

Foreign Language Competence as a Career Enabler: Employee Motivation to Develop Foreign Language Competence in the Technology Industry

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Abstract

The primary goal of this thesis is to gather the opinions from a variety of people working in the technology industry in an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of how foreign language competence can be utilized in the contemporary work environment. The secondary goal of this study is to examine respondent attitudes towards foreign language competence development.

This study utilizes Carrera's (2005) framework to classify the respondents into eight distinct motivation categories. Additionally, the content of the answers is analyzed in order to study foreign language competence as a career enabler in the technology industry. The research method utilized in this thesis is text analysis based on respondent answers to a qualitative, open-ended research question included in a survey initially sent out to approx. 3500 Tekniikan akateemiset ry. members.

The low frequency of intrinsically highly motivated language learners in the field of technology implies that unless the employer utilizes the employees' secondary language skills or provides language training opportunities for them, their language competence may deteriorate. This may result in a loss of soft skills for the employer, lower employee satisfaction and potentially higher turnover rates, as well as a decrease in the employability and career opportunities for the employee.

Employees in the technology industry seem to be the most motivated to foreign language competence development when the learning is voluntary, and the employees can directly apply their language skills in practical situations: in order to become and remain employed in the industry, to integrate better into the work group and/or the local society, or to become eligible for favourable career opportunities such as a foreign assignment.

Keywords foreign language competence, competence development, career development, career enablers, motivation

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän pro gradu-tutkielman päätavoitteena on selvittää tekniikan alalla työskentelevien mielipiteitä siitä, kuinka kielitaitoa voidaan hyödyntää nykyaikaisessa työympäristössä. Tutkielman toissijaisena tavoitteena on tutkia osallistujien asenteita vieraan kielen osaamisen kehittämistä kohtaan.

Tutkielmassa hyödynnetään Carreran (2005) mallia, jonka avulla osallistujat pyritään luokittelemaan kahdeksaan eri motivaatiokategoriaan. Tämän lisäksi kyselytutkimuksen vastausten sisältöä analysoimalla tutkitaan vieraan kielen osaamisen roolia urakehityksen mahdollistajana tekniikan alalla. Tutkimusmetodina käytetään n. 3500 Tekniikan akateemiset ry:n jäsenelle lähtetyn kyselytutkimuksen avoimen kvalitatiivisen kysymyksen vastausten tekstianalyysia.

Korkeasti motivoituneiden vieraiden kielten opiskelijoiden vähäinen osuus tutkimukseen vastanneista implikoi sitä, että ellei työnantaja hyödynnä työntekijöidensä vieraiden kielten osaamista työtehtävissä tai tarjoa mahdollisuutta kielitaitoa ylläpitävään koulutukseen, työntekijöiden kielitaito voi käyttämättömyydestä johtuen taantua. Kielitaidon taantumisen puolestaan saattaa seurata nk. ”pehmeiden taitojen” katoamista, työntekijäytyytyväisyyden taantumista sekä mahdollisesti korkeampaa työntekijöiden vaihtuvuutta, sekä työntekijän näkökulmasta vähemmän mahdollisuuksia urakehitykselle sekä huonommat uudelleentyöllistymisnäkökulmat.

Tekniikan alan työntekijät vaikuttavat olevan kaikkein motivoituneimpia opiskelemaan vieraita kieliä silloin, kun kielten opiskelu on vapaaehtoista ja kun työntekijät pystyvät soveltamaan oppimaansa suoraan käytännön tilanteissa: saadakseen töitä tai pysyäkseen työllistettyinä tekniikan alalla, sopeutuakseen paremmin paikalliseen yhteiskuntaan tai työympäristöön, tai täyttääkseen urakehityksen edellyttämät kielivaatimukset esimerkiksi ulkomaan työkomennuksen osalta.

Avainsanat kielitaito, urakehitys, osaamisen kehittäminen, uramahdollisuudet, motivaatio

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Research Problem and Gap	5
1.2 Research Objectives and Questions	6
1.3 Key Definitions.....	6
1.4 Structure of the Thesis	8
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.1 English as the Lingua Franca of Globalization	9
2.2 Foreign Languages in the Workplace	10
2.3 Competence	11
2.4 Competence Development.....	13
2.5 Motivation for Foreign Language Studies	14
2.6 Carrera’s Framework of Language Learning Motivation	15
Table 1. Carrera’s Framework of Motivation	16
2.6 Grammar-oriented Language Teaching vs. Communication-oriented Language Teaching.....	17
2.7 Gender Differences.....	18
2.8 Gender Differences in Communication Styles.....	18
2.9 Career Enablers	20
2.10 Career Development in the Contemporary Work Environment	20
2.11 Gender Differences in Career Development	22
3 Research Method	23
3.1 Research Process	23
3.2 Data Collection	23
3.3 Data analysis.....	24
4 Findings.....	26
4.1. Language Competence as a Necessity.....	28
4.1.1 English as a Necessity	28
4.1.2 Local Language Skills as a Necessity	31
4.2 The Status of English Compared to Other Foreign Languages	32
4.2.1 English as Supplementary to Other Languages	32
4.2.2 English at the Expense of Other Languages	34
4.2.3 Counterarguments to the Prevalence of English Language	40
4.3 Foreign Language Competence as a Career Enabler	42
4.3.1 Improved Work Skills.....	43
4.3.2 FLC as Skill Differentiation	43

4.3.3 International Career Opportunities.....	43
4.3.4 Underutilization of FLC.....	46
5 Discussion	49
5.1 Foreign Language Competence as a Career Enabler in the Technology Industry	50
5.2 Employee Motivation to Study Foreign Languages.....	50
5.2.1 Carrera’s Framework Perspective	51
5.2.2 Gender Perspective	52
5.2.3 Age Perspective	53
5.3 The Effect of Foreign Language Competence on Career Development	54
6 Conclusion	55
6.1 Managerial Implications	56
7 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research	58
References.....	60

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem and Gap

In the contemporary work environment (Greenhaus et al., 2010:xiv), where the relationship between the employer and the employee is short-term focused and the psychological contract (see Rousseau, 1989) is weak, employees need to take increased responsibility of their personal competence development and career management (see Greenhaus et al., 2010). Social competence, a.k.a. soft skills, are increasingly valued by the employers (e.g. Robles, 2012) partially because they are more difficult to develop than 'hard skills' (e.g. Laker & Powell, 2011), but also because the nature of the employer-employee -relationship increasingly focuses on short-term gains (e.g. Kuijpers et al., 2006). Competence development is especially important in the field of technology (e.g. Sunthonkanokpong et al, 2011). Foreign language competence development refers to the development of an individual's foreign language skills. This development can occur either in a more traditional mentor-mentee setting, through individual study methods, or learning by actively using the language.

English as lingua franca tends to have a special language status both in international business and in the technology industry (e.g. de La Rosa, 1992; Charles, 2007; Virkkula & Nikula, 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010). However, English as lingua franca in itself is not likely to be sufficient – at least not at the top management levels (Uber Grosse et al., 2004). When working using a non-native language, an individual's communicative competence (see Hymes, 1966) significantly affects that individual's social competence, and inequality in language skills may lead to unexpected power redistribution in the workplace (Räisänen, 2012). Males and females have different communication styles (Mulac, 2006), and they may have different motivations or attitudes towards foreign language learning.

However, little previous research exists which attempts to combine these aspects: similarities and differences across the gender and generation groups for foreign language skills development in the contemporary technology industry. Because there was little previous research on the topic as well as in order to gain in-depth understanding of the different motivations and attitudes, the use of qualitative research methods including a survey and qualitative text analysis of the results was considered to be an appropriate research method for this study.

The survey was available in three alternative languages: Finnish, Swedish and English. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents were Finnish nationals, approximately half of whom were working in the greater Helsinki region. This limits the study mainly to the Finnish context and Finnish attitudes towards foreign language competence development in the technology industry.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The primary goal of this study is to gather the opinions and voices from a variety of people working in the technology industry in an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of how foreign language competence can be utilized in the contemporary work environment. The secondary goal of this study is to examine the respondent attitudes towards foreign language competence development, and to look at the similarities and differences between ages and genders.

In order to reach these research goals, the following research questions were formulated after the data collection: 1. How does foreign language competence act as a career enabler in the technology industry in the contemporary work environment? 2. Why do the employees in the technology industry study foreign languages? 3. How can their motivations for foreign language competence development be explained from a gender and age perspective? 4. How can foreign language competence affect one's career development?

1.3 Key Definitions

This thesis focuses on foreign language competence development (FLCD) in the technology industry. In the context of this study, the technology industry is defined very broadly to include all areas where a graduate with a MSc in Technology degree may find employment. This includes a wide range of sectors, such as chemistry, forestry, industrial engineering, software technology, physics, architecture and mechanical engineering (TEK, 2014a).

An individual's competence can be defined as *"the entirety of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes, which are necessary for an individual to work effectively in a particular working environment"* (Savanevičienė et al., 2008:81). In the context of this thesis, competence development refers to any activity which results in the improvement of an individual's competence.

Communicative competence (see Costin, 2011) is a linguistic term, which has been derived from a combination of language competence, i.e. what the language learner knows about the language, and language performance, i.e. what the language learner can do with the language in a real-life communication setting.

Foreign language and secondary language (L2) are used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to any language which is not the person's mother tongue. This use of terminology should not be confused with how the term is used in other sources, such as the official Finnish public sector statistics, to refer to a foreign language as a language which does not have the status of an official language in a given country. The official languages in Finland are Finnish and Swedish. Swedish is taught to all Finns in schools at primary, elementary and high school levels; foreign nationals are exempt from these compulsory Swedish language studies. However, as will be later discovered in the data analysis section, the fluency and subjectively perceived importance of the Finns' Swedish language skills varies widely within the Finnish borders, both individually and geographically. On the other hand, some members of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland whose mother tongue is Swedish are effectively bilingual due to their daily exposure to Finnish. In the context of this thesis, for the respondents who recorded their mother tongue as Swedish but who regardless chose to answer to the qualitative question of the survey using Finnish or vice versa, neither of these languages is considered to be L2. For respondents who recorded their mother tongue as Finnish and who answered to the qualitative question in Finnish, Swedish is considered to be L2; and vice versa.

Language learners can be either motivated or unmotivated (e.g. Mirabela-Constanta & Abrudan, 2011). In this thesis, motivated language learners are classified using Carrera's (2005) framework found in section 2.6. Carrera's framework is an extension of the classical distinction between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (see Dörnyei, 2001). Extrinsic motivation is the motivation to "do something because of an external reward that may be obtained" (Schmidt et al., 1996:14); intrinsic motivation "is demonstrated when we do something because we get rewards enough from the activity itself". Carrera's (2005) model contains two additional classifications for motivation. Firstly, autonomy-heteronomy. Autonomy refers to learning out of personal interest; and heteronomy refers to learning due to other people. Secondly, integrative-instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to language learning in order to become integrated into a group, such as the local community or workplace. Instrumental motivation refers to language learning in

an attempt to gain tangible benefits from the language learning, such as increased salary or job opportunities abroad.

In the context of this thesis, a career enabler is defined as a skill which is positively related with the availability of career-related opportunities.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

After this introductory section, this thesis contains a literature review which extends on the introductory references to the contemporary work environment, individual competence development, motivations for foreign language studies, career enablers and gender aspects in career development. This is followed by methodology, where the research process, research methods and translation are described. After methodology comes research findings. The findings - section contains respondent voices covering all the different themes, including both the original quotation and the researcher's translation of it, and the accompanying text analysis. In the discussion section, the main findings are grouped together in an attempt to draw conclusions. The conclusions related to the management and employees of organizations with international operations are then condensed into managerial implications. Finally, the limitations of the study are examined and suggestions for further research are made.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins by examining the special status of the English language compared to local languages, especially in the highly globalized contexts of technology industry, international business and the Finnish society. After that, the concepts of individual competence and competence development are defined. Carrera's (2005) motivational framework for language learning is introduced, and the differences between grammar competence oriented and communicative competence oriented language teaching, as well as other potential sources of gender and generation differences in language learning motivation are examined. Lastly, career enablers are defined and some ways for benefiting from one's foreign language competence as a career enabler will be examined.

2.1 English as the Lingua Franca of Globalization

The interplay of multiple languages is one of the most defining factors of globalization today: only language can enable individuals, companies and countries to communicate (Chambers, 1994:15).

English is the established international lingua franca of business and technology (e.g. de La Rosa, 1992; Charles, 2007; Virkkula & Nikula, 2010; Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010). This special status of the English language in international business can be partially attributed to US-based multinational companies' world-wide spread of business (Vernon, 1971; Mataloni, 2008) and their English-promoting corporate language policies (Fixman, 1990; Fredriksson et al., 2006); and to the lingua franca status of English as the most frequently used language in contemporary academic research (Swales, 2006) and on the internet (Warschauer, 2000). Due to the prevalence of the English language in multinational settings - such as international business meetings (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010) - variations in individuals' English language competence can result in unexpected power redistribution (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010; Räisänen, 2012; Räisänen, forthcoming). In other words, excellent communication skills in a secondary language (L2) may increase an individual's status and authority when using L2; while poor communication skills in a L2 may decrease them.

The global prevalence of the English language has also raised concerns regarding the potential dangers of monoculture – at least in the US, UK and Canada. Primary and secondary education teachers in these countries have been worried of the pupils' declining interest towards L2 studies

since the early 1990s. According to Chambers (2004), some pupils find difficulty in seeing the point in learning other languages, when everyone seems to manage with English.

In Finland, academics have been worried that the need to communicate in English in working life, which has increased in the recent years due to globalization, may lead to a depreciation of other languages – including Finnish as a primary language (Räsänen, 2012). Finland’s research center of national languages has referred to this phenomenon in their 2009 publication ‘The Future of the Finnish Language’ as follows (Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus, 2009:10, translated into English by the researcher):

Although Finnish in general fares well ... its uses in Finland have become narrower, especially in natural sciences, in the technology industry and in international companies. The tone of the discussion regarding the status of Finnish as a language of science has been quite worried for a long while. It has become apparent that the current position of the Finnish language as a language used in all areas of the society will not preserve itself, and that special attention needs to be paid to it in a world that is becoming ever smaller.

In the following section, foreign language use in the contemporary workplace will be examined.

2.2 Foreign Languages in the Workplace

Many international companies have decided to introduce a single corporate language – a policy which has several human resource implications (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). The corporate-wide appreciation of one foreign language at the expense of other languages gives these languages unequal status in the workplace. Furthermore, this tendency may have implications for employee motivation towards foreign language competence development (FLCD).

However, English as lingua franca may not be enough for doing international business today. Grosse (2004) found out in her study of US International Management alumni that at senior international levels, where “English is spoken by everyone” (Grosse, 2004:366), the knowledge of additional foreign languages can be seen as a significant competitive advantage. Over 80% of Grosse’s respondents stated that foreign language and cultural knowledge had benefited them in their careers, and half of the respondents acknowledged that it had given them a significant competitive advantage in business.

Van Veen & Marshman (2008) found that the number of people with a foreign background serving on top management teams has increased significantly in multiple European countries in the recent years. Their findings support the view that foreign nationality and international experience can be perceived as a valuable add-on to relevant managerial background and experience (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2008).

Furthermore, when working in a secondary language, not all employees have equal communicative competence in that foreign language. This can pose significant problems to otherwise competent employees with limited language experience (Räsänen, 2012), and it can force those employees to become active language learners in the workplace. The inability to sufficiently interact with others in L2 when so required can also have negative effects for one's self-image (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010; Räsänen, 2012). However, even in a case where an individual has previously self-adopted the identity of a poor language user in the workplace, successful experiences and positive feelings due to success as a foreign language user can be an empowering experience bringing about a positive change in that person's language learner identity (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004 ; Virkkula and Nikula, 2010). Clément (1980; see also Clément and Kruidenier, 1985) also suggests that frequent and pleasant contact with the L2 group will increase motivation towards L2 learning as well as subjective L2 confidence.

It is also worth noting that much of the foreign language learning-related literature include only a single secondary language; rather than multiple foreign languages. In the case of multiple foreign languages, it is worthwhile to study whether these languages are considered to be of equal importance. It is possible that the motivation for studying a specific foreign language may be greater than the motivation for studying other foreign languages.

Language skills can be regarded as a part of an individual's competence required to succeed in his or her everyday work. The following two sections will be about competence and competence development.

2.3 Competence

An individual's competence can be defined as *“the entirety of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes, which are necessary for an individual to work effectively in a particular working*

environment” (Savanevičienė et al., 2008:81). Traditionally, the focus of the organization has been on professional competence (see e.g. Blaskova, 2011), which is a subset of competence consisting of only the skills directly required to technically perform the tasks related to an individual’s profession – or, more narrowly - job description. Professional competence is also commonly referred to as professional skills or hard skills; in order to distinguish them from social competence, which is in turn frequently referred to as soft skills (e.g. Laker & Powell, 2011).

Social competence can be defined as the ability to communicate and work with people (e.g. Savanevičienė et al., 2008). Tocher et al. (2012:283) argue that social skills can have significant business consequences by highlighting factors such as *“entrepreneurs’ ability to influence stakeholder actions”* and *“an individual’s ability to influence other’s actions within the business environment”*. Klaus (2010) argues that modern companies rate their employees’ interpersonal skills as more important than their hard skills.

Robles (2012:455) has identified the ten most important soft skills through a survey sent to business executives as follows:

- Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
- Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable
- Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what’s right
- Interpersonal Skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills
- Positive Attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident
- Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised
- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
- Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative
- Work Ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

Singling out communication as one skill or skillset is a difficult proposition due to the definition of social skills - the ability to communicate and work with people. All interpersonal relations are affected by an individual's communicative competence (see the next section). Frequently, even hard skills and soft skills are interlinked, because in addition to acquiring knowledge one has to be able to transfer that knowledge through communication in order to be successful in the workplace (Klaus, 2010). For example, while working using a non-native language, the individual's foreign language skills can directly or indirectly affect the interpretation of his or her soft skill attributes of Communication, Courtesy, Flexibility, Interpersonal Skills and Teamwork (Robles, 2012). Consequently, an individual's foreign language skills can act as either an enabler or a limitation to conveying his or her level of social competence to both management and peers.

Communicative competence is a linguistics term coined by Hymes (1966), later developed by several authors (for a brief development history, see Costin, 2011). Communicative competence has been derived from a combination of language competence, i.e. what the language learner knows about the language, and language performance, i.e. what the language learner can do with the language in a real-life communication setting (Costin, 2011). Communicative competence can be perceived to form a substantial part of social competence.

In the context of this thesis, any activity which results in the improvement of an individual's competence is referred to as competence development.

2.4 Competence Development

Many sources (e.g. Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010) refer to the process of individual competence development, also commonly referred to as skill development, as either continued learning or lifelong learning – terms which emphasize the ongoing nature of the process rather than reaching a clearly defined goal or learning objective.

Professional skills have been recently considered to be 'dynamic', because they can be developed quickly; compared to the relatively slow development of social skills (e.g. Savanevičienė et al., 2008). Laker & Powell (2011) found out that soft skills training is significantly less likely to transfer from training to the job than hard skills training. This finding provides an incentive for companies to hire candidates who already have excellent soft skills instead of providing these skills through

training in the workplace. Together, these factors have led to an increased organizational emphasis while recruiting on new employees' social competence; since the professional competence is easier to develop while the employee is already within the organization. Robles (2012) expressed this by claiming that hard skills may get the candidate into a job interview; but soft skills are required in order to receive the job and to stay employed.

Competence development is important especially in industries which require skilled workers, such as in the technology industry (e.g. Sunthonkanokpong et al, 2011). For example, some of the technical devices or technical competence can become outdated, and will consequently need to be updated as a necessity. This applies to machinery and information systems as well as their users.

High technology industry is a sub-section of the technology industry, and one of its key features is that the average employee tends to be very young (Hardy, 2013). Ramsar et al. (2014) have recently discovered that the old but firmly held belief of cognitive capabilities steadily declining due to aging is a myth. Therefore, it is possible that one of the key reasons for the young average age of employees in the high technology industry is the young age of many sectors of the industry: for many new occupational titles, no traditional forms of skills training exist, since the demand has sprung up so suddenly. High schools, universities and colleges around the world are struggling to keep up with the rapid pace of development in the contemporary high technology industry, both in their lecture content as well as their teaching equipment and methods (e.g. Debolt, 2008).

In this section, it has been established that people employed in the technology industry will often be required to improve their technical competence as a necessity. The following sections will focus on whether this tendency is transferable also to foreign language competence development. In other words, some theories of what motivates people to study foreign languages will be examined.

2.5 Motivation for Foreign Language Studies

A well-known distinction in psychological motivational theory is the division between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). Extrinsic motivation is the motivation to *“do something because of an external reward that may be obtained”* (Schmidt et al., 1996:14); intrinsic motivation *“is demonstrated when we do something because we get rewards enough from the*

activity itself". A person can be simultaneously motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically. A person who is not motivated intrinsically, neither extrinsically, is unmotivated (e.g. Mirabela-Constanta & Abrudan, 2011). This is a simple and somewhat crude model for studying motivation, as there are large variations within both of these categories. Therefore, Carrera's (2005) more detailed framework for language learning motivation will be discussed next.

2.6 Carrera's Framework of Language Learning Motivation

Hayamizu's model (1998, in Japanese; English reference in Carrera, 2005) further divides intrinsic and extrinsic motivation into four types: goal-autonomy, goal-heteronomy, means-autonomy and means-heteronomy (see Table 1 for examples). In this context, means refers to L2 learning being used as a means to achieve another target; while goal refers to the L2 learning being the purpose of learning. Autonomy refers to learning out of personal interest; and heteronomy refers to learning due to other people.

An additional method for examining motivation in L2 learning is the division between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation suggested by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Integrative motivation refers to a positive attitude and positive feelings towards the target language group; while instrumental motivation refers to utilitarian gains of foreign language proficiency, such as getting a job or higher salary. Carrera (2005) has combined Hayamizu's model with the model by Gardner and Lambert, and has ended up with a framework with eight distinct categories:

Table 1. Carrera’s Framework of Motivation

Motivation type	Description	Example
Means-Autonomy – Integrative	Wants to integrate into L2 culture and learn L2 only as a means to an end	Immigrants who want to become members of the society, but who are not interested in learning the local language in itself
Means-Autonomy – Instrumental	Wants to get utilitarian gains, e.g. a better job or salary, and studies L2 only as a means to an end	Businessperson fulfilling in-company language competence requirements necessary for a promotion
Goal-Autonomy – Integrative	Studies L2 because wants to integrate into L2 culture, becomes absorbed in the learning because finds the learning itself fun and enjoyable	Immigrants who want to become members of the society who consequently find out they like language learning
Goal-Autonomy – Instrumental	Wants to get utilitarian gains, e.g. a better job or salary, but becomes absorbed in L2 studies and enjoys it	Businessperson learning a foreign language to further his/her career, who enjoys studying the language
Means-Heteronomy – Integrative	Made to study L2 for integrative reasons by an external power and learns L2 only as a means	Parents force immigrant children to learn L2; children are reluctant to study L2 to catch up with school work
Means-Heteronomy – Instrumental	Made to study L2 for instrumental reasons by external power and learn L2 only as a means	Parents force high school students to study L2; students are reluctant to study L2 in order to enter into the university
Goal-Heteronomy – Integrative	Made to study L2 for integrative reasons by external power, but is absorbed in L2 learning and finds it enjoyable	Children living abroad made to go to local school by their parents, but who enjoy their school life and L2 learning
Goal- Heteronomy – Instrumental	Made to study L2 for instrumental reasons by external power, but becomes absorbed in L2 learning and finds it enjoyable	A Japanese company encourages businessmen to get a high TOEIC score and makes them study English. Some of them really enjoy learning English.

Source: Adapted from Carrera (2005:59-61)

Carrera (2005) regards goal-autonomy motivation as ‘perfect intrinsic motivation’; and means-heteronomy motivation as ‘perfect extrinsic motivation’. Goal-heteronomy motivation refers to a person who is forced to do an action by others, but who finds that action enjoyable and becomes absorbed in it. An example of this is a child forced to study a foreign language but who eventually finds the experience pleasant. Means-autonomy motivation refers to a person who decides by him/herself, what is the goal of the language study. An example of this is a person studying foreign

languages in order to gain good overall grades and therefore entrance into high school or university level education.

Although even Carrera's framework is not likely to cover all language learning situations, it is nevertheless helpful in the context of this study for categorizing language learners based on their purpose for studying the foreign language.

After discussing the motivation for foreign language learning, it is time to focus on language teaching methods. The topic of traditional, grammar-oriented language teaching methods versus more modern, communication-oriented language teaching is a section which was added to this thesis after the data analysis based on the respondents' qualitative answers.

2.6 Grammar-oriented Language Teaching vs. Communication-oriented Language Teaching

Grammar-oriented language teaching focuses on teaching the lexical and grammar rules of a language; communication-oriented language teaching focuses on typical language use situations and practical vocabulary. Grammar-oriented language teaching, which has traditionally been prevalent especially in the Finnish context of the study (see Maijala, 2013), has a behavioural tendency to punish the language learner by pointing out his or her grammatical mistakes. This negative feedback can make the language learner less confident in his or her L2 skills, and lead to a tendency to avoid using the L2 in real life. Consequently, many contemporary foreign language teachers believe that communicative competence should be the primary goal of language education (Savignon, 1997), as the main goal of communication-oriented language teaching is to promote L2 use (Clément et al., 2003). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a language teaching method which aims at acquiring communicative competence in its four components: grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences (Costin, 2011).

Because the primary focus of L2 teaching has been shifting from grammar-oriented towards communication-oriented since the early 2000s, the researcher is interested whether consequent generational differences between respondents exist in their likelihood to use L2 skills in real life situations due to past language learning experiences.

In addition to generational differences, also the gender aspect will be examined in this thesis. Whether men and women are fundamentally similar to or different from each other might be a philosophical debate as old as philosophy itself.

2.7 Gender Differences

In the field of psychology, there has been an ongoing debate regarding to whether men and women are fundamentally different (e.g. Gray, 1992) or basically similar (e.g. Hyde, 2005). It appears to be a risky proposition to take either of these assumptions for granted: undoubtedly, some psychological and behavioural differences as well as similarities exist simultaneously (Archer, 2006). The gender reality hypothesis is a position taken by Lippa (2005 and 2006) with the aim of moving beyond the simple yes-or-no debate by acknowledging that “many psychological gender differences are small-to-nonexistent, some are moderate, and some are large” (Lippa, 2006). Lippa’s position forms the basis for this research, with the following ramifications:

- preconceived assumptions concerning sex or gender in research design and methodology should be avoided
- research hypotheses should not contain implied assumptions about the genders
- both similarities and differences between the genders should be explored when analyzing the results

In the context of this thesis, the researcher will attempt to point out both similarities and differences between the genders based on the findings, instead of only focusing on one of the two categories.

2.8 Gender Differences in Communication Styles

Lakoff (1973) raised attention in his study to the different communication styles men and women tend to adopt when communicating in English: “The personal identity of women ... is linguistically submerged; the language works against treatment of women, as serious persons with individual views.” Mulac (2006:219) describes this phenomenon as follows: “*First, men and women speak the same language. Second, men and women speak that language differently.*” Males and females have been found to have a tendency to use different communication styles also in online

communication (e.g. Postmes & Spears, 2002). Herring (2004) illustrates some key differences between the stereotypical male and female communication styles, which she calls communication ethics:

A daunting 68% of the messages posted by men made use of an adversarial style in which the poster distanced himself from, criticized, and/or ridiculed other participants, often while promoting his own importance. The few women who participated in the discussion, in contrast, displayed features of attenuation -- hedging, apologizing, asking questions rather than making assertions -- and a personal orientation, revealing thoughts and feelings and interacting with and supporting others.

Historically, in English-speaking cultures, there has been a bias to favor 'the male communication style' over 'the female communication style' (e.g. Lakoff, 1973; Mulac, 2006). The male-oriented history of the English-speaking cultures is also implicitly present in contemporary everyday English language use (e.g. Hogg, 1985; Hogg & Reid, 2006).

This gender bias in communication styles has been later researched widely in the monolingual US context (e.g. Hogg, 1985; Hogg & Reid, 2006), where the historical and cultural aspects of the English language are deeply rooted. However, the language bias is not widely recognized in countries which have recently adopted the use of English language without sharing the English cultural background, such as Finland. If a certain communication style is preferred over others, it is possible that this implicit bias may favor a specific group of employees at the expense of others. It is also possible that the gender bias in communication styles contributes to the glass ceiling, thus making gender equality in top management more difficult to achieve (see Pichler, Simpson & Stroh, 2008). In other words, it is possible that in order to become a top manager, one has to fulfill a culturally held role model of a typical leader. It is also possible that in some Western cultures the fulfillment of this typical role model of a top manager requires one to not only appear masculine but also to talk using a masculine communication style.

Another example of how strong-rooted the - mostly implicit - English language use division into 'male' and 'female' categories has been identified in Lassonde & O'Brien's 2013 study, in which the researchers examined reader perception of an occupational character based on whether the character was referred to using male-biased or gender-neutral nouns, and whether the passages

included an introductory sentence telling the gender of the character. The researchers found out that the use of gender-biased nouns 'him' and 'her' in the third person affect reader perception of the character based on gender stereotypes, and noted that since there does not exist a widely adopted gender-neutral noun to replace 'him' and 'her' in the English language, gender-biased nouns are likely to implicitly affect reader perception in other text types as well.

Competence, language, motivation and gender have already been covered in this literature review. The final sections will be about career enablers, contemporary career development and gender differences in career development.

2.9 Career Enablers

In the context of this thesis, a career enabler is defined as a skill which is positively related with the availability of career-related opportunities. Since communicative competence (see Hymes, 1966) has been identified as one of the key soft skills attributes and soft skills are required in order to receive the job and to stay employed (Robles, 2012), communicative competence can be considered to be a career enabler. Career enablers are especially important in the contemporary work environment for reasons examined in the following section.

2.10 Career Development in the Contemporary Work Environment

Greenhaus et al. (2010:xiv) describe the contemporary employment climate as follows:

Realities in the world of work – economic uncertainties, mergers and acquisitions, downsizings, cost containment efforts, and the globalization of business, to mention a few – have dramatic effect on careers. We can no longer expect to spend 20 or 30 years in one company, or even one industry. We cannot expect our employer to take responsibility for managing our career. In today's world, the relationship between employer and employee has a short-term focus, often with low levels of commitment and loyalty between the two parties.

In the context of this thesis, career management is defined as a process for coping with changes in the contemporary employment climate. From an organization's viewpoint (see e.g. Florin, 2012), career management and related activities can be seen as a part of the human resources function,

aimed at developing the skills of the organization's current employees, as well as to guide them in their intra-organizational career paths. From an employee's viewpoint (see Greenhaus et al., 2010), career management can be seen as an individual's life-long process of career planning, including inter- and intra-organizational career changes and personal career goals.

In order to study the nature of the relationship between the employee and the employer in more depth, Rousseau (1989) has developed a concept called 'the psychological contract'. According to Rousseau (1989:123), a psychological contract between the employee and the employer is formed when the employee believes that "*a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations*".

Sturges et al. (2005:821) suggest that

individual career management behavior is associated with the experience of organizational career management help, which is related to fulfillment of the psychological contract. Fulfillment of the psychological contract in turn is linked to organizational commitment and is associated with behaviors at work, including absenteeism, turnover, and independent ratings of job performance.

Organizations which would like to maintain high levels of employee commitment and loyalty, but are unable to provide career progression to the same degree as previously, will need to find new ways to retain and motivate staff and to reward performance (e.g. Ball, 1997). One of these ways would be to provide skill training to the employees. This, in turn, may lead to an increase in the fulfillment of the psychological contract, thus contributing to increased organizational commitment.

In the contemporary employment climate (Greenhaus et al., 2010:xiv), employees employed in organizations which are unable to provide career progression to the same degree as previously will need to focus more on their personal competence development and to be prepared for repeated career changes. The concept of protean careers, coined by Hall (1976), is focused on "*achieving subjective career success through self-directed vocational behavior*" (Briscoe et al., 2006:30-31). In practice, protean careers are likely to remain an optimistic ideal, since real life limitations often necessitate career changes due to reactive adaptation to the rapid changes in the contemporary work environment. Nevertheless, the researcher is interested to find out whether a

relation between foreign language skills and the ability to shape one's career path can be identified.

2.11 Gender Differences in Career Development

The prototypical career holder – at least in the UK and in the US – has historically been implicitly male (Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). This implicit assumption has been held firmly in place in the English-language career-related research literature globally until the early 1990s, and in some cultures, past the millennium (see Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). Similarly, the assumption of a man's career taking precedence over a woman's career remains firmly rooted in place among many dual-earner couples in the US also in the 21st century (ibid.).

Pichler et al. (2008) studied the concept of 'glass ceiling', i.e. why the proportion of women in an organization tends to not be positively related to the proportion of women in top management. The researchers found out that top management jobs tend to be sex-typed as masculine and characterized in masculine terms; while women are favored for jobs sex-typed as feminine. This results in a lack of fit (see Heilman, 1983) due to a sex bias. Additionally, the researchers suggested that women's advancement in relatively male-dominated professions may be even more difficult. Consequently, the researchers suggest that in order to favor gender diversity, female employees should be trained to be successful in a male-dominated world.

On the other hand, Melamed (1995) notes that if careers were to be interpreted as social roles rather than as a sequence of jobs, this "would suggest that the notions of career and career success bear different meanings for women and men." In other words, it is possible that the fulfillment of the previously mentioned social expectations equals career success to some individuals.

3 Research Method

3.1 Research Process

Initially, this research was not supposed to be about foreign language competence development at all; it was supposed to be about career mobility, with foreign language competence being utilized only as a tool for developing a more mobile career. However, after the initial keyword search of the qualitative data it became apparent that the data was a poor fit to the initial research goals due to a scarcity of related respondent answers. This mismatch between the initial research setting and the data could possibly be attributed to participant heterogeneity in the survey group in regards to personal career mobility experiences, such as work experience abroad.

Consequently, I decided to scrap the preconceived researcher setting and to start again by analyzing the qualitative data in order to come up with themes stemming from the data itself. The literature review was rewritten and developed more towards this new thematic direction. While this research process has been unconventional, it should help in finding themes and keywords arising from the data.

The following research questions were formulated after the data collection: How does foreign language competence act as a career enabler in the technology industry in the contemporary work environment? Why do the employees in the technology industry study foreign languages? How can their motivations for foreign language competence development be explained from a gender and age perspective? How does foreign language competence affect one's career development?

3.2 Data Collection

I was part of a research group consisting of researchers from the University of Vaasa and Aalto University School of Business in Helsinki. The research group had sent out a survey to Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland (in Finnish: Tekniikan akateemiset ry., TEK) association prior to the researcher joining the research group. The survey was available in Finnish, English and Swedish, and all respondents were encouraged to use their native language to answer to the survey. Special attention was paid to translating the survey questions in order to make the different language versions as identical as possible.

The qualitative findings used for analysis were gathered from the answers to a single open-ended question titled “Free comments and/or feedback to the researchers” at the end of the survey. In the English version of the survey, this was a small text box. In the Finnish and Swedish versions of the survey, the whole backside of the last page was dedicated for the answers.

The survey was sent out to approximately 3500 TEK members, 432 of whom responded to the survey. Consequently, the response rate was approximately 12%. The amount of people who answered to the optional qualitative open-ended question was 226, which is 52.3% of the respondents. 215 out of those 226 respondents (91.5%) answered to the qualitative question in Finnish; 8 (3.5%) in Swedish; and 3 (1.3%) in English.

A slight disparity seems to exist in the sample statistics between the amounts of respondents using Swedish and who reported Swedish as their mother tongue. 33 out of 432 respondents, which is 7.3% of the respondents to the full survey, reported their mother tongue to be Swedish. However, only 8 out of 226, which is 3.5% of the respondents who answered to the qualitative question, wrote their qualitative question response in Swedish. This gap can be attributed to Swedish-Finnish bilinguals, who are fluent in both Swedish and Finnish, and who work and handle everyday matters - such as filling out surveys - using Finnish, but who nevertheless report their mother tongue to be Swedish.

In order to examine the effect of age on the responses, the respondents were organized into three distinct groups, which are supposed to roughly reflect three different generations of respondents. Firstly, young respondents: age 25-33, 49 out of 226 respondents (21.7%). Secondly, middle-aged respondents: age 34-49, 113 out of 226 respondents (50.0%). Lastly, senior respondents: age 50-67, 64 out of 226 respondents (28.3%). When the qualitative answers are analysed in the Findings-section, the age group and the gender of the respondent are provided along with the quotation.

3.3 Data analysis

The 226 responses – most of them consisting of a single sentence – were initially read through by the researcher using in-depth, line-by-line scrutiny without sorting algorithms. Then, software assistance was used to create initial themes based on keyword repetition (see Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Some examples of initial themes included “working abroad”, “job finding” and “language use in the workplace”. The initial themes were mostly related to language use context. These

initial themes could be described as “when” and “where” the respondents had used and learned foreign languages. These themes were developed further by purposefully searching for mentions related to these themes: work experience abroad, language use experience, language-related career opportunities, and language studies. A tentative mind-map of themes was formed. Consequently, it was found out that a specific category of responses which primarily consisted of personal opinions and reflection fell outside of this initial theme pattern.

Next, the content of the answers falling outside of the initial theme patterns was analyzed. It was found out that these answers were concerned with the “why” and “how” aspects of language learning, and that the opinions of the respondents varied significantly. Initially, these responses were divided into three categories: “negative”, “neutral or necessity” and “positive” attitude towards foreign languages. Another mind map of themes was formed. Initially, this mind map had a matrix pattern with language use context on one axis and the language user’s attitude on the other axis. However, further theme grouping separated the necessity view as its own branch, since the responses under this category had little in common with the other responses. Additionally, it was discovered that the attitudes towards the English language were different from the attitudes towards the other foreign languages. Consequently, the matrix was transformed into a mind map containing three main branches, which then became the main themes. Firstly, “Language Competence as a Necessity”, which is primarily concerned with the utilitarian and somewhat objective views towards language studies and foreign language requirements in the workplace. Secondly, “The Status of English Compared to Other Foreign Languages”, which contains more emphasized and quite subjective respondent voices about which foreign languages should be studied and what is their “mutual hierarchy” in the contemporary technology industry. Lastly, “Foreign Language Competence as a Career Enabler” focuses on the positive benefits and gains achieved through language studies. The related discussion topics below each of these or mind map branches became the sub-themes. Some of these sub-themes were based on differences in opinions between respondent groups, as classified by gender and generation. Finally, discussion was developed with regard to the variety of unique voices on each theme, and bridges to existing research and literature were created.

Thematically, the difference between answers written in English and the other answers was found out to be significant. The Swedish and Finnish language answers were homogenous, except that the status of the Swedish language was not mentioned in the answers written in Swedish.

Consequently, for the purposes of this survey, both the Finnish and Swedish language respondents can be considered to belong to the same cultural group; while the English language respondents can be viewed to belong to a different cultural group.

In the case of multiple similar answers from similar respondent profiles under one theme, only one or two representative quotations have been singled out to be included in this Thesis. Unless otherwise specified, the answers quoted in the following discussion section have been translated from Finnish into English by the researcher. Some cultural insight related to the translations is provided within the analysis in order to mitigate the problem of losing cultural information in the translation process (Xian, 2008). In the field of translation, this translation-related choice is frequently referred to as source-faithful translation versus target audience-faithful translation (see e.g. Ranua, 2009). The emphasis in this thesis is on source-faithful translation, which aims to provide additional information beyond the technical citation translation itself in order to better understand the meaning of the original text. Nevertheless, it is possible that some information or linguistic nuances have been lost in the translation process. After all, the translation is formed based on the translator's subjective interpretation of what the respondent has answered; what the respondent has originally intended with the answer might be slightly different, especially when the translated material is concerned with subjective experiences (Xian, 2008). In order to mitigate this problem, the original citations are provided alongside with the translations.

4 Findings

In the context of this study, the term "technology industry" is defined very broadly to include any sector where a graduate with a MSc in Technology degree can become employed. This includes a wide range of sectors, such as chemistry, forestry, industrial engineering, software technology, physics, architecture and mechanical engineering. On the Finnish language version of their website (TEK, 2014a), TEK refers to themselves as *"an association providing services and member benefits for Masters of Technology (in Finnish: diplomi-insinööri), architects and people who have received an equivalent university level degree ... our mission is to advance and promote technology in order to improve the welfare of people, the environment and the society"*.

TEK has approximately 72 300 members; 51 000 of whom are graduates and 21 000 are students (TEK, 2014b). In comparison, the Finnish export-oriented privately owned technology sector directly employs approximately 290 000 people in the fields of electronics & electricity, machinery & metal products, metal refining, planning & consulting and IT (Teknologiateollisuus, 2014). This figure includes also people with a lower than university level degree, and it excludes people employed in the public sector of the technology industry. Nevertheless, the proportion of TEK members out of the overall workforce in the Finnish technology industry is significant.

The sample statistics seem to roughly correspond with TEK member statistics. TEK estimates that approximately 80% of their members are male and 20% female, with a mean age of approx. 44 years, and less than 50% of the members live in the greater Helsinki region (TEK, 2014b). Out of the 226 respondents who answered to the qualitative question, 171 (75.6%) were male, 55 (24.3% were female), the mean age was 43.0 years, and the amount of people living in the greater Helsinki region was 92 (40.7%), with 116 (51.3%) residing elsewhere in Finland and 18 (8.0%) abroad. As such, the results from this study may be to some extent transferable to TEK members, and therefore also to the Finnish technology industry.

In order to examine the effect of age on the responses, the respondents were organized into three distinct groups, which are supposed to roughly reflect three different generations of respondents. Young respondents: age 25-33, middle-aged respondents: age 34-49 and senior respondents: age 50-67. Both the age group and the gender of the respondent are provided along with the quotation.

4.1. Language Competence as a Necessity

The most prevalent theme was the perception that foreign language skills are a necessity in order to work in the field of technology. Some of the most frequently recurring words in the qualitative answers when referring to foreign language skills were “necessity” and “requirement”.

”Kielitaito on kaiken edellytys. En voisi tehdä työtani (sic) ilman kielen hallintaa.”

”Language competence is a fundamental requirement for everything. I could not do my job without mastery of the languages.”

Female, senior

The necessity view highlights means and instrumental motivations for FLCD. In other words, L2 learning is used as a means to achieve another target, with utilitarian gains of foreign language proficiency. For the respondents advocating the necessity aspect, the primary aim of FLCD appears to be to become - and remain - employed in the technology industry. Their emphasis is on how well the person can communicate in L2 within the person’s work environment. This finding supports communicative competence focused Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); rather than the more traditional grammar competence focused L2 learning.

4.1.1 English as a Necessity

Respondents from both genders and across all age groups consider the knowledge of English language especially to be a necessity in the contemporary working life in the field of technology. The answers most directly related to this theme were received from senior respondents. A potential reason for this response pattern might be that some of the senior respondents have had to develop their foreign language competence – especially English – relatively late during their careers to match the challenges arising from the internationalization of the contemporary work environment. Several reasons for necessity were offered: these will be analyzed in the following subsections.

4.1.1.1 English to Stay Employed

”Koska osaan englantia en ole joutunut pois nykyisistä tehtävistäni.”

”Because I know English, I have not been cast out from my current position.”

Male, senior

This senior male respondent emphasizes not being replaced thanks to his English skills. Some parts of the technology industry are known to prefer young employees at the expense of senior employees due to young employees' more up-to-date know-how (see Brown & Linden, 2009). FLCD is one of the aspects of lifelong learning (e.g. Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010) necessary for senior employees in order to maintain their current positions, and to retain their employability in the labour market.

”Englannin kielen osaaminen on edellytys, jotta voin työskennellä nykyisellä työnantajallani ja tehtävissäni.”

”English language competence is a requirement for me in order to work for my current employer and in my current position.”

Female, young

However, there are also young respondents who emphasize the necessity and employability aspects for English language competence. For younger respondents, insufficient foreign language competence can act as a barrier of entry into the industry. This is closely related to the following section, in which the status of English as the dominant industry language will be more closely examined.

4.1.1.2 English as the Industry Language

”Tässä työssä ei voisi toimia ilman englantia. Englanti on koko alan yhteinen kieli.”

”It would be impossible to work in this position without English. English is the industry language.”

Male, middle-aged

“Englannin sekä suullinen että kirjallinen osaaminen on mielestäni alallani täysin välttämätöntä, niin opinnoissa kuin työelämässäkin.”

“I consider both oral and written English skills to be absolutely necessary in my industry, both while studying as well as in the working life.”

Male, young

These two male respondents from different age groups highlight the status of English as a common industry language. In other words, the respondents are talking about English as lingua franca (ELF) in the field of technology. This can be partially attributed to the high degree of globalization in the technology industry: information is traveling too fast from one country to another to provide local translations. In many cases, there is no local language equivalent for the industry-prevalent English term, which forces the language users to adopt English in order to be correctly understood. This can lead to English language competence becoming a barrier of entry for learning industry jargon. In other words: one might not be able to enter the industry without sufficient English language competence; and one cannot stay within the industry without developing the English jargon further.

4.1.1.3 Functions Located in English-Speaking Countries

“Englannin kielen taito on välttämättömyys, koska keskeiset työtehtäviini vaikuttavat toiminnot (sic) ovat USA:ssa”

“English language skills are a necessity, since the central functions related to my tasks are located in the USA”

Female, senior

This senior female respondent refers to functions located in the USA. As explored in the literature review (e.g. Friedman, 2006), globalization is becoming more prevalent in everyday life, and it is already commonplace in the technology industry. Being directly involved with functions in another country may encourage integrative motivation for FLCD towards that culture, especially if the employee considers that business traveling to the foreign country may be possible in the future.

4.1.2 Local Language Skills as a Necessity

Respondents who answered to the English version of the survey highlighted the importance of local language skills when working abroad – in this context, Finnish language skills as a necessity for working and living in Finland.

“It [my language skills] simply gave me the opportunity to continue working and living with my family in Finland” (answer in English)

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent’s argument is very similar to the arguments voiced in the earlier section about staying employed. However, the situation is reversed: rather than having an employee with a local background required to learn the global corporate language, we have a person with a foreign background having to learn the local operating language. Furthermore, studying foreign languages for the family’s sake raises up the means and integrative motivations for FLCDD.

“My Lack of Finnish language skills has slowed me down significantly in engineering area where Finnish is NEVER used”

(answer in English) Male, middle-aged

This respondent raises up the controversial topic of local language requirement for a profession where the primary language of work is nevertheless a foreign language, typically English. This requirement creates a barrier of entry for people from other cultures with a different language background to become employed in Finland. If the work language truly is English without requiring additional languages, this could maybe even be interpreted as an obstacle for free movement of labour - which is granted within the European Union (EU) by the EU legislation.

Nevertheless, the employers frequently require local language skills from the employees. One of the most commonly stated reasons in the private sector (see Finnish Chamber of Commerce, 2013) is an organizational policy of having the exact same language competence requirement for all employees; while in the public sector the legal requirements of some organizations and job titles requires at least nominally fulfilling the language competence requirements for both Finnish

and Swedish. Consequently, foreign employees' employment opportunities in Finland are frequently hindered by the local language requirements of Finnish and/or Swedish. Rather recently, the Finnish Chamber of Commerce has begun the foundation process for forming a Helsinki Region Immigrant Employment Council (HERIEC) together with both public and private actors to deal with the problem of underemployment of foreign nationals with an academic background currently residing in Finland (ibid.).

4.2 The Status of English Compared to Other Foreign Languages

The previous thematic section focused on the importance of language competence in the contemporary work environment based on necessity, highlighting the special status English language enjoys in the technology industry. In this section, the respondents' thoughts and attitudes towards the special status of the English language will be examined. Three differing viewpoints could be distinguished: English with complementary other languages, English at the expense of other languages and Counterarguments to the prevalence of the English language.

4.2.1 English as Supplementary to Other Languages

While English is perceived as the global industry language, many respondents also perceive a need for local language competence. Especially Swedish and Russian were frequently mentioned as beneficial languages. This is likely due to the close geographical proximity of Sweden and Russia, as well as their ranking among Finland's largest export destinations (Tulli, 2010). In this section, the focus is on the view that English language competence should be supplemented with other foreign language competences.

"Englannin kielen sujuva taito on ollut välttämättömyys, ruotsi hyödyksi ja venäjä (sic) olisi ollut syytä opiskella"

"Sufficient English knowledge has been a necessity, Swedish has been beneficial and Russian would have been beneficial to learn as well."

Female, senior

This senior female respondent refers to Russian in the conditional past tense: "Russian would have been beneficial to learn". This sentence holds an implicit assumption that the respondent is no longer able or willing to learn Russian or that she will no longer be able to benefit from learning it;

in other words, she has given up the notion of Russian L2 studies. This quote supports the means motivation for L2 learning: Russian language competence would have provided her with some benefits in the past, which she is unable to attain recursively.

“Swedish has been beneficial” is also worth noting. Although Swedish is the second official language in Finland, and is therefore included in the compulsory curriculum in secondary schools and high schools, in reality many Finnish citizens have only grasped the basics or bare necessities of the Swedish language. Therefore, excellent Swedish language competence may well be an advantage in the contemporary Finnish work environment.

”... Vaikka olen konttorilla Suomessa, puhun enemmän englantia työpäivän aikana jopa konttorilla (ulkolamaisia (sic) johtajia komennuksella). Lähes kaikki sähköposti englanniksi tai ruotsiksi. Vastaanotan myös saksaksi ja ranskaksi. Normaali kielitaito perusedellytys että edes työpaikan saa. Urakehitys täysin seis jos ei osa (sic) englantia. Venäjänkielestä olisi paljon hyötyä ja avaisi ihan uusia mahdollisuuksia uralle...

”... Although I am at the office in Finland, I speak more English during a working day even at the office (foreign managers on assignment). Almost all e-mail [is] in English or Swedish. I also receive [them] in German and French. Career development would stop completely if you didn't know English. Russian would be very useful and it would open up whole new possibilities for career...”

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent frequently uses five different languages in his work: Finnish, English, Swedish, German and French. Despite working in a multilingual environment, English is still given a special status: “Career development would stop completely if you didn't know English.” This may imply that the organization has adopted an organizational language policy, effectively rendering English as the only language which matters for career progression.

Nevertheless, the respondent feels that competence in a sixth language would be beneficial as well: “I am at the office in Finland ... Russian would be very useful and it would open up whole new possibilities for career”. Two external things should be noted when analyzing this response.

Firstly, Europe is currently suffering from a financial crisis; while the Russian economy was growing at a significantly higher rate of 3.4% in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). Secondly, the demand for employees with Russian language competence is currently higher than the supply in the Finnish labour market. One of the foundations of this discrepancy can be found by examining the Finnish high schools: in the 2011 spring and fall Finnish matriculation examinations, a total of 38227 students completed the advanced syllabus in English; 2445 in Swedish; 997 in German; 419 in French; and only 322 in Russian (Ylioppilastutkinto, 2012). In addition, 904 students completed the basic or intermediate syllabus in English; 18131 in Swedish; 2278 in German; 1541 in French; 1303 in Spanish; and only 546 in Russian (ibid.). These numbers indicate that Russian language competence may well be a competitive advantage in the Finnish labour market through skill differentiation – at least when compared with a competence of the most commonly studied languages of English, Swedish, German and French.

4.2.2 English at the Expense of Other Languages

In this section, the spotlight is on the view that besides English, no other secondary language competence may even be required. We will begin with moderate opinions, moving towards the more radical perceptions of how non-English FLCD is a waste of time and resources. The voices in this thematic section belong solely to middle-aged and senior males. Based on this evidence, we may be able to deduce that young employees and female employees have a more positive attitudes towards FLCD; or at least that they are not as vocal in voicing their displeasure towards it.

At this point in the analysis, it is worth noting that even though Swedish is the second official language in Finland, it is not the second most popular language after Finnish in the Finnish matriculation examinations; this position currently belongs to English (ibid.). In the 2011 examinations, 23189 students completed the advanced syllabus and 904 the basic syllabus in English, bringing the total to 39131 students. As for Swedish, the numbers were 2564 Swedish as mother tongue, 3 Swedish as the second mother tongue, 2445 advanced syllabus and 18131 basic syllabus, for a grand total of 23143 students. Correspondingly, English has already been identified as the most useful secondary language by many respondents. However, the attitudes towards this position are divided.

”ohjelmistoalalla ei voi toimia ilman englannin kielen osaamista, muut kielet tarpeellisia lähinnä ohjelmiston käännöstöissä”

”It’s impossible to work in the software industry without English language skills, other languages are useful mostly for software translation”

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent considers English to be the primary language of operation in the software industry; whilst the local languages fall into a secondary role for translation purposes. This gives all other languages a lower status than English in the software industry. The response can also be interpreted to hold an implicit assumption that if everybody understood English, there would be no need for software translations and therefore no need for the other languages in the software industry, either.

”Ilman englantia ei pärjää. Muut kielet on aika lailla nice-to-know osastoa. Aina voi spekuloida että jos osaisi vaikkapa jorubaa tai urdua tai sitten olisi ehkä päätynyt hommiin jossa niitä tarvittaisiin. Tai sitten ei. Bottom line on että jos ei ole mitään sanottavaa niin on ihan sama kuinka monella kielellä sen voisi sanoa.”

”Without English it is impossible to get by. All other languages are pretty much in the nice-to-know category. You can always speculate that if you knew for example Yoruba or Urdu or maybe then you may have ended up in a position where you needed those. Or not. Bottom line is that if you have nothing to say, then it makes no difference in how many languages you could say that.”

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent seems to struggle with the language and vocabulary while writing his commentary using his native language of Finnish, and resorts into using English expressions in the middle of his sentences. These expressions include “nice-to-know” and “Bottom line”. From this it can be derived that perhaps the respondent is using more English than Finnish language on a daily basis, which undoubtedly has an effect on his attitudes as well.

The respondent raises an interesting point towards the end of his commentary: “if you have nothing to say, then it makes no difference in how many languages you could say that”. It is rare for a respondent to have separated the medium – the language used – from the message, referring to the content of what is being said. The respondent’s passing reference to the not widely spoken languages of Yoruba and Urdu give further support for his utilitarian argument and means motivation for FLCD, referring to L2 competence as a tool rather than a goal.

“Englanti on tärkeä työkieli ja ehdoton edellytys nykyisten tehtävien hoitamiseksi. Ruotsia tai muita kieliä en ole tarvinnut.”

“English is an important work language and an absolute requirement to perform my current tasks. Swedish or any other languages I have not required.”

Male, senior

“Englanti on ehdottoman välttämätön, muistakin on välillä (sic) iloa ja hyötyä.”

“English is absolutely necessary, others are occasionally joyful and useful.”

Male, senior

These senior male respondents are very direct in their utilitarian view about L2 studies: English is a necessity; the other languages are not as frequently required. This highlights the means motivation for FLCD, and it could even be considered an example of means-autonomy – instrumental motivation. In other words, FLCD is not perceived to have value unless it can be utilized as a means to gain some other, personal and tangible benefits.

Swedish has been singled out by the first respondent as an example of a language which has not been perceived to be useful to him. The specific mentions of English and Swedish in a Finnish language response may imply that the respondent in question has not studied any language besides these three. The phrasing of the answer implies that he may not be willing to learn any new languages in the future, since he has combined them all together with the ‘useless’ Swedish.

This reference to the Swedish language also acts as a transition for guiding the analysis towards ‘involuntary’ secondary language learning, namely the compulsory Swedish studies, which several middle-aged and senior male respondents have genuinely disliked. The following responses help in illustrating how tool-heteronomy - instrumental motivation for FLCD is an especially weak

motivation for L2 studies when the language as a tool cannot be applied into practice frequently enough.

“13.5 vuoden ulkomaantyöskentelyni perusteella voin sanoa, että ruotsinkieleen (sic) käytetty aika on ollut todella henkilökohtaista haaskausta. Minulla on ollut suorina esimiehinä ruotsalaisia yli 10 vuotta ja koskaan keskustelujamme ei ole käyty ruotsinkielellä (sic). Ruotsin kieleen käytettävät tunnit tulisi käyttää englannin opiskeluun. Englantia pitää osata hyvin. Jos joku todella tarvitsee myöhemmin ruotsinkieltä (sic), niin sen kyllä hyvin englantia hallitseva oppii. Itselleni paljon ruotsia hyödyllisempiä kieliä ovat olleet venäjä ja kiina. Ruotsalaiset snapsilaulut tulisi tietysti hallita, joita voi sitten hoilata hauskojen ruotsalaiskollegoiden kanssa. Valitettavasti snapsilaulut eivät kuulu pakkoruotsin opetussuunnitelmaan. Nykyisellä koulujärjestelmällämme suomalaisinsinööri jää kielellisesti aina häviölle ruotsalaiskollegoihin verrattaessa. Heidän vieraiden kielten taitonsa on normaalisti vahva englati (sic) ja saksa.”

“After working abroad for 13.5 years, I can say that the personal time used to study Swedish has been a complete waste. I have had Swedish direct supervisors for over 10 years and we have never had a conversation in Swedish. The hours used to study Swedish should be used to study English. Good knowledge of English is a must. If someone really needs the Swedish language later on, then any person who [already] knows English well can learn it. For me, Russian and Chinese have been much more useful than Swedish. Swedish schnapps songs should of course be mastered, so that one can sing them along with funny Swedish colleagues. Unfortunately, schnapps songs are not included in the teaching plan of compulsory Swedish. With our current educational system, a Finnish engineer will always be linguistically inferior compared to our Swedish colleagues. Their foreign language skills are normally strong English and German.”

Male, senior

This senior male respondent strongly believes that the compulsory Swedish lessons in the Finnish curriculum should be used to study English instead. He notes that the Swedish engineers' typical three language combination of strong Swedish, English and German competence is better in the

contemporary work environment compared to the Finnish engineers' Finnish, Swedish and English competence. Furthermore, the type and register of the Swedish language he has been taught in the past has been far removed from the real-life context in which he has used the Swedish language.

The sentence "I have had Swedish direct supervisors for over 10 years and we have never had a conversation in Swedish" makes a passing reference to English as lingua franca (e.g. de la Rosa, 1992), but it also raises up the notion of redistribution of power based on language competence explored by Räisänen (2012). The respondent appears to have made a personal choice of not using Swedish, a language in which his supervisor has superiority over him; instead he has chosen to use English, which is a secondary language for both of them, thus diminishing the power distance and hierarchy between the supervisor and the respondent. Therefore, it could be beneficial for the respondent in terms of career development to converse with his superiors using the superiors' L2 to give a better impression of himself; rather than trying to speak the superiors' mother tongue.

All in all, it seems that this respondent would have preferred more autonomy in regards to his language studies, and wished for these studies to have been more communicative competence oriented rather than grammar competence oriented. The former is a common finding among the senior male respondents, possibly indicating a high degree of individualism and stubbornness in this particular peer group, making them a rather challenging language learner group to work with; the latter gives support to the views of Savignon's (1997) and Clement et al. (2003) that the ultimate goal of L2 learning should be L2 use.

"Olen suoraan sanonut tyrmistynyt siitä, että ruotsin kieltä ei tarvitse juuri ikinä mihinkään. Silti sitä on pitänyt pakolla opiskella ja nyt kielitaito ruostuu pikkuhiljaa käytön puutteessa. Toki voi katsella ruotsinkielisiä (sic) uutisia tai muuta ohjelmaa televisiosta. Sama koskee saksaakin, mutta sen opiskelu on ollut ihan itse aiheutettua. :) Englantia tarvitsee aina ja kaikkialla, koska suurin osa tietotekniikan alan oppaista ja ohjeista on englanniksi. Englannin puhumista tarvitsee harvemmin, mutta sekään ei ole ongelma."

"Frankly, I am shocked that Swedish language is almost never required for anything. Yet, I have been forced to learn it and now my language skills are deteriorating slowly due to a lack of use. Sure you can watch Swedish news or other programs from the television. Same with German, but learning that has been self-inflicted. :) English is

required always and everywhere, because most of the IT manuals and instructions are in English. Speaking English is less frequently required, but that is not a problem either.”

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent's answer has been picked for analysis primarily because he has a clear difference in attitude towards 'self-inflicted' German L2 studies and compulsory Swedish L2 studies, despite neither of them have proved out to be very useful for him. The respondent has a more positive attitude towards German than Swedish, expressed with an emoticon “:)” at the end of his sentence about German studies.

This raises up an interesting issue related to language studies: the personal freedom of choice and its effect on motivation. In other words, the respondent's heteronomy motivation, referring to studying as a member of a group where group membership may not be voluntary, for studying Swedish is not as strong as his autonomy motivation for studying German. This is especially true when the language learner has a strong means motivation rather than a goal motivation. Based on this answer, it could be deduced that language learners with a strong means motivation are more motivated when they can choose their language of study, thus invoking their autonomy motivation which is stronger than their heteronomy motivation. This, in turn, is likely to increase the language learner's willingness to learn and encourage the learner to develop a more positive attitude towards the L2 as well as the L2 group – which may later even increase the integration motivation for L2 studies. In conclusion, the combination of means-heteronomy – instrumental motivation seems likely to negatively affect the language learner's willingness to learn if the possibility to use the L2 as a tool is not encountered frequently enough.

“Pakkoruotsista ei ole ollut eikä tule olemaan mitään hyötyä urallani. Uskon, että laajemmassa mittakaavassa pakkoruotsi vahingoittaa Suomen kilpailukykyä ja on hirveää resurssien tuhlausta.”

“Compulsory Swedish has never been useful and will never be useful for my career. I believe that on a larger scale, compulsory Swedish harms the Finnish competitiveness and is a terrible waste of resources.”

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent had the most critical view towards L2 learning out of all respondents. He indirectly states that the marginal utility gained from teaching and studying compulsory Swedish lessons is smaller than the marginal utility of spending that time to study something else instead. However, the respondent does not offer an alternative for which language or other subject this time should be reallocated for.

The respondent is also pessimistic about the future prospects of benefiting from his Swedish language competence by making a future statement that it "...will never be useful for my career". This pessimistic attitude may even contribute into making this statement become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

4.2.3 Counterarguments to the Prevalence of English Language

In this sub-section, we will hear voices which challenge the dominant status of the English language, claiming that its sovereign status may potentially be harmful for foreign language and culture studies as a whole. In stark contrast to the voices heard in the previous section, these voices consider cultural and lingual understanding to be a goal in itself, raising up the goal motivation rather than means motivation for FLCD. Interestingly, many of these voices also belong to middle-aged males. One potential explanation for this is that these voices have sprung up as a counterargument to the previous view of English at the expense of the other languages, which may be a dominant within the peer group, work environment or the industry.

"Hienoa, että asiaa selvitetään. Kielitaito nähdään nykyän (sic) liian (sic) suppeasti englannin osaamisena, jolloin kyky tajuja (sic) eri kulttuureja vaikeutuu ja kaventuu."

"It is great that there is research on the subject. Language skills are nowadays perceived too narrowly as English language skills, which makes understanding different cultures more difficult and narrower."

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent raises up multiple topics to be analyzed. Firstly, "Language skills are nowadays perceived too narrowly as English language skills" implies that the respondent has been involved in situations where 'English language skills' have been treated synonymously

with 'foreign language skills'; as if the other foreign language competences would not have relevance. This implicitly supports the view of English as lingua franca (ELF), where people with different mother tongues converse with each other using English; rather than by learning one another's mother tongues. Furthermore, the use of the word "nowadays" implies that in the past the situation has been different.

Secondly, in "... which makes understanding different cultures more difficult and narrower" the respondent makes connection between language competence and cultural competence. The respondent seems to implicitly state that increased cultural understanding is a goal in itself, which raises up the goal motivation for FLCD - and to some extent, also integrative motivation for FLCD. Taken as a whole, these views can be tied in with academic concerns on how English as lingua franca may eventually undermine local languages and cultures and lead towards a global monoculture (see Phillipson, 2008).

"Olen saanut sujuvan kielitaidon Englannin (sic) suhteen, koska se on ollut useita vuosia pääsääntöinen työkieleni ja olen matkustanut paljon työni takia tapaamassa yhteistyökumppaneita (sic) ja asiakkaita. Minulla on myös ollut 4 ulkomaista esimiestä, joiden kanssa olen pystynyt kommunikoimaan hyvin. Toisaalta Englannin (sic) hallitsevuus on heikentänyt muita kieliä, joita ei ole juurikaan tarvinnut. Myös Hollannissa asuessani Englannilla (sic) pärjäsi "liian hyvin", joten ei tullut opeteltua Hollantia kunnolla."

"I have acquired fluency in English, because it has been for several years my primary working language and I have traveled a lot in my work to meet partners and clients. I have also had 4 foreign supervisors, with whom I have been able to communicate well. On the other hand, the prevalence of the English language has weakened my other foreign language skills, which I have not needed as much. Also while living in Holland you could get by with English "too well", so I never properly learned Dutch."

Male, middle-aged

This middle-aged male respondent was concerned that his other foreign language skills have not developed as much as he would have preferred due to the prevalence of the English language. The notion "while living in Holland you could get by with English "too well" again highlights the

problems related with lingua franca status of the English language, at the expense of local languages. Additionally, if one can manage his or her life only using English as an expatriate, there is less means-integration motivation for learning the local language.

4.3 Foreign Language Competence as a Career Enabler

In the first thematic section, FLCD as a necessity, the means-instrumental motivation for FLCD was analyzed primarily in the context of staying employed in the current position. However, there is another side to the means-instrumental motivation which has already to some extent been brought to our attention in some of the responses included in the second thematic section – that of career progress. In this section, FLC will be examined as a career enabler.

I have attempted to pick up illustrative examples of all the different instances where FLCD has been mentioned to affect career mobility. Furthermore, the last subsection is dedicated to the voices which criticize how their FLC has been either underutilized or underappreciated by their current or past employers.

Middle-aged and senior male voices dominated the debate in the English at the expense of other languages –section. In this thematic section, female voices from all three age groups form the majority, with only a minority of the voices belonging to male respondents. Given that roughly two-thirds of the survey respondents were males, this means that female voices are overrepresented in this discussion compared to their proportion of overall respondents. Consequently, it is possible that the female respondents and male respondents are having separate discussions on the same topic, perhaps incorporating different, gender-specific communication styles to discuss their main points.

4.3.1 Improved Work Skills

“Äidinkieleni sekä ranskan ja venäjän perusteiden hallinta on merkittävästi helpottanut tutkimustyötä, johon nykyinen työnantajani on erikoistunut.”

“[Good] knowledge of my mother tongue, as well as the basics of French and Russian, have significantly helped in the research work in which my current employer is specialized in.”

Female, senior

This senior female respondent states that her language skills – both her mother tongue of Finnish as well as her FLC in French and Russian has been a significant advantage in performing her work, and has consequently helped her employer as well. This respondent is an example of a case where FLCD can directly improve work skills, highlighting the means-instrumental motivation for FLCD.

4.3.2 FLC as Skill Differentiation

“minut on valittu kahdesta tasavahvasta hakijasta ranskankielentaitoni takia”

“I have been chosen from amongst two [otherwise] equal applicants due to my French language skills”

Female, middle-aged

This middle-aged female respondent raises up the notion of how language skills can act as a decisive factor when two applicants are otherwise equal. Therefore, FLC in multiple languages can be considered as a differentiating competitive advantage on the labour market. On one hand, this respondent represents a case where FLC can increase one’s employability and career management opportunities even if the language studied may not be directly applicable to the task itself. On the other hand, the second person - the ‘otherwise equal’ job applicant who did not receive the position - represents a case where he or she most likely did not realize that his or her earlier choice of not learning foreign languages may hinder that applicant’s competitiveness in the labour market in the future.

4.3.3 International Career Opportunities

Respondents from both genders and across all age groups highlighted the importance of language skills as an enabler for working abroad. Illustrative examples of all the different arguments and

viewpoints of how precisely FLC can act as an enabler for international career opportunities have been picked from amongst the responses to be analyzed in this section.

“[Kielitaito on vaikuttanut uraani] edistävästi; suomalaisen on mahdotonta työskennellä ulkomailla ilman kielitaitoa”

“[Language skills have affected my career] progressively; it is impossible for a Finn to work abroad without [foreign] language skills”

Female, young

This young female respondent notes that the Finnish language is not frequently spoken outside of the national borders of Finland. Therefore, if a Finnish person wants to become employed abroad, that person needs to have foreign language competence. This raises up the means motivation for FLCD, as well as indirectly the integrative motivation for FLCD in order to become involved in the local culture as well.

Her attitude towards FLCD is positive because she considers working abroad to be a positive opportunity. The following respondent, who is a middle-aged male, displays the opposite reasoning for his positive attitude towards FLCD by implicitly stating that staying in Finland carries negative connotations, and departing from Finland is a positive outcome:

“Kielitaito antaa mahdollisuuden lähteä pois Suomesta työn perässä.”

“Language skills provide the opportunity to depart from Finland in order to work abroad.”

Male, middle-aged

Together, these female and male respondents illustrate how “men and women speak the same language ... differently” (Mulac, 2006:219), using slightly different communication styles to discuss the same phenomenon.

“Espanjankielen taito vaikutti ulkomaankomennuksen järjestymiseen.”

“Spanish competence affected achieving a work assignment abroad.”

Male, senior

This senior male respondent’s phrasing of “achieving a work assignment abroad” implies that working abroad may have been a personal career goal for him. Working towards personal career goals highlights the means-autonomy motivation for FLCD.

“Kielitaitoni ja valmiuteni opiskella kieliä on antanut minulle valmiudet työskennellä ulkomailla.”

“My language skills and preparedness to study languages have provided me with the capability to work abroad.”

Female, young

In addition to her FLC, this young female respondent also mentions her “preparedness to study languages”. FLCD preparedness is a theme which came up in some of the young respondents’ answers, and is in contrast with some senior respondents’ resistance to learn additional languages analyzed in the previous section. FLCD preparedness indicates high levels of autonomy motivation for FLCD.

Furthermore, the display of preparedness may encourage an employer to send an employee with only basic or intermediate FLC on a work assignment abroad, since the employer can reasonably expect the employee to autonomously develop his or her language skills further during the stay abroad. In other words, sometimes the display of willingness to develop one’s FLC can be a sufficient substitute for actual FLC in order to fulfill the employer’s FLC requirements in order to work abroad. Consequently, a high level of motivation for FLCD may be a valuable asset in the contemporary work environment.

However, the “preparedness to study languages” in this context could also mean that the applicant had the right positive mindset suited for the task, which may have been more important for the employer than existing language skills.

“Olen päässyt Ruotsiin komennukselle, jossa kommunikoin [r]uotsiksi: Sama Norjassa. Itävallassa englanniksi. Hollannissa hollanniksi ja englanniksi”

“I have been able to receive an assignment in Sweden where I communicated in Swedish. Same in Norway. In Austria using English. In the Netherlands using Dutch and English.”

Male, senior

“Olen pystynyt tekemään töitä kansainvälisissä projekteissa ja ollut kaksi kertaa komennuksella. Ilman kielitaitoa en olisi pystynyt hoitamaan tehtäviäni”

“I have been able to work in international projects and been twice on a work assignment abroad. Without language skills I would not have been able to do that.”

Female, middle-aged

These two respondents have had multiple international assignments. The senior male respondent can be said to have an international and mobile career, which may have been an exceptional career choice at the time. In contrast, the middle-aged female respondent’s career progress of international work projects combined with short periods abroad has become fairly typical in the contemporary work environment. Based on their answers, it is difficult to determine precisely what has been the primary motivation for their secondary language studies. However, their stories exemplify how after the first foreign assignment and initial international experience the barrier for pursuing further career opportunities abroad has been reduced.

4.3.4 Underutilization of FLC

FLCD requires noticeable effort from the employee. If the employee feels that this effort is not sufficiently recognized, valued or rewarded by the employer, the employee may experience disappointment, anxiety or frustration due to the underutilization of his or her FLC.

The female perspective towards FLCD differs significantly from the male perspective. While some male respondents focused on complaining about the perceived uselessness of additional FLCD in the earlier section titled ‘English at the expense of other languages’, the female respondents in this thematic section highlight their disappointment of not being able to utilize the full extent of their FLC in their current work environment. It is difficult to define whether these are two separate discussions on two separate topics, two separate conversations on the same topic, or one conversation using male and female communication styles. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this section is dominated by female voices, with male voices being absent.

“En pysty täysin hyödyntämään kielitaitoani nykyisessä työssäni (ranska)”

“I am unable to fully utilize all my language skills in my current job (French).”

Female, middle-aged

This middle-aged female respondent claims to be unable to utilize her French language skills in her current job. Her attitude is in stark contrast with how several male respondents in her age group previously described a similar situation with their Swedish language competence.

”Ensimmäisessä työpaikassani (25v.) ei osattu hyödyntää kielitaitoani, vaikka siitä olisi ollut monessakin tapauksessa hyötyä. Viimeisessä kahdessa työpaikassani olen päässyt hyödyntämään kielitaitoani. Pääsääntöisesti englantia ja ruotsia, mutta nykyssä (sic) tehtävässäni myös italiankielen alkeistani on ollut muutaman kerran hyötyä. Kokemukseni mukaan liian (sic) monessa tehtävässä ei hyödynnetä kielitaitoa, vaan annetaan taidon rapistua käyttämättömänä, näin minulle meinasi tapahtus (sic) ruosin keilen (sic) kanssa.”

”In my first job (age 25) they were not able to utilize my language skills, although it would have been beneficial on multiple occasions. In my last two jobs I have been able to utilize my language skills. Primarily English and Swedish, but in my current position also my basics of Italian have been useful a few times. Based on my experience, in too many positions language skills are not utilized; rather, the [language] skills are allowed to deteriorate unused, this is what almost happened to me with the Swedish language.”

Female, senior

This senior female respondent recounts how “they were not able to utilize my language skills, although it would have been beneficial on multiple occasions” in her first job, at age 25 and “[b]ased on my experience, in too many positions language skills are not utilized”. Her answer highlights the importance for employees with FLC to proactively seek out opportunities to utilize their FLC in order to gain benefits from that FLC in the working life. This may require the self-promotion of L2 skills upon an occasion when the language competence would be useful.

The respondent also mentions that her language skills were “allowed to deteriorate unused” by her employer. Maintaining one’s language skills when they are not frequently used requires high levels of autonomy motivation for FLCD – as well as personal commitment. By underutilizing the employees’ language skills without providing language training possibilities, the employer risks losing some of the employee’s language competence due to deterioration.

“Vaikka työnantajani konsernikieli onkin nykyään (viron (sic) toimiston avaamisen jälkeen) englanti, firmassamme on vahva suomen kieltä kannustava perinne. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että yritykseen palkattuja, ei suomea äidinkielenään puhuvia, on kannustettu oppimaan ja käyttämään suomea toimistolla ja työtilanteissa - Suomessa raporttikielemme on Suomi (sic). Samalla nautimme työyhteisönä siitä, että meillä puhutaan äidinkielenä ainakin viittä muutakin kieltä kuin suomea (eikä yksikään niistä ole englanti) ja organisaatiossamme on useita kielistä kiinnostuneita ja/tai kielellisesti lahjakkaita esimiehiä ja asiantuntijoita. Kollegoista löytyy myös sen verran monta ruotsia kotona käyttävää, että oma ruotsin kielen taitoni on päässyt pahasti ruosteeseen, huolimatta siitä, että pidän ko. kielestä kovasti; silloin tällöin pidämme "svenska dagen":ia, yleensä huonolla menestyksellä :-)”

“Although the corporate language of my employer is nowadays (after opening up the Estonian office) English, in our firm there is a strong tradition which encourages the use of Finnish. This means that the people recruited without Finnish as their mother tongue have been encouraged to learn and use Finnish at the office and in work situations – in Finland the language of reports is Finnish. At the same time we benefit as a work community from the fact that at least five languages other than Finnish are also spoken as mother tongues (and none of them are English) and in our organization there are several supervisors and experts interested in and/or talented in languages. My colleagues include so many people who use Swedish at home that my own Swedish skills have deteriorated, despite the fact that I like the language; from time to time, we have a “svenska dagen” [Swedish language day], usually with poor results. :-)”

Female, middle-aged

This middle-aged female respondent mentions “liking the language” as her motivator, which refers to goal-autonomy motivation for FLC. Furthermore, she seems to appreciate people who are “interested in and/or talented in languages”, which implies that she does not perceive FLC only as a utilitarian tool. Although the respondent admits that over time, her “own Swedish skills have deteriorated”, her attitude towards this is not as negative as the male respondents’. Her attitude is in contrast to some of the male respondents in her age group, who appeared to have low

willingness towards language learning, and who used stronger expressions in voicing their displeasure.

The respondent describes that in her workplace “at least five languages other than Finnish are also spoken as mother tongues (and none of them are English)”. Clearly, in this organization, the English language does not have such a dominating status over other foreign languages as in the organizations of many of the earlier respondents. According to Clément (1980), frequent and pleasant contact with foreign languages and cultures increases one’s motivation towards L2 learning. Her positive attitude seems to support Clément.

Lastly, she mentions that “from time to time, we have a “svenska dagen” [Swedish language day]”. This is an example of active effort by the employer to promote language skills besides the corporate language. Even though the respondent considers the practical results to be poor, the recognition and the active efforts to utilize L2 by the employee may nevertheless have a significant positive effect on the employees’ motivation towards FLCD.

5 Discussion

Based on the qualitative analysis, it became apparent that the English language enjoys a special status in the contemporary work environment in the technology industry. This is in line with previous research, where English as lingua franca was identified as the industry language (e.g. de la Rosa, 1992). These findings also support Räisänen’s (2012) claim that otherwise competent employees with limited English language skills may find it difficult to compete in such an environment.

Finnish language competence was rarely mentioned in the answers to the non-English versions of the survey. This may imply that the employees, and potentially also the employers, consider Finnish language competence to be self-evident, or taken as granted. This tendency can create implicit or invisible barriers of entry for foreign nationals into the contemporary Finnish working life which are difficult to remove. This finding gives justification and support for the Finnish Chamber of Commerce’s (2013) efforts to make these barriers visible, and to tackle the problem of underemployment of foreign nationals with an academic background in the Finnish economy. This finding may be surprising to such Finnish nationals, including employees as well as employers, who rarely consider the difficulty in becoming employed in the Finnish labour market without excellent Finnish language knowledge.

The discussion topics below have been organized according to the research questions. The first topic concerns foreign language competence as a career enabler. The second topic is about motivation, Carrera's framework, gender and age. The third and last topic describes the effect of foreign language competence on career development.

5.1 Foreign Language Competence as a Career Enabler in the Technology Industry

Opinions differed on whether other foreign language skills should be developed in addition to the English language competence, and which languages these should be. Many respondents considered Russian to be the second most useful foreign language, with Swedish being ranked third. This result may be attributed to Finland's strong trade relations and close geographical proximity with Russia. However, this result is surprising when one considers the official status of Swedish as the second official language in Finland, and the overwhelming popularity of Swedish, German, French and even Spanish over Russian in Finnish high schools (Ylioppilastutkinto, 2012). Based on these findings, there seems to be a significant disparity between the number of Russian language learners in Finland and the actual demand for employees with Russian language competence in the Finnish labour market.

5.2 Employee Motivation to Study Foreign Languages

Respondents from all age groups and both genders agreed that at least some foreign language competence is necessary in the workplace. Young employees seem to require initial foreign language competence in order to become employed in the technology industry; middle-aged and senior employees require ongoing foreign language competence development in order to stay employed. These findings support previous research concerning the importance of lifelong learning (e.g. Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2010) as well as Robles's (2012) claim that hard skills may get the candidate into a job interview; but soft skills are required in order to receive the job and to stay employed.

5.2.1 Carrera's Framework Perspective

Of Carrera's (2005) framework for motivation for FLCD, the means-autonomy - integrative and means-autonomy -instrumental motivations were the most prevalent. From a practical viewpoint, employees in general are the most motivated to FLCD when the learning is voluntary, and the employees can directly apply their language skills in order to become and remain employed, integrate better into their work group and/or the society, or become eligible for favourable career opportunities such as a foreign assignment or a promotion. These findings give further support for the communicative competence –oriented L2 teaching advocated by Clément et al. (2003) and Costin (2011).

Among the respondents, three other motivational types were also mentioned: Firstly, goal-autonomy – integrative respondents, who like studying new languages for the pleasure of being able to better communicate with other people. Secondly, goal or means - heteronomy – instrumental respondents, who had been taught English as a new language by the employer because the employer saw it as a necessity, and who either did or did not generally enjoy studying the language. Finally, there were also unmotivated respondents who considered further FLCD, possibly with the exception of English and some other specific languages, to be a waste of their time. This finding illustrates a common challenge in L2 teaching: the diversity of the language learner group. Not all language learners are studying for the same reasons, and different learners will frequently have different motivation behind their L2 studies. Furthermore, some unmotivated learners may even actively refuse to learn. A good language teacher needs to use variable language teaching methods and tasks in order to cater to the different motivations, and should not let the unmotivated learners' potentially negative attitude dominate the language teaching sessions.

Goal-autonomy – integrative motivation was only rarely identified from the respondents' answers. Carrera (2005) describes goal-autonomy – integration as the perfect intrinsic motivation. The low frequency of intrinsically highly motivated language learners in the field of technology implies that unless the employer utilizes the employees' L2 skills or provides language training opportunities for them, their language competence may deteriorate. This can result in a loss of soft skills for the employer, lower employee satisfaction and potentially higher turnover rates, as well as a decrease in the employability and career opportunities for the employee. Furthermore, employees with

underutilized FLC need to proactively seek out opportunities to utilize their FLC in order to gain benefits from that FLC in the working life.

5.2.2 Gender Perspective

Female respondents had a generally more positive attitude towards FLCD than males. However, with the sample size and analysis methods employed, it is possible that this difference could be attributed to male respondents being more vocal about their displeasure towards FLCD.

Respondents from both genders noted that the foreign language skills not required in their daily work environment were deteriorating. The answers which most explicitly focused around this theme were often related to the Swedish language, which can be attributed to the Finnish curriculum which includes compulsory Swedish studies. While the male respondents were more inclined to advocate spending less time on “unnecessary” language studies in the first place, the female respondents were more likely to express their disappointment for the underutilization of FLC in their current work environment. Similar opinions have been identified among elementary school students by Chambers (2004).

Furthermore, several male respondents shared a tendency to value language skills based on their perceived utility and direct application into their personal work environment; while some of the female respondents mentioned “liking the language” as their motivation for additional L2 studies. These findings seem to imply a psychological difference between the genders (see Lippa, 2006) affecting the respondents’ attitudes towards FLCD in a language which is not directly utilized in the workplace.

All voices in the English at the expense of other languages –section belonged to middle-aged and senior males; all voices in the underutilization of FLC –section belonged to females from all three age groups. Therefore, it seems possible that the male and female respondents could have separate discussions on FLCD-related topics using gender-specific communication styles. This finding supports Lakoff’s (1973) and Mulac’s (2006) notions on the existence of a gender-based communication bias. In other words, the dominant communication style of the discussion tends to implicitly limit participation in the discussion about the topic itself. This communication bias and

the resulting lack of mutual participation in the same discussion may be one of the barriers contributing to the glass ceiling (see Pichler, Simson & Stroh, 2008).

5.2.3 Age Perspective

Some senior employees referred to FLCD in the conditional past tense, implying that they had given up the idea of learning additional languages in their current life situation. In contrast, some young employees referred to FLCD in the future tense, suggesting that they may be willing to learn new languages. Given that the language requirements in the working life are likely to change over the years - as illustrated by several senior respondents' initial German studies which had to be later supplemented with English studies in the working life out of practical necessity – this willingness to learn new skills gives a competitive advantage to young employees over senior employees. Should this tendency be transferable from FLCD to the development of other work-related skills as well, it may be one of the reasons behind the high technology industry's tendency to favour hiring young employees over senior employees (e.g. Hardy, 2013).

Some middle-aged and senior respondents also mentioned Swedish as the least useful foreign language. However, this critique may be actually directed towards the compulsory Swedish studies in the Finnish educational system, as well as towards the grammar competence -oriented foreign language teaching methods which were prevalent during the middle-aged and senior respondents' youth. If this interpretation is correct, it would support the views of Clément et al. (2003) and Costin (2011) that the ultimate goal of secondary language (L2) learning should be L2 use, and the focus of L2 learning should be on developing the language learners' communicative competence. In other words, means motivation -oriented language learners seem to suffer from a lack of motivation to study a language which the language learner already knows will not become frequently used in the future. Based on some respondents' strong voices on the subject, it seems that negative experiences from involuntary language studies may even lead to discrediting some foreign language and culture skills. These findings raise the question, whether involuntary language learning is the optimal use of limited educational resources in the context of the Finnish public sector?

5.3 The Effect of Foreign Language Competence on Career Development

The respondents had experienced significantly varying degrees of career mobility. Some had been employed in the same position with the same employer in the same country for most of their career; others had moved between countries and employers multiple times. Based on the responses, some level of FLC is a necessity in the contemporary work environment in the technology industry even when the career mobility is low due to English being the industry language, and due to international projects becoming commonplace. In addition, the results seem to suggest that respondents with higher levels of FLC have had more career mobility opportunities available to them, and can therefore be interpreted to have more control over their careers compared to respondents with lower levels of FLC. These findings support the view of FLC acting as a career enabler.

The respondents who focused their response around personal experiences while working abroad seemed to have more career mobility and a more positive attitude towards FLCD than the respondents who focused their response around language learning within the Finnish borders or their lack of opportunities to utilize their FLC. This finding supports Clément's (1980) view that frequent and pleasant contact with the L2 group will increase motivation towards L2 learning.

It was also found out that FLC can act as the decisive factor when two applicants are otherwise equal. Furthermore, the preparedness for FLCD was found out to be substitutable for actual FLC in some instances when applying for a job opportunity abroad.

6 Conclusion

“Foreign language skills” means different things to different people. Amongst the voices in this study, there have been Swedish-Finnish bilinguals who don’t consider either of these languages to be foreign; Finnish nationals who consider learning Swedish to be a waste of their personal time; Foreign nationals who are frustrated about the Finnish language requirements in order to land a job in Finland where the technical industry work language will nevertheless be English; as well as people who work abroad using 5 or more languages on a daily basis who are disappointed in the common interpretation of “foreign language skills” to be synonymous with “English language skills” in the technology industry. Treating all employees equivalently, e.g. by adopting a unified corporate language (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a) and by demanding the same language skills from all new recruits may have historically been the industry standard, at least in MNCs originating from ethnocentric countries (Harzing & Pudelko, 2012). However, the rapid globalization of the technology industry, increased worker mobility within the European Union and the pervasiveness of the English language within the technology industry (e.g. de La Rosa, 1992; Charles, 2007) may call for employers looking for the best talents from a narrow pool of highly specialized technicians (see Hardy, 2013) in a turbulent labour market (Greenhaus et al., 2010) to re-think their local language requirements for open positions (see Chamber of Commerce, 2013). At least, the local language requirements should be openly displayed in job descriptions in the future, which does not currently seem to be the case in the Finnish technology industry labour market.

Respondents from both genders noted that the foreign language skills not required in their daily work environment were deteriorating. The low frequency of intrinsically highly motivated language learners (Carrera, 2005) in the field of technology implies that unless the employer utilizes the employees’ L2 skills or provides language training opportunities for them, their language competence may deteriorate. This may result in a loss of soft skills for the employer, lower employee satisfaction and potentially higher turnover rates, as well as a decrease in the employability and career opportunities for the employee. Furthermore, employees with underutilized FLC need to proactively seek out opportunities to utilize their FLC in order to gain tangible benefits from that FLC in the working life.

The respondents considered Russian to be the second most useful foreign language after English. However, currently Swedish, German, French and even Spanish are overwhelmingly more popular than Russian in Finnish high schools (Ylioppilastutkinto, 2012). Based on these findings, there

seems to be a significant disparity between the number of Russian language learners in Finland and the actual demand for employees with Russian language competence in the Finnish labour market.

Of Carrera's (2005) framework for motivation for FLCD, the means-autonomy - integrative and means-autonomy -instrumental motivations were the most prevalent. From a practical viewpoint, employees in general seemed to be the most motivated to FLCD when the learning is voluntary, and the employees can directly apply their language skills in order to become and remain employed, integrate better into their work group and/or the society, or become eligible for favourable career opportunities such as a foreign assignment or a promotion.

6.1 Managerial Implications

Based on the research findings, I make these recommendations to organizations with international operations: Make all language requirements, including the local language requirements, public and open to job applicants. Provide local language training opportunities for foreign employees working locally to help them integrate better into the workplace and the local community. Keep all language training sessions practical and closely connected to the work environment.

These recommendations are to employees working in organizations with international operations: Promote your FLC to avoid it becoming underutilized in the workplace. Express your preparedness for international assignments clearly to the employer. Develop also your cultural competence before departing on a work assignment abroad.

These recommendations are to language teachers: Focus on communicative competence; not grammatical competence. Use involving teaching methods, such as small group discussions in order to engage the poorly motivated students in the learning process and to make them learn by participating. Provide additional language learning materials for the language learners with high intrinsic motivation. Keep the vocabulary practical and closely related to the intended language use setting.

These recommendations are to language learners: Identifying your reason and motivation for learning a foreign language will help you set achievable learning goals for yourself. Foreign

language skills not required on a daily basis requires some active practicing, or they will eventually deteriorate.

7 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

The pervasiveness of languages makes them a complicated phenomenon to be studied. No matter how well the study is designed, planned and executed, it can grasp only a fraction of the complex and plentiful ways in which we use language in our everyday lives. The respondents' answers to the qualitative survey question were mostly brief, and limited in their scope and context. The respondent voices would undoubtedly have also longer, more detailed stories to tell regarding their foreign language use and development experiences in the workplace. As such, conducting a more detailed follow-up study with fewer respondents would help to understand the phenomenon in-depth. Asking follow-up questions from the participants would also limit the degree of subjective researcher interpretation always inherent when conducting a qualitative text analysis.

As with most survey studies, it is possible that the individuals with the strongest opinions on the subject were the most inclined to answer to the survey. In such a case, the "silent majority" of the respondent group would be underrepresented in the results. Consequently, it is possible that some themes belonging to this "silent majority" are absent from the study.

Despite being a practical tool for respondent categorization, Carrera's (2005) framework could not be successfully applied to all respondents. The framework implicitly assumes that the language learners are self-conscious about their participation in language learning activities. In the context of this study, it was found out that in the workplace setting, language skills such as vocabulary and pronunciation can be developed by actively using that language, without conscious attention being paid to the learning process. In other words, language learning can happen more spontaneously than Carrera's model suggests, as a natural part of everyday life and work, outside of formal language learning settings. In such a context, it is difficult to classify the motivations of the language learners using Carrera's framework.

This study focused on the technology industry, and the majority of the respondents were Finnish. It would be interesting to conduct similar research in the technology industry in other countries with different nationalities. The results could then be compared to perceive more accurately which part of the results can be attributed to national or cultural differences, and which part of the results seem to be universally valid within the industry. Additionally, it would be interesting to

conduct similar research in the Finnish context in another, less globalized industry in order to examine the differences between industries in more detail.

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