

Laura Mahlamäki

Sorry, do you speak English?

A research study on how performance in Finnish affects
the well-being at work of foreign employees in Finland

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

European Management

Thesis

April 2014

Author	Laura Mahlamäki
Title	<i>Sorry, do you speak English?</i> A research study on how performance in Finnish affects the well-being at work of foreign employees in Finland
Number of Pages	59 pages + 4 appendices
Date	22 April 2014
Degree	Metropolia Business School
Degree Programme	International Degree Programmes
Specialisation option	European Management
Instructor	Louise Stansfield
<p>As migration constantly increases, diversity in the workplace has also increased in Finland. In order for organisations to benefit from a diverse workforce, successful diversity management should be carried out.</p> <p>The purpose of this thesis was to study whether the lack of or poor performance in Finnish affects the well-being at work of foreign employees and if so, to what extent, and whether it influences more the actual work performance or the social well-being of the employees. The focus was on the social and mental well-being of foreign workers and the question was addressed through mastery at work and social interaction of employees.</p> <p>The research was conducted as a quantitative study carried out with a survey questionnaire. To deepen the knowledge on the topic, the quantitative part was followed up by an additional qualitative study that included three interviews. The questions of the survey and the interviews focused on basic aspects of well-being at work. The findings were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.</p> <p>The findings suggest that overall, foreigners in Finland seem to be very satisfied with their well-being at work, both socially and mentally. Furthermore, the results indicate that there is some relationship between language and occupational well-being, but the level of Finnish is not a major contributor. The mother tongue and working language of the respondents affected especially the mastery at work; those who worked purely in English were less or not at all affected by the lack of knowledge in Finnish.</p>	
Keywords	well-being at work, occupational well-being, foreign employee, language, diversity management

Contents

List of Figures and Tables	1
Introduction	3
1 Working life in Finland and the modern changes	5
2 Important concepts and theories	10
2.1 Well-being at work	10
2.1.1 Physiological well-being	13
2.1.2 Social well-being	13
2.1.3 Mental well-being	14
2.2 Foreign employees, immigrants and expatriates	15
2.3 Diversity at work	15
2.3.1 Diversity management	16
2.4 Culture and communication	17
2.4.1 High-context and low-context cultures	19
3 Research methods	21
3.1 Quantitative and qualitative methods	21
3.2 Data collection	22
3.2.1 Survey	22
3.2.2 Interviews	26
3.3 Response rate	26
4 Findings and analysis of the results	28
4.1 Survey results	28
4.1.1 Respondent profile	28
4.1.2 Language background	32
4.1.3 Mastery at work	36
4.1.4 Social Interaction	39
4.2 Statistical analysis of the results	41
4.2.1 Analysis of variance	42
4.2.2 Association analysis	48
4.2.3 Correlation analysis	49
4.3 Examination of the interview answers	52
4.4 Final analysis of the findings	55

Conclusions	58
References	60
Internet sources	61
Appendices	
Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire	63
Appendix 2. Interview questions	67
Appendix 3. Cross tabulation tables	69
Appendix 4. CEFR Criteria Grid	74

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Migration of foreigners to Finland between 2000 and 2012 (Official Statistics of Finland 2012)	7
Figure 2. Evaluation of immigration between 2000 and 2012 by continent of origin (Official Statistics of Finland 2012)	8
Figure 3. Occupational well-being presented with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Ojala and Ahonen, 2003: 21)	12
Figure 4. Example of a fictional work sociogram adapted from Moreno (1978)	14
Figure 6. Ladder of countries from low-context to high-context cultures adapted from Hall (1989)	20
Figure 7. Distribution of respondents by their educational background	29
Figure 8. Distribution of respondents by the length of their employment in the current organization in Finland	30
Figure 9. Share of respondents and number of employees in their current organization	31
Figure 10. Distribution of respondents by their mother tongue	33
Figure 11. Official working language of the respondents in their current organization in Finland	34
Figure 12. Languages spoken at the workplace in addition to the corporate language	35
Figure 13. Level of Finnish of the respondents (CEFR)	36
Figure 15. Social interaction of foreign employees working in Finland	40

Table 1. Forwarding of the survey by participant	27
Table 2. Age of the respondents	28
Table 3. Share of non-Finns in the current organization of the respondents	32
Table 4. Frequency distribution of degree of agreement of the respondents on the question "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?"	38
Table 5. New variables for demographic questions	42
Table 6. Comparison of means by age "Does you immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?"	43
Table 7. Comparison of means by length of employment	44
Table 8. Comparison of means by number of employees	45
Table 9. Comparison of means by share of non-Finns in the current organization of the respondents	45
Table 10. Comparison of means by official working language of the respondents	47
Table 11. Comparison of means by level of Finnish	47
Table 12. Correlations "Are you content with the quality of work you provide?"	49
Table 13. Correlations "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?"	50
Table 14. Correlations "Have you noticed any disturbing conflict between co-workers"	51

Introduction

It is often said that Finland is such an international country that one can easily manage with only English when living here; *everybody* speaks English. Last autumn the author was on a work placement in the commercial department of the French embassy in Helsinki. The working language was French and most of the employees were of French nationality. The rest of the staff also spoke French, so there were no problems communicating at the office.

However, the writer became increasingly aware that her colleagues needed language assistance with some of their tasks; when reading web pages of Finnish companies, browsing news on Finland or even when contacting people on the phone. Although many websites have the option to change the language to English, usually only the first page is translated and the rest, containing more detailed information, is only available in Finnish and Swedish. More than once a Finnish person refused to speak English on the phone and requested to speak with someone that knows Finnish. Colleagues who had recently moved to Finland, or had only been living here for a short period of time, also needed help with practicalities related to their arrival.

These situations naturally frustrated the author's colleagues and made them lose a lot of their working time as well as hers. The writer also started noticing frustration at the coffee table at the office. Often when two or more Finns were having lunch or a coffee break at the same time, the conversation easily turned to Finnish even if some French colleagues were also present. The corporate language in this case did not mean that it would be the only language spoken at the office. This type of behaviour is often justified by Finns by referring to the idea that foreigners should learn the local language and hearing the language would help them in doing that.

The experiences encountered during the work placement made the author want to examine this phenomenon more closely. The writer wanted to know more about the situation of foreign people working in Finland and how they perceive their level of Finnish affects their daily working life, not only purely professionally but also on an interpersonal level. In order to study and understand the phenomenon, the following research questions were formulated: Do foreign employees feel left out or detached

from the work community due to not understanding the discussions between colleagues? Does good language skills in Finnish increase occupational well-being of foreigners in Finland or does the lack of or poor performance in Finnish affect negatively the well-being at work of foreign employees and if so, to what extent, and whether it influences more the actual work performance or the social well-being of the employees?

In order to ensure that the theoretical basis for this study would reflect the working environment and sociological surroundings in Finland, the main sources were selected from studies by established and well-respected researchers focused on the situation in Finland. It can be assumed that the concept of well-being as well as the whole structure of the working life varies between countries and therefore it was of interest to use mainly local sources to present the working life in Finland and the key concepts used for this thesis. The sources will be further justified at the beginning of chapter 2.

This thesis will first briefly discuss Finnish working life and specifically review the modern changes in working life in order to provide the reader with background information on foreigners and working in Finland. The key concepts important for this study are explained, followed by a presentation of the research methods, the actual research carried out for this study, and an analysis of the research findings. Finally, a conclusion based on these results is given.

1 Working life in Finland and the modern changes

The labour market in Finland is considered to be very strong and centralized on an international scale. Finland has strong labour market organizations and at the end of the year 2009, 2, 148 000 Finns were members of labour unions (Ahtiainen 2011: 35). There are three players in the Finnish labour market model: the labour market organization representing the employers, the labour market organization representing the employees and the central organization of the employers. (Kauppinen 2005: 330) The Finnish government aims, inter alia, to decrease unemployment by labour market policies. The working life in Finland is fairly equal; both men and women work and equal treatment of job applicants and employees is promoted.

As the whole economy of Europe is constantly evolving, significant changes have also taken place in Finland during the past decade. One of the changes already visible is the increasing need for a foreign workforce in the future. As the Finnish population gets older, the need for new workforce increases. (Vihavainen 2009: 195)

Immigration is an old phenomenon, but this study will concentrate on 20th century immigration. Larger scale immigration to Finland started in the 1970's and 1980's. The first immigrants at that time came from Vietnam and Chile followed by Somalis at the beginning of the 1990's. Since then the number of immigrants has constantly increased. (Viitala 2007: 307–309) One of the main factors affecting the increase in immigration is Finland's membership in the European Union in 1995 permitting free movement of labour within the EU zone. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (European Commission) entitles EU citizens and citizens of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland to:

- look for a job in another EU country
- work there without needing a work permit
- reside there for that purpose
- stay there even after employment has finished
- enjoy equal treatment with nationals in access to employment, working conditions and all other social and tax advantages

(European Commission)

In 2006, more foreign people moved to Finland than ever and as the overall number of foreigners increased in Europe, the topic of discrimination became relevant. The International Labour Organization (ILO) investigated discrimination in the recruitment processes in Europe in the 1990's and the results showed that a foreign name was enough to reject an applicant in Belgium, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. (Viitala 2007: 307–309)

In February 2014, the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy published a study on the employment of immigrants in Finland with the aim of assessing their employment situation in Finland. The material was collected between the years 2000 and 2010 and gives a very current introduction to the situation of foreign employees and job seekers in Finland. The foreign workforce has an essential position in keeping an economically favourable rate of working age people in Finland in the future. In the long run, to keep the economy growing, a sufficient workforce is required and people moving to Finland can contribute in increasing this workforce. Therefore, it is very positive that the share of immigrants in the Finnish population has increased during the last decades. The reasons for immigration vary from work-related (almost a third of all immigrants), family reasons, studies etc. and the immigrant population in Finland is very heterogeneous. (Eronen et al. 2014: 12–15)

On 19.10.2006, the Finnish Government approved a new immigration policy. The main objective of the policy is to actively increase work-based immigration to Finland. The policy aims to make the Finnish society more diverse in ethnicity and to decrease discrimination. (Viitala 2007: 308) Making Finland a more open country with regards to discrimination could contribute to keeping the skilled foreign workforce in Finland. (Eronen et al. 2014: 75)

Today, 80% of foreigners living in Finland are of working age. There are also an important number of foreign students studying in Finland. At the moment more people move in than out of Finland, which may increase the number of foreign workers in the country. At the end of the year 2012, the number of people with a foreign nationality living in Finland was 195,511 (3.6% of the total population). The number of people having a mother tongue other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami living in Finland at the end of the same year was 266,949 (4.9% of the total population). This last number is often used as an indication for the share of people with a foreign background living in

Finland, although it leaves out the Swedes (8,500 in 2012). (Eronen et al. 2014: 12–15)

Immigrants are increasingly highly educated and bring in valuable skills and knowledge. (Eronen et al. 2014: 16) Diversity of any kind, not only ethnic, in the workplace is increasingly considered by specialists as an asset for a company. It can bring the organization valuable intellectual capital, and a more diverse workplace is often seen to be innovative as new ideas and work methods are added to the already existing ones. However, these benefits do not come without any work and the organization needs to strive to achieve them. (Viitala 2007: 308). Increased diversity at the workplaces also brings society benefits by helping in the integration of foreigners.

Although immigration has rapidly increased since the beginning of the 1990s, the share of foreigners in Finland remains low by international comparison; the proportion was 3.6% at the end of the year 2012 compared to approximately 10% in the United States, Sweden, Germany and Norway (Eronen et al. 2014: 13). Figure 1 illustrates the increase of foreigners moving to Finland between the years 2000 and 2012. The number has drastically increased during these 12 years. However, as the share of foreigners remains low, their integration into the Finnish working life should be carried out with care in order to avoid discrimination and to promote integration of foreigners to the Finnish society and work life. Finland has already gained much valuable experience of consolidation of different working styles, especially with those of other Nordic countries and Estonia (Lindström and Leppänen 2002: 268).

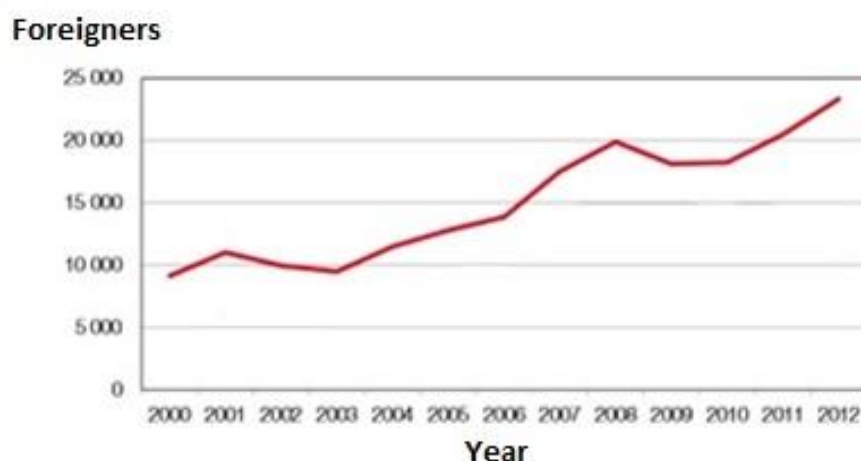


Figure 1. Migration of foreigners to Finland between 2000 and 2012 (Official Statistics of Finland 2012)

Most (two out of three) of the foreigners moving to Finland are European citizens. The share of EU citizens is constantly increasing and in 2012 they represented almost 45% of all immigrants. The increasing share of EU citizens moving to Finland could be explained by the challenging economic situation in the southern countries of the EU. The challenging situation forces EU citizens from less fortunate areas to migrate in order to find work. This also supports the claim of job seeking being the primary reason for immigration. In Figure 2, the evaluation of immigration between 2000 and 2012 is presented by the continent of origin. Most immigrants arrive in Finland from the European Union. The second biggest group of immigrants comes from Asia, followed by Europe (non-EU), Africa, and the Americas, and the smallest group of immigrants by continent of origin is Oceania.

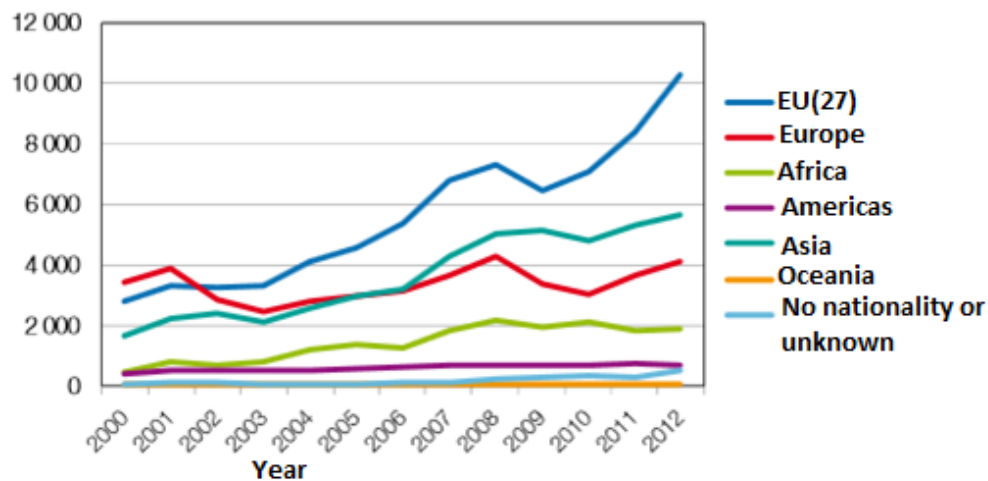


Figure 2. Evaluation of immigration between 2000 and 2012 by continent of origin (Official Statistics of Finland 2012)

In the study conducted by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (Eronen et al. 2014: 75) the topic of language is also addressed. It became clear that the knowledge of Finnish does have an impact on the employment of immigrants in Finland. However, measuring to what extent local language skills affect the employment opportunities of immigrants is very challenging as also many other factors influence the employment of immigrants; discrimination in recruiting, difficulty in comparing degrees, facing prejudice etc. The same phenomenon may occur once employed; the level of knowledge could affect the occupational well-being of foreign workers, but it is hard to measure to what extent as other factors are also involved.

Eronen et al. (2014: 75) suggest that foreign employees in Finland should learn Finnish, as it would benefit everyone involved; from the individual (the employee) to the organizational level this would be beneficial up to having a positive impact on the whole society. The benefits for the employee can be seen in a better integration and easier progression of the career. The organization would benefit from a more skilled employee who would most likely be more committed to the country and the organization. On a societal level, in the event of an employee becoming unemployed, there would be a higher possibility of fast re-employment and therefore, the society would benefit from the skilled worker staying in Finland. (Eronen et al. 2014: 75

2 Important concepts and theories

The research question of this thesis is how performance in Finnish affects the well-being at work of foreign employees in Finland. In order to approach the research question, the main concepts used in the study will be elaborated. The concepts are well-being at work, including physical, mental and social well-being, the concepts of foreign employee, immigrant as well as expatriate and inpatriate, diversity at work and diversity management, and culture and communication applying the theory of high-context and low-context cultures.

As mentioned in the introduction, when presenting the working life in Finland and the key concepts and theories, the author chose to use Finnish authors and other Finnish sources to a large extent. The reason for this choice was to gather information specific to the Finnish labour market and the occupational well-being as it is in Finland. The well-being at work is seen very differently in different countries and it could be assumed that Finnish researchers know the local situation the best. The sources used for this thesis were evaluated according to their relevance before using them; the study by Eronen et al. was conducted by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Leenamajja Ojala is a Finnish researcher specialised in management and occupational well-being, Ritva Viitala is a university professor of management whose literary work is mainly focused on human resource management and the study by Valtanen et al. is a relevant study by Turku School of Economics. The four sources mentioned were the main Finnish sources for this thesis. It was very important for this study that the literature used would have Finland as a focus and that the theories cover occupational well-being, diversity management and the topic of language. It could be said that the main foreign theories used in this thesis, Maslow and Hall, are generally approved as they have established their position in their fields of study.

2.1 Well-being at work

The concept of well-being has developed considerably since it was first introduced. According to Anttonen et al. (2009: 16) "Well-being results from the fulfilment of the important needs of individuals and the realization of goals and plans set for one's life.

Goal-oriented activity and commitment to tasks creates well-being". However, the concept of *quality and productivity of working life* has not been used for long and it has only been recently attached to concepts such as *learning* and *social activities*. Anttonen et al. (2009: 17) highlight that well-being at work is a demanding, holistic and integrated concept. It does not have a well-rooted name which sometimes creates confusion when measuring it. In different countries, a variety of terms are used for well-being at work, or activities similar to it. The following are some examples of the terms used. The list is not inclusive. (Anttonen et al. 2009:16–17)

- Quality and productivity of working life (Germany and Finland)
- Workplace as supporting health (Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden)
- Work ability (Finland)
- Inclusive working life (Norway)
- Work environment (Denmark, Netherlands, UK)
- Employee involvement in company development (Norway, Poland, Romania)

The concept of well-being at work is complex and difficult to measure. It varies between individuals and is of such nature that it easily includes almost everything that happens at the workplace, both professionally and non-professionally. It can include everything from the actual work, meaning the tasks executed at work, to social interactions and physiological factors such as the chair and the desk appointed to the employee. Should it be only based on the experiences and feelings of the employees or should it be measured using factual indicators? Which factors should be taken into consideration? (Anttonen et al. 2009: 17) These are some of the questions related to measuring of well-being at work. As the answers vary between countries, organizations and individuals, the results of studies are hard to compare.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be applied to give a better idea of all the factors that influence an employee's well-being at work. Maslow's pyramid has 5 different levels; the physiological needs safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow 1943). Ojala and Ahonen (2003: 21) applied Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the concept of well-being at work. Figure 3 summarizes the factors that affect a person's well-being and how they apply in working life. The factors are

- physical well-being, meaning a person's health condition, coping with the workload
- mental well-being, balance between work and private life
- social well-being, relations with co-workers, friends and family
- values and attitudes towards a person's own work, appreciation of work
- professional ability and development

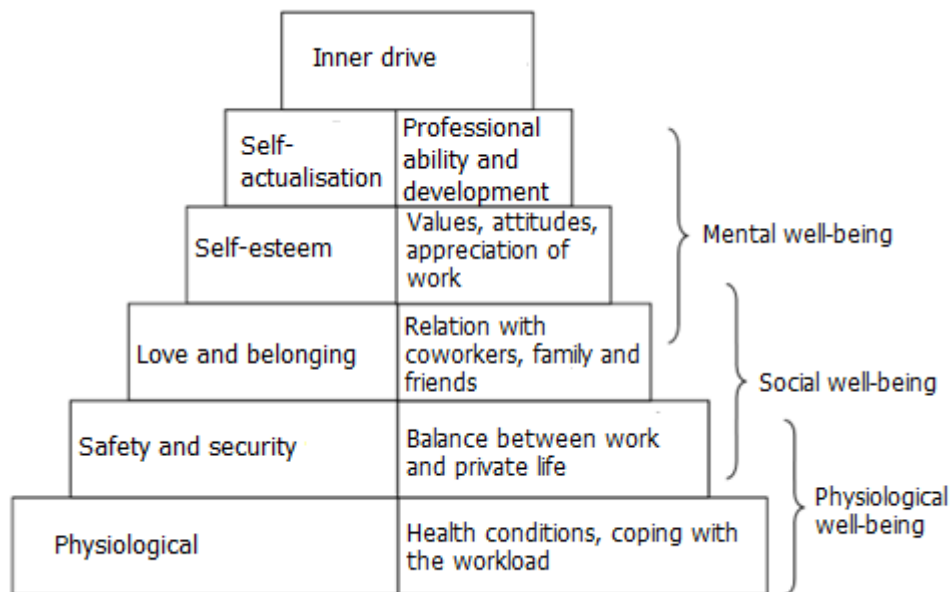


Figure 3. Occupational well-being presented with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Ojala and Ahonen, 2003: 21)

The pyramid of needs can be divided into three categories in light of a person's well-being: the physiological, the social and the mental well-being. All three types of well-being at work can be measured. It is clear that simply collecting information is not enough in order to influence the well-being situation at a workplace. The hardest part is to analyse the information and act on it. It is essential that the measurements are continuous because that will allow seeing the results of the actions taken and the direction the organization is going towards. Next, a closer look at these three categories will be taken in order to better understand them and what they include. The different measurements for each factor will also be introduced.

2.1.1 Physiological well-being

The two needs that can be applied to physiological well-being are the physiological needs and safety and security. Physiological well-being also includes an individual's healthy lifestyle and diet, sufficient rest and sleep, and a satisfactory physical condition. Physiological needs and the need for safety and security are closely linked together because being tired or in an unsatisfactory physical condition may cause unnecessary absences or raise the risk of accidents at the workplace. Physiological well-being may also affect a person's ability to learn and develop. The physiological needs and safety and security needs represent the two lowest levels in Maslow's pyramid and they are considered to be the basic needs that lay the foundation for the other needs in the hierarchy. The measurements used to observe physiological well-being at work include, for example, absence rates, working ability measurements, body mass index and blood pressure measurements. (Valtanen et al. 2006: 119–124)

2.1.2 Social well-being

The two needs related to a person's social well-being are safety and security and the need for love and belonging. Social well-being includes cooperative and interactive skills, networking and relations with colleagues, family and friends. Maintaining a feeling of positive social well-being at work is a very important aspect as a decrease in social well-being may lead to deterioration of the general atmosphere at the workplace and consequently increase the risk of social exclusion and deterioration of the social and interpersonal skills of the staff. (Valtanen et al. 2006: 120–124)

The work community may increase social well-being of the staff by enabling familiarization and interaction between colleagues which can lead to informal networking and develop the staff members' interpersonal and communication skills. The measurements used for the observation of social well-being at work include customer feedback surveys, atmosphere measurements, networking (professional and non-professional) and sociograms. Sociograms, introduced in the 30's by the psychiatrist J.L. Moreno, illustrate the relations between employees; who works with whom. Figure 4 is a fictional example of a work sociogram and represents a very simple model. To develop the sociogram further, it is possible to add information about

the quality of the relationships to the sociogram; for instance, do the persons involved enjoy working with each other. (Valtanen et al. 2006: 120–124)



Figure 4. Example of a fictional work sociogram adapted from Moreno (1978)

Language is an important factor for the social well-being. A person easily feels left out if he cannot understand the language spoken around him. It is important to place employees in the sociogram in such a way that they share a common language and feel comfortable with each other.

2.1.3 Mental well-being

The workforce's mental well-being is closely related to the employees' motivation and commitment to the work and it is therefore a very important aspect of well-being. Motivation and commitment easily decrease if the employee's mental well-being deteriorates. Mental well-being consists of, for example, an employee's commitment, objectives, enthusiasm, skills, and ability to affect one's own work. It is possible to influence the employees' mental well-being within the work community by monitoring the employees and reacting to their stress levels, by offering support, and by promoting both personal and professional development. The measurements for mental well-being include instruments such as work satisfaction surveys, absence rates, overtime hours, stress and sleep disorder measurements. The needs in the Maslow's hierarchy of needs related to mental well-being at work are the need for love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation. These are the three highest needs in the pyramid. (Valtanen et al. 2006: 119–124)

2.2 Foreign employees, immigrants and expatriates

For this thesis, the general term *foreigner* will be used to include all foreigners regardless of their background. This term was used in the research question and throughout the questionnaire. It will also be used to present and analyse the findings. In this thesis, the term incorporates all types of foreigners, immigrants and inpatriates. In order to define the group further, the concepts of immigrant, expatriate and inpatriate are explained.

In Finland, a person living in Finland, born in another country of non-Finnish parents, is usually referred to as an immigrant. In 2013, over 300,000 immigrants were living and working in Finland, either temporarily or on a regular basis. Some of them are in Finland to stay; some of them are in the country only for a limited period of time. (Finnish Institute of Occupational Health 2013)

Expatriate is another term often heard when referring to foreigners or foreign employees. According to the Oxford Business English Dictionary (Parkinson & Noble 2005: 202) an expatriate (or expat) is "a person living in a country that is not their own". Brayer Hess and Linderman (2002: XV) define an expatriate as "anyone who is living outside of his or her home country, either on a permanent or temporary basis." Leaning on these definitions, anyone living outside their home country would be seen as an expatriate. However, it has become more and more common, that the word is used for only a certain group of foreigners living abroad. In international Human Resource Management, the concepts of expatriates and inpatriates are essential. The concept of expatriate refers to employees that are sent by the mother organization to a foreign subsidiary for a limited period of time. For Finns, an expatriate is a Finn living in a foreign country. An inpatriate, on the other hand, is a foreigner living in Finland. The length of the period abroad may vary from short assignments of some months (3 to 12) up to several years (1 to 5). (Viitala 2007: 299)

2.3 Diversity at work

As more and more people live in another country than their own, diversity has increased in workplaces. A workforce that consists of employees with different

nationalities and different ethnic backgrounds is often referred to as a diverse workforce. It can also be expressed by saying that the workforce consists of employees that represent or come from different cultures (Trux 2000: 263). A diverse workforce is composed of women and men to a nearly equal degree and includes employees of different age groups. Sexual orientations, religious affiliations and family structures may differ according to each employee's own choices. (Guirdham 2005: 12)

The number of culturally diverse work communities has increased due to the globalization of the economy, international migration and new structures in the labour market. Many organizations actively aim to gain cultural diversity as it is considered to benefit the company in one way or another (Sorainen 2007: 19). The more there is diversity in the workplace, the more important it is to make well-being at work goal-directed and to actively increase the staff's well-being at work by taking into consideration the diversity of the work force. (Ojala and Ahonen 2005: 49)

2.3.1 Diversity management

Cultural diversity in an organization provides both opportunities and challenges. The concept of diversity management started finding its way to management of organizations, to trainings and strategies already at the beginning of the 90's (Lahti 2008: 32). Diversity management does not only consist of managing employees with different cultural backgrounds, but also age, sex, physical condition and so on. The list continues to the point that all employees are different when measured by different indicators (Trux 2000: 269). However, the concept of diversity management is most often used in association with ethnic minorities (Viitala 2007: 308). When an organization manages the diversified staff successfully, the situation brings economic benefits to the company. The benefits may be a competitive advantage in areas such as creativity, problem solving and adapting to change. According to Mead (2005: 18), diverse groups are more likely to succeed when its members are tolerant of difference, cooperative and respectful, *and* when the work is organized so that diversity is an advantage. Work where diversity is considered to be an advantage is often said to be non-routine work where the workers can choose themselves how to complete the work; for example, which method of work to use, how to divide the tasks so that every member of the group can bring in valuable knowledge or even where to work and at what time. (Mead 2005: 17–19)

It is possible to maximize the benefits and minimize the disadvantages it may bring to the organization by successfully managing a diverse workforce. It is, however, even more important that the attitudes of the whole work community, the staff, and the labour unions support the diversity management strategy (Sorainen 2007: 19). When it comes to the language question in diversity management, the management should ensure that all staff members are able to communicate in a common language and that they are familiar with the specific vocabulary in that language in that industry. This is very important in order to avoid confusion. The most important guidelines and instructions should be available in the staff's native language or in a language that the employees are able to understand well. In addition, all surveys conducted among the staff, such as work satisfaction surveys, should also be performed in a language that all employees are able to understand well. (Viitala 2007: 309–310)

2.4 Culture and communication

It is important to consider the language and culture of the employees when managing a diverse workforce with the aim to promote well-being at work. Language and culture are closely linked with each other. Several theorists have linked the two elements together and claim that communication is one of the key elements of culture. In Figure 5 the theories of five theorists on the topic of communication and culture are shown. Many theorists have been criticized for giving mere lists of characteristics such as worldviews, values and behavioural characteristics to define different cultures. For example, Hofstede, Trompenaars and Schwartz et al. received criticism for oversimplifying and being too static when determining the different cultures. (Guirdham 2005: 59)

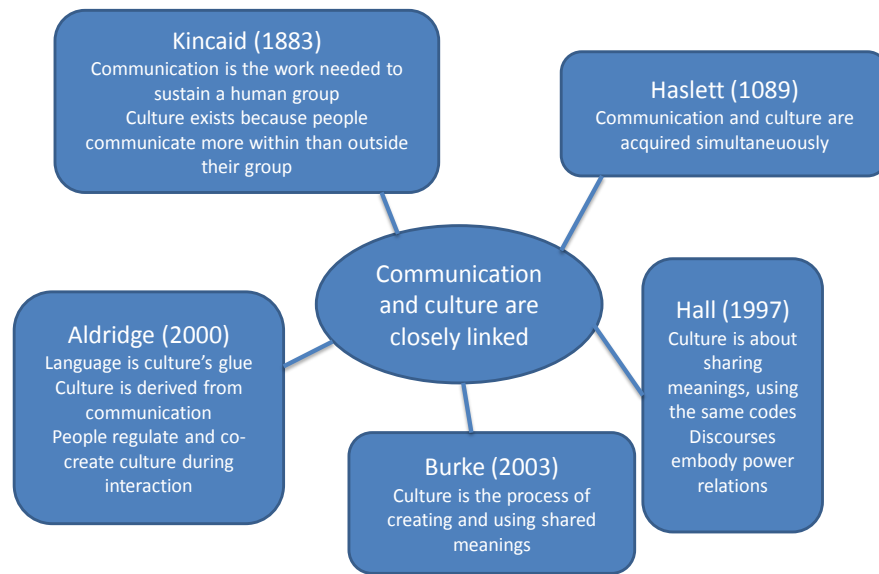


Figure 5. Culture as communication (Guirdham 2005: 47)

Language and culture are factors that determine how a message is communicated from one person to another. When a person wants to communicate a message to another person, he needs to think of the receiver's language, the organizational policy on language, the language associated with the task and the status of the language in the particular industry. (Mead 2005: 103) Different communication styles linked to different cultures exist and they can be analysed from different points of view. One way to analyse them, introduced by E.T. Hall, is to separate cultures into low-context communication and high-context communication (Hall 1989: 101–116). This division was chosen for this study as it addresses cultures, the content of the communication situation *and* the language. In many theories the emphasis is on the culture and not so much on the actual language. In this thesis, however, language has a fundamental role in the research and therefore Hall's division was chosen. Next, these two concepts will be further explained.

2.4.1 High-context and low-context cultures

To illustrate the main idea of the division, it can be said that in high-context cultures people pay more attention to the whole communication situation and the people involved and therefore the message itself has less emphasis. This means that the actual words spoken do not have to be very precise. On the other hand, in low-context cultures, people rely much more on words to interpret the content of the message. In high-context cultures, people often adopt a role-oriented communication style. This means that the person communicates according to a role set by a social status and the situations he finds himself in. (Hall 1989: 101–116)

Finland, according to Hall would be seen more as a low-context culture. This means that communication in Finland is performed more with actual words, and the communication situation or other factors do not play a big role. This is something worth keeping in mind when studying the well-being at work of foreign employees in Finland who have limited knowledge of Finnish. It is more difficult for non-Finns to understand a Finn, because not much body language, such as hand gestures or intonation, is used to give ideas on the content of the message. It can also be difficult to understand the mood of a Finn as the message is explained with words rather than facial expressions or other non-verbal methods. Figure 6 presents the ladder of countries extending from low-context to high-context cultures. In this context, Finland shares the same low-context communication style as other Northern European cultures. The closest communication cultures to this group are Germany and the United States.

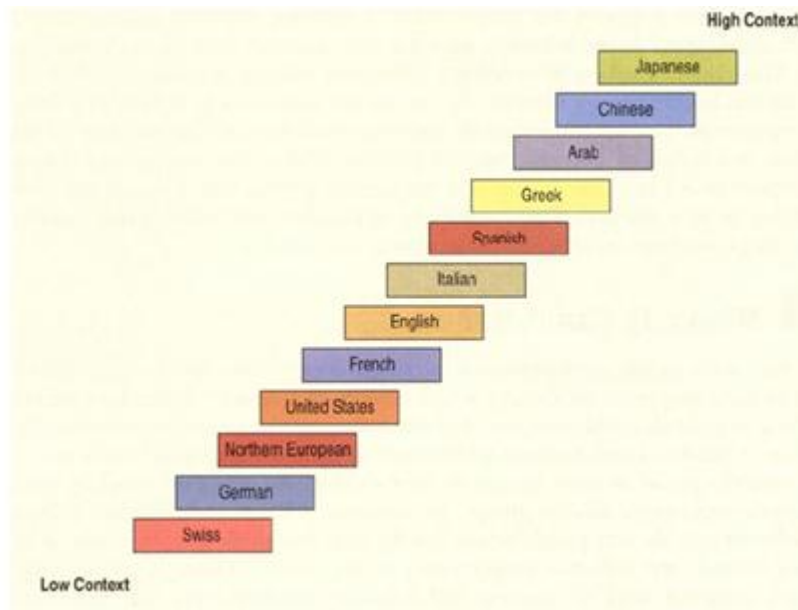


Figure 6. Ladder of countries from low-context to high-context cultures adapted from Hall (1989)

Even though language is the most noticeable feature of ethnicity in symbolic terms, so far only a few researchers in the field of communication have concentrated on the communication behaviour of people with different ethnic backgrounds (Thompson 2003: 56). The evidence so far would suggest that people from different ethnic backgrounds use different communication behaviours such as expressing and interpreting positive and negative messages. Differences have been found in the accuracy in which the message was sent and decoded by people with different ethnic backgrounds. Studies suggest that there are fewer differences among female speakers. (Guirdham 2005: 114–115)

3 Research methods

The aim of this study was to research how performance in Finnish affects the occupational well-being of foreigners in Finland. The author wanted to examine whether good language skills in Finnish would also mean that the foreigner feels better at work and vice versa; does a foreign employee with poor skills in Finnish feel unsatisfied with occupational well-being?

The topic of this study, as interesting as it may be, is difficult to examine in terms of how to measure it. Social interaction and mastery at work are both rather abstract subjects and therefore the measurements rely somewhat or entirely on the experiences and feelings of the respondent. Nevertheless, a quantitative research method was chosen for the main part of this study because it allows a wider perspective on the situation with its higher degree of accessibility than an in-depth interview with only a small number of respondents. In addition, a qualitative research method was used to deepen the findings. The choice of the data collection methods is discussed and justified in detail in the sections 3.1 and 3.2.

3.1 Quantitative and qualitative methods

Research methods are referred to as "systematic, focused and orderly collection of data for the purpose of obtaining information from them, to solve/answer a particular research problem or question" (Ghuri and Gronhaug 2005: 109). Data collection can be classified into two main groups which are quantitative and qualitative methods. The main difference is often described as the quantitative researchers employing measurement and the qualitative researchers not (Layder 1993; Bryman and Bell 2003 in Ghauri and Gronhaug 2005: 109). However, the question is not only about quantification but also about different perspectives and research objectives. It can be said that the choice of method depends on the research question and the purpose of the study and the decision on whether to use the qualitative or the quantitative method should be weighed against these. The two methods are also often used together and both methods will be used in this study as well. For the first part of the data collection, the writer chose to collect data by means of a survey, and the method of collecting and analysing the data is quantitative. For the second part of the data

collection, additional interviews were conducted among a small number of respondents and the data will be analysed using a qualitative approach.

3.2 Data collection

When conducting a study, it is possible to use either data collected by others or to collect data yourself. The data collected for the purposes of a particular study is referred to as primary data and the data that has already been collected by others and is reused for the purposes of the study in question is referred to as secondary data (Curwin & Slater 2004: 264). The choices of collecting primary data in order to answer the research question include observation, experiment, interview or survey. For the purpose of this thesis, the choice of collecting primary data was by a survey and interviews.

For the purpose of this study, both primary and secondary data were used. Secondary data was used to explore the relevant theories and concepts and primary data was collected by conducting the survey and the interviews.

3.2.1 Survey

One of the main reasons for choosing to conduct a survey was to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. This ensures that all may express their opinions openly, without being identified. This may encourage greater freedom of expression for the participants and therefore result in more reliable responses. (Collis & Hussey 2003: 35) The survey composed for this study was conducted in Finland. The first phase in designing the survey was defining the *population*. The term of population refers to the people that are of interest for this study (Curwin & Slater 2004: 264). The population of this survey included a person if he or she filled all of the following criteria:

- a foreigner who lives in Finland at the moment
- currently employed in Finland
- does not have Finnish as mother tongue

In this study, only a *sample* of the population was used. The term sample indicates that only a selection from the population of interest is used for a study (Curwin and Slater 2004: 265). In this study, the reasons behind this choice were the limits set by

time and budget constraints. Once the focus group is clear, the next step in designing a study is the question of sample selection; how to select the sample? One of the most important concepts of sample selection is randomness. According to Curwin and Slater (2004: 266), "a random selection gives each individual (...) a *calculable chance* of being included." This would include a required sample frame, in this case a complete list of all foreign people currently living and working in Finland. Therefore, complete randomness was impossible to achieve because a complete list was impossible to obtain. Another limitation was that the questionnaire was written in English and thus, the respondents had to have an understanding of English as a minimum requirement. Bias therefore included language barriers and lack of accessibility to demographics on foreigners working in Finland.

As it was not possible to achieve randomness, the writer chose to use the sampling method of *snowballing*. This means that first a small sample of foreign employees was collected. This was done within the writer's social group, including friends, colleagues and other acquaintances. After having completed the survey, participants were asked to point out other people they knew to be in the same situation. This way the sample size was increased. (Oakshott 2009: 70–71). In order to keep track of the response rate, each participant was asked to let the writer know if they had forwarded the survey to other possible respondents and to inform the writer of the number of new potential respondents.

An online survey was chosen in order to reach people regardless of their location and to avoid postal charges. Digium Enterprise software was used to compose the questionnaire. The application is specialized in surveys and has been developed by Questback, a company founded in Oslo in 2000 with the aim "to make customer and employee surveys work online" (Questback - our story). With the program, it was possible to create an online questionnaire that allows the respondents to remain completely anonymous throughout the study; a factor that is very important when you wish to collect truthful feedback also from respondents working for well-known corporations.

The aim of the survey was to gather information about how language affects foreigners living and working in Finland. The main focus was on studying the effect

language may have on the well-being at work of the foreign employees especially with regard to their mastery at work and their social interactions. In order to create a suitable questionnaire for this study, an overview of other similar studies was performed. As the thesis was to explore and understand the relationship between language and occupational well-being, some factors of occupational well-being could be left out from the questionnaire. These included, for example, the topic of physiological well-being. The QPS Nordic General Questionnaire for Psychological and Social Factors at Work (National Institute of Occupational Health Norway) was used as inspiration for the layout and structure of the questionnaire created for this study. It is a project by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the questionnaire can be used to identify the psychological and social factors at work of employees especially in the Nordic countries. According to the National Institute of Occupational Health of Norway, (National Institute of Occupational Health Norway) "The General Nordic questionnaire for psychological and social factors at work (QPSnordic) is thoroughly psychometrically tested and tried in many organizations. The instrument is the core of surveys."

In order to keep the answering time reasonable and thereby aiming at increasing the response rate, the number of questions in the survey was kept small. The questionnaire consists of 29 questions with 7 questions targeted at identifying the demographics of the respondent. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. The nature of the questionnaire was structured, meaning that the answers were pre-determined (multiple choice) (Ghauri and Grohnaug 2005: 123). The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Each section had its own heading:

1. Personal background (7 questions)
2. Language background (6 questions)
3. Personal mastery (1 question with 6 items)
4. Social interaction (1 question with 10 items)

The aim of the first section was to gain general information about the respondent. The demographics gathered in this section would be used when analysing the answers by comparing the answers of different groups of respondents. The demographics were age, sex, educational background, position in the current organization, time spent working in the current organization and the number of employees in the current organization.

The second section was very important for this study. Its aim was to obtain information about each respondent's native language and knowledge of the Finnish language. In order to make sure that information on the level of Finnish would be as accurate as possible, a common scale needed to be used. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was chosen as it gives a very detailed description of the level of knowledge of the foreign language. The framework is set by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. With the CEFR, the foreign language proficiency of a person can be described at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. The Criteria Grid for each level can be found in Appendix 4. According to the Council of Europe (2014), empirical research and widespread consultation shows that the framework "makes it possible to compare tests and examinations across languages and national boundaries". It is widely used in Europe but it is also in use in other continents and therefore it could be assumed that at least some of the respondents would be familiar with the scaling thereby making the answering easy and fast. (Language policy division of the Council of Europe 2009)

The third section, personal mastery at work, aimed to collect information about the respondent's performance at work. The focus of the questions was on the level of performance at work of the foreign employee who does not have perfect knowledge of the Finnish language; how much this affects the performance of the actual work, the pace of work and the problem solving abilities. The answers gathered in this section are based on the respondent's feelings and not on facts. The answers were based on the Likert scale. The possible answers regarding the different items varied from 1 to 5, with 1 corresponding to "very seldom or never" and 5 to "very often or always".

The fourth and last section of the questionnaire focused on social interactions at work. The main aim was to gather information on the respondent's personal feeling on the social well-being at work. How does the lack or poor performance of Finnish affect the respondent's social relationships at work? Does the respondent feel as part of the group or left out, and is lack of the Finnish language the reason behind the feeling? Similarly to the third section, the answers gathered in this last section are based on the respondent's feelings and sensations rather than facts, and the answers are based on the Likert scale.

Before sending out the questionnaire, a test run was done with the help of a small test group of 3 respondents. The aim was to test whether all questions were easy to understand, whether the questionnaire worked without any technical problems and what the response time would be. Some minor changes were made after the test run in order to make the questionnaire easier to fill in. The answering times of the testers were 5 minutes, 6 minutes 20 seconds and 6 minutes 30 seconds. Consequently, in the message to introduce the survey, the answering time was estimated to be approximately 6 minutes. It is important to give the respondents an estimation of the answering time so that they can choose a suitable situation in which to respond.

The questionnaire was sent out between the 14th of February 2014 and the 22nd of March which allowed for snowballing 5 weeks to collect answers. Most answers were received within the two first weeks and only a small number during the last three weeks.

3.2.2 Interviews

In addition to the survey, 3 interviews were conducted in order to get some real-life examples of situations where language has affected the well-being at work of foreigners in Finland. The second purpose of the interviews was to collect ideas on how to improve the situation of foreign workers in Finland.

Due to time restraints of both the interviewer and the interviewees, face-to-face meetings could not be arranged. Nevertheless, three remote interviews were conducted via e-mail. In order to keep the answering time reasonable, the number of questions was set to three. The e-mail interviews were semi-structured, where the questions were predetermined but the respondents were free to answer in their own way. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

3.3 Response rate

The survey was sent to 81 potential respondents; 11 were included in the first sample and the rest were reached by the snowballing method. In total, 7 respondents took the role of spreading the survey forward and the distribution is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Forwarding of the survey by participant

Participant	Number of people the survey was forwarded to
1	4
2	21
3	16
4	3
5	3
6	19
7	4

All recipients of the survey (both initial and other recipients) were all part of the focus group; they are foreigners who live in Finland, are currently employed and do not have Finnish as their mother tongue.

The response rate of the survey was 77.8% which could be considered as a reasonable response rate for this type of study. The adequacy of the response rate depends on the use of the responses. An exact number determining a reasonable response rate does not exist. However, the higher the response rate the more reliable the findings as the results give a more comprehensive view of the opinions.

4 Findings and analysis of the results

In this section of the thesis the findings for both the survey and the additional interviews will be reviewed. The findings for each question will be presented as percentages, frequencies and averages. Figures and tables are used to visualize the findings.

4.1 Survey results

The findings of the survey questionnaire were analysed using the Digium Enterprise application, Microsoft Office programme Excel and IBM's analytic software for statistical analysis SPSS.

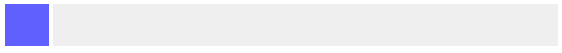

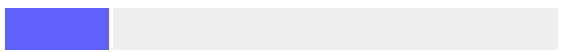
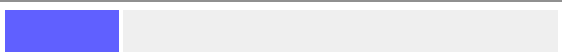
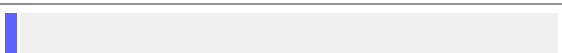
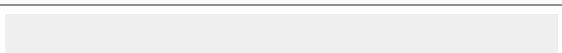
4.1.1 Respondent profile

This section presents the answers to the seven questions concerning the personal background of the respondents.

Question 1: Age

The respondents were distributed between the 6 age groups with approximately 50% in the 25 to 34 age group and approximately 20% in both the 35 to 44 and the 45 to 54 age groups, representing approximately 90% of the respondents. Only about 8% were under 25 years old and only 1.59%, meaning 1 respondent, was over 54. No respondents were 65 years old or older. The distribution of the age range of the respondents is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Relative frequency (%)	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
18-24	5	7.94%					
25-34	32	50.79%					
35-44	12	19.05%					
45-54	13	20.63%					
55-64	1	1.59%					
65 or more	0	0.00%					
Total	63	100%					

Question 2: Sex

The majority of the respondents were men. In the respondent population 58.73% (37 respondents) were male and 41.27% (26 respondents) were female.

Question 3: Educational background

For the question on the educational background, the respondents were given the choice between the following: comprehensive school, secondary school, college degree, higher university degree. None (0%) of the respondents had the educational background of comprehensive school. The majority of the respondents (76.19% or 48 respondents) had a higher university degree, followed by the group having a college degree (19.05% or 12 respondents). Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of respondents by their educational background.

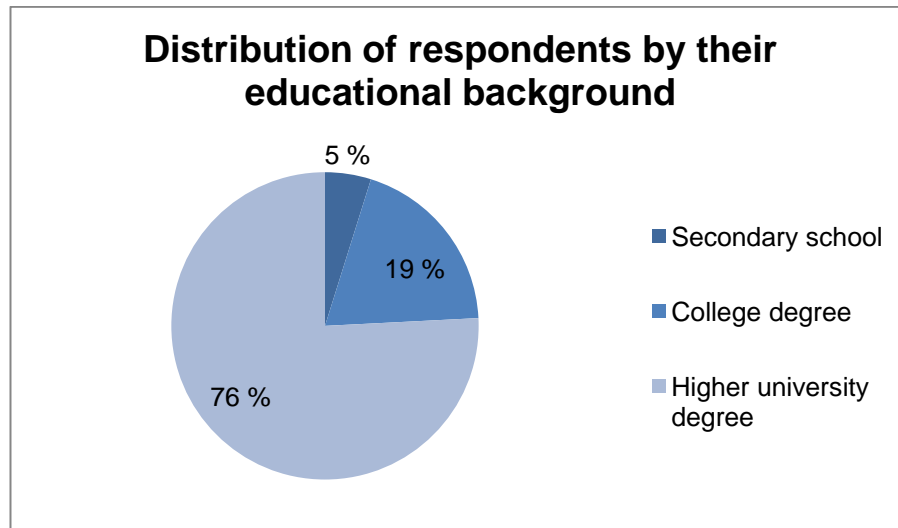


Figure 7. Distribution of respondents by their educational background

Question 4: Position in the current organization

The largest group of respondents (39.68% or 25 respondents) was in an employee position in their current organization. There were 16 respondents (25.40%) in a specialist position and 15 respondents (23.81%) in a manager position. The number of respondents currently holding a top management position in Finland was 7 (11.11%). None of the respondents categorized themselves as being in a supervisor position in their current organization.

Question 5: Length of employment in the current organization in Finland

The fifth question aimed to gain information on how long the respondents had worked for their current employer in Finland. The aim was to see if the length of the employment has an effect on the well-being at work. The distribution of respondents by the length of employment in their current organization in Finland can be seen in Figure 8. The largest group of respondents had been working for their current organization in Finland from 2 to 4 years (29 respondents), 14 respondents had been working for their current organization for a period of one year or less. The group of respondents having worked for their current employer in Finland for 5 to 10 years included 12 respondents and 8 respondents had worked for the same employer more than 10 years. Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of respondents by the length of their employment in the current organization in Finland.

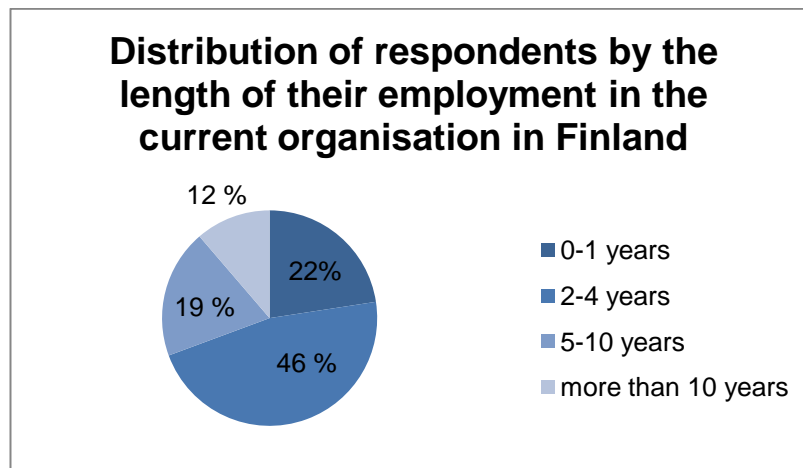


Figure 8. Distribution of respondents by the length of their employment in the current organization in Finland

Question 6: Number of employees in the current organization in Finland

The aim of this question was to gain information on the size of the organizations where the respondents currently work. The size of the organization may have an effect on the management style, the HR processes and the overall atmosphere at the workplace.

The distribution of respondents by the number of employees in their current organization in Finland is illustrated in Figure 9. Approximately 25% of the respondents currently work in an organization with fewer than 10 employees. Similarly, approximately 25% work in an organization of 11 to 50 employees in Finland. Only a little over 3% of the respondents were currently employed in an organization with 51

to 100 employees. Close to half of the respondents worked in an organization with more than 100 employees.

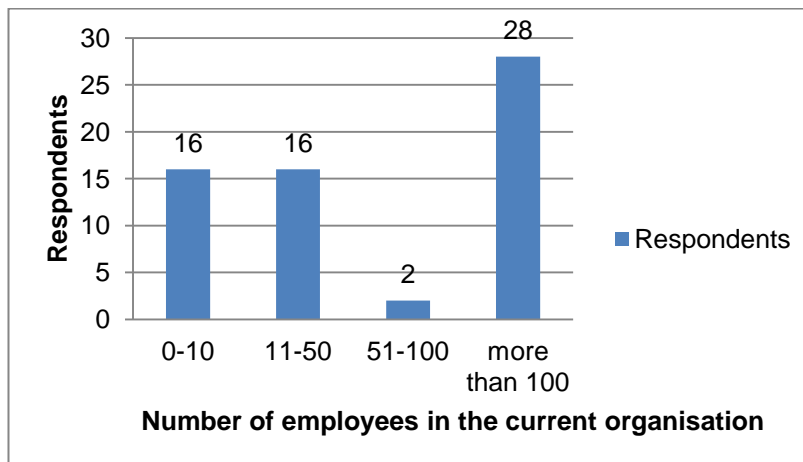


Figure 9. Share of respondents and number of employees in their current organization

Question 7: Share of non-Finns in the current organization in Finland

The writer wanted to collect information on the distribution of Finns and non-Finns in the current workplace of the respondents. It is often difficult for the respondents to provide an exact answer to such a question and an estimate of the share was requested. The aim was to see if being the only foreigner is related to the well-being of a foreign worker and whether language plays a lesser role in occupational well-being if an important part of the employees are foreigners.

In total, 8 respondents (12.70%) were the only non-Finns in the organization and 17 respondents (26.98%) estimated that less than 10% of the employees are non-Finns. Among the respondents, 12 (19.05%) estimated that between 11 and 25% of the employees in their current organization were non-Finns whereas 14 respondents (22.22%) estimated that between 26 and 50% of the employees were non-Finns. Finally, 12 respondents (19.05%) estimated that they currently work in an organization with more than 50% of the employees being non-Finns. Table 3 illustrates the frequency of respondents and their relative frequency according to the share of non-Finns in their current organization in Finland.

Table 3. Share of non-Finns in the current organization of the respondents

	Frequency	Relative frequency (%)	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
I am the only one	8	12.70%					
Less than 10%	17	26.98%					
11-25%	12	19.05%					
26-50%	14	22.22%					
More than 50%	12	19.05%					
Total	63	100%					

4.1.2 Language background

In this section the findings regarding the six questions concerning the language background of the respondents will be presented.

Question 8: Mother tongue of the respondents

The respondents were asked about their mother tongue. The three languages that accumulated the most answers were English (33.33%), Spanish (20.63%) and French (19.05%). German was the mother tongue of 4 respondents (6.35%). Two respondents mentioned Russian or Estonian each corresponding to a 3.17% share of the answers. The rest of the respondents mentioned languages which were the mother tongue of only one respondent which corresponds to a share of 1.59% of the answers. These languages were Dutch, Czech, Akan, Italian, Urdu, Hindi, Turkish, Chinese/Cantonese and Norwegian. Figure 10 illustrates the distribution of the respondents by their mother tongue.

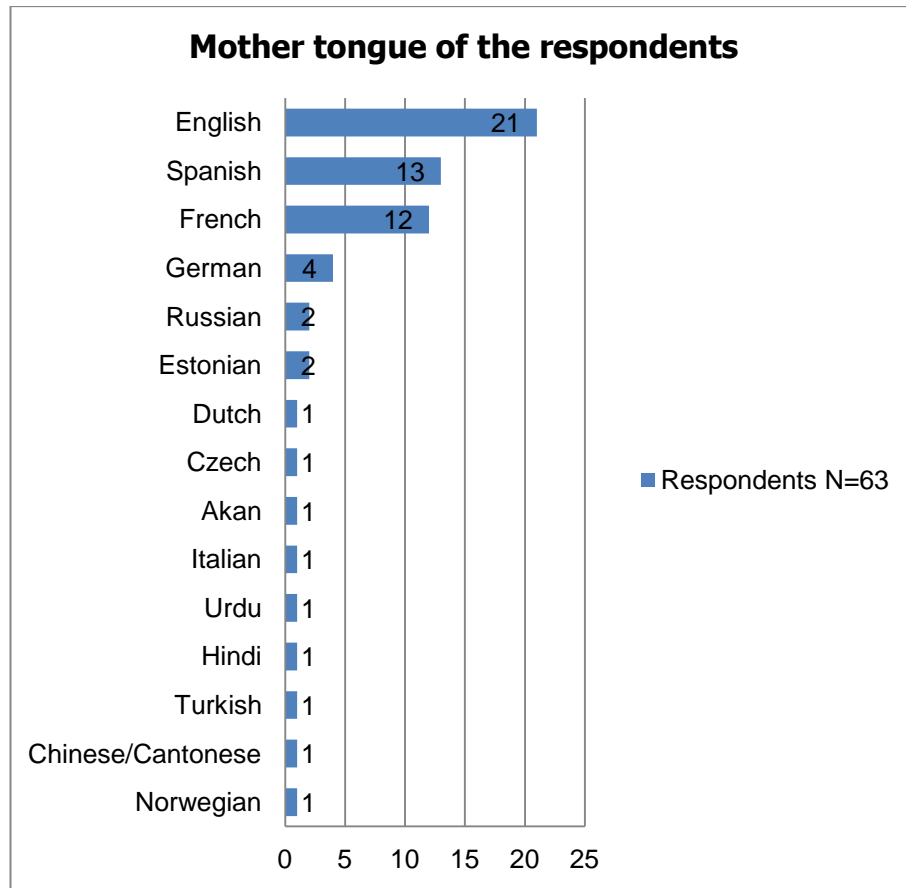


Figure 10. Distribution of respondents by their mother tongue

Question 9 and 10: Official working language and other languages used in the current organization

The aim of the two questions was to find out what languages are used at the workplace. The official corporate language is not always used in day to day social interactions at the workplace. The answers to question 9 revealed that the official language of the organization was in most cases English with 41 respondents (65.08%). The second largest group of respondents had Finnish as the official language at work representing 16 respondents (25.40%). 5 respondents (7.94%) had French as their official working language and only one respondent (1.59%) had Spanish as the official working language. Figure 11 illustrates the distribution of the official working languages of the respondents.

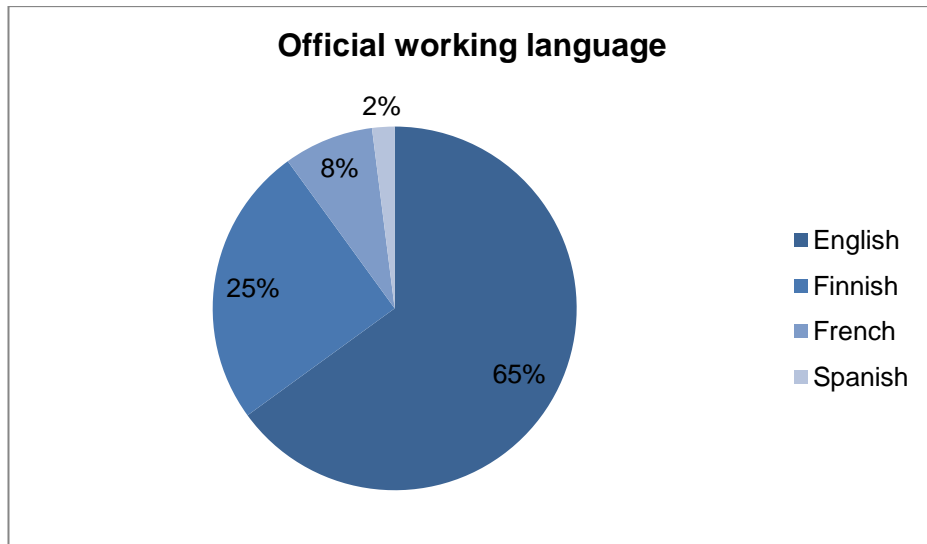


Figure 11. Official working language of the respondents in their current organization in Finland

For question number 10 the respondents could give more than one language as an answer. The aim was to see if the official language corresponds to the languages actually spoken at the workplace. Figure 12 illustrates the unofficial languages spoken at the workplaces of the respondents. A total of 70 answers were given for this question and only 4 respondents stated that in addition to the official language, no other language is used at the workplace. 36 respondents said that Finnish is also spoken in their organization, 18 gave English as an additional language. At the workplace of 6 respondents also French was spoken, in 6 cases Swedish was also used in the current organization while 3 respondents said German was being used and 1 respondent mentioned Estonian as an additional language to the corporate language of the current organization in Finland. Figure 12 illustrates the unofficial languages spoken at the workplace of the respondents in Finland.

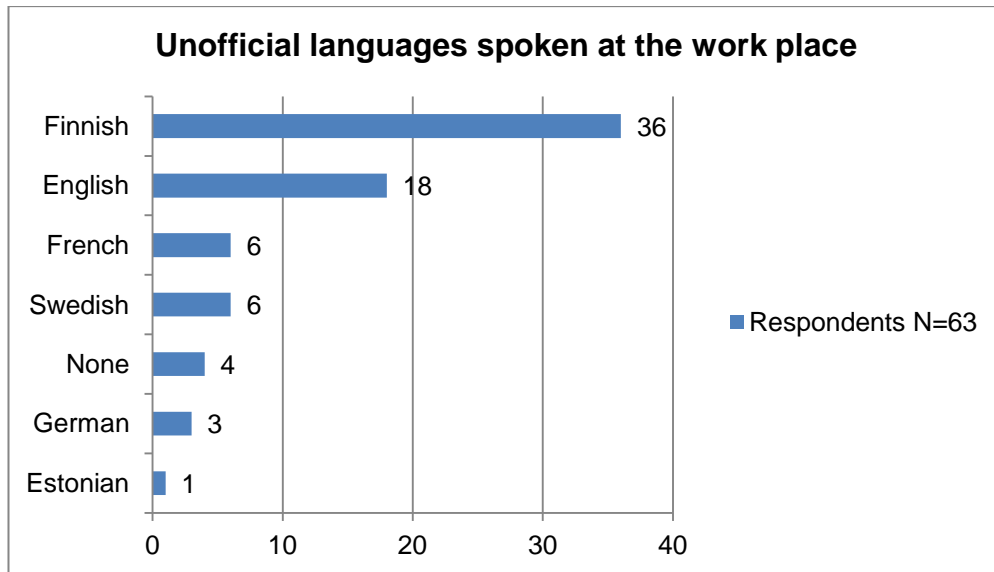


Figure 12. Languages spoken at the workplace in addition to the corporate language

Questions 11, 12 and 13: Level of Finnish of the respondents

For question 11, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was used to describe the current level of Finnish of the respondents. See Appendix 4 for detailed assessment criteria. The framework is widely used in Europe and therefore enables consistent answers among the respondents. It was very important to gain accurate information on the level of Finnish because language is the core question of the study. The respondents were well distributed between the levels and there were at least 4 respondents on each of the 7 levels. There were 5 respondents that had no knowledge of the Finnish language. 15 respondents had a beginner level (A1), 12 had an elementary level (A2) and 15 respondents categorized themselves as intermediate (B1). The A1, A2 and B1 groups were the largest groups of respondents and 66.7% of the respondents classified themselves in one of these 3 groups. A total of 8 respondents ranked themselves in the upper intermediate level (B2), only 4 in the advanced (C1) and also 4 respondents ranked their knowledge of Finnish in the proficiency (C2) category, the highest level after native speakers. Figure 13 demonstrates the distribution of the level of Finnish of the respondents.

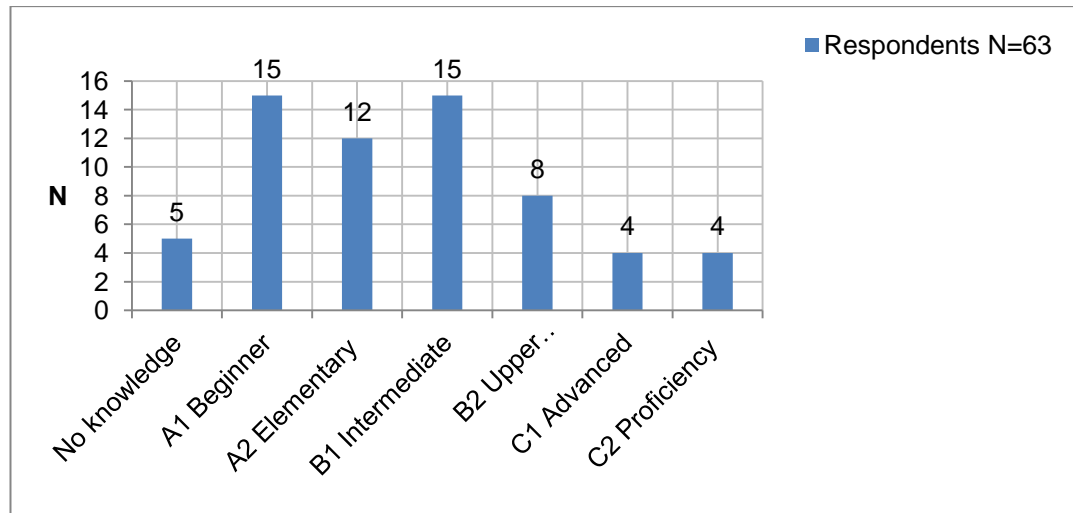


Figure 13. Level of Finnish of the respondents (CEFR)

Additional questions were asked on the current situation and attitudes of the respondents towards the Finnish language. Based on the responses to questions 12 and 13, 22.22% of the respondents are currently studying Finnish while a large majority, 77.78%, are not. However, almost 90% of the respondents wished they had a better knowledge of the Finnish language. Only 4 respondents (6.35%) did not wish for a higher level of Finnish and 3 respondents could not answer either yes or no and ticked the "I don't know" box.

4.1.3 Mastery at work

The next group of questions concerned the personal mastery at work of the respondents. In this next chapter the results of those six questions will be presented.

Question 14 on Mastery at work

The aim of this question was to gather information on how the respondents feel they perform in their work and whether the level of their Finnish affects their performance. In general, the respondents felt content with their mastery at work. They were rather often content with the quality of work they provide (average 4.40/5). Similarly, they felt rather often content with the amount of work that they get done (average 4.24/5). On average, the respondents were very often or always content with their ability to solve problems at work (4.51/5). For the question on whether the level of Finnish of the respondent negatively affects the mastery at work of the respondents, the

responses were very positive. The respondents only rather seldom felt that the level of Finnish affects negatively the quality of their work (average 1.56/5). Similarly, they felt that the level of their Finnish only rather seldom affected negatively the pace of their work (average 1.57/5). The most positive results were found on the question regarding the problem solving ability of the respondents. On average, the respondents felt only very seldom or never that their level of Finnish had a negative influence on their ability to solve problems at work (average 1.48/5). This means that the ability to solve problems at work was seen as the least problematic for the respondents among the three themes of mastery at work. Figure 14 illustrates the range of answers of the respondents on the mastery at work in their current organization in Finland. For items 1, 3 and 5, the higher the average, the more content the respondents were on their mastery at work. For the items 2, 4 and 6, the lower the average, the less their level of Finnish negatively affects their mastery at work.

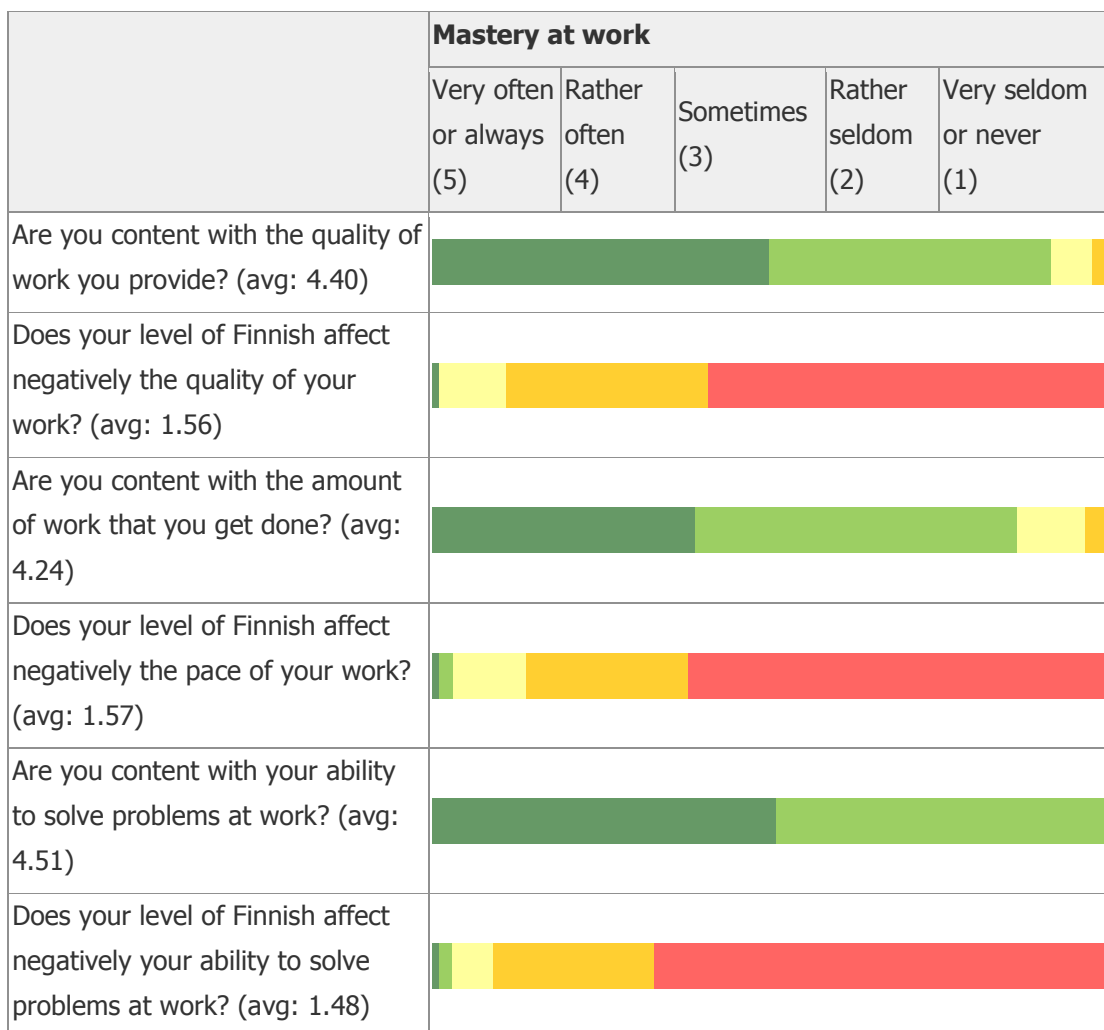


Figure 14. Mastery at work of foreign employees working in Finland.

Irrespective of how positive the overall image of the answers of the section Mastery at work is, some of the respondents felt very negatively about their current situation at work. One respondent felt the level of Finnish affected negatively the quality of work very often or always. 6 respondents felt that their level of Finnish sometimes affected their quality of work. 11.11% of the respondents (7) thus felt that the level of Finnish does affect their quality of work negatively sometimes or more often.

On the question related to whether the level of Finnish negatively affects the pace of work of the respondent, one respondent felt that this happens very often or always, one respondent felt that this happens rather often and 7 respondents felt that this happens sometimes. This means that 14.29% of the respondents (9) felt that the level of their Finnish affected the pace of their work at least sometimes. Table 4 presents the frequency distribution of the degree of agreement of the respondents on their level of Finnish negatively affecting their pace of work.

Table 4. Frequency distribution of degree of agreement of the respondents on the question "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?"

	Frequency	Percent
Very seldom or never (1)	39	61.9
Rather seldom (2)	15	23.8
Sometimes (3)	7	11.1
Rather often (4)	1	1.6
Very often or always (5)	1	1.6
Total	63	100.0

There were also some negative answers to the question on the ability to solve problems at work. One respondent felt that the level of Finnish does affect this ability very often or always. Another felt that it affects this ability rather often and 4 respondents felt that their level of Finnish sometimes affected negatively their ability to solve problems at work. Thus, these three groups equalling to 9.52% of the respondents felt that the level of Finnish has an effect on the problem solving at work at least sometimes.

4.1.4 Social Interaction

In this section the results of the last group of questions will be presented. This section concentrates on social interaction and includes 10 items.

Question 15 on Social Interaction

The last 10 items were related to the social relations between the respondents and their co-workers. The aim of the question was to find out whether the level of Finnish affects the social interaction of a foreign employee in Finland and if yes, to what extent. The themes of the questions were the relationship with co-workers, conflicts and bullying, equal treatment of employees, sense of belonging and being a member of the team.

In general, the respondents felt content with their social interaction. They were rather often content with their relationship with co-workers (average 4.35/5). They only rather seldom felt that their level of Finnish affected negatively their relationship with co-workers (average 1.68/5). They had rather seldom noticed any disturbing conflicts between co-workers (average 1.79/5) and were very seldom or never subjected to bullying or harassment (average 1.13/5). On average, the respondents rather often felt that their immediate superior treats workers fairly and equally (average 4.49/5). A great majority had very seldom or never noticed inequalities in the treatment of employees due to their level of Finnish (average 1.43/5). The respondents felt on average rather often a sense of belonging to their organization (average 4.10/5) and rather seldom felt left out because of their level of Finnish (average 1.87/5). They felt rather often an important part of their team (average 4.40/5) and felt respected and valued at work (average 4.41/5). Figure 15 presents the respondents' answers to the questions in the section of Social Interaction. Similarly to Figure 14, for items 1, 5, 7, 9 and 10 in Figure 15, the higher the average, the more content the respondents were on their social interactions at work. For items 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8, the lower the average, the less their level of Finnish negatively affects their social interaction at work.

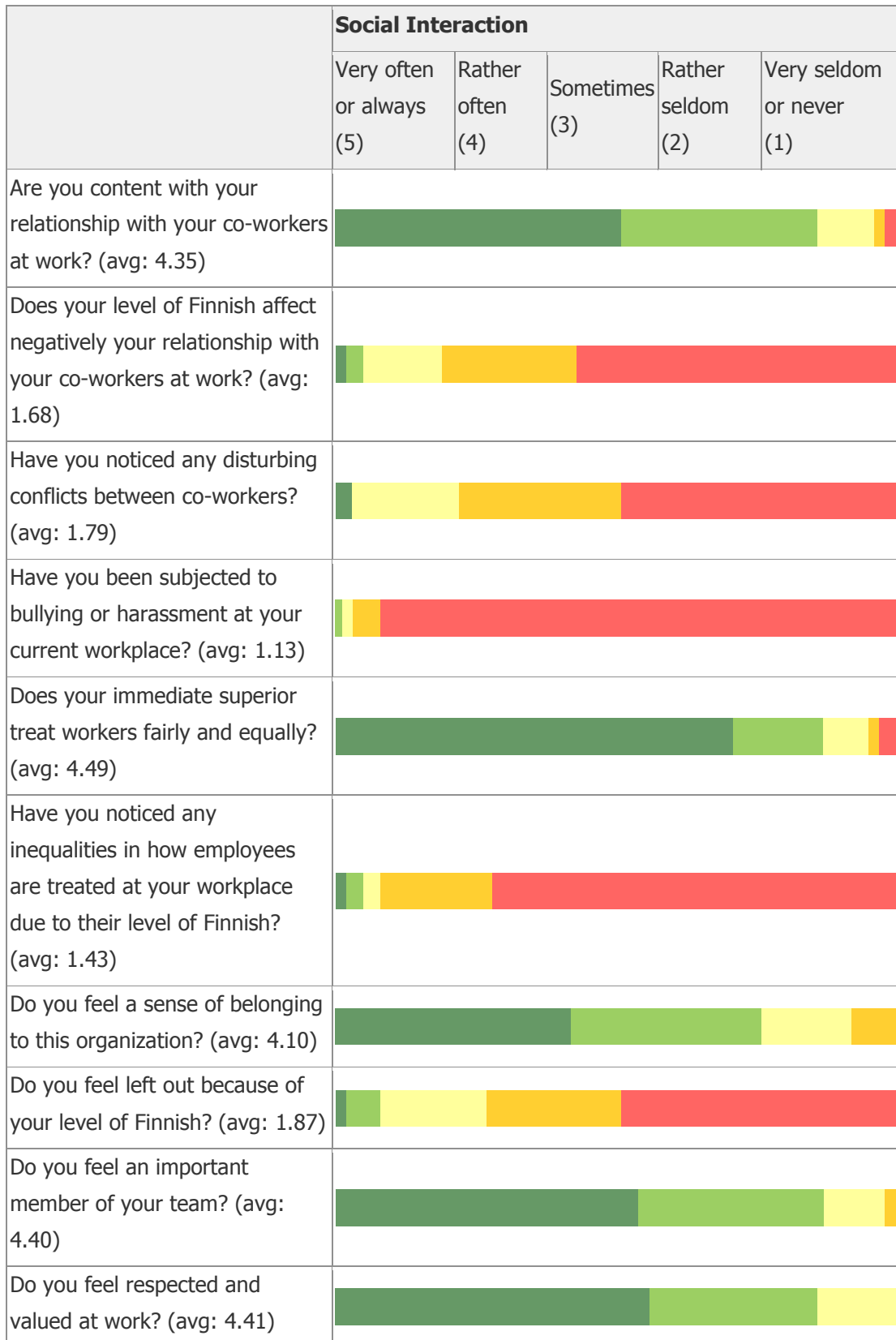


Figure 15. Social interaction of foreign employees working in Finland

As we can see, the overall responses are very positive. However, some of the respondents felt that their level of Finnish affected their social interaction at work. 2% of the respondents felt only very seldom or never content with their relationship with co-workers. Another 2% felt this way rather seldom and 10% sometimes. The respondents, who felt that their level of Finnish affected negatively their relationship with their co-workers very often or always, represented 2% of all respondents. The group that felt this way rather often represented 3% of all respondents and those respondents that felt that their level of Finnish sometimes affected negatively their relationships with co-workers represented 14% of all respondents. 27% of the respondents felt that they were left out by their co-workers because of their level of Finnish sometimes or more often. This means that roughly every fourth respondent's social interaction suffered because they do not master Finnish.

4.2 Statistical analysis of the results

For the purpose of the statistical analysis of the findings, three different methods of statistical analysis were used: cross tabulation, comparing means and Pearson's correlation. The analysis was started by recoding some of the independent variables into different variables in order to gather larger groups of respondents and to thereby gain more statistical significance for the analysis. The new variables were created for the age, length of employment in the current organization, number of employees in the current organization, share of non-Finns in the current organization, mother tongue, official working language and current level of Finnish. The answers of each question were divided into two groups as presented in Table 5. The number of respondents corresponding to each new variable is given in parenthesis. The variables of the educational background could not be recoded as the distribution was concentrated on higher university degree by 76% of the respondents.

Table 5. New variables for demographic questions

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Age	18-34 years old (37)	over 34 years old (26)
Length of employment	0-4 years (43)	5 years or more (20)
Number of employees	up to 50 employees (32)	over 50 employees (31)
Share of non-Finns	less than 10% (25)	10% or more (38)
Mother tongue	English (21)	other (42)
Corporate language	English (39)	other (24)
Level of Finnish	No knowledge – A2 (32)	B1 – C2 (31)

4.2.1 Analysis of variance

After recoding the independent variables, the means of each item of questions 14 and 15 of the survey questionnaire were compared according to the two groups of respondents. By comparing means directional information on whether there is a relationship between the independent and the dependent variables could be gained.

The writer decided to examine further only those relationships where the difference between the means was 0.3 or higher. The findings of such relationships are now presented. The age of the respondents affected the feeling that the immediate superior treats workers fairly and equally; younger respondents felt that their superior treated workers fairly with a mean of 4.33 and the respondents that were over 34 years old felt so with a mean of 4.72 on the scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "very seldom or never" and 5 "very often or always". This would suggest that older respondents felt that their superior treated workers fairly and equally more often than the younger respondents. The findings for the comparison are presented in table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of means by age "Does your immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?"

Age		Does your immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?
18-34 years old	Mean	4.33
	N	36
over 34 years old	Mean	4.72
	N	25
Total	Mean	4.49
	N	61

When taking the length of the employment of the respondents in their current organization in Finland as an independent variable, several items of questions 14 and 15 gave a difference in the means of 0.3 or higher. Differences could be found when comparing the answers on relations with co-workers, equal treatment of workers and feeling of being left out. Table 7 presents the findings of comparing the means by length of employment. The clearest difference could be seen in the results for the question "Do you feel left out because of your level of Finnish?". The difference was 0.41: the mean for the respondents having worked in their current organization for 0-4 years was 1.74 and the mean for those employed for more than 5 years in their current organization was 2.15. This would suggest that those who have worked longer in their current organization would feel more affected by their level of Finnish when it comes to feeling left out due to the level of Finnish. We could presume that the ones who have worked longer in the same organization have Finnish as working language as they would not be in Finland for a limited amount of time, and those who only work a shorter time in Finland would be working in English and therefore not be influenced that much by their level of Finnish.

Table 7. Comparison of means by length of employment

Length of employment		Are you content with your relationship with your co-workers at work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your relationship with your co-workers at work?	Does your immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?	Do you feel left out because of your level of Finnish?
0-4 years	Mean	4.47	1.56	4.38	1.74
	N	43	43	42	43
5 or more years	Mean	4.10	1.95	4.74	2.15
	N	20	20	19	20
Total	Mean	4.35	1.68	4.49	1.87
	N	63	63	61	63

The next independent variable chosen to use was the number of employees in the current organization of the respondents. When comparing means, two questions had a difference greater than 0.3 between the two groups of respondents (up to 50 employees and over 50 employees). The questions were whether the level of Finnish of the respondent affected negatively the pace of work and whether the immediate superior treated workers fairly and equally. Table 8 presents the findings for both questions. The findings would suggest that in organizations with up to 50 employees, the level of Finnish affects the pace of work of the respondents more often than in organizations with more than 50 employees. Furthermore, according to these findings, in organizations with more than 50 employees, employees feel more often that their immediate superior treats workers in a fair manner.

Table 8. Comparison of means by number of employees

Number of employees		Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	Does your immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?
up to 50 employees	Mean	1.75	4.32
	N	32	31
over 50 employees	Mean	1.39	4.67
	N	31	30
Total	Mean	1.57	4.49
	N	63	61

When comparing the means of the answers to the items included in questions 14 and 15 by the share of non-Finns in the current organization of the respondents, a total of 5 questions had a difference in means of over 0.3. The results are presented in table 9.

Table 9. Comparison of means by share of non-Finns in the current organization of the respondents

Share of non-Finns		Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work?	Are you content with your relationship with your co-workers at work?	Do you feel left out because of your level of Finnish?
Less than 10%	Mean	1.88	1.88	1.84	4.12	2.32
	N	25	25	25	25	25
More than 10%	Mean	1.34	1.37	1.24	4.50	1.58
	N	38	38	38	38	38
Total	Mean	1.56	1.57	1.48	4.35	1.87
	N	63	63	63	63	63

The most significant differences in means by share of non-Finns (less than 10% or 10% or more) were found for the question "Do you feel left out because of your level of Finnish" (difference in means of 0.74) and for the question "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems" (difference in means of 0.60). This would suggest that in organizations where the share of foreigners is smaller, the level of Finnish of foreigners affects some aspects of both mastery at work and social interaction more than in organizations where the share of foreigners is larger.

The only question where a difference in means greater than 0.3 by mother tongue of the respondent could be found was on feeling of being an important member of the team. The mean for the respondents with English as mother tongue was 4.19 and for those with a mother tongue other than English the mean was 4.5. The difference was only slightly above 0.3 (0.3095) and the variables will therefore not be subjected to a further analysis. The official language of the respondents' current organizations did, however, seem to have an effect on several factors of occupational well-being. There were great differences between those with English as the official working language and those with a working language other than English. Table 10 presents the findings when comparing means by official working language of the respondents. As we can see, the respondents with English as the official working language were less affected by their level of Finnish when it comes to quality of work, pace of work and ability to solve problems. The respondents that had English as the official working language also felt more a sense of belonging to the organization and had noticed less inequalities caused by the level of Finnish of other employees. The differences in the means were largest among the independent variables analysed by comparing means; 0.85 for quality of work, 0.89 for pace of work and 0.71 for ability to solve problems at work.

Table 10. Comparison of means by official working language of the respondents

Official working language in current organization	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work?	Have you noticed any inequalities in how employees are treated at your workplace due to their level of Finnish?	Do you feel a sense of belonging to this organization?	
English	Mean N	1.23 39	1.23 39	1.21 39	1.26 38	4.34 38
Other	Mean N	2.08 24	2.13 24	1.92 24	1.70 23	3.71 24
Total	Mean N	1.56 63	1.57 63	1.48 63	1.43 61	4.10 62

The last independent variable that was used to compare the means of the items of questions 14 and 15 was the level of Finnish of the respondents. This is an important variable for this study as the focus is on the Finnish language and on how not having enough competence may affect occupational well-being. Two of the dependent variables seemed to be affected by the level of Finnish of the respondent: the pace of work of the respondents and their relationship with co-workers. The findings regarding the two questions are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Comparison of means by level of Finnish

Level of Finnish		Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your relationship with your co-workers at work?
No knowledge - A2 Elementary	Mean	1.81	1.44
	N	32	32
B1 Intermediate - C2 Proficiency	Mean	1.32	1.94
	N	31	31
Total	Mean	1.57	1.68
	N	63	63

The findings would suggest that the pace of work of the respondents with a lower level of Finnish would be more affected than that of those with a higher level of Finnish. However, when it comes to the relationship with co-workers, the respondents with a lower level of Finnish claimed to be less affected by their level of Finnish than those with a higher competence. This would suggest that a lower level of Finnish would not affect negatively the relationship with co-workers of foreign employees. However, as mentioned earlier, comparing means only gives a figurative suggestion on the relationship between the variables. The variables presented in this section will be now subject to further analysis.

4.2.2 Association analysis

At this stage, the association between the variables presented in the previous chapter will be examined. The tool used for this part of the analysis was cross tabulation which measures the strength of association of the variables. Five of the sections that were further analysed resulted in statistically significant findings according to the Chi-square. In those five cases the Sig.-value was equal or smaller than 0.05 which would correspond to an at least 95% probability of stating a true relationship between the variables. However, in all the cases there were more than 20% of the cells in the table with a frequency number less than 5. For this reason, the tests are not reliable and more cases or a larger study in general would be needed in order to gather reliable findings.

Nevertheless, the findings of the association analysis could point towards the possibility that the official working language of foreign employees and their level of Finnish may have some effect on the quality of work, the pace of work and the ability to solve problems at work. The findings could suggest that respondents who were working in English were less affected by their level of Finnish than those whose working language was other than English. Furthermore, the foreigners who were working in English may have a stronger feeling of belonging to the organization than those working in another language. As mentioned, these findings are not reliable but they may give us some directional lead of the situation. The cross tabulation tables for the association analysis together with the Chi-square test can be found in Appendix 3.

4.2.3 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is used to examine whether there is a linear relationship between two variables. In this study correlation analysis was used for all items of questions 14 and 15 in order to understand whether there is a relationship between the different variables.

The first correlations found were between the level of satisfaction on the quality of work and the amount of work, the ability to solve problems, the satisfaction on the relationship with colleagues, the superior treating workers fairly and equally and the feeling of being respected and valued at work. Table 12 presents the findings of the correlation analysis for the item "Are you content with the quality of your work?".

Table 12. Correlations "Are you content with the quality of work you provide?"

	Are you content with the quality of work you provide?	Are you content with the amount of work that you get done?	Are you content with your ability to solve problems at work?	Are you content with your relationship with your co-workers at work?	Does your immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?	Do you feel respected and valued at work?
Are you content with the quality of work you provide?	1	.655**	.449**	.518**	.351**	.303*
Pearson Correlation		.000	.000	.000	.006	.017
Sig. (2-tailed)						
N	62	62	62	62	60	62

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There is close to a 100% (Sig.-value < .001) statistical probability that the respondents who are content with their quality of work are also content with the amount of work that they get done ($r=.655$), their ability to solve problems at work ($r=.449$) and their relationship with co-workers ($r=.518$). There is a strong positive correlation between the variables. There is also a positive correlation between the level of satisfaction of the quality of work and how the respondents perceive their immediate superior treats workers ($r=.351$); the more content the respondent is with the quality of work, the

more often he feels that his superior treats workers fairly and equally. There is a 99.4% statistical probability for this positive correlation. The last correlation was found for the question "Do you feel respected and valued at work?". There is a 0.17% risk of error for the positive correlation between the level of satisfaction of the quality of work and the feeling of being respected and valued at work ($r=.303$); this would suggest that when a foreign worker is content with the quality of work, he also feels respected and valued at work.

The next correlations were found for the level of Finnish affecting the quality of work of the respondents. When the respondents felt that their level of Finnish affected the quality of their work, they also felt that it affected the pace of their work, their ability to solve problems and the frequency of being subject to bullying. Table 13 presents the findings of the correlation analysis for the item "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?".

Table 13. Correlations "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?"

		Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work?	Have you been subjected to bullying or harassment at your current workplace?
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?	Pearson Correlation	1	.670**	.673**	.392**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.001
	N	63	63	63	63

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is close to a 100% (Sig.-value < .001) statistical probability that the foreign workers that feel their level of Finnish affects negatively the quality of their work also feel that it affects negatively the pace of their work ($r=.670$) and their ability to solve problems at work ($r=.673$). There is a strong positive correlation between the variables. There is also a positive correlation between the level of Finnish affecting the

quality of work of a foreign worker and the frequency of being subjected to bullying or harassment at the workplace ($r=.392$). There is a 99.99% statistical probability of a linear relationship between the variables.

Positive correlations ($r=.326$) were also found between the variables "Have you noticed any disturbing conflicts between co-workers?" and "Have you been subjected to bullying or harassment at your current workplace?". There is a 99.91% statistical probability to state: "the more often a foreign worker has noticed conflicts between co-workers, the more often he has also been subjected to bullying or harassment at the current workplace." A positive correlation ($r=.261$) was also found between the variables "Have you been subjected to bullying or harassment at your current workplace?" and "Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your relationship with your co-workers?". When there is more frequency in one, there is also more frequency in the other. There is a small risk of error of 99.61% (Sig.-value=.039). Table 14 presents the findings of the correlation analysis.

Table 14. Correlations "Have you noticed any disturbing conflict between co-workers"

		Have you noticed any disturbing conflicts between co-workers?	Have you been subjected to bullying or harassment at your current workplace?	Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your relationship with your co-workers at work?
Have you noticed any disturbing conflicts between co-workers?	Pearson Correlation	1	.326**	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.09	.905
	N	63	63	63
Have you been subjected to bullying or harassment at your current workplace?	Pearson Correlation	.326**	1	.261*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009		.039
	N	63	63	63

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.3 Examination of the interview answers

Three interviews were conducted remotely via e-mail. The interviewees were chosen in such a way that each interview would bring in a different point of view, different answers and attitudes from each of the respondents as the intention of the interviews was to gather additional information and real-life examples from foreigners working in Finland in order to answer the research question of how performance in Finnish affects the well-being of foreign workers in Finland.

The first respondent is a 25 year old French woman with an A1 level in Finnish. She currently works in a Finnish company with English as corporate language. In her case it was interesting that it is forbidden to speak Finnish at her workplace even though many of the employees are Finnish or speak Finnish. Due to this rule in the organization, she never feels a need to understand or speak Finnish at work. However, she does feel that the fact that English is not her mother tongue does sometimes affect her expression: "I am not English native so off course sometimes I can't express myself perfectly in English." She has not experienced any social exclusion at work, neither in official nor in unofficial situations. She does, however, comment on wishing having a higher level of Finnish before having the current position: "However I wish I would've had a better Finnish level while my job research. It seems to be harder to find a job here when you don't speak Finnish." The first respondent did not have a strong opinion on the topic as she feels that it is not relevant in her case.

The second interviewee had stronger opinions on the topic. He is a 28-year-old Spanish man with a B1 level in Finnish. He works in an environment where 95% of the employees are Finns. He has often experienced the feeling of being left out during unofficial gatherings at the workplace:

The level of my Finnish only affects in the communication with my colleagues when in lunch breaks, coffee breaks or other non-purely-work related matters. Working in a company where 95% of people is Finnish means that often the group talks are in Finnish as well. [...] Have you felt left out by your Finnish speaking colleagues at lunch or when having coffee? Yes, many times.

He also feels that not all Finns are very fluent in English and it is an effort for some to change the language:

Sometimes colleagues prefer to continue in Finnish even after I arrive because they feel more comfortable talking in that language. Then I might not understand everything said and thus, I might feel a bit outside of the conversation. However, all work related stuff is normally in English.

As the respondent has already gained an intermediate level of Finnish, he is able to communicate some things in Finnish or at least be able to understand or follow some conversations in Finnish, especially with the help of a dictionary: "Sometimes email chains that have been written in Finnish are forwarded to me, but I do not have major problems in understanding what has been said with a bit of effort." In addition to the occasional e-mail in Finnish, the only official informing that has taken place in Finnish has been the employee co-operative negotiations during which some of the meetings took place in Finnish. He feels that providing Finnish courses as an incentive by the organization would be a great idea. He also feels that the fact that Finns tend to have a quite high level of English makes learning Finnish difficult for foreigners: "The best thing to happen in order for foreigners to quickly learn Finnish would be Finns level of English to decrease considerably :). But that is not going to happen!"

The third interviewee is a 44 year old Estonian woman with a B2 level of Finnish. Even though the general working language at her workplace is Finnish, her own work does not require written Finnish skills and she can manage the day-to-day situations with her spoken Finnish skills. Some of the policy instructions were hard for her to understand but she has been able to get help from co-workers:

Some of the policies are quite complicated and I have asked my co-workers to help understand some of them. The instructions are so task-specific that they do not cause any problems. Also, somebody will explain them to me in English if necessary.

The interviewee thought that although she has an upper intermediate level of Finnish, she experiences difficulties in understanding her colleagues especially during informal situations when the discussions are not very structured:

I find it difficult at coffee or lunch that people speak so quickly and over each other that is difficult to understand. Written Finnish is also quite different from spoken Finnish which makes it quite hard to understand.

During work related meetings held in Finnish she usually only participates when her own speciality is addressed: "At meetings I don't speak much unless it is about my own speciality, then I know the vocabulary also in Finnish and can participate even not as much as I wish." This would suggest that her level of Finnish affects her participation negatively. When it comes to the social interaction with her co-workers, she does not spend time with her colleagues outside of work, but she does not feel it is a consequence caused by her level of Finnish:

I don't have much to do with my co-workers outside of work and most of my friends are not Finns. I think a better knowledge would not make much of a difference because all of my co-workers have their own lives which are different from mine.

This would suggest that language is not the splitting factor in this case but rather the cultural or individual differences between the interviewee and her colleagues. It might also be easier for her to spend time with other foreigners that find themselves in a similar situation. She had studied Finnish prior to her arrival and she thinks it is very important to do so: "I think it is up to the person coming to work to have a sufficient level of Finnish required to perform the job." The difficulty of the Finnish language is often said to be that the spoken and the written languages vary so much. The interviewee has also noticed this feature: "It was a surprise to me how different the spoken Finnish is from the written one and this made it quite difficult at the beginning." As a suggestion for organizations receiving foreign employees would be to guide them more, especially at the beginning on the employment:

I think there are enough courses arranged but I think it would be good to have some kind of a tutor at work at first to show you around and to explain about Finnish customs etc.

The suggestion made by the interviewee is very accurate for any new employee but especially in the case of a foreign worker as in addition to all the new company policies and new people, the foreigner also has to learn about the national culture and the language of the country.

Although the number of interviews was limited to three, the respondents were encouraged to give feedback on the topic and on the actual survey questionnaire. Several respondents sent feedback directly to the author or via the participant that had used the snowballing method to forward the questionnaire. Overall, the respondents found the topic very interesting and relevant to the current situation in Finland. Many respondents requested to receive the results of the study as they wanted to know if others felt the same way as they did. An Australian-American commented on the survey:

It was a very interesting set of questions. I don't find my pathetic level of ability of Finnish to be a problem in our English-speaking workplace, but I DEFINITELY find that it's a problem outside of work. In fact, because English is accepted so completely at work (where I spend most of my time), that's one of the things that keeps my Finnish from developing further, sadly. I was just at the passport office, speaking to the lady behind the counter in Finnish, and when I had to ask her to repeat something that I didn't understand, she literally sneered at me and said, "Look at this, a Finnish citizen who can't even speak Finnish." Quite hurtful, and an attitude that I have never once run into in the workplace in nearly ten years. I do wish I spoke Finnish better, though!

Another respondent felt that the survey was not so much targeted to him and he didn't have Finnish as working language. Here's the feedback from this American respondent: "It's really more for foreigners working in Finnish companies (where Finnish is the working language) than for foreigners working in global companies where English is the corporate language." It is nevertheless interesting to hear the opinions of both companies where the working language is Finnish and companies where it is English.

4.4 Final analysis of the findings

The findings of this study were used to answer the research question on how performance in Finnish affects occupational well-being of foreigners in Finland. Based on the findings of this study it can be said that foreign employees are overall very satisfied with both their personal mastery at work as well as their social interactions with co-workers. In general, language does seem to have some effect on the occupational well-being of foreign employees in Finland. Directional information could be found during the statistical analysis and the interviews supported these findings. The findings would point out a tendency that the level of Finnish of a foreign employee may affect factors such as the quality and pace of work and the ability to solve

problems of those foreigners that have to use, to at least some extent, Finnish as the working language. The foreigners who were only working in English in a working environment with only other foreigners, or at least a large share of other foreigners, were less affected by their level of Finnish. It could be assumed that the workplaces with a diverse workforce have a working management style that benefits both individuals as well as the organisation.

As we have seen in the interviews, language affects the occupational well-being of a foreigner in Finland if the working language is not English, if co-workers are unwilling to speak English and if the foreigner has no knowledge at all of Finnish. The interviewee that felt the least affected by the level of Finnish was the one working in an environment where speaking Finnish is even forbidden. The two other interviewees that were working in an environment where Finnish is also used, both felt affected by not speaking fluent Finnish. To the largest extent, the level of Finnish affected both mastery at work and social interactions. However, in many cases it is hard to define whether language is the affecting factor or if cultural differences, different working styles or just the fact of being away from home, affect the well-being at work of a foreign worker. Personal criticism may also affect the way employees rate their work performance.

The results of the correlation analysis were consistent; the respondents who were positive on one aspect of occupational well-being were often positive on other aspects as well. On the other hand, those who had some negative experiences, also felt negatively about other aspects of their well-being at work. It could be related to Maslow's theory of needs; if one need is fulfilled, it is easier to fulfil the other needs as well. All needs are also somewhat related, for example love and belonging which can be gained from relation with co-workers, family and friends, affects both social well-being as well as mental well-being.

The findings may reflect the truth but they may also reflect temporary factors such as the mood of the respondent. Respondents may not remember negative incidents at the moment of taking part in the survey or may only remember the negative side of things. Answers may also be affected by the pressure caused by time restraints (many of the

respondents had filled in the survey during office hours) or pure mistakes such as reading the question or answer wrongly or accidentally ticking the wrong box.

Based on the results, we can see that the group of respondents is somewhat homogenous and up to a certain degree reflects the writer's own social environment; over half of the respondents belong to the same age group as the author (25–34 years old), all the respondents have a degree after their secondary education, and the three most frequent mother tongues of the respondents are English, French and Spanish which all reflect the author's studies and interests. However, the sample was not deliberately chosen to target only respondents with similar demographics. It is interesting that although the questionnaire was sent to people with very different backgrounds, a great majority of the respondents still were to a certain extent similar. Would the demographics represent a typical foreigner in Finland rather than the author's own social environment? Would highly educated foreigners, or highly educated people in general, be more interested and open to answer such a survey? For further studies on the topic, it would be interesting to use stratified random sampling in order to gather information from different subgroups and to make sure that the sample has the same characteristics as the population.

The requirement that the respondent needs to understand English quite well to be able to fill in the survey may also have weeded out foreigners with no education and thereby resulting in the majority of the respondents being highly educated. Interestingly, although the degree of education is very high among the respondents and a great majority has a higher university degree, in most cases the respondents only hold an employee position in their current organization. This could relate to discrimination of foreigners during the recruitment process or to poor advancement opportunities of foreigners in their careers. The underlying reasons may depend on several factors, such as poor language skills, discrimination or prejudice. However, this study did not look at this type of discrimination and it could be worth further examination.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the level of Finnish of foreign employees in Finland on their well-being at work. The author concentrated on two aspects of well-being at work, personal mastery at work and social interaction with co-workers. The objective was to find out whether foreign workers that master the Finnish language have a higher occupational well-being than foreigners with poor skills in Finnish.

This objective was pursued through a quantitative study carried out with a survey questionnaire followed up by an additional qualitative study that included three interviews to deepen the knowledge on the topic. The questions of the survey and the interviews focused on basic aspects of well-being at work. The questions were related to three needs from Maslow's hierarchy of needs: need for love and belonging, need for self-esteem and need for self-actualisation which correspond to social and mental well-being of workers.

Overall, foreigners seem to be very satisfied with their well-being at work, both socially and mentally. The results indicate that there is some relationship between language and occupational well-being, but the level of Finnish is not a major contributor. The mother tongue and working language of the respondents affected especially the mastery at work; those who worked purely in English were less or not at all affected by the lack of knowledge in Finnish. The respondents with English as mother tongue also felt slightly better with their occupational well-being than the two second largest groups of respondents, Spanish and French. Seen in the light of Hall's theory on high-context and low-context cultures and bearing in mind that England and the United States score closer to Finland on the ladder than France, Spain and the Latin America, it is possible that culture affects the exchange of messages between Finnish people and representatives other cultures when it comes to occupational well-being. Additional research should be made to ensure the findings as nationality of respondents was not asked in the questionnaire.

The relevant theories show that the concept of well-being at work is very complex and difficult to measure. This study gave a general idea of how the level of knowledge of

the local language may affect the well-being at work of a foreign employee. However, the size of the sample restricted any deeper statistical analysis and in this study it is necessary to rely on directional findings only. Other limitations of this study were the time and budget restraints which made a larger study impossible. The sample size remained fairly small and therefore the statistical value of the research suffered. For further studies it would be interesting to gather a greater sample and thus allow a more extensive statistical analysis of the results. Due to the lack of face-to-face encounters for the interviews, there is also lack of interaction between the respondents and myself. Therefore, there was also no further possibility for elaboration of answers or attitudes during the interviews. Nevertheless, this could also be seen as a strength of the study method. Because the interviewees answered the questions alone it could be assumed that they had more time to think about the answers. Writing down the answers independently also prevents the interviewer from, consciously or subconsciously, directing the answers in one direction or another.

Some of the respondents felt that they did not actually belong to the target group of the survey because their working language was not Finnish. However, it would be interesting to also study whether it is a global phenomenon that foreign employees are more affected by the lack of knowledge of the local language outside of their work rather than at the actual workplace. A comparative study between Finnish companies and large multi-national organizations could be carried out in order to find out whether there is proper diversity management. This would be very important in order to benefit from a diverse work force to the maximum; a possible competitive advantage for organizations in the future.

References

- Ahtiainen, L. 2011, "Palkansaajien järjestäytyminen vuonna 2009 ja työehtosopimusten kattavuus vuonna 2008 Suomessa", *Työpoliittinen aikakauskirja*, vol. 54, no. 3, pp. 35–45.
- Anttonen, H. & Räsänen, T. 2009, *Työhyvinvointi: uudistuksia ja hyviä käytäntöjä*, Työterveyslaitos, Helsinki.
- Collis, J. & Hussey, R. 2003, *Business research : a practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*, 2nd ed., Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke.
- Curwin, J. & Slater, R. 2004, *Quantitative methods: a short course*, Thomson, London.
- Eronen, A., Härmälä, V., Jauhiainen, S., Karikallio, H., Karinen, R., Kosunen, A., Laamanen, J. & Lahtinen, M. 2014, *Maahanmuuttajien työllistyminen – Taustatekijät, työnhaku ja työvoimapalvelut*, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Helsinki.
- Ghuri, P. & Grønhaug, K. 2005, *Research methods in business studies: a practical guide*, 3rd ed., Prentice Hall, Harlow.
- Guirdham, M. 2005, *Communicating across cultures at work*, 2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Hall, E.T. 1981, *Beyond culture*, Repr. Doubleday, Garden City (NY).
- Hess, M.B. & Linderman, P. 2002, *The expert expatriate: your guide to successful relocation abroad: moving, living, thriving*, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.
- Kauppinen, T. 2005, *Suomen työmarkkinamalli*, WSOY, Helsinki.
- Lahti, L. 2008, *Monikulttuurinen johtaminen*, WSOYpro, Helsinki.
- Language policy division of the Council of Europe 2009, *Manual for relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- Lindström, K. & Leppänen, A. 2002, *Työyhteisön terveys ja hyvinvointi*, Työterveyslaitos, Helsinki.
- Maslow, A.H. 1943, "A theory of human motivation", *Psychological Review*, 1943, vol. 50, no. 4, pp. 370–396.
- Mead, R. 2005, *International management: cross-cultural dimensions*, 3rd ed., Blackwell, Malden, MA.
- Moreno, J.L. 1978, *Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*, Third ed., Beacon House Inc., New York.

- Oakshott, L. 2009, *Essential quantitative methods: for business, management and finance*, 4th ed., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Otala, L. 2003, *Hyvinvointia työpaikalle, tulosta toimintaan: työhyvinvoinnin työkirja*, WSOY, Helsinki.
- Otala, L. & Ahonen, G. 2005, *Työhyvinvointi tuloksentekijänä*, 2. uud.p. ed., WSOYpro, Helsinki.
- Parkinson, D. & Noble, J. 2005, *Oxford business English dictionary: for learners of English*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Sorainen, O. 2007, *Ulkomaalainen työntekijä: rekrytointi, maahanmuutto ja työnteko*, Edita, Helsinki.
- Thompson, N. & Campling, J. cop. 2003, *Communication and language: a handbook of theory and practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Trux, M. 2000, *Aukeavat ovet: kulttuurien moninaisuus Suomen elinkeinoelämässä*, WSOY, Helsinki.
- Valtanen, J., Lamminpää, K., Akola, E., Heinonen, J., Koskinen, K., Malinen, P. & Westergård, M. 2006, *Henkilöstön kehittämisen opas*, Turku School of Economics, Kirjapaino Esa Print Oy, Tampere.
- Vihavainen, T. 2009, *Länsimaiden tuho*, 2. ed., Otava, Helsingissä.
- Viitala, R. 2007, *Henkilöstöjohtaminen: strateginen kilpailutekijä*, 6. ed., Edita, Helsinki.

Internet sources

- The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the Council of Europe* 2014, [Homepage of Cambridge University Press], [Online]. Available: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp [2014, 01/10].
- Migration* 2012, Official Statistics of Finland.
- Free Movement - EU nationals* [Homepage of European Commission], [Online]. Available: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=457> [2014, 02/20].
- Ketkä ovat maahanmuuttajia?* 27.11.2013-last update [Homepage of Finnish Institute of Occupational Health], [Online]. Available: http://www.ttl.fi/fi/muuttuva_tyoelama/maahanmuuttajat_ja_tyo/ketka_ovat_maa_hanmuuttajia/sivut/default.aspx [2014, 2/20].
- Psychological and social factors at work* [Homepage of National Institute of Occupational Health, Norway], [Online]. Available: <https://www.qps-nordic.org/en/> [2014, 01/10].

QPS Nordic - General questionnaire for psychological and social factors at work
[Homepage of Nordic Council of Ministers], [Online]. Available: https://www.qps-nordic.org/en/doc/QPSNordic_questionnaire.pdf [2014, 01/08].

Questback - our story. Available: <http://www.questback.com/uk/our-story> [2014, 02/06].

Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire

Survey: Working in Finland as a foreigner

The collected answers will be used as part of the Metropolia Business School Bachelor's Thesis to evaluate the influence of the level of Finnish on a foreign employee's well-being at work in Finland.

Please read each question carefully before answering and think about your own opinions and situation in your answers. Your participation in the survey is voluntary and anonymous.

Kindly answer all questions. Answering the survey will take approximately 6 minutes. Please tick the box that best matches you or your opinion.

Thank you for participating!

Personal Background

1. Age

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or more

2. Sex

- Male
- Female

3. Educational background

- Comprehensive school
- Secondary school
- College degree
- Higher university degree

4. Your position in the current organisation

- Employee
- Supervisor
- Specialist
- Manager
- Top management

5. How long have you worked for your current organisation in Finland?

- 0-1 years
- 2-4 years
- 5-10 years
- more than 10 years

6. The number of employees in Finland in your current organisation

- 0-10
- 11-50
- 51-100
- more than 100

7. Estimate the share of non-Finns in your organisation in Finland

- I am the only one
- Less than 10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- More than 50%

Language Background

8. What is your mother tongue?

9. What is the official working language in your current organisation in Finland?

10. What other languages are used in your current organisation in Finland?

11. Using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), choose the level that best describes your current level of Finnish

- No knowledge
- A1 Beginner (Can understand very basic phrases, introduce him/herself and interact in a simple way)
- A2 Elementary (Can communicate in simple and routine tasks and describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background)
- B1 Intermediate (Can deal with most situations likely to arise while in Finland, can produce simple connected text on familiar topics and can describe experiences, events, dreams and hopes and briefly give reasons and explanations for them)
- B2 Upper intermediate (Can understand the main ideas of complex text including technical discussion in his/her field of specialization, can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity and can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of

subjects)

C1 Advanced (Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts and recognize implicit meaning, can express ideas fluently, can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes, can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text for professional use)

C2 Proficiency (Can understand with ease everything heard or read, can summarise information from different sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation, can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations)

12. Are you currently studying Finnish?

- Yes
 No

13. Do you wish you had a better knowledge of Finnish?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

Mastery at work

14. Please tick what best describes your current situation:

	Very often or always	Rather often	Sometimes	Rather seldom	Very seldom or never
Are you content with the quality of work you provide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you content with the amount of work that you get done?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you content with your ability to solve problems at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Social Interaction

15. Please tick the option that best describes your current situation

	Very often or always	Rather often	Sometimes	Rather seldom	Very seldom never
Are you content with your relationship with your co-workers at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your relationship with your co-workers at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you noticed any disturbing conflicts between co-workers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you been subjected to bullying or harassment at your current workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your immediate superior treat workers fairly and equally?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you noticed any inequalities in how employees are treated at your workplace due to their level of Finnish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel a sense of belonging to this organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel left out because of your level of Finnish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel an important member of your team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel respected and valued at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2. Interview questions

1. Age _____

2. Sex _____

3. Current level of Finnish

- A1
- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2

4. How do you feel the level of your Finnish affects your well-being at work?

(Please think of both, mastery of your own work and your social interactions.)

For example:

- Do you sometimes have to ask for linguistic help to produce results?
- Do you have difficulties understanding company policies or other instructions?
- How does working in another language than your own mother tongue affect your work?

5. Give an example of a situation at your workplace where you wished you had a higher level of Finnish.

For example:

- Have you felt left out by your Finnish speaking colleagues at lunch or when having coffee?
- Have you ever sat at a meeting without being able to contribute due to lack of Finnish?
- Do you think you would have a closer relationship with your co-workers if you were a native Finnish speaker?

6. What could your employer do to improve the well-being of foreign workers?

For example:

- Do you feel it should be up to the employer to provide Finnish language courses?
- Does the society provide adequate possibilities to learn Finnish?
- Should the employer take foreign employees' integration into consideration by organizing social activities etc.?

Appendix 3. Cross tabulation tables

Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work? * Share of non-Finns

Crosstabulation

		Share of non-Finns		Total	
		Less than 10%	10% or more		
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work?	Very seldom or never (1)	Count	11	31	42
		% within Share of non-Finns	44.0%	81.6%	66.7%
		% of Total	17.5%	49.2%	66.7%
	Rather seldom (2)	Count	10	5	15
		% within Share of non-Finns	40.0%	13.2%	23.8%
		% of Total	15.9%	7.9%	23.8%
	Sometimes (3)	Count	2	2	4
		% within Share of non-Finns	8.0%	5.3%	6.3%
		% of Total	3.2%	3.2%	6.3%
	Rather often (4)	Count	1	0	1
		% within Share of non-Finns	4.0%	0.0%	1.6%
		% of Total	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%
	Very often or always (5)	Count	1	0	1
		% within Share of non-Finns	4.0%	0.0%	1.6%
		% of Total	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%
Total	Count	25	38	63	
	% within Share of non-Finns	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	39.7%	60.3%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.027
Likelihood Ratio	.020
Linear-by-Linear Association	.004
N of Valid Cases	

a. 6 cells (60,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,40.

Do you feel a sense of belonging to this organisation? * Official working language in current organisation

Crosstabulation

			Official working language in current organisation		Total
			English	Other	
Do you feel a sense of belonging to this organisation?	Rather seldom (2)	Count	0	5	5
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	20.8%	8.1%
		% of Total	0.0%	8.1%	8.1%
	Sometimes (3)	Count	5	5	10
		% within Official working language in current organisation	13.2%	20.8%	16.1%
		% of Total	8.1%	8.1%	16.1%
	Rather often (4)	Count	15	6	21
		% within Official working language in current organisation	39.5%	25.0%	33.9%
		% of Total	24.2%	9.7%	33.9%
	Very often or always (5)	Count	18	8	26
		% within Official working language in current organisation	47.4%	33.3%	41.9%
		% of Total	29.0%	12.9%	41.9%
Total	Count	38	24	62	
	% within Official working language in current organisation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.3%	38.7%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.018
Likelihood Ratio	.009
Linear-by-Linear Association	.011
N of Valid Cases	

a. 3 cells (37,5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,94.

Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work? * Official working language in current organisation Crosstabulation

			Official working language in current organisation		Total
			English	Other	
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the quality of your work?	Very seldom or never (1)	Count	31	6	37
		% within Official working language in current organisation	79.5%	25.0%	58.7%
		% of Total	49.2%	9.5%	58.7%
	Rather seldom (2)	Count	7	12	19
		% within Official working language in current organisation	17.9%	50.0%	30.2%
		% of Total	11.1%	19.0%	30.2%
	Sometimes (3)	Count	1	5	6
		% within Official working language in current organisation	2.6%	20.8%	9.5%
		% of Total	1.6%	7.9%	9.5%
	Very often or always (5)	Count	0	1	1
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	4.2%	1.6%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%
Total	Count	39	24	63	
	% within Official working language in current organisation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.403 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	20.516	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.927	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	63		

a. 4 cells (50,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,38.

Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work? * Official working language in current organisation Crosstabulation

			Official working language in current organisation		Total
			English	Other	
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively the pace of your work?	Very seldom or never (1)	Count	30	9	39
		% within Official working language in current organisation	76.9%	37.5%	61.9%
		% of Total	47.6%	14.3%	61.9%
	Rather seldom (2)	Count	9	6	15
		% within Official working language in current organisation	23.1%	25.0%	23.8%
		% of Total	14.3%	9.5%	23.8%
	Sometimes (3)	Count	0	7	7
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	29.2%	11.1%
		% of Total	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%
	Rather often (4)	Count	0	1	1
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	4.2%	1.6%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%
	Very often or always (5)	Count	0	1	1
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	4.2%	1.6%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%
Total	Count	39	24	63	
	% within Official working language in current organisation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.001
Likelihood Ratio	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000
N of Valid Cases	

6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .38.

Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work? * Official working language in current organisation > English/ other Crosstabulation

			Official working language in current organisation		Total
			English	Other	
Does your level of Finnish affect negatively your ability to solve problems at work?	Very seldom or never (1)	Count	32	10	42
		% within Official working language in current organisation	82.1%	41.7%	66.7%
		% of Total	50.8%	15.9%	66.7%
	Rather seldom (2)	Count	6	9	15
		% within Official working language in current organisation	15.4%	37.5%	23.8%
		% of Total	9.5%	14.3%	23.8%
	Sometimes (3)	Count	1	3	4
		% within Official working language in current organisation	2.6%	12.5%	6.3%
		% of Total	1.6%	4.8%	6.3%
	Rather often (4)	Count	0	1	1
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	4.2%	1.6%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%
	Very often or always (5)	Count	0	1	1
		% within Official working language in current organisation	0.0%	4.2%	1.6%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%
Total	Count	39	24	63	
	% within Official working language in current organisation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.016
Likelihood Ratio	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	.001
N of Valid Cases	

a. 6 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .38.

Appendix 4. CEFR Criteria Grid

Oral Assessment Criteria Grid

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get on or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2+					
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.
B1+					
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2+					
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can ask and answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".

Written Assessment Criteria Grid

	Overall	Range	Coherence	Accuracy	Description	Argument
C2	Can write clear, highly accurate and smoothly flowing complex texts in an appropriate and effective personal style conveying finer shades of meaning. Can use a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.	Shows great flexibility in formulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Can create coherent and cohesive texts making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.	Maintains consistent and highly accurate grammatical control of even the most complex language forms. Errors are rare and concern rarely used forms.	Can write clear, smoothly flowing and fully engaging stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles and essays which present a case or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured and mostly accurate texts of complex subjects. Can underline the relevant salient issues, expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and round off with an appropriate conclusion.	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say. The flexibility in style and tone is somewhat limited.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured text, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; occasional errors in grammar, collocations and idioms.	Can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in a mostly assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.	Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues. Can expand and support point of view with some subsidiary points, reasons and examples.
B2	Can write clear, detailed official and semi-official texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. Can make a distinction between formal and informal language with occasional less appropriate expressions.	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, using some complex sentence forms to do so. Language lacks, however, expressiveness and idiomatically and use of more complex forms is still stereotypical.	Can use a number of cohesive devices to link his/her sentences into clear, coherent text, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a longer text.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstandings.	Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences making the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned.	Can write an essay or report that develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of some significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem. Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving some reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. The texts are understandable but occasional unclear expressions and/or inconsistencies may cause a break-up in reading.	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Can link a series of shorter discrete elements into a connected, linear text.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more common situations. Occasionally makes errors that the reader usually can interpret correctly on the basis of the context.	Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text. Can write a description of an event, a recent trip – real or imagined. Can narrate a story. Can write straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest.	Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest. Can summarise, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on a familiar routine and non-routine matters, within his field with some confidence. Can write very brief reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because". Longer texts may contain expressions and show coherence problems which makes the text hard to understand.	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information mainly in everyday situations.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".	Uses simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes. Errors may sometimes cause misunderstandings.	Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences. Can write short simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people.	
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. Longer texts contain expressions and show coherence problems which make the text very hard or impossible to understand.	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" and "then".	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorized repertoire. Errors may cause misunderstandings.		