University of Turku: Internationalisation and languages

Universities as drivers of socio-academic integration in multilingual Europe
Tartu 2 December 2019

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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
Aitäh! Kiitos! Thank you!

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