

MULTILINGUALISM AS A STRENGTH AND A CHALLENGE

State and level of the Finnish language reserve and its
development needs

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Background for the survey in 2017

- There has been a great deal of discourse on language needs, but it has been fragmented
- The same concerns decision-making; solutions apply to a single level of education and are implemented as separate projects
- Development of the language reserve not understood broadly enough (formal/non-formal learning; not only proficiency of different languages but also a skill to learn languages)
- Language proficiency needs vary, but most pupils at the primary and secondary schools study only English (in addition to the national languages, Finnish and Swedish)
- Number of immigrants has grown: new demands on the instruction of national languages AND practices used to recognise other language proficiency
- Language technology helps, but also creates new professions for language experts
 - The principles and objectives of the Finnish language education policy require clarification
- Finnish, Swedish and English will remain important, but after these it is difficult to arrange languages in order of priority

Power Language Index top 10

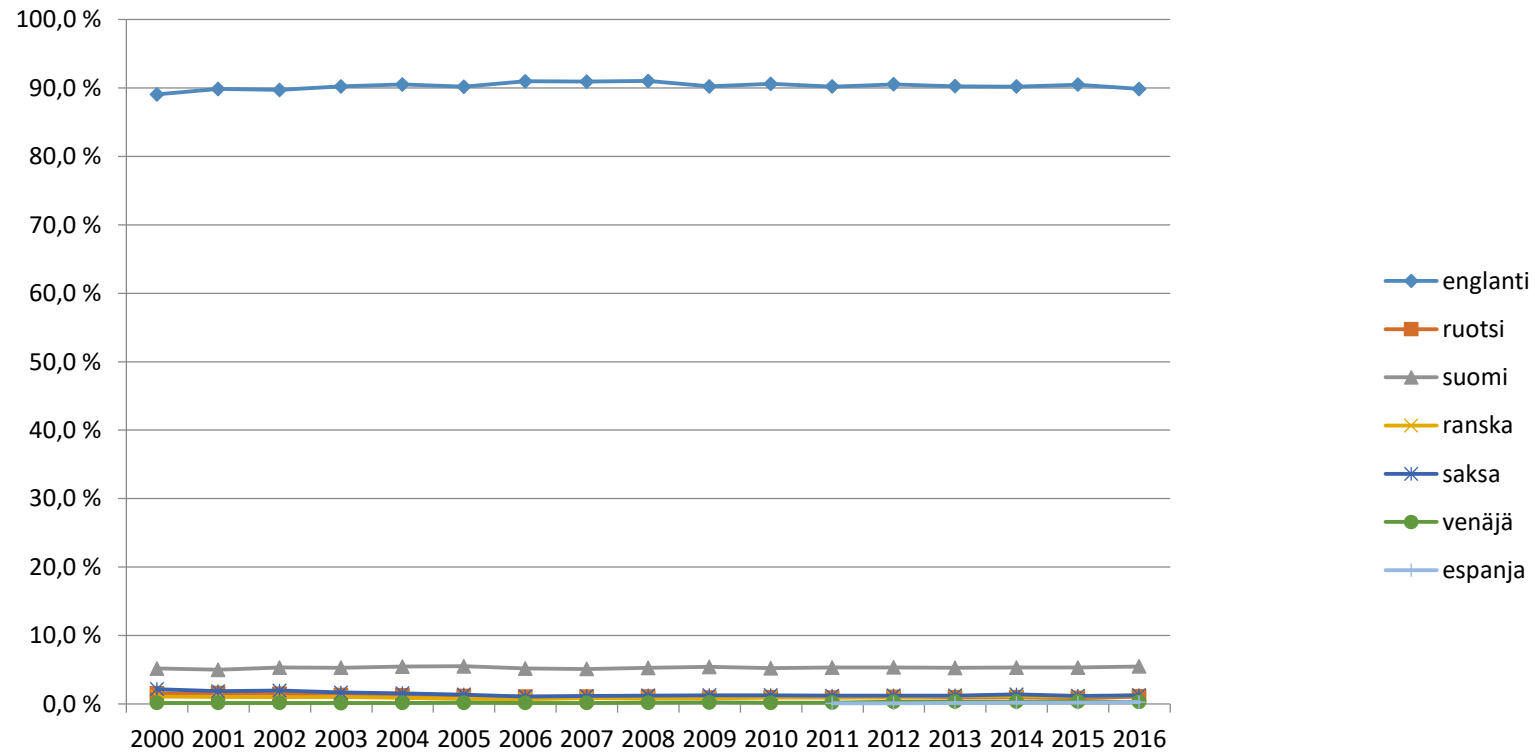
World Economic Forum 2016

Sijoitus	Tilanne 2016	Ennuste 2050
1.	englanti	englanti
2.	mandariinikiina	mandariinikiina
3.	ranska	espanja
4.	espanja	ranska
5.	arabia	arabia
6.	venäjä	venäjä
7.	saksa	saksa
8.	japani	portugali
9.	portugali	hindi
10.	hindi	japani

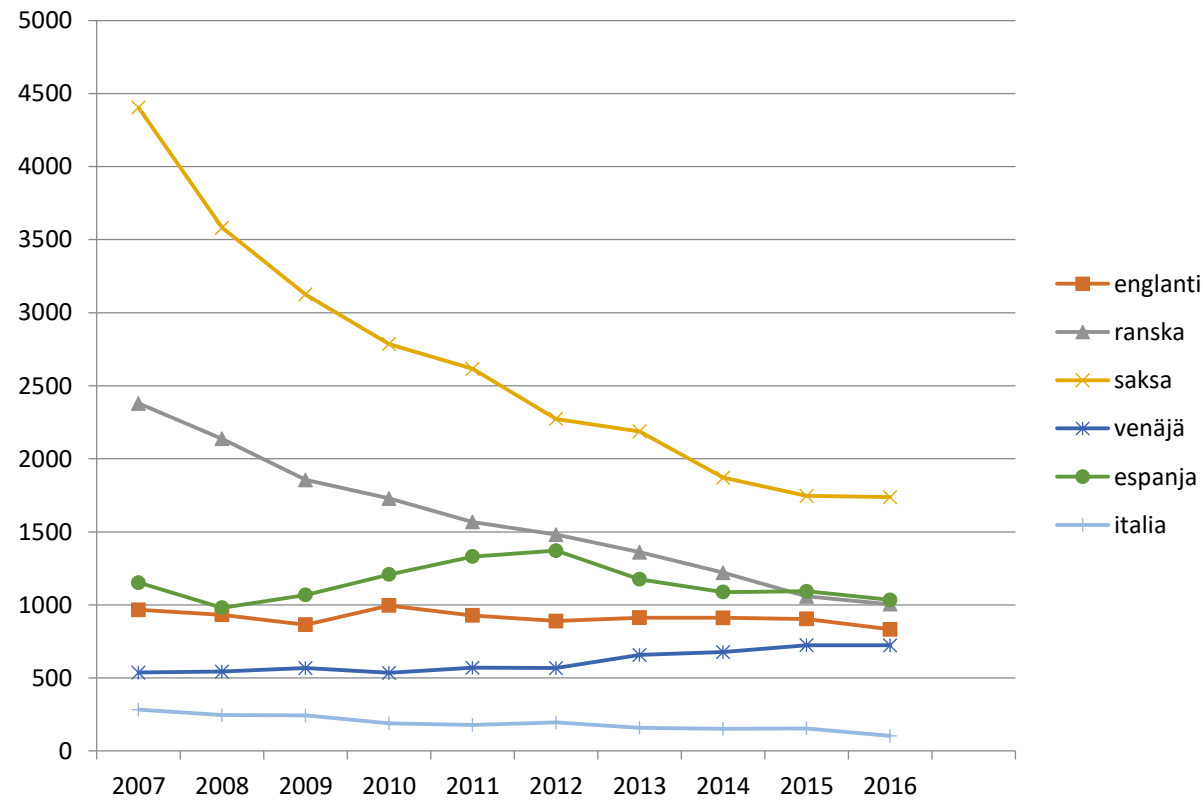
Fewer languages studied in school

- Language proficiency needs vary, but most pupils at the primary and secondary schools study only English (in addition to the national languages, Finnish and Swedish)
- Study of languages in schools has decreased and narrowed ("English is enough") (see *examples*); especially sharply dropped study of German and French
- Large cities offer more languages; however, there are also smaller municipalities with a rather extensive and active offering
- Some gender differences: boys study less languages than girls, BUT succeed well in English
- Several different reasons for the decrease of language studies (from state/city level strategic decisions to practical institutional solutions)
- Study of languages often considered to be difficult and demanding
- Results achieved in different development projects; development stopped as soon as the projects concluded

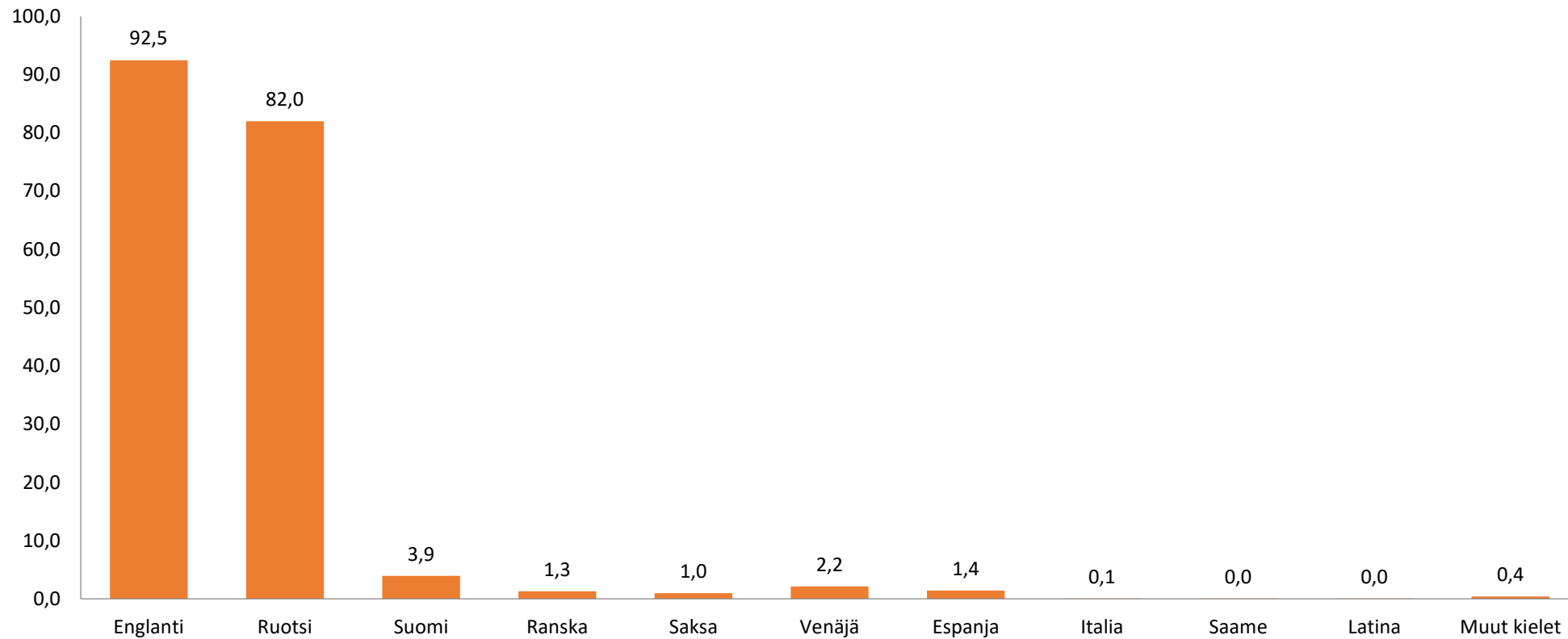
Choices for A1 (advanced, compulsory) language (2000-2016)



Second ("short") foreign language in matriculation exams (2007-2016)



Study of languages in vocational education 2015



Need to develop school practices

- The new curricula emphasise language sensitive learning and teaching; language practices play a role in all learning
- Everyday life in the future will be multilingual for all pupils and students
- Motivation a key factor; how to enhance motivation to languages?
 - Linking instruction to the pupils' own lives; having more links between the language practices used in everyday life and at school
 - Taking informal learning into consideration in formal instruction
 - Updating the teaching methods and learning materials
 - Increasing the intergation of languages and other subjects > more authentic learning
 - Taking advantage of "internationalisation at home"
 - Emphasising the importance of languages in internationalisation
 - Making multilingualism visible and natural in school practices
 - Starting language studies no later than the spring term of the first grade

Continuum from level to level

- Solutions for one level of education reflected in others, but language education not developed as a whole
- Students' language path end when moving from one level of education to the next
- Number of languages studied decreases in upper secondary level; adult interest in studying languages traditionally quite high
- Seamless continuum requires both strategic and practical solutions
 - Municipalities encouraged to draft language and internationalisation programmes which cover both language education in terms of language path continuum from pre-primary to adult education, offering and distribution of language choices, needs of local and regional business, and international needs

Languages in all higher education degrees

- Students of HEIs currently required to demonstrate proficiency in both national languages and at least one foreign language
- Some institutions/fields require more foreign languages
- Most commonly studied language also among HE students is English
 - Could it be possible to require (in research universities) proficiency in at least two foreign languages?
- Language centres offer also voluntary language studies
- Intergating the study of languages with other subjects has proven to be a functional and motivating model (still quite rare in quantitative terms but growing)
- Mobility periods increased; students see languages as a means of enhancing their international competences and cultural knowledge (motivation!)
- Number of degree programmes in English increasing (study fees for non-EU students introduced in 2017)

Degree education in languages

- Over the past ten years, the development of degree education in language subject examined by several national groups
- Number of applicants for degree education in languages declining
- If the current trend continues, the need for language teachers in schools will not increase
- All projects have emphasised the need for a clearer division of work and more co-operation between the universities, especially in languages less commonly studied
- Need for cooperation also with universities in the Nordic countries and Estonia; making use of digitalisation in teaching & learning
- Need for rethinking the structures of degree education in languages; in working life an increasing need for experts who possess knowledge and skills in languages and cultures, but also have skills in other areas
 - More ready-made models and new types of degree programmes combining languages and other fields of study

Immigration and language reserve

- General debate in Finland has focused on the proficiency in Finnish and Swedish
- Immigrants' own languages clearly underutilised
- Over 500 languages are spoken in Finland (*see next slide*)
- Support for the development of primary languages in different levels of education needs more attention
- School dropout risk among S2 (Finnish as a second language) students high in secondary education (= level not satisfactory for the studies)
- Lack of proficiency in national languages a barrier to employment
 - But: different types of language proficiency needed for different types of work
 - Also a need to be accustomed to different ways of speaking Finnish or Swedish

Native languages most commonly spoken in Finland 2016 (other than Finnish, Swedish or Saami)

Väestörekisteriin äidinkieli	merkitty	Henkilöä
venäjä		75 444
viro		49 241
arabia		21 783
somali		19 059
englanti		18 758
kurdi		12 226
kiina		11 334
persia, farsi		10 882
albania		9791
vietnam		9248
thai		9047
espanja		7449
turkki		7403
saksa		6256
puola		5081

(An idealistic) outlook for Finland 2025

- Each working-age citizen is proficient in national languages & English
- Many people are also proficient in one or more other languages and are constantly developing their skills
- Multilingualism is seen as a strength and a resource; multiple languages used side by side
- Learning informally is identified and recognised along with learning in formal education
- Language awareness and language proficiency are assets for both the individual and society as a whole

More information

- Extensive background report and sources (in Finnish: *Monikielisyys vahvuudeksi. Selvitys Suomen kielivarannon tilasta ja tasosta*. OKM julkaisuja 2017:51)
<http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160374/okm51/pdf>
- A shorter report with recommendations for developing (in three languages):
Monikielisyys vahvuudeksi
Flerspråkighet som resurs
Multilingualism as a strength
- Wide circulation for comments (more than 130 organisations participated; comments mostly positive)
- See also: *Strategy for the National languages in Finland* (2012)
http://oikeusministerio.fi/documents/1410853/4734397/Kansalliskielistrategia_EN.pdf/2e5f2752-4777-4b96-997f-acf145befe5d