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## **Language in business and commerce in Finland**

This article deals with the language options available to Finnish firms and in particular with the extent to which the Finnish language is used in company operations. Finnish firms have become increasingly international in recent decades. Many major companies have become more and more clearly multinational, and many small and medium-sized firms have increased their foreign ties and joined international networks. While many practices have changed, nearly all firms have made decisions regarding the status of their own language in internal interaction and the kind of language skills needed for external operations. Other languages and proficiency in them are required for international operations. It is, however, noteworthy that Finnish and Swedish are still used in business operations. The development of the two principal languages of Finland in various sectors is also essential for businesses. Moreover, firms that enjoy public support have obligations toward Finnish society and Finnish citizens.

### **1. The internationalisation of Finnish firms**

The internationalisation<sup>1</sup> of Finnish firms began relatively late, in fact not until the 1980s. Since then the pace has increased. At present the degree to which major firms of Finnish origin have internationalised is high, and approaches that of Sweden, where the process began much earlier than in Finland. As its pace has accelerated, internationalisation has also taken on new forms. Direct foreign investment, mainly company acquisitions, has continued to increase, while internationalisation based on agreements – international networking – has expanded alongside it.

Direct foreign investment, however, remains the most import form of internationalisation alongside exports. The foreign subsidiaries of Finnish firms have nearly 400,000 employees. This figure has tripled in ten years. Approximately one-fifth of the employees of the entire corporate sector and two-fifths of those employed in industry work abroad.<sup>2</sup> Technology (metal products, mechanical engineering, and electronics) is the largest sector, and here the number of foreign personnel after the merger of Nokia and Siemens in 2007 exceeded the number of personnel in Finland. By 2008 the group comprising the thirty largest firms accounted for more than two-thirds of the personnel in foreign units, while at the beginning of the 1990s this figure was still below 40%.<sup>3</sup> Large companies have moved into new markets the most rapidly, while at the same time seeking new forms of internationalisation such as international production networks, strategic alliances, and partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless stated otherwise, the source for the review of corporate internationalisation in chapter 1 is Kotiranta/Lundan/Ylä-Anttila (2008).

<sup>2</sup> Most employees are local. More precise figures on the number of Finnish-speakers in foreign units is not available.

<sup>3</sup> Pajarinen/Ylä-Anttila (2008).

The international economist Richard Baldwin uses the term ‘second unbundling’ to describe the present situation. No longer does internationalisation or the increasing division of labour between countries or regions necessarily take place on the level of sectors, but on that of functions or tasks. According to a survey made by Statistics Finland,<sup>4</sup> the relocation of (core) functions of production abroad is most frequent in high-tech industrial companies.

The internationalisation of the Finnish economy and Finnish business can be roughly divided into three periods. However, Finnish business had already expanded its operations abroad before these three periods, mainly to Sweden. The first significant investment was the establishment in 1903 of a subsidiary in Sweden by the Strengberg tobacco company of Pietarsaari, Finland. Geographical proximity was of course the reason, although a common cultural background and language, Swedish, which was the principal language of business at the time, also had an impact. Before 1945, 19 Finnish firms had invested in Sweden. The main sectors were tobacco, sweets, porcelain, and timber.<sup>5</sup>

The first major export-driven period occurred from 1940 to 1970. Efforts were made to retain strict Finnish ownership of Finnish firms, and only a few Finnish firms had production units abroad. The first steps in the process of internationalisation were associate membership in EFTA in 1961 and the conclusion of a free trade agreement with the EEC in 1973. Still, the volume of direct investment abroad at the beginning of the 1980s remained relatively small by international standards – only 2% of GNP. The second phase of internationalisation occurred at the beginning of the 1980s when investment abroad increased rapidly. The present type of internationalisation began at the end of the 1990s. Barriers to the free movement of capital and restrictions on foreign ownership were removed in 1992; in 1993 the average world level in foreign investment (as a percentage of GNP) was achieved and eventually accession to the European Union in 1995 and to the monetary union in 2000 made Finland part of the international economy.

Some 60% of the international moves by Finnish companies are to the EU area. The largest countries outside the EU are India, China, and Russia and a large volume of core business operations is being relocated in China, in particular. Finnish firms are mainly attracted abroad by lower labour costs, though strategic reasons are also important. The aim in relocating production may also be to move closer to the actual market area.

Internationalisation can also be divided into two groups according to whether domestic operations are transferred entirely abroad or whether the company has expanded outside of Finland. With respect to language options, all modes of internationalisation in any case signify a new kind of linguistic environment and call for consideration of language choices. The linguistic landscape has changed in all companies, and in them the environment confronted by the Finnish language is altogether different than it was 20 years ago.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ali-Yrkkö/Rikama (2008).

<sup>5</sup> For investment in Sweden, see Fellman (2006).

<sup>6</sup> See also Leppänen/Nikula (2008).

## 2. Legislation and business operations

Legislation governing the language of business operations is rare. The Language Act,<sup>7</sup> which applies to the national languages, concerns the rights of speakers of Finnish and Swedish in official contexts, and not private business operations. However, there are a few points in the Language Act that require firms to provide service in national languages. The first of these concerns the obligation of state and municipal enterprises and companies to provide service in Finnish and Swedish.

Section 24 – Linguistic services of a public enterprise and a State and municipal company

(1) A public enterprise and a service-producing company in which the State or one or more bilingual municipalities or municipalities using different languages exert authority shall provide services and information in Finnish and Swedish to the extent and manner required by the nature of the activity and its substantive connections and which in view of the totality cannot be deemed unreasonable from the point of view of the company. What is provided in this Act regarding authorities applies to a State company that attends to a function of an authority. ([www.finlex.fi/english](http://www.finlex.fi/english))

The following section of the Language Act stipulates how a private service provider of a public administrative function offers services in both languages.

Section 25 – The obligation of a private individual to provide linguistic services

If a public administrative task has been assigned by or under law to a private individual, the provisions of this Act on an authority apply to the said private individual in attending to this task. If the recipient of the task is determined on the basis of a decision or other action of an authority or on the basis of an agreement between an authority and the recipient, the authority shall ensure that linguistic services are provided in accordance with this Act in the performance of the task. This shall also be ensured when an authority assigns other than a public administrative task to a private individual, if the maintenance of the level of service required by this Act so demands. ([www.finlex.fi/english](http://www.finlex.fi/english))

Although most international companies do not perform tasks of the kind mentioned above, service companies that internationalise may increasingly carry out public functions in the future. In recent years statutory municipal services have also been increasingly outsourced to private companies. The more operations are transferred to the private sector for implementation, the more companies performing public administrative functions in Finland will be required under the Language Act to offer service in Finnish (and in Swedish).

In addition, the Language Act includes a provision requiring the labels to be provided with a product in unilingual and bilingual municipalities.

Section 34 – Information to be provided on consumer goods

When the law requires that a product to be sold is labelled in accordance with commercial practice with a name, a description of the product, instructions or a warning, the text on a product to be sold in a unilingual municipality shall be at least in the language of this municipality and the text on a product to be sold in a bilingual municipality shall be at least in Finnish and Swedish. In providing the information here referred to, Finnish and Swedish shall be dealt with on an equal basis. ([www.finlex.fi/english](http://www.finlex.fi/english))

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<sup>7</sup> Language Act 423/2003.

In accordance with the minimum requirements of the Language Act, a Finnish-speaking user of services in a bilingual municipality is entitled to receive service in Finnish (likewise, Swedish-speakers in Swedish). Moreover, the buyer of a product must be able to obtain a description of the product and the instructions for using it or a warning in Finnish. Since Finnish is the majority language in Finland, a Finnish-language text is more than likely found on most products. Problems may arise from the kind of Finnish used in labels and instructions. There are many examples where native speakers of Finnish could make no sense of the instructions for using a product because the labels were not in clear, understandable Finnish. This shows that not all companies focus sufficient attention on the clarity of the language used.

The Language Act is general legislation regulating the activity of officials. Its impact is also apparent in other legislation – that is in legislation concerning company operations. Apart from the Language Act, for example the Government decree on the safety of machinery stipulates the use of Finnish (and of Swedish). According to this decree, information, warnings and instructions regarding machinery to be marketed or used in Finland must always be in Finnish and Swedish.<sup>8</sup>

In general, there are no provisions in company legislation regarding language. Membership of the European Union and the status of Finnish as an official language of the Union have, however, also affected legislation concerning companies. The impact of membership of the European Union on consideration of the Finnish language in legislation is apparent for example in the provision of the Consumer Protection Act<sup>9</sup> on the language of commercial contracts; this provision stipulates that commercial contracts or loan agreements must be drafted according to the buyers' choice, in either the language of their place of residence or of their country of citizenship if the country in question is an EEA country and the language chosen an official language of the European Union or either Norwegian or Icelandic (§6).

An act that explicitly requires use of Finnish and Swedish, the official languages of Finland, is the Act on foreign insurance companies. This legislation requires an official translation of documents into Finnish and Swedish (§71).<sup>10</sup> However, it would appear to require inclusion of a Finnish translation only when stipulated by the Insurance Supervisory Authority. No information is available on how this provision is implemented in practice.

Hence, there is on the whole very little legislation regulating the use of language or the choice of languages. To a great extent, the operations of companies are governed by the language of the customers to whom they are marketing their products and what this practical need means with respect to the launching of products or to other activity directed towards customers. Companies operating in Finland or selling products on the Finnish market naturally use Finnish for practical reasons because according to the familiar saying, you can buy in any language but sell only in the language of the customer.

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<sup>8</sup> Government decree on the safety of machinery 12.6.2008/400.

<sup>9</sup> Consumer Protection Act 11.12.1997/1162.

<sup>10</sup> Amendment to the Act on foreign insurance companies 18.7.2008/525.

### 3. The use of Finnish and other languages in written and spoken business communication

In general, companies do not have a public language policy (with the exception of the Finnish company Partek, which has clearly decided that the languages of the group are Finnish, Swedish, and English); in addition, local languages are used in material for the countries in question.<sup>11</sup> Here descriptions of the language practices are mainly based on information in the possession of representatives of the Confederation of Finnish Industries, corporate managing directors and communication directors,<sup>12</sup> and on information acquired in various studies on the experiences of employees.<sup>13</sup>

Numerous Finnish multinational companies such as Nokia, Kone, Metso and Tieto have adopted English as their corporate language or common working language during the process of internationalisation. Although no actual language policy has been stated other than with an announcement of a general nature concerning the corporate language, the practice is to write all official texts in English and to provide all spoken information to owners and the international public in English. English is used increasingly at the headquarters of multinational companies located in Finland for official records, memoranda, internal reporting and other internal communication.<sup>14</sup> If matters are expected to take on an international dimension at some stage, the texts concerned are in general written first in English and then if necessary in other languages as well (more exact information on the other languages are used in such situations is not available). The use of English ensures that basic information concerning the company is available throughout the company, in all parts of the world, with the same content and at the same time. Documents of significance solely to Finnish employees and the Finnish markets are mainly written in Finnish. On the other hand, spoken communication is still often in Finnish: among Finnish employees and in meetings in units in Finland, Finnish (or Swedish) remains the primary language. If there are many employees with different language backgrounds from other countries at the workplace English is used as the common language.<sup>15</sup>

Some 20 communication directors, communication officers or persons in similar positions were surveyed at the beginning of 2008 regarding the extent to which Finnish and other languages are used in their own work on the one hand and throughout the company or group on the other.<sup>16</sup> Replies were received from firms representing different sectors and of various sizes; large, multinational communication consultancies, publishing houses and from small news agencies, advertising and public relations companies, larger paper and chemical companies, travel companies and insurance companies. The survey also included Kone Corporation, which is one of Finland's most in-

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<sup>11</sup> Lindblad (2001).

<sup>12</sup> The information was obtained from the Confederation of Finnish Industries and from a report by Helena Kangasharju.

<sup>13</sup> The information is based mainly on a 2008 article by Tiina Virkkula and on sources cited therein.

<sup>14</sup> Piekkari (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Sajavaara (2008).

<sup>16</sup> The survey was made by Helena Kangasharju, Professor of Finnish Language and Communication at the Helsinki School of Economics (Kangasharju 2008).

ternational companies. The estimates of the interviewees regarding the percentages of Finnish used in their own work or throughout the company or the use of Finnish by a unit operating in Finland were compiled in table 1. The figures are estimates given by the respondents.

Company	Sector	Interviewee's work: estimated % in Finnish	Entire company: estimated % in Finnish
AstraZenica	pharmaceuticals	90	80
Dazzle Oy	consulting	90	95
Forma Publishing	publishing	90	80
Hill & Knowlton Finland	communication consulting	60	30
KauppaLehti	communications	70	85
Kemira GrowHow	chemical industry	80	50 for all Kemira
Kone Corporation	manufacturing	60-70	50
Kreab	corporate communications	80	60 Suomi, 10 for all Kreab
Luovat Sanat	communications	99	99
SanomaWsoy, investor relations	communications; investments	60	35
StoraEnso, financial communication	forest industry	60-70	80-90 Helsinki
STT	news agency	90	85
PR Agency Taivas Relations	communications	90	50
Sulake Corporation	virtual company	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
Talentum	media	95	95
Tallink Group AS	travel	85	85
Tapiola Group	insurance	90	95

Table 1: The use of Finnish in certain companies 2008 (the smallest percentage for Finnish is in bold)

The overall impression is that Finnish is still used to a great extent in many companies operating in Finland, even when operations extend to international arenas. The percentage of Finnish used in the work of a unit is reduced when information is provided or other contact maintained in multiple languages or in English; on average, 20% of the personnel's working time may involve use of a language other than Finnish. An exception is the Sulake Corporation, whose operations aim to unite young people of the world into the same virtual community through the use of animation, mobile games, and advertising. In fact, there are 15 different nationalities employed in its Helsinki unit and there the use of Finnish was the lowest of all the companies surveyed. Never-

theless, Sulake Corporation's Habbo Hotel and IrcGalleria operate in Finnish (and similarly in other languages). Another company that stands out from the others is the communications consultancy Hill & Knowlton Finland, whose English-language history and international present explain why the percentage of Finnish used throughout the company is low. These circumstances also affect the languages used by individual employees working in Finland.

Representatives of the companies that took part in the survey state that in large multinational companies texts concerning the entire group are often written first in English and then translated into other languages such as Finnish. However, the extent to which Finnish is used could vary greatly between units. Written communication such as email is mainly in English while conversations with one's closest colleagues are in Finnish.

Finnish is used most in publishing companies and communication consultancies operating in Finland. Here the percentage of Finnish is high in the work of both individual communication professionals and throughout the companies.

English has an important role in international corporate operations, and the managers and office employees of many Finnish companies use English daily. English-language emails are common in the work of all groups of personnel. Acquisition of language proficiency is essential in keeping competent professionals from becoming excluded due to deficient language skills.

The decision by a company to adopt English as its corporate language does not in itself make English the common language, for its use is not problem-free for all employees. Not everyone knows English as well as is generally assumed. Low proficiency in English and other languages also causes financial losses to companies.

In 2006, Education and Culture of the European Commission published a report<sup>17</sup> on the significance of skills in different languages and intercultural communication, the use of language professionals in companies, and on plans to improve language proficiency. The inquiry included nearly 2000 small and medium-sized enterprises in 29 European countries and some 30 major companies with headquarters in France. One tenth of the participating companies estimated that they had lost contracts because of deficient language skills. According to the replies from the companies, the situation could be improved by hiring native speakers of the languages, by using translators and interpreters, and by providing language training to employees. The representatives of the small countries were clearly more aware of cultural differences and the need for language skills while those of large countries assumed that others would learn their language.

Multilingualism can increase the innovative capacity of companies when global operating principles and solutions are adapted to local conditions that is, when the native languages of employees in subsidiaries operating in others countries are taken into account.<sup>18</sup> The employees of companies notice through their own experiences that par-

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<sup>17</sup> Hagen et al. (2006).

<sup>18</sup> Piekkari (2007).

ticularly in competitive situations negotiators have an advantage when they know the native language of the customer.<sup>19</sup> It is possible to buy in English, but to sell knowledge of the customer's language is required.

#### **4. Teaching of Finnish, language revision and translations services in companies**

Nowadays, companies recruit speakers of Finnish and of other languages as well. Both groups need Finnish teaching. Native speakers, frequently highly trained employees, may even have a great need to take part for example in courses to maintain their language skills, in writing, and to improve their oral interaction skills. The significance of communication and interaction skills and the ability to write good text have been brought to the fore in many interviews in recent years. It is natural that corporate management seeks to recruit employees who possess the requisite basic skills for working life, such as mastery of their own language. Other language speakers need instruction in Finnish and Finnish culture so that it will be easier to take their place in Finnish society and working life.

Since more and more jobs involve text production and when nowadays all employees, right up to the top manager, write their own texts, language fluency is necessary for both the company itself and for communication directed at the customer.<sup>20</sup> All employee groups need training appropriate specifically for their own work and tailored to it. This is the most motivating kind of training and is an efficient means of both familiarizing staff with various work-related aspects and of teaching them to speak and write about work-related matters. Employees from other countries do not always find appropriate courses at the right time outside the company, so that teaching in Finnish as a second language must be arranged in the company itself, and is in the best interests of the company. For example in many building companies it is important that instructions concerning the flow of work are clear and understandable so that accidents and all kinds of lack of clarity related to the flow of work are avoided. Since company employees come increasing from many countries and language areas, instructions and working regulations should also be in the employee's own language unless it is possible to provide an interpreter.<sup>21</sup> For employees who are speakers of different languages and who come from elsewhere, the use of Finnish alone may be an on-the-job problem that cannot be resolved solely by increasing the use of English; greater use of other languages and more diverse language skills on various levels of operations are required.<sup>22</sup>

Knowledge of Finnish is the key to the employment and integration of immigrants. The Act on the Integration of Immigrants and the Reception of Asylum<sup>23</sup> seekers stipulates that employment offices and municipalities can arrange for example instruction in Finnish and Swedish as measures and services to promote and support integration (§7).

<sup>19</sup> For the language experiences and skills of company employees see Virkkula (2008).

<sup>20</sup> For the potential of customers to understand complex texts see for example Tiililä (2007).

<sup>21</sup> Sajavaara (2007).

<sup>22</sup> Nowadays employees in the building sector come from many different countries and hence companies should have speakers of Finnish and Estonian, Finnish and Russian, and Finnish and Polish.

<sup>23</sup> Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 493/1999.

Integration means that immigrants are supported in the acquisition of the basic information and skills needed to function in society. Proficiency in Finnish is one of the most important skills with respect to employment. In general, companies employing immigrants would like to have courses on the ABCs of Finnish society because their own efforts are not always sufficient for assisting immigrants to adapt. Companies would like to have these courses offered to those who have already been hired directly by them as well and not only for those taking part in integration programmes or for refugees. Apart from language skills, guidance for example regarding matters related to employment contracts, working hours, leave, pay and culture would also be needed.<sup>24</sup>

In virtually every sector, skills in Finnish are emphasized, skills that graduates with an English-language BBA from a university of applied science do not in general possess. For example in the pharmaceutical industry, “errors resulting from deficiencies in language skills cannot be tolerated in customer service and quality control”.

Nowadays, there are already companies that support multiculturalism at the workplace and offer training to employees of different language backgrounds. One of these is Itella (formerly the Finnish Postal Service), whose successful efforts are apparent in a continuous rise in the number of employees with foreign backgrounds and improvements in their career development. For example, Itella offers its employees training in Finnish and other languages and also training for ‘culturally aware supervisors’. At the beginning of 2007, Itella started a multicultural working group with the aim of supporting and promoting multiculturalism and diversity throughout the company. At that time a total of 15 Itella employees, hailing from eight different countries, began to study Finnish. Efforts to promote multiculturalism and familiarisation with diversity are thus a part of Itella's operations. “We would like to further integrate our employees with immigrant backgrounds into Finnish society,” explains HR manager Wilberforce Essandor on Itella's website.<sup>25</sup>

Translating and the use of translating services is an essential element of business operations and an important factor in interaction. Many companies have their own translation units, in which translators familiar with the sector in question are employed. Many companies also continue to use the same translation agency or translator, making cooperation with the translator close, despite the outsourcing. If in contrast, the translation services have to be purchased from various translators and contacts with translators are therefore more haphazard, it is not always possible to be certain whether the translators have sufficient experience with texts from the sector in question and whether they have an opportunity to adequately familiarise themselves with the vocabulary and key concepts.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hopes of this kind were expressed when the Kluuvi employment office in Helsinki, which specialises in service to job applicants with a higher education, sent a survey in summer 2008 to some 500 employers, of whom more than one hundred responded. They also interviewed representatives of seven different sectors. See Liiten (2008).

<sup>25</sup> Itella (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Sajavaara (2008).

No data on how companies arrange language revision for texts in Finnish or other languages are available. Although some companies do have professionals in Finnish who both write and revise texts in Finnish no more detailed information on how this work is arranged in companies is available.

## 5. Company names, professional titles and professional terminology

When foreign investors began to invest in Finland during the 19th century, many companies were established that remain well-known Finnish brands to this day. In recent decades, they have invested in the region and established units for example in Estonia and Russia. Such companies include Stockmann<sup>27</sup> and Karl Fazer Oy. They took their founders' surnames, which have been retained as the company name and have become their trademarks.

Although Finnish remains the most frequent language when company names are chosen, English has gained ground. Finnish and English are also combined in the same name (*Poutapilvi Web Design Ab, Riento Import, Kauneushoitola PS-Beauty, Ohjelma-toimisto Bluewest Oy, Suomen Hot Food Oy*). The growing importance of English is apparent in the fact that in mixed-language names, English is generally used in those parts of the name where comprehension of meaning is essential. Finnish is also combined with names in other languages, for example in the following: *Biltema Suomi Myynti Oy, Hoitola La Perle, Viestintätoimisto Signal Oy*. Since the 1980s, one typical trend has been to devise names for companies that are not really in any language (for example *Nordea, Destia, Itella, Sonera, Sportuna, Vecorex*).<sup>28</sup>

Internationalisation is also apparent to some extent in job advertisements.<sup>29</sup> In the four Sunday editions of the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* of February 2008, there were 692 advertisements under the headings 'Job Openings' and 'Vacant Posts'. This figure includes advertisements that were of at least two columns; hence small, one-column advertisements were excluded (all of them were in Finnish). Advertisements that were entirely in Finnish accounted for 85% (588) of all advertisements and advertisements in English for 8.4% (58). Advertisements in Finnish, in which all or some of the job titles were in English, accounted for 5.9% (41). Advertisements in Swedish accounted for 0.7% (5). The 'Vacant Posts' were all in Finnish.

On the basis of this sample, the percentage of Finnish advertisements is rather constant: 82-85% in all publications. Most of the English-language advertisements belong to multinational listed companies such as Atria, Eaton, Finnair, Ruukki, American Express, and Securitas Systems, in which English is the corporate language and which announce job openings at the same time in different countries with the same advertisement. Of the public institutions in the survey, the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs advertised in English. Nevertheless, English-language advertisements still account for less than 10% of all advertisements. The

<sup>27</sup> For a history of the company see Damstén (1961).

<sup>28</sup> For the history of Finnish company names and related legislation and present names see Sjöblom (2006).

<sup>29</sup> Nuolijärvi (2008).

percentage of advertisements in Swedish is small, which is explained by the fact that Swedish-language advertisements in Finland are most often published in the Swedish-language press.

In the Finnish-language advertisements the most popular English title is *Manager* with various meanings (21 different titles in four Sunday editions). *Analyst, Controller, Assistant* and *Engineer* appeared more than once. The most extraordinary included titles such as *Head of Equity, Senior Salkunhoitaja* and *Jack & Jones supplymyyjä*. Finnish and English are therefore also combined in the same title. Sometimes the use of English-language titles causes problems for those preparing the advertisements. The result is clumsy when the name cannot be declined without some difficulty: *Etsimme nuorekkaaseen dynaamiseen joukkoomme: Business Manager [We are looking for a 'Business Manager' to join our team]*.<sup>30</sup>

Most of the language proficiency requirements in company job advertisements focus on English, and describe the language skill sought with the words *fluent, excellent, very good, solid, and good*. Often Finnish is used alongside English. The demanding skills required in Finnish are described with the following expressions: *fluency in spoken and written Finnish and English, good skills in written and spoken expression, communicates fluently in Finnish and English*. Companies require proficiency in other languages, including Swedish, much less often.<sup>31</sup>

Within companies and their sectors, a special vocabulary that is not part of the general language is naturally used. The terms and expressions needed in each sector are developed in various terminology working groups and there are numerous special vocabularies. Loan words are naturally adopted in special fields, and words of Finnish origin are often used alongside the foreign word (*benchmarking, benchmarkkeeraus, esikuva-analyysi, vertaisanalyysi*). Loan words from English are often used even when a good Finnish equivalent is available because the foreign word is regarded as more precise than the Finnish word, for example *implementointi = täytäntöönpano, sopimuksen scope = sopimuksen soveltamisala*.<sup>32</sup> Hence all sectors have a constant need to develop their own vocabulary and to specify terms.

## 6. Multilingualism is an advantage in business

Although English is part of everyday life in companies that are international or are at present undergoing the process, all companies need adequate proficiency in written and spoken Finnish. The aim ought to be bilingual or multilingual speakers who maintain their national identity and who have the skill needed to communicate with non-natives.<sup>33</sup> Thus corporate internationalisation obviously requires more than the use of English<sup>34</sup> and also spoken and written proficiency in either Finnish or Swedish but preferably in both. The more proficient in languages the personnel of companies, the

<sup>30</sup> For material collected at the beginning of the 21st century see Laaksonen (2003).

<sup>31</sup> For material from 2006 and 2008 see Salo (2006) and Nuolijärvi (2008).

<sup>32</sup> Sajavaara (2008).

<sup>33</sup> For more details see Virkkula (2008).

<sup>34</sup> For discussion relevant to this see Paatola (2008) and Söderlundh/Melander (2008).

better and the more reliable they are in running the operations of a company and in contributing to its success. Proficiency in Finnish and Swedish is the essential foundation of language skill and also an important element in the operations of international companies.

It would be important for large multinational companies to draw up clear language strategies that state where both written and spoken Finnish and/or Swedish are used alongside other languages in everyday operations. Companies should consider a high degree of proficiency in Finnish a merit and reward those who possess it. In companies where there are employees of different language backgrounds, written and spoken proficiency in Finnish should be maintained by arranging tailor-made training for texts relevant to the sector in question and for interaction situations. In such cases it is best to offer an opportunity to study Finnish on the job so that it is possible to master the professional language of the sector in question in a real working environment. It is in the interest of companies to ensure that professionals handle translation services and language revision. Government should promote the integration and employment of immigrants by ensuring that professionally skilled teachers give statutory instruction in Finnish and that the teaching itself is of a high quality and also effective. Hence, there will also be a workforce with proficiency in Finnish available to private companies. The maintenance of proficiency in Finnish would also be promoted by support from government to those companies that see to the arrangement of instruction in Finnish and Swedish and to the maintenance of both Finnish and Swedish in their operations.

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## 8. Expert opinions

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