

University of Turku: Internationalisation and languages

Universities as drivers of socio-academic integration in
multilingual Europe

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Finland: legal background

- *Universities Act.*
 - Language of instruction is either Finnish or Swedish
 - University may also decide to use an other teaching language, but degrees in all fields have to be offered **also** in Finnish or Swedish (number of degree programmes in English increasing)
 - Official language of administration is either Finnish or Swedish
- Students must demonstrate in degrees proficiency in Finnish and Swedish as well as skills in at least one foreign language
 - This does not concern a student who has been educated (basic education) abroad
- 2017: tuition fees introduced for non-EU/EEA students → decrease in applicant numbers from abroad (now slowly recovering)

State and level of national language reserve

- '*English is enough*' thinking: most pupils/students study **only** English (in addition to national languages)
- Especially has decreased study of German and French
- Several reasons: from state/city level strategic decisions to practical institutional solutions and understanding studying of languages to be difficult and demanding
- Solutions for one level of education reflected in others (but language education not developed as a whole)
 - Number of languages studied decreases in upper secondary level → need for more language training in universities (adult interest in studying languages traditionally quite high)

Read more: www.minedu.fi/en/multilingualism

Immigration and language reserve

- General debate in Finland has focused on the proficiency in national languages
- School dropout risk high among those students who have Finnish as a second language in secondary education AND their proportion in higher education lower than in the population
 - = level of proficiency not satisfactory although learning outcomes achieved in primary education
- Lack of proficiency in national languages a barrier to employment (need for more training in Finnish/Swedish also in HE degree programmes in English)
- Immigrants' own languages clearly underutilised (over 500 languages spoken in Finland; biggest groups Russian, Estonian, Arabic, Somali, English, Kurdish, Chinese)
- Support for the development of primary languages needs also more attention

University of Turku: languages of education and research

- Language of **degree education**: Finnish
- In addition to that, several Master's programmes (& some Bachelor's programmes) and Doctoral education in English
- Joint programmes with the Swedish-speaking Åbo Akademi in English
- Language of **research** not defined in legal acts or regulations
- Differences among the fields (e.g. Natural sciences vs. Law)
- Impact of the state funding model:
 - Three-level classification of publication fora
 - Tends to unify publication practices as esteemed English-language journals are ranked highest

University of Turku: languages in everyday life

- UTU *Language Policy* (2011; updated in 2016): "parallel lingualism and receptive multilingualism"
- Permanent working group on language matters
- Language of official documents: Finnish
- Language of administration: Finnish & English
- University Communications use Finnish and English in most functions
- Languages as an equality matter: difficulties experienced by international staff members vs. challenges caused by the growing number of international staff
- Challenge: Integration of international students & researchers into the academic community **and** the Finnish society



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Aitäh! Kiitos! Thank you!

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