is 40 years old, an architect from the UK with vast local experience and international. His studies were mainly completed in the UK. He mentioned that he has lived in Finland for ten years.

The interview was done by records that the interviewed provided for this thesis research. The complexity of the current corona situation made this method as a quick solution. However, the interviewed answers were profound and helpful for this research. The interview has given high complexity on this topic and has given useful insights for this research.

The interview was conducted in English.

#### **Interviewed 4**

She is 22 years old Business Bachelor student from the Dominican Republic. During her studies, she has worked as a sales assistant in a B2B company. He has a broad international life experience because she has lived in many countries and expended many years in Finland. Her answers provide this research with a clear perspective of a small international company.

The interview was done by audio record because of the current corona situation.

Interview conducted in English

#### **Interviewed 5**

She is 29 years old, a Graphic designer from Chile. She has completed her university studies in Chile but worked in many agencies as a designer. She moved to Finland five years ago. Her perspectives and insights have contributed to the research.

The interview took place by Skype because of the current corona situation.

The interview was conducted in Spanish, and it has been translated into English.

### **3.2 Interview findings, quotes and observations**

#### **Interview 1**

The interviewed was a very open, communicative, and participative person. The interviewed perceived negative differences among employees, especially because of the level and importance of the responsibilities and tasks.



“For example: during a conflict or something to solve regarding the company operations, something that you can solve because you are capable of doing it. You are not even consulted, because they think you are not going to solve that.” (Interview 1, question 1)

In the above quotation, it is demonstrated what several findings in this thesis research mentioned. Some Finnish employers tend to believe that foreign employees are not as good as the locals one.

The interviewed finds many cultural differences when he compares his native culture and the local one; for him, those differences are the most complicated things of being an expatriate in Finland. In his words: “For example, daily in the office, it was very uncomfortable to start my shift with colleagues that were not able to say: hi! How are you? Instead, every morning they were heading to their desks (...) and, the excessive silence in the office, I felt like I was bothering my colleagues if I say something.” (Interview 1, question 2)

The interviewed experience related to the Finnish work environment is more individualist according to Hofstede insights, and the interviewed finds some challenges because of this, especially for the fact he is the only foreign person within the company.

Team meetings are only a part of the whole universe of organizational communication focused on internal communication. Nevertheless, this part has a deep significance when it comes to diversity inclusion. Regarding this matter, the interviewed mentioned the following:

“Team meetings were in Finnish. Always, even though I do not speak Finnish well. Every certain time inside the team, they were asking if I understood or if I followed it (that question was always in English) because every time they asked me something, it was in English. Or for instance, the meeting was always in Finnish, but if they wanted to discuss something directly with me in the meeting, that small part was always in English. After that was addressed, the meeting continues in Finnish.” (Interview 1, question 3)

Despite the Spanish collectivist approach, the interviewed lack of participation can be explained for the lack of integration plan of the company. When it came to describing his behavior during team meetings, he replies: “I am zero participative in the team meetings because I am only a viewer.” (Interview 1, question 4)

After four years of working in the same company, the interviewer’s motivation is shallow due to all the previous findings. Lastly, he mentioned that it is tough to see his career

growth in this company. Because his motivations went from high to low: “In the beginning I did see possibilities of growing because I had the illusion of having it, but then I realized that the reality was different. Our internal communication and external was totally in Finnish. I am an architect, and in Finland, there are regulations and normative that are different than in Spain, so we had to follow the Finnish ones, of course. Besides, almost all our clients were Finnish speakers, so I could not help in that either.” (Interview 1, question 5)

In conclusion, many factors expressed by the interviewed that can help this research to demonstrate the lack of an integrated diversity plan for companies besides of the lack of information in English to support internationality for Finnish companies to grow abroad, as is the case of the access to the regulations and normative in this field.

## **Interview 2**

When employees are aware of how diverse the work environment is and have gotten clear instructions about the newcomers (no matter their nationality), they can build together a more inclusive place to be. Managers must prepare and instruct them to create an inclusive environment. Foreigner employees, no matter the number of them within a company, can quickly realize that his/her colleagues are making a prompt atmosphere to work better as a team.

“Whenever I am there, they switch to English, so I can see that they care a lot about how I can feel, so they try to make me feel included. So, I do not feel big differences.” (Interview 2, question 1)

Regarding to the following question, the interviewed had mentioned various important point on diverse inclusion:



Figure 5 Interviewed findings on diversity inclusion

“Of course, the language is the most challenging thing. Of course, English is not their native language either, (...) even though I have taken courses for years, I am not able to dominate it on a professional level. Also, our company wants to have a presence internationally, so it is not a problem for them to switch to English because they want the company to be more international.

I am happy that they are like that, especially for the fact that I am not the only foreigner at the company, but in my team, I am the only one.” (Interview 2, question 2)

A company that works on its diversity strategy develops and manages all its communication channels and material to be accessible to all members of the organization. For instance, team meetings, sources, materials, data are made and conducted in a way that it’s understood for everyone within the company without leaving anyone behind.

“They are in English (team meetings), and my company uses English material, so I think most of our customers are Finnish, but they have managed to make like that. Especially because they want to expand.” (Interview 2, question 3)

A company seeking expansion considers openly diverse people. In this case, people with foreign backgrounds because through working on diversity inclusion and diverse team, they develop tools and skills to be able to penetrate new markets.

Regarding career development, the interviewed expressed that the company cares about her career development and expectations. She was promoted, and they continuously follow up what are her professional projects and plans.

There are several ways of rewarding employees: some are based on material benefits and other in intrinsic. However, both have the goal of reaching employees' satisfaction, confidence, and commitment. Rewards make them feel worthy and essential for the company's success: promoting and giving a place to communicate their professional interests are ways in how a company can develop talents within an organization to achieve success.

### **Interview 3**

Foreigner employees see as a disadvantage not to be Finnish native speakers because it locates them on a different level. However, the interviewed says that it is not a big issue because the company is having many other foreign colleagues. He also even mentions that there is a second language group of people who speaks French.

About what is the most complicated thing of being a foreigner, he says the following:

“As the company is based in Helsinki, it makes things incredibly easier because here, English is widely spoken. Particularly in the last decade, this had improved incredibly so that I can manage with minimal Finnish language. When it comes to work, there is much technical language; those are not even commonly found in dictionaries, so it is something that makes very complicated even though if you have studied Finnish. How to communicate very specific, technically in more complicated situations.” (Interview 3, question 2)

Besides his positive approach to how Helsinki had become more international, he mentioned that there are still some limitations regarding more deep and technical situations in which he cannot even collaborate because of its language limitations.

Team meeting does not have a clear conducted language, and it is essential for the success of a clear way of setting them in order that the information and instructions reach all team members accurately. By setting a language, make should that everyone feels comfortable. Projects to a more explicit and transparent on its approach and implementation: “In terms of team meetings in the office, naturally many people would converse in Finnish, but my boss had been very keen on promoting English as a common language within the

offices. So, meeting most of the time switch between Finnish and English, so I do my best to follow them as much as possible, but when I do not understand, I can ask questions. But, commonly right now, seemingly migrating from Finnish to English” (Interview 3, question 3)

The way how we interact and participate is molded based on our personalities. However, the way how we usually see or evaluate certain behaviors might be generally applied to how the working culture sees those interactions.

“I participate quite a lot in meetings. I mentioned before, it quite easy to participate in English, but difficulties arise when there are technical discussions in Finnish. Some people do not have such as good command in technical terminology either in English, but that is the case.” (Interview 3, question 4) As it was mentioned, this company is doing the transition towards English (a language widely spoken within the company), but there are still some limitations on English/Finnish terminology that make it difficult for their jobs.

Also, offering manager and director positions for foreigners demonstrates an interest in the company in seeing and appreciate international talents by recognizing their expertise and knowledge.

“I joined the company I currently work for just over a year and a half ago. Six months ago, they made me the design director. I joined as a senior architect, and previously I had experienced as a senior before. I was not necessarily expecting to be given that position per se. But, I think at the moment our company is growing quite rapidly because they are going through a transition in their structure. So, I think my promotion, in a sense, was part of an overall vision of trying to control a design politic across projects in our office.” (Interview 3, question 5)

#### **Interview 4**

The interviewed did not see differences among colleagues based on their language. On the contrary, she gave the perception that everyone felt equally treated regarding their roles. About the second topic, she says some facts that are mostly related to the jobseeker perspective of the Finnish market and the challenges that foreigner deal when it comes to search for jobs in Finland:

“Unfortunately, it is very tough to find a job that does not require Finnish, and in the case you do find one, it is most likely not something in your field. Finns have started to write job

ads in English, which leads to many of us reading through it, seeing we qualify for it. But then, in the end, there is the unfortunate “must-have fluent Finnish skills”- they expect companies to have an international outreach yet limit themselves to only employing Finnish speakers.” (Interview 4, question 2)

Finally, she mentions that the language of the company was always Finnish, even though there were Finnish native speakers within the company, this approach was always evident. About team meetings, she confesses that she is not very participative because her role was very minimal, but she felt quite comfortable working there because she got the desired experience.

### Interview 5

Over six years living and working in Finland, the interviewed has seen openness in the Finnish work market regarding to foreign employees.



Figure 6 (Interview 5, question 1)

Based on her answer, we can assume that she noticed that there were differences among employees based on their language. She says that relationships with colleagues were complicated because of the lack of it. “they were having even fun in their language, but I was not part of that because of the language thing” (Interview 5, question 1)

She mentioned that she did not have difficulties related to her job operations because her profession can be done totally in English.

The interviewed says that the most challenging thing about being a foreigner in Finland is to find a job with a multicultural mindset. She says that when someone does not find the opportunity feels that they do not belong to society. They cannot be a success and independent if people would find job opportunities; their feelings would be more positive. "But to have that difficulty is bad too because you live here, but you do not feel entirely part of the society. When you get a job, you have almost half of the way done because when you get a job, you have independence, and you can make your life easier." (Interview 5, question 2)

Team meetings are significant for every team; that's why managers must find a strategy to make everyone understand what is going on at the meeting and feel part of them:

"When it came to team meetings, most of the time they were trying to keep speaking in English, but at one point they switched to Finnish because probably they lost their patience and it was more comfortable for them to do it that way, considering they were all Finnish.

However, I had also worked in more multicultural places, and our team meetings were in English, but sometimes we had customers who were speaking in Finnish, so I was not allowed to be in those meetings for obvious reasons.

I think English is a kind of universal language for those who live in Finland, but were not born there. It is the language in which we communicate and try to work because, as a professional, it would take us to learn our career again to do it totally in Finnish." (Interview 5, question 3)

### 3.3 Hofstede's interviews countries comparison

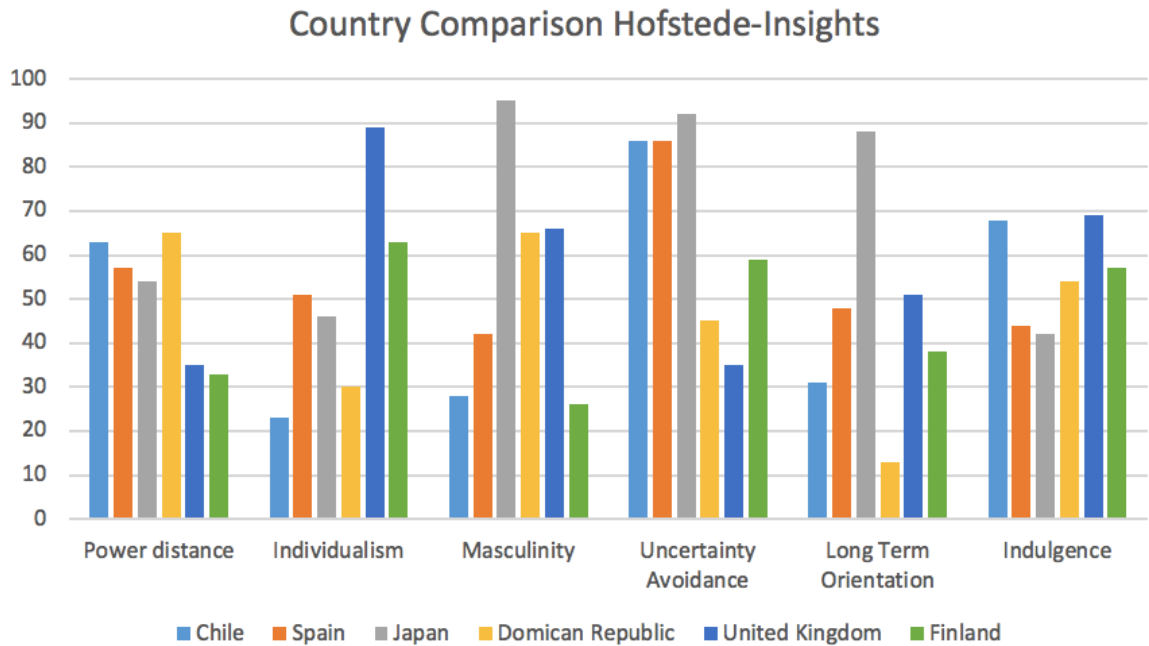


Figure 7 Data extracted from Hofstede (Hofstede 2010)

The following analysis had been made by using the data collection on the website Hofstede insights, which help people to analyze cultural dimensions based on Hofstede's previous analysis and compare them. Here a summary and analysis on his dimensions:

“Regarding Power distance, we can conclude that Chile, Spain, Japan, and the Dominican Republic are entirely even on this matter.

For instance, there is a strong class society in Chile, and Hofstede analysis mentioned that people do not share the same spaces regarding their social class. So, there is a clear sense of hierarchy that is notoriously lower than the other Latin American countries.

Japan is considered a very hierarchical society from a Western point of view, but in Hofstede analysis is seen as an intermediate score because meritocracy means that Japanese people perceive that everybody is born equal. They can become anything is they work hard.



Based on this study, in Spain, it is expected that subordinates follow what their superiors tell them to do. The point of view from which a comparison is made; depends notoriously on how a country can be considered.

The Dominican Republic, here is understood for everyone that each one has its place, and there are not questions regarding this. As in Spain, subordinates are also expected to follow and do what their bosses say.

In the United Kingdom, regardless their social class system, employees are expected to be treated as equals, and their score in this subject is very low, meaning that their aim is towards an equalitarian work environment.

On individualism, Chile scores the least, as Hofstede explains this phenome is notoriously changing, but it is very notorious outside Santiago where some paternalistic practices remain.

Individualism in Japan again is different than in other Asian nations; they are more individualist than collectivists by Western eyes. Japanese are very private in comparison with other Asians, but they chose to bring their loyalty to a company, which is mostly an individualist thing of doing, says Hofstede.

On the individualism point, Spain is seen as a collectivist country; Hofstede says that Spain tends to be related itself with other non-European cultures and is seen that the privilege of teamwork because it is something natural for them to do.

Regarding masculinity, the situation is different. Here the countries are again divided: Chile, Spain, and Finland are considered more feminine societies instead of The Dominican Republic, Japan, and the UK.

Chilean and Spain society are expected to care for the others, and success and standing out is seen as not admirable, which converts them into a feminine society.

On the other hand, based on this study, Japan is considered one of the most masculine cultures in the world; this is because Japanese society encourages competitiveness between groups. In Japan, workaholism is very common because employees are expected to overwork in order to overpass their goals.

Dominican Republic and the UK share a similar position on this matter. These masculine societies are reflected on being highly success orientated, English people live in order to work and have a clear ambition, as Dominican Republicans who are proud of their success and achievements in life.

When it comes to uncertain avoidance, the groups change again:

In this case, Chile, Spain, and Japan show a strong need for rules and legal systems in order to structure life; they depend highly on experts and authorities' opinions. What is again notorious is that Hofstede again highlights Japan, in this case, as one of the most uncertain avoidance countries of the world, because such culture feels a need to be prepared for uncertain circumstances.

On the contrary, Dominicans score low in this dimension because they are flexible at the time to modify plans, and improvisation is considered as a good practice. However, it does not mean that they are opened to new ideas and or different business practices. In the case of the UK, employees have a clear goal, and the way of achieving this can vary, the importance is to stick to the plan of reaching that goal.

Long term orientation in Chile, Dominican Republic, and Finland is the lowest on this group, leaving Finland closer to a middle point, but still low. The Dominican Republic is the lower result among the selected countries in this matter. That means that those countries look to achieve quick results, and they have a very small propensity for saving.

Spain and the UK belong to a more intermediate level on this dimension; this can result in a bit ambiguous for many readers. Spain (dispatch the fact of looking to achieve quick results and a wish of living the moment) Hofstede says that there is a need for clear structures and defined rules versus a more pragmatic and relaxed approach to life.

Finally, regarding the indulgence dimension, we can separate the results into two groups: Chile, Dominican Republic, UK, and Finland have an indulgent orientation; this kind of society is comfortable by realizing what they wish. There is a positive attitude and a clear tendency to optimism.

The other group is constituted with Spain and Japan together in this dimension because those countries have a pessimist attitude; this is reflexed in the perception that people have over actions that are restrained by social norms; they feel that indulgence is something wrong." (Hofstede 2010)

## **4 Empirical part**

This thesis research aims to place the discussion about how expatriates are integrated into the Finnish working life, and how the local culture influence in their relationships inside the company. There is not in-depth material on the subject, and many companies and employees struggle in how to develop a communication strategy that can be reachable for all employees in a company, no matter what their cultural background is.

The author of this thesis has sustained her investigation on what Finnish media communicates on this subject by newspapers; also, data collected from external (foreigner) sources are used to get a broader perspective about what others have to say about this topic. Most of the information can be collected in media researches, as from interviews and focused research on this matter.

Besides, five interviews had been done in order to collect data based on international experience in their jobs in Finland. The experience of this author herself is also essential for this research as she is also an expatriate and had worked using English in Finland.

The used literature has been crucial to understanding the role and position of the appropriate authorities in this matter.

### **4.1 International Talents**

This thesis and many other studies have assured that international talents and diverse workplaces are meant to be more successful. Finnish government had made several calls encouraging employers to incorporate more international talents, people with foreign backgrounds to join their workforce.

In November 2019 was held the Talent Boost Summit Programme, to create awareness about the issue and encourage employers to open to change to foreign talents to join their companies and its benefits for Finland's business growth.

During Talent Boost Summit, highly skilled immigrants, students, and researchers are promoted in order to develop a network between them and Finnish companies. This program, promoted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, has a clear

goal: develop the Finnish economy and boost its international presence and supporting professional foreigners living in Finland, diminishing the already high unemployment rate among foreigners in Finland.

“Greater diversity in society and working life will make Finland more attractive to international talent and investors, while also making a decisive contribution to improving the employment rates among immigrants already living in Finland. Having a more international working environment will encourage international graduates and researchers to settle in Finland, and prevent the so-called brain drain” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2019)

#### **4.2 Local reflections on cultural inclusion in Finland**

It is known that the local context on employments in Finland is very local; employers still prefer to protect the Finnish work style, ensuring to include foreigners to fulfil professionals' roles within a company. Employers fear that newcomers will not match the Finnish work style and the work community.

“Despite the plans and good intentions, for many foreigners who already reside in the country, the reality is full of difficulties. Many of them say in social media that the Finnish language is a major barrier to get jobs. They also allege that many potential employers openly tell them in the interviews that they are reluctant to incorporate foreigners into their workforce because they prefer someone who is familiar with the country's work culture” (Calvar, 2019)

Besides, the cultural factor, this reluctance is also reflected on the Finnish appreciation of their quality standards and production development. For instance, the fact that education is well recognized in Finland and abroad makes employers to be more inclined towards workforce who has been trained and educated in Finland vs. those who don't.

Unfortunately, the positive and negative national stereotypes qualifications, had set Finns as very responsible, committed, punctual and goal orientated in their jobs. Against other national stereotypes from other cultures such as South European's ones that position them as very relax, talkative, noisy and unpunctual.

The Religious believes and values coming from certain cultures might cause reluctance on the selection process because employers would assume that applicants would feel uncomfortable surrounded by those who don't belong to their religion or do not share their values, it can be presumed also on the other way around. Stereotypes also take a role in this matter categorising individuals into certain mindsets and behaviours, such as chauvinist attitudes and conflicts of power connected with their national culture might conflict with the local culture.

These national stereotypes make employers to take decisions based on this negative perception of some cultural stereotypes, and they take decisions presuming that those applicants most likely would behave as the stereotype dictates, so they won't be suitable for joining the Finnish work community.

### **4.3 Language barrier**

Regarding this point, two things must be remarked:

Resources for learning Finnish language do exist, but those are limited. This limitation comes during the integration process. Immigrants take their courses (usually lasting one year), and then they are expected to join the Finnish labor market. The fact is that many of those foreigners who are already professionals cannot reach the sufficient language target to work using their professional knowledge and skills in their respective professional fields by speaking Finnish unless they re-complete their education.

As was mentioned before, the integration process focused on providing sufficient skills for joining the Finnish workforce, but what it's not said it is that the majority of immigrants are joining the services and the construction employment areas.

The second point is about the employers and the recruiting process. Many job advertisements are literally totally written in English, with the exception that they require a native level of Finnish.

"Unfortunately, it is very tough to find a job that does not require Finnish, and in the case you do find one, it is most likely not something in your field. Finns have started to write job ads in English, which leads to many of us reading through it, seeing we qualify for it, but then at the end, there is the unfortunate "must-have fluent Finnish skills." They expect

companies to have an international outreach yet limit themselves to only employing Finnish speakers.” (interviewed 4)

A poll conducted by Foreigner.fi discusses about the idea of implementing English as a third official language of Finland because of its spread use in Helsinki and Tampere area. People who participate in this poll said the following:

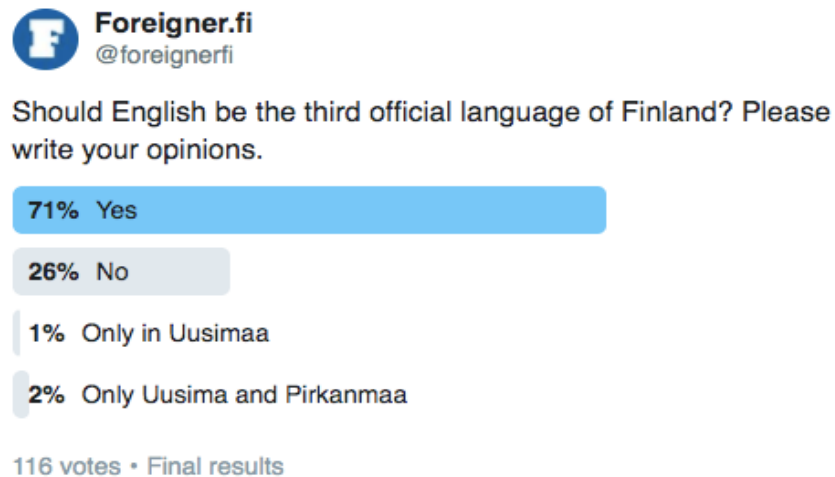


Figure 8 Poll about English as third national language from Foreigner.fi 2019

In a global world, English is the language that connects us, and it had become no-longer a foreign language in the Netherlands. For instance, recognizing that its use is widely spread in the country and everybody can get any service they wish in English. Also, over half of the university programs are conducted in this language.

“English is no longer a foreign language in the Netherlands, asserts Leiden University’s Alison Edwards, who has published widely on the subject. ‘If you can assume that you can walk down the street and that the hairdresser will be able to speak to you in English, and the bus driver, and the taxi driver, then functionally it is a second language, not a foreign language.’” (DutchNews.nl, 2018)

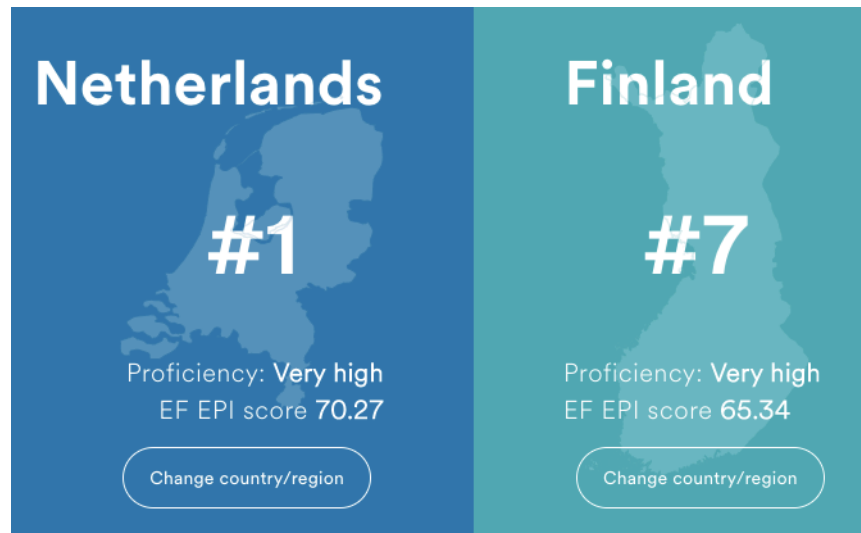


Figure 9 Education First. English Proficiency Index, 2019

Education First has created a ranking considering 100 countries and testing their English skills on the EF English Proficiency Index 2019 (EF EPI, 2019). The results are very positive and allocates Finland in a prominent and remarkable position, as number seventh.

#### 4.4 Challenges and opportunities for expatriates

Despite the long list of pros and cons on living in Finland, this part of the research looks for highlighting and reflex what are the main and more important things that expatriates go through when it comes to develop their professional career in Finland.

About the challenges, learning Finnish had been talked several times. There are many thoughts and pre-conceptions regarding this, especially because the lack of opportunities for a proper professional training on this subject.

Learn a language is something that almost all immigrants around the world have to deal with, but in many places those efforts are seen as positive and considered as sufficient for finding jobs. The situation in Finland became more complex due to the uniqueness of the Finnish language, probably there are few cases of immigrants who have learnt the language before actually moving in Finland, regarding to this it's only possible on the cases from Eastern European country where students can access to Bachelor's degree in Finnish language and literature.

There is also a collective feeling regarding to the difficulties of Finnish language. Finnish integrations programs are mainly based on teaching what is considered *kirjakieli* (written

language) instead of *puhekieli* (spoken language), and many immigrants learnt that instead of the highly spread way of speaking Finnish, as native does. Why? Well, Finnish teachers say that learning *kirjakieli* would give a more formal aspect to foreigners speaking in Finnish, which is true, but Finns do not normally speak like this.

The second point is the lack of use, especially in Uusimaa. It's well-known that Finnish citizens speak good English, and this is very helpful for tourist who are able to manage their time in Finland easily because of that. But when it comes to practice the local language, Finns feel that they are being kind and helpful by switching to English when they heard a non-native Finnish accent.

Finding work a job can be tricky for foreigners because the language barriers and the few possibilities of working in English. Besides that, native level of Finnish language is very difficult to reach, but it's required by many employers. Also, it's quite normalized that immigrants work in low payed roles, or in areas where university or UAS competences are not required.

Among the opportunities for expatriates, it's remarkable the possibilities of developing a professional academic career. Something that is granted in Finland is the right to education, and nowadays is becoming more possible to be able to get high-quality education in a foreign language as English because there are plenty of programs meant for attracting international talents.

The fact that education is granted is something unreal in many other countries and continents. For instances, it's considered a class privilege to reach higher university degree in many countries outside Europe. Academical institution encourage students to network with locals and other foreign studies, as it's the case of Haaga-Helia.

#### **4.5 Discrimination in the recruiting process**

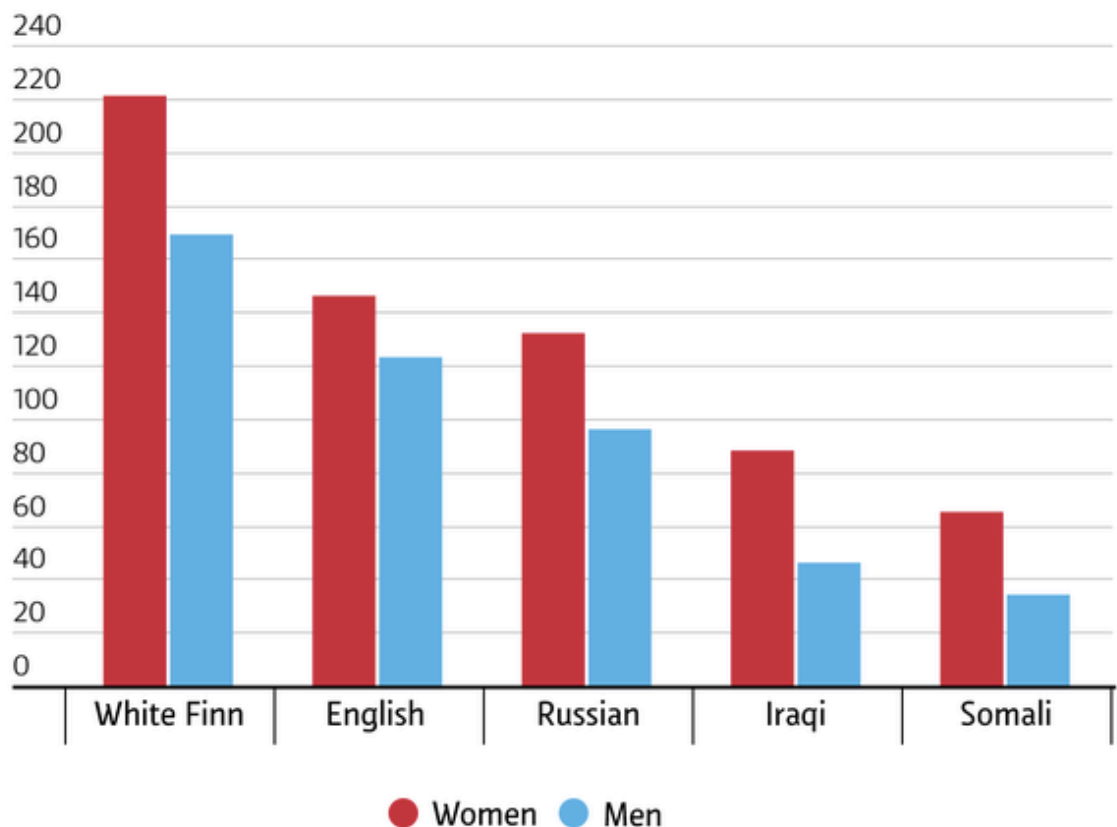
A study conducted by the University of Helsinki by Akhlaq Ahmad aims to demonstrate that foreign-sounding names suffer from discrimination during the recruiting process. The experiment shows several applications sent by Finnish, Russian, Iraqis, English, and Somalis applicants' profiles, all of them with local education and experience. The foreign-sounding ones were less likely to be called for an interview.



“The fake applicants were equally strong. They had the same training, the same amount of experience, all of them had been to school in Finland to indicate that they had lived their whole lives in Finland or at least had moved to Finland before they started school.

All of them spoke excellent Finnish.” (Yle 2019)

## Interview invites per 500 job applications



Source: When the Name Matters: An Experimental Investigation of ethnic discrimination in the Finnish Labor Market. Ahmad Akhlaq, University of Helsinki, 2019.

Figure 10 Experiment about applicants with foreign backgrounded Yle 2019

This study confirms that Finnish applicants with Finnish sounding names were superiorly considered for being called to interviews, then later English, Russian, Iraqi and Somali the least. It also assures that women were more considered for job interviews than men.

To summarize, this study demonstrates that employers do not make decisions based on academic and work profiles and competences of the applicants. However, they do base

on their first impressions from the name and privileging the Finnish citizen without a foreign background.

It is worth mentioning that the job applications were made to low-paid roles, such as the case of cleaning jobs, restaurants, among others. Akhlaq Ahmad says that typically those positions are fulfilled by immigrants, but he says, "If a white Finnish worker is available, others are pushed aside" (Yle 2019)

## 5 Discussion

The results show that there are advantages and disadvantages on the integration process, but once addressing them members of the team will increase notoriously their international experiences and the company's turnover. So, this study has demonstrated that probably the process of implementing strategy would be more complex, but it would have very positive results for a company to do it:

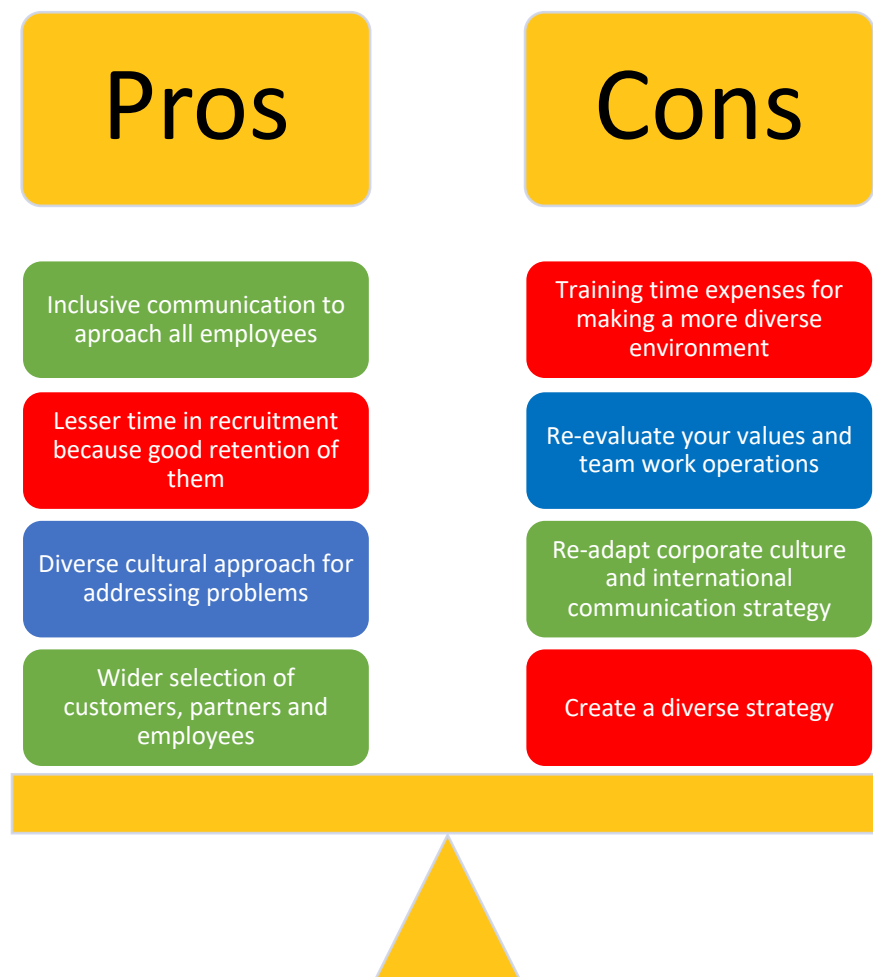


Figure 11. Pros and Cons of a new communication strategy

## **5.1 Consideration of results**

Most likely and in the case of a company where many of the employees are not highly skilled in English, this strategy could be applied on creating international teams inside the company, instead of stressing those who have worked well within the company but do not have sufficient skills in English.

A good consideration of a company might be to encourage training and learning among employees in regard of supporting their inclusion at the company and country. In the case of foreigner employees, a good idea could be to help them to get more skilled in the Finnish language, as for local employees who do not speak well English, encourage them to learn English in order to foster career development and new skills for employees.

This idea can be positive considering that all employees might learn something that could improve their career and their relation between colleagues.

## **5.2 Trustworthiness of the research**

A more international approach within companies and recruiting international talents has been already applied in Finland, but it is still in develop.

Around the world, many companies have successfully created environments where people from all over the world had feel integrated.

This research mostly gave a view that can be considered useful for small company where there are only a few foreign employees.

## 5 Conclusions

Globalization has arrived to stay, and as this study showed, there is clear evidence that Finland is trying to fit these new perspectives also within companies by governmental initiative. As many of the provided interviewed and literature provided by this thesis research. It has been a slow development from organizations to become international by adapting their communication strategy and being more inclusive with the newcomers from abroad. To set all data and information channels in English (recognizing that this language is the one that can connect people from all over the world).

Going through this thesis research, people can realize the diverse players that can improve the integration of a diverse workforce within Finnish organizations and the experience and knowledge they must achieve in order to be internationally successful.

Organizational Communication must sound very wide for some but implementing a strategy that thinks in all members of the organization can achieve a positive work environment and understanding of how international markets behave. Organizational Communication must be effective.

Deep we can see why international communication and workplace communication took an essential role in this research because through understanding its reachability. A company can realize that the message has to be clear for everybody, and the employee must perceive themselves as necessary as the others.

By developing consciences of integration and attentive perception on employees, employers must make an effort to work on integrative solutions by making them feel as talented team players. Integration must be understood for everyone inside the company. Companies waste a lot of money and time seeking new employees, but if they relied on integration and adaptation to newcomers, they would achieve their commitment and retain them.

Analyzing Hofstede's dimension, the company and employees can find perspectives, and values that a person from a particular culture might provide to the team. Those called characteristics can be seen as a way of understanding each other and the way how they might interact and their expectations. Introducing the company 'culture must help new employees (no matter their cultural background) to know what is expected and the way how a particular company works. Understanding each other employees would achieve better performance, trust, and a healthy work environment.

Human Resources and Leadership take an essential role in this matter. References made by certain Finnish newspapers such as Yle or Foreigner.fi presented some crucial discover on how employers discriminate applicants based on their non-sounding Finnish names, or when it comes to validating their university qualifications and job experiences.

Those facts mentioned above fit perfectly with the findings and experiences shared by the interviewees because they mentioned and explained the same issues presented in the newspapers and references used for this thesis research.

Qualitative research in this matter allowed it to provide a more human perspective of the reality of many foreigners living in Finland, trying to work and being unemployed. This researcher thinks that was a good approach because the study could be based in real life experiences from real people.

## **5.1 Final Conclusion**

All the topics provided by the thesis research are useful material to have some initial understanding and perspective about foreigner employees (non-born in Finland) integrated as adults in the Finnish society.

This study aims to present their work-life and experience from foreigner living and working in Finland. Moreover, represent their view and perception about their integration in Finnish working life.

Fortunately, this researcher has founded incredibly a lot thesis research about this subject from Theseus, but it would be a goal to see this thematic and a higher scale of sources specially on the Finnish context because unfortunately, there are not many works of literature that focused and implemented an in-depth study about this matter, which is entirely new in Finland.

However, this research considers that Finland has a lot potential to become a very multicultural nation and is able to integrate better foreigner workforce without losing its singular label. Governmentally, there is a notorious wish to achieve this goal by making visible these topics and encouraging employers to open towards international talents.

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## Attachment 1. Interviews

### Questions

1. Do you see differences among employees regarding their spoken languages at work?
2. What is the most complicated of being an expatriate in Finland?
3. Regarding your company's team meeting: in which language are those implemented?
4. How participative are you in team meetings?
5. What are your goals at your company regarding promotions or career development?

### Interviewed 1:

Name: Armando

Nationality: Spain

Age: 45

Profession: Architect

1. Yes, of course. Because the language carries per se other responsibilities and tasks, or even communication, and unfortunately it carries a difference in the relations from your colleagues and your bosses.

For example: during a conflict or something to solve regarding the company operations, something that you can also solve because you are capable to do it. You are not even consulted, because they think you are not going to solve that.

We had a software in the company, but as the software was made in Finnish, I wasn't able even to use it.

2. Cultural differences are the more difficult things. At least for me, even after 5 years living and working in Finland, those differences are the most complicate things of being a foreigner in Finland.

For example, daily in the office, it was very uncomfortable to start my shift with colleagues that were not able to say: hi! how are you? Instead, every morning they were heading to their own desks.

Or the excessive silence in the office, I felt like I was bothering my colleagues if I say something.

3. Team meetings were in Finnish. Always, even though I don't speak Finnish well. Every certain time inside the team, they were asking me if I understood, or if I followed it (that question was always in English) because every time they asked me something it was in English. Or for instance, the meeting was always in Finnish, but if they wanted to discuss something directly with me in the meeting, that small part was always in English. After that was addressed, the meeting continues all the way in Finnish.

4. I'm zero participative in the team meetings because I'm only a viewer.

5. In the beginning I did see possibilities of growing because I had the illusion of having it, but then I realized that the reality was different. Because our internal communication and external was totally in Finnish. I'm an architect and in Finland there are regulations and normative that are different than in Spain, so we had to follow the Finnish ones, of course. In addition, almost all our clients were Finnish speakers, so I couldn't help in that either.

## Interviewed 2

Name: Ayami

Nationality: Japanese

Age: 29

Profession: Content creator

1. Whenever I'm there, they switch to English, so I can see that they care a lot about how I can feel, so they try to make me feel included. So, I don't feel big differences.

2. Of course, the language is the most difficult thing. Of course, English is not their native language either, and it makes me feel bad they do extra efforts because I'm there, and I'm not able to speak Finnish as they do. Maybe, I should improve my Finnish, but it takes too much time to do it, even though I have taken courses for years, I'm not able to dominate it in a professional level.

Also, our company wants to have presence internationally so it's not a problem for them to switch to English because they want the company to be more international.

I'm happy that they are like that, especially for the fact that I'm not the only foreigner at the company, but in my team I'm the only one.

3. They are in English, and my company uses English material, so I think most of our customers are Finnish, but they have managed to make like that. Specially because they want to expand.

4. Probably because of the cultural differences and my own self-confidence, I sometimes feel uncomfortable taking initiative and leadership, and negotiations. Maybe the cultural thing affects me, in Japan is not expected to take initiative, you do what has been asked for you to do. Basically, you must follow what your boss says, and you can really say your opinions. In team meetings I usually I ask questions more than suggesting things. I think this is bad, because I still have many questions about what many team members do, so I focus too much on my own tasks, but I only have a general picture about what is the company about, but I think this is something that I really have to improve.

5. I got a promotion last month, and it was something that I really was looking for. They are really interested in what I'm doing and what are my goals and expectations. For instance, they had asked me several times when I'm graduating, or what are my plans regarding if I want to stay in Finland or go back to Japan.

Interviewed 3

Name: Sean

Nationality: British

Age: 40

Profession: Architect

1. Yes, I do. I think the biggest thing is that I don't speak Finnish, so it puts me on a different level, but in my office is also a numerous of language spoken, so for example there is a common French group as well, so there is a group where people I speak that language fluently together.

2. As the company is based in Helsinki, it makes things incredibly easier because here English is widely spoken. Particularly in the last decade, this had improved incredibly, so I can manage with very little Finnish language. When it comes to work, there is a lot of technical language, those are not even commonly found in dictionaries so it's something that makes very complicated even though if you have studied Finnish. How to communicate very specific, technically in more complicated situations.

3. In terms of team meetings in the office, naturally many people would converse in Finnish, but my boss had been very keen in promoting English as common language within the offices. So, meeting most of the time switch between Finnish and English, so I do my best to follow them as much as possible, but when I don't understand I can ask questions. But, commonly right now, seemingly migrating from Finnish to English.

4. I participate quite a lot in meetings. I mentioned before, it quite easy to participate in English, but difficulties arise when there are technical discussions in Finnish. For some people do not have such as good command in technical terminology either in English, but really that is the case.

5. I joined the company I currently work for just over year and a half ago. Six months ago they made me they design director, I joined as a senior architect, previously I had experience as a senior before, I wasn't necessary expecting to be given that position per se, but I think at the moment our company is growing quite rapidly because they are going through a transition in their structure. So, I think my promotion in a sense was part of an overall vision of trying to control a design politic across projects in our office.

#### Interviewed 4

Name: Rebeca

Age: 22

Nationality: Dominican Republic/ American

Profession: Sales assistant

1. There are not differences because mostly English is used in everything regarding work related things.

2. Unfortunately, it's very tough to find a job that doesn't require Finnish, and in the case, you do find one, it's most likely not something in your field. Finns have started to write jobs ads in English, which leads to many of us reading through it, seeing we qualify for it, but then at the end there's the unfortunate "must have fluent Finnish skills"- they expect companies to have an international outreach yet limit themselves to only employing Finnish speakers.

3. My company's team meetings are always held in English

4. I'm not usually participative as my role is quite minimal.

5. Not much, I was just comfortable doing my job and getting experience in this company.

#### Interviewed 5

Name: Sofía

Age: 29

Nationality: Chilean

Profession: Graphic Designer

1. The last six years that I had lived here I had seen how the Finnish market had opened little by little to multiculturalism. For example, when I first worked here, I was the only person who didn't speak fluently Finnish, and my only communication with my colleagues was in English when they need something for me, because everything around me was happening in Finnish. So, if you are part of the minority that does not speak Finnish, you are kind of by your own. Sometimes they were having even fun in their own language, but I wasn't part of that because of the language thing.

Even though my field can be done totally in English, it's still very limited because companies prefer to do that in Finland and get Finnish workers, because to be multicultural is something that is starting to grow but it hasn't developed yet well.

2. The most difficult thing is to find a multicultural job, of course it depends on your profession, but probably in the health field is almost impossible because all terminology must be in Finnish.

But to have that difficulty is actually really bad too because even though you live here you don't feel entirely part of the society, because when you get a job you have almost half of the way done because when you get a job you have independence and you can do your life easily.

3. When it came to team meetings, most of the time they were trying to keep speaking in English during the team meetings but at one point they switched to Finnish because probably they lost their patience and it was obviously more comfortable for them to do it that way, considering they were all Finnish.

But I had worked also in more multicultural places and our team meetings where in English, but sometimes we had customers who were speaking in Finnish, so I wasn't allowed to be in those meetings for obvious reasons.

I think English is kind of the universal language for those who live in Finland but were not born here, it's the language in which we communicate and try to work, because as professional it would takes us to learn our career again to do it totally in Finnish.

4. I'm not very participative, but it's because I need to catch the ideas in the brainstorm and transfer them to visual, so I was more attentive. Also, my meetings when it comes directly to what I do, it was with the art director because we can talk into details about what we do.

But in general, my personality does not help too much with this, so I prefer to listen in those contexts.

5. Basically, my goal would be art director, but I never so the possibility close in any of this companies because I hadn't last too long working in these places.

In one company, foreigners could get the opportunity to develop their careers, but it wasn't my case. But that depends on the company together with the employee attitude.