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# **STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH IN FINNISH UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATION**

A Comparative case study of attitudes towards  
English in Finnish upper secondary and vocational  
school

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# ABSTRACT

Susanna Mäkinen: **Students' attitudes towards English in Finnish upper secondary level education – a comparative case study of attitudes towards English in Finnish upper secondary and vocational school**

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The purpose of this thesis is to investigate upper secondary level students' attitudes towards the English language. The aim is to explore the possible differences between the attitudes of upper secondary school and vocational school students and detect why there are such differences. The perspective of the study is, thus, the educational background of the participants, and whether it influences their attitudes. Since the position of the English language is going towards a shift globally from English as a foreign language towards English as a second language, the interest of this research is on how it can be seen in the attitudes of the students in the different upper secondary level institutions in Finland. The study, in addition, questions why different guidelines are provided for teaching English in upper secondary school and vocational school curricula.

There were 178 upper secondary level students that took part in the study, from which 95 were in upper secondary school and 83 in vocational school. The data for the study were collected with an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of yes/no questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. In the analysis of the results, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The answers to the questionnaire were analysed and compared by descriptive statistical analysis.

The hypothesis of this study was that in general, the attitudes of the upper secondary level students are affirmative, yet there are differences between the two compared groups. The assumption was that the vocational school students have more negative attitudes towards the English language because the curricula of the two institutions do not provide same guidelines for teaching English.

The results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data indicate that students in upper secondary level education in Finland have positive attitudes towards the English language and learning English. Still, there are differences between the attitudes of the two student groups. Although the differences are not distinctive, upper secondary school students have more positive attitudes and less negative attitudes towards the English language when compared to the vocational school students.

Some conclusions can be made from the results of the study. The position of the English language appears to be strengthening at least among upper secondary level students in Finland, and the differences between the two school institutions curricula might influence the way in which the students perceive the English language.

Keywords: language attitudes, foreign language acquisition, sociolinguistics

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Susanna Mäkinen: **Students' attitudes towards English in Finnish upper secondary level education – a comparative case study of attitudes towards English in Finnish upper secondary and vocational school**

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Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää toisen asteen opiskelijoiden asenteita Englannin kieltä ja opiskelua kohtaan Suomessa. Päämääränä on saada selville mahdollisia eroavaisuuksia lukion ja ammattioppilaitoksen oppilaiden asenteissa. Tämän tutkielman näkökulmana on tutkimukseen osallistuvien koulutuksellinen tausta ja sen vaikutukset heidän asenteisiinsa. Koska Englannin kielen asema on kansainvälisesti muuttumassa vieraasta kielestä toiseksi kieleksi, tämän tutkimuksen mielenkiinnon kohteena on, miten se näkyy suomalaisen toisen asteen oppilaitosten opiskelijoiden mielipiteissä kieltä kohtaan. Tämä tutkielma myös kyseenalaistaa sen, miksi lukioden ja ammattioppilaitosten opetussuunnitelmissa on erilaiset suuntaviivat Englannin kielen opetukselle.

Tutkimukseen osallistui yhteensä 178 toisen asteen oppilaitoksen opiskelijaa, joista 95 oli lukion ja 83 ammattioppilaitoksen opiskelijoita. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin internetpohjaisella kyselylomakkeella. Kyselyssä oli kyllä/ei -kysymyksiä, monivalintakysymyksiä, ja avoimia kysymyksiä. Aineiston analyysissä käytettiin sekä määrällisiä että laadullisia menetelmiä. Kyselyn vastaukset analysoitiin ja vertailtiin kuvailevan tilastollisen menetelmän keinoin.

Tutkimushypoteesi oli, että yleisellä tasolla suomalaisten toisen asteen opiskelijoiden asenteet Englannin kieltä kohtaan ovat positiivisia, mutta eri oppilaitosten oppilaiden asenteiden välillä on eroja. Oletamus oli, että ammattioppilaitoksen opiskelijoiden asenteet Englannin kieltä kohtaan ovat negatiivisempia, koska ammattioppilaitosten opetussuunnitelmien sisällöt eroavat lukioden opetussuunnitelmasta.

Määrällisen ja laadullisen aineiston analyysin perusteella toisen asteen opiskelijoiden asenteet Englannin kieltä ja opiskelua kohtaan ovat pääasiallisesti myönteisiä. Kuitenkin kahden tutkitun ryhmän asenteissa on eroja. Vaikka erot eivät ole huomattavia, ovat lukiolaisten asenteet Englannin kieltä kohtaan hieman positiivisempia ja vähemmän negatiivisia kuin ammattioppilaitosten asenteet.

Tutkimuksen tuloksista voidaan tehdä joitain päätelmiä. Englannin kielen asema näyttäisi olevan vahvistumassa ainakin suomalaisen toisen asteen oppilaitosten oppilaiden keskuudessa, ja erot lukioden ja ammattioppilaitosten opetussuunnitelmissa saattavat vaikuttaa oppilaiden näkemyksiin Englannin kielestä.

Avainsanat: kieliasteet, vieraan kielen omaksuminen, sosiolingvistiikka

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The English language as a school subject has kept a stable position in the Finnish basic and upper secondary level education throughout the years. For instance, the decision of the *Finnish National Agency for Education (Opetushallitus)* to *prepone (varhentaminen)* the beginning of language teaching in the basic education from grade three to the first grade from the beginning of year 2020 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018) verifies that the position of English in Finland, among other foreign languages, seems to be strengthening. In comprehensive school, English was the most studied language in 2017 (Official Statistics of Finland, henceforth OSF 2018). In addition, in both vocational and upper secondary school, English was the most studied language in 2018 (OSF 2019a; OSF 2019b). At least from an academic perspective, the appreciation of language education in Finland appears to be increasing.

This MA thesis focuses on comparing how Finnish upper secondary school and vocational school students perceive the English language and learning English. Various studies of attitudes towards languages among people from diverse backgrounds around the world have been conducted earlier, from which a wide range of studies have been conducted from students' perspectives (Gardner & Lambert 1972; Dörnyei et al. 2006; Linn et al. 2015; Rasool & Winke 2019). Although in Finland, studies on attitudes towards English have been published as well (Hyrkstedt 1997; Pirskanen 2009; Leppänen et al. 2011; Hämäläinen 2016), it seems that there has not been a lot of comparative research conducted on the attitudes of the two major upper secondary level school institutions' students.

The main objective of this study is to investigate whether the different educational backgrounds of the students cause differences in their attitudes towards the English language. The assumption is that, in general, the attitudes among the students towards the English language are

positive, yet there is a difference between the attitudes of the students in the two upper secondary level institutions. The hypothesis is that the students in vocational school do not value English as highly as the students in upper secondary school, resulting from the fact that in vocational school the main concentration of the studies is in learning a profession, for example to become a hairdresser. In other words the teaching, for instance, focuses on more practical skills in vocational school than in upper secondary school, in which the emphasis is on general education of different fields of science. Another reason for a less positive evaluation of the English language among the vocational school students could be that the requirements of the English curriculum in vocational school are not as vast as they are in the upper secondary school curriculum. This is discussed later in this thesis in further detail (see subsection 2.2.2).

This thesis draws upon the fields of *sociolinguistics*, *applied linguistics*, *foreign language acquisition*, and *second language acquisition*. One of the most important goals of this thesis is to determine whether especially the educational institution of the participants affects their attitudes towards the English language and learning English. Hence, this research is involved in the field of sociolinguistics, a field that focuses on the correlations between language and society (Wardhaugh 2015). Since this study investigates attitudes, it can be located to the field of applied linguistics as well. Applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary field of study that concentrates on practical issues of language and communication (Wei 2013). Furthermore, this study is related to the fields of teaching and learning English. Second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) as a discipline begun in the 1970's. The present SLA research focuses on linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education (Cook 2008, 6). Second language acquisition and foreign language acquisition are terms oftentimes used to either refer to the same concept or recognised as different entities (Cook 2008; Håkansson & Norby 2010). In this study, *second language* or *L2* refers to the learners' second language, used widely in their native country, for example Swedish in Finland. *Foreign language* or *FL* refers to the language that the learner studies for other purposes in addition to using the language in their native country.



Further information regarding the terms L2 and FL is presented later in this paper (see subsection 2.2.1).

To conclude, the purpose of this study is to formulate a thorough description and a comparison of upper secondary and vocational school students' attitudes towards the English language and learning English in a Finnish upper secondary level institution. In addition, an attempt to find possible reasons for the differences and similarities in the students' attitudes is made. The first research question aspires to answer to the questions of what attitudes the upper secondary level students have towards the English language in general. The second question concerns the participants' attitudes towards learning English in school. The answer to the third question provides information about the similarities and differences between the two student groups' attitudes analysed in this study. In addition, an attempt to briefly explain why there are similarities and differences between the students' attitudes will be made. The research questions are presented in the list below.

1. *What kinds of attitudes do the Finnish upper secondary level students have towards the English language?*
2. *What kinds of attitudes do the Finnish upper secondary level students have towards learning English in school?*
3. *What are the differences or similarities between the attitudes of the upper secondary and vocational school students?*
4. *Why are there differences or similarities between the attitudes of the students?*

The results of this study could provide information about the status of the English language among upper secondary level students in Finland, and it could be compared to the data of earlier attitude studies conducted in Finland. The information on the status of English among upper secondary level students in Finland could be beneficial for planning and developing the English language education in Finnish upper secondary level institutions. It could in addition provide guidelines for other countries' upper secondary level education, in which English has a similar status.

The thesis consists of the following parts: Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of this study. In chapter 3, the data and methods of the study are introduced. Chapter 4 focuses on the results and analysis of the study. A Discussion of the results in this study is provided in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 concludes the thesis. The appendices (A-D), presenting the questionnaire used in the study, the cover letter of the questionnaire, and the research permission from Tampere vocational college, can be found after the last chapter, at the end of the thesis.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, to specify the context for this thesis, the central terms and previous research are presented. The Finnish educational system is briefly introduced in section 2.1. In section 2.2, the current situation of English as a global language is presented. English in Finland is presented in subsection 2.2.1, and subsection 2.2.2 provides information about teaching English in Finland. The term *attitude* from the perspective of language learning is discussed in section 2.3. The last section of this chapter provides a literature review of the earlier research conducted on language attitudes in contrast with this thesis.

### 2.1 The Finnish educational system

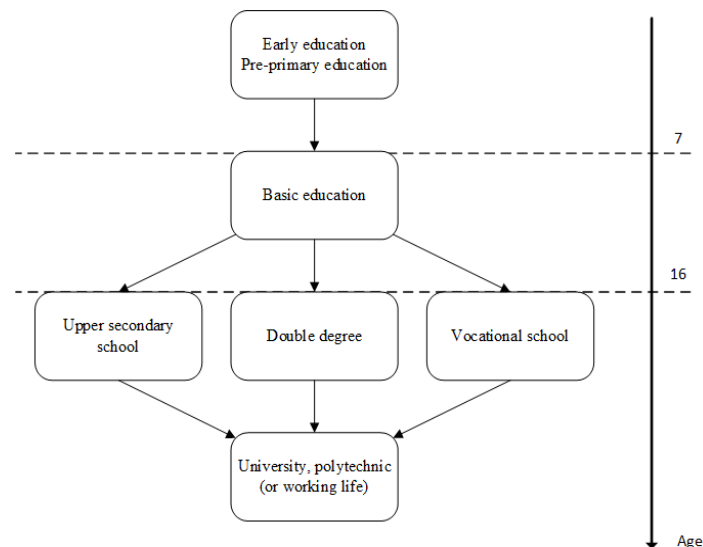
Since education is in the focus of this study, a brief description of the Finnish educational system is provided in this section. The Finnish educational system consists of *early education*, *pre-primary education*, *comprehensive education*, *upper secondary level education* and *tertiary education*.

Early education is a planned unity that provides education and care to advance the development, health and well-being, and supports the learning conditions of children. Early education is provided for children under the age of seven. The Finnish National Agency for Education presents the guidelines for early education. Pre-primary education is a continuum to early education, and it takes place one year before children enter comprehensive school. From year 2015, pre-primary education has been compulsory in Finland.

After early education and pre-primary education, a child begins their basic education in the comprehensive school system. The comprehensive school in Finland consists of the year classes from one to nine. The obligation to study, determined by the Finnish law, begins in the year a child turns

seven years, and ends when the curriculum is finished or when ten years have passed from the beginning of the obligation to study. In comprehensive school, teaching is based on the basic education curriculum, *Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (henceforth POPS). Children are obliged to enter the comprehensive school.

Once completed the compulsory comprehensive school, in the age of 15 or 16, the adolescent can choose to continue their studies in an upper secondary level institution. In Finland, upper secondary level education is not compulsory. The adolescent can choose between upper secondary school and vocational school. The Finnish law states that upper secondary level institutions should provide a student with a qualification for tertiary level studies in university or polytechnic. The purpose of upper secondary level education, both upper secondary school and vocational school, is to support the student to become a good, balanced, and sophisticated person, and a functional part of society. The difference of upper secondary school and vocational school is that vocational school provides the student with a qualification to practice a profession after the education has been completed. There is a possibility for a student to choose studies from both upper secondary school and vocational school, and graduate from these schools simultaneously. This option is called *Kaksoistutkinto* (*double degree* [author's translation]). (Ministry of Education and Culture 2020). The educational system is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



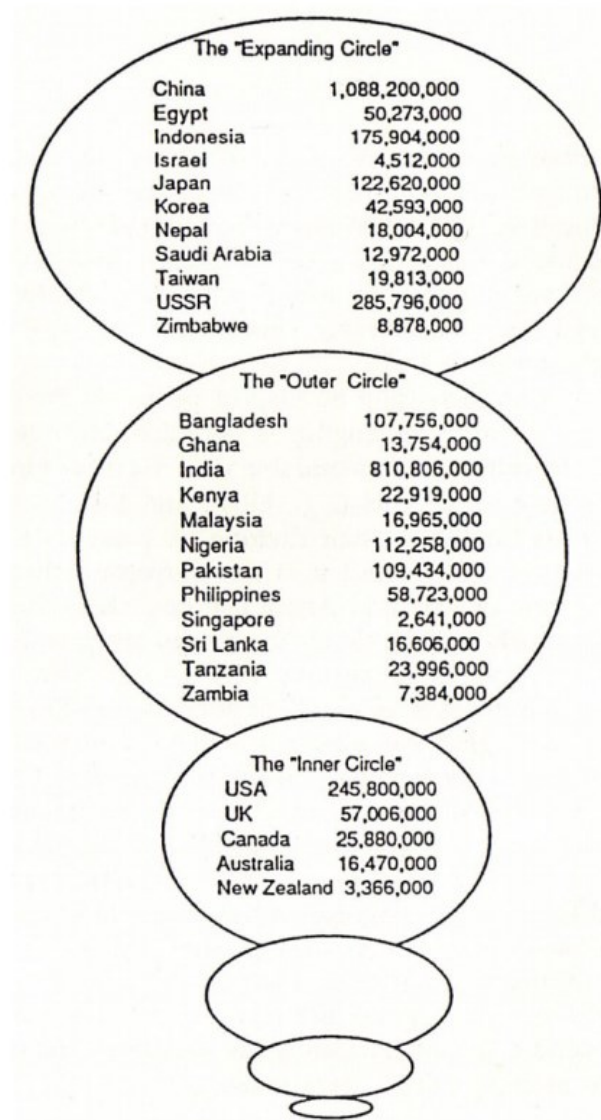
**Figure 1** The Finnish educational system.

## 2.2 English as a global language

Although the purpose of this study is to describe the status of the English language in Finland, it is essential to comprehend how the language has achieved its current status around the world as a global means of communication. Understanding the global status of English assists to clarify the prevailing linguistic situation in Finland as well. In this section, the most famous and vastly implemented model of the spread of English, Braj Kachru's (1992) *Three Concentric Circles of English*, is presented.

Kachru's (1992) aim was to introduce all varieties of English, not only based on geography, but in terms of how English has spread to a specific area, how the speakers acquire the language, and what its functions are in society. The different varieties of the language are classified into three different circles, listed in the following: the *Inner*, the *Outer*, and the *Expanding Circle*. According to Kachru, the Inner Circle "refers to the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English" (356). These linguistic bases are the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle is a representation of the non-native varieties. In other words, the varieties of the people who have English as a second language, discussed later in this thesis (see subsection 2.2.1). These regions, for example Bangladesh, Ghana, and India, have gone through an extensive process of colonisation. The Expanding Circle, to which also Finland belongs, consists of regions where the language is acquired as foreign. Other regions of the Expanding Circle are, for instance, China, Egypt, and Indonesia. Although the model is a rather compact presentation of the users of the English language, it has been

criticised for instance because it provides a monochromic presentation of the global status of the English language (Schneider 2012, 32). The three concentric circles are presented in Figure 2 below.



*Figure 2 Braj Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English.*

### 2.2.1 English in Finland

Finland has been a bilingual country since 1922 (Leppänen et al. 2011). The official languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. According to the official statistics of Finland, Finnish was spoken by 87.6 % and Swedish was spoken by 5.2 % of people in the year 2018. Sámi language, a national language of Finland, was spoken by 0.03 % of the Finnish population. Russian was the third most spoken language with 1.4 % of people speaking the language, and other languages were spoken by 5.7 % of people. English falls into the category of other languages, and it was spoken by 0.4 % of the population in Finland (OSF 2020). Although English is not spoken as a native language in Finland by many, it is widely used by non-native speakers as a *lingua franca*, a shared language of communication between people who do not share the same native language (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003; Leppänen 2007). In this subsection, the current position of the English language in Finland is described in greater detail.

Since this study concentrates on students' attitudes towards English and learning English, it is important to describe and understand what the terms related to the status of English are. In this paragraph, the terms *English as a foreign language* (henceforth EFL) and *English as a second language* (henceforth ESL) are explained in greater detail. According to previous research, there are three different types of language users and learners: *L1* users, or native speakers, *L2* users or learners, who have the language as an additional or second language in addition to their native language, and *FL* users, who use or learn the language as a foreign language (Seidlhofer 2011, 5). In Finland, the English language in general has been considered from the perspective of EFL, and it has been taught as a foreign language in school. English is not an official language of Finland, although according to some descriptions of L2, it could be considered as a second language in Finland. Second language is described, for example, as “a language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue” (UNESCO, quoted in Cook 2008, 2). To the present day it seems that the status of English in Finland

in general has been and is going through a change. The status of English as a foreign language is shifting towards English as a second language globally, and Finland has been argued to be going towards the same direction (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003; Taavitsainen & Pahta 2008).

Despite the different descriptions and slight ambiguities of the terms second language and foreign language, in this study, the English language will be referred to as the foreign language of the participants because there still has not been an official statement that the status of English in Finland would have gone through a shift.

### **2.2.2 Teaching English in Finland**

In this section, the English language teaching in Finland is described in greater detail. Providing English teaching in the Finnish upper secondary education is compulsory. English has been taught as a foreign language since the 1970's in the Finnish basic education for children from age nine onwards (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2008, 31). The most studied foreign language in the Finnish comprehensive school in the autumn term of 2017 was English, with 71 % of the students in grades from one to six, and 99.5 % of students in grades from seven to nine (OSF 2018) studying the language.

As noted in the introduction, a recent decision was made by the Finnish National Agency for Education to prepone the beginning of language teaching in the basic education from grade three to the first grade from the beginning of the year 2020. This decision was based on research on language acquisition of young children (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018). English is, thus, one of the language subjects that children can begin learning from the first grade in school. A decision to provide language teaching from the first grade, and especially giving an opportunity for parents to decide which language a child begins acquiring in school suggests that English is not the only language that children ought to acquire. Instead, a wider supply of different languages is provided. A first grader's parents can choose, with the child, that they begin learning German, for example, instead of English



as their first foreign language. This will presumably change the way in which people perceive the importance of learning other languages in addition to English.

The general guidelines for upper secondary school education are provided in national curricula created by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The teachers in upper secondary school and vocational school follow separate instructions on teaching English. In the Finnish upper secondary school, the guidelines for teaching English are presented in *Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (henceforth LOPS 2015) while in vocational school the guidelines are different in each orientation and area.

According to LOPS (2015), the Finnish upper secondary school curriculum, foreign language teaching in upper secondary school should expand the language education provided for the student earlier in the Finnish basic education. This means that after the foreign language studies in upper secondary school, the student will for instance “be able to benefit from their language abilities in their studies, work and free time” (107 [author’s translation]). Furthermore, according to the upper secondary school curriculum, English studies can be divided into *long* and *short* syllabi, long meaning the broader studies of the language. In the curriculum, it is recommended that the student follows the same syllabus that they followed in their basic education. However, the student can change their English syllabus from short to long and vice versa. According to the curriculum, A-level English learner is expected to evolve in using English in a culturally diverse world in local, national, European, and global communities; understand the significance of the English language and its role as a language of international communication; evaluate the sufficiency of their own abilities from the perspective of their further education; plan their language studies for their future needs from the perspective of their working life and internationalisation; receive experience from reading, analysing, and interpreting vaster English texts; put into perspective their own knowledge in the language according to the developing language skills scale B2.1; and estimate their development and evolve

continually (109-110 [author's translation]). There are in total six compulsory English courses in upper secondary school, regardless of whether the student follows the long or the short syllabus.

The curriculum for the Finnish vocational school differs from the curriculum of the upper secondary school. Each region and department in vocational school has their own curriculum for teaching. Nevertheless, in the Finnish law, basic guidelines for the curricula are stated for all vocational schools. Finnish vocational schools must provide three common components or “common subjects”, in every degree: *communication and interaction studies*, *mathematical and natural science studies*, and *society and working life studies*. Language courses are thus, according to this law, provided in all vocational schools as a part of communication and interaction courses (Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 2017, 13 §). Since in vocational school, in contrast to the upper secondary school, there is no common curriculum for all schools around Finland, Tampere vocational college curriculum for common subjects (2016) is presented in this thesis as an example of the vocational school curriculum. In Tampere vocational college curriculum, in the obligatory part of the foreign language studies for the A-level language, which is the equivalent of A-level English in upper secondary school, the student is expected to be able to communicate and act in a situation in a way that they can practice their occupation; to know how to use the language in assignments relating to their own area of expertise; to retrieve information from sources using the foreign language; and to be able to work in a multicultural and multilingual environment (47 [author's translation]). In addition, there are optional English courses for the students to follow in the curriculum.

To summarise, in the curricula of upper secondary school and vocational school, there is a clear difference in what the learner is expected to achieve in their language studies, and there are less obligatory courses in vocational school than in upper secondary school. In vocational school, the emphasis is on the usage of English in *working life*, whereas in the upper secondary school curriculum English is seen as a subject important not only for working life but also for *studies* and *free time*. This

might have an influence in the way in which teachers approach the language learners in the two upper secondary level institutions, for instance projecting appreciation towards a specific use of English.

### **2.3 Attitudes in language research**

In this section, the term *attitude* and its relation to language research are described in greater detail. Attitude, in colloquial language, could be described as opinions, thoughts and feelings towards something or someone. For example, in the online *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (2020) the word is described as ‘The way that you think and feel about someone or something; the way that you behave toward someone or something that shows how you think and feel’. Although attitude as a term seems rather straight-forward, it is important to acknowledge that there are many other terms that could be described almost in the same manner as attitude, and for that reason the meanings of the terms often-times overlap. For example, the term *belief* has been used in studies related to the same phenomenon as the term attitude (Aragão 2011; Nguyen 2013, 11-12; Hämäläinen 2016). The term belief is described in Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2020) as ‘An opinion about something; something that you think is true’.

Throughout the past decades, for instance researchers of social psychology have been attempting to give a thorough description of the concept, and although there is still a lack of consensus on its meaning and functions, attitude is considered “an individual's disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event, or to any other discriminable aspect of the individual's world” (Ajzen 1989, 241). Furthermore, proving convincingly that attitudes have an influence on the behaviour of people has been under discussion among social psychological researchers for the past few decades. There has been and still appears to be an ongoing debate on whether attitudes have an influence on behaviour (Greenwald 1989; Ajzen & Fishbein 2005). Garrett (2010, 20) summarises the complexity of the concept of attitude as follows: “The status of attitudes

as psychological constructs brings difficulties in accessing them. This is the reason why there is always a great deal of debate about how we can study them, throughout attitudes research, ...”

Nevertheless, studies on the correlation between attitudes towards languages and on the motivation to study languages have been conducted earlier, and it seems that language attitudes among other factors have an influence on the motivation to study a language (Gardner and Lambert 1972; Kormos & Csizér 2008). Hence, this study bases on the assumption that attitudes have an influence on language learning. According to previous research, attitudes are learned. Garrett (2010), for example, states that “parents and teachers can have some role in the development of such attitudes at the person-to-person level, consciously or not” (22). In a school environment, the teachers’ explicit or implicit attitudes towards English language and its importance, for instance, may have an impact on how the students perceive studying the language. Furthermore, at home, people close to the student, for example parents, may influence on their perception of a certain language. The research thus supports the argument that the social background, for instance the educational background of language learners, affects their perception of the language learned.

Attitudes towards languages are not stable. Factors contributing to attitude change can be *external*, for example legislations on language policies influence the way in which people perceive a language, or *internal*, based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986). According to the theory, people have a motivation to maintain a positive self-concept. For this positive self-concept to be maintained, favorable comparisons of the group in which the person belongs to, *ingroup*, are compared to the group they do not belong to, *outgroup*, leading to a tendency to favor the group the person belongs to. Hence, an attitude towards a certain language might be influenced and changed by the group in which the person belongs to (Dragojevic & Giles 2014, 91–111).

Taking into consideration the earlier research conducted on the importance of attitudes in language learning, it is a relevant factor, among others, to be considered for example in developing current language education. The demand for information on students’ attitudes in upper secondary

level education in Finland comes apparent for instance when and if the level of the students' language efficacy increases or decreases. Analysing students' attitudes might provide one possible answer in explaining and predicting students' overall performance in English tests, such as upper secondary school matriculation examination, for example.

## **2.4 Earlier research on attitudes towards languages**

An attempt to describe and compare research related more closely for the purposes of this study is made in this section. Research on attitudes towards languages has been conducted earlier around the world from different theoretical perspectives and with varying methodologies. Since language attitude research is an extremely wide field of different studies, this literature review is not trying to cover the whole sphere of the research.

Gardner & Lambert (1972) conducted a large-scale study in the United States on upper secondary school students' attitudes and motivation towards learning the French language. The study was a continuum to a similar social psychological study conducted earlier in Canada. The purpose of the study was to investigate why some people are more efficient in learning a second language. The data for the study were collected with questionnaires from upper secondary school students in Louisiana, Maine and Connecticut.

The results of the research suggested that American students' attitudes towards French-speaking people and the French way of life influenced their learning. According to the research, for example a student who had more negative attitudes towards French culture would more likely receive lower grades in French. In fact, it was even stated that "... one's attitudes and feelings toward the representatives of the group whose language is being studied are essential factors in language learning, independent of intelligence and motivation" (38).

This rather early study on language attitudes, although from the perspective of second language acquisition, supported the argument of attitudes having an influence on peoples' behaviour. Multiple other factors in addition to attitudes were studied in the research as well to construct a thorough description on the aspects that have an influence on learning a second language, thus attitudes are not the only aspect to be considered in examining language learning. This factor is important and has to be considered in the current research as well; attitudes are not the only variable influencing learning a language.

Nevertheless, the relation of behaviour and attitudes are closely related to the purposes of this thesis. This study does not aim to prove the correlation between attitudes and behaviour, it rather supports the phenomenon. In a situation where, for example students have negative attitudes towards studying a certain language, the attitudes might influence their language learning behaviour, abilities, and interest in learning languages in general. Since attitudes are a factor contributing to peoples' behaviour, it is important to understand what kinds of attitudes students have towards languages in order to develop for example language education and information on a status of a language in a specific environment.

European studies on attitudes towards different languages have been conducted for example in Hungary (Dörnyei et al. 2006). The aim of the Hungarian study was to investigate pupils' attitudes towards English, French, German, Italian, and Russian. The study is rather interesting from the perspective of this study, since it provided a contrast between attitudes towards multiple languages. The data for the research were collected from Hungarian school pupils aged 13 to 14 with a questionnaire, and it was partially longitudinal, since it was repeated twice after the first research in 1993 with different children of same age and area.

According to the results of the study, attitudes towards the English language among Hungarian school children were the most positive and towards the Russian language the least positive. Attitudes towards all languages were declining in positivity in the later research periods. The fact that English

was the most positively valued language was argued to result from the assumption that “the five languages examined can be divided into two distinct groups ... *world language* and *other foreign languages*” (46). The study argued that the popularity of learning other foreign languages in Hungary had declined but the interest towards learning a world language had maintained its popularity. The most intriguing part of the Hungarian study from the point of view of the present study was the argument that English was highly valued since it was a world language. As discussed earlier in this thesis (see subsection 2.2.1), the status of English is going towards the global lingua franca, world language, in Finland as well. This would then allow an assumption that also in Finland, English is seen as a globally important language, and an appreciation towards English would not have declined drastically among the upper secondary school participants.

A Scandinavian study conducted in Sweden used discourse analysis to make a description on attitudes towards English in university settings (Björkman 2015). The study investigated attitudes by analysing the discourse in Swedish language policy documents at universities. The corpus data for the study were collected from nine Swedish universities’ language policy documents. The corpus consisted of 15829 words, and it was analysed with a corpus analysing program *AntConc*. The study used critical discourse analysis as a method for analysing the language policy documents.

The results of the study suggested that in Swedish universities, English was important, and being competent in it was necessary; it should co-exist with other languages; it might pose a threat to the local language and other languages; and the type of English used should be clear and plain. According to the study, the importance of English, competency in the language, and its expected co-existence with other languages were largely present in the documents analysed. The last statements in the study, the English language posing a threat to the locals’ language and other languages, and the type of English that should be used, were less frequent in the language policy documents. The last two statements were present in the study because of a discussion on whether English language is problematic from the point of view of other languages used in Sweden. The study results implied that

English had an important role and it was a “prerequisite” for a student or a scholar to succeed in an international university. In addition, the position of the Swedish language along with English was being questioned, and according to the study, there was discussion on a need for the protection of the Swedish language. The discourse analysis research presented a rather similar status of English in Sweden in higher academic settings when compared to the status of English in Finnish higher academic environment (Saarinen & Rontu 2018).

The assumption that academic attitudes towards English are reflected in society in general is supported by earlier research on attitudes and the way in which they influence behaviour, discussed earlier in this thesis (see section 2.3). The results of the Swedish study would then allow the assumption that English is highly valued in the upper secondary education by the English language teachers who have accomplished their studies in a university level. Since students’ attitudes have been proven to be influenced by the teachers’ explicit or implicit attitudes towards English language and its importance, it can be argued that academic values and attitudes influence the different layers of society. In other words, it is rather expected that the appreciation of the upper secondary institutions towards English is reflected in the attitudes of the students of these institutions.

Research on the attitudes towards languages has been conducted from different perspectives in Finland as well. A master’s thesis was conducted from the perspective of upper secondary school students’ attitudes towards native and non-native teachers of English in the University of Tampere (Mäkinen 2014). The aim of the study was to investigate the students’ views of the English language, the teaching of English and especially the teachers of the English language. The data of the study were collected with a survey, with 183 participants in total, which was clearly more than the participants per school institution in this study. The participants were senior-year upper secondary school students.

According to the research, the upper secondary school students were aware of the global status of English and the changes that it has brought to their own need for language knowledge and usage.



The students wanted to sound similar to native speakers, and they admired Finnish people who can speak as fluently as native English speakers. Furthermore, the research results implied that the participants valued both non-native and native English teachers, and there was no clear difference between the attitudes.

The research is important for this thesis from the perspective of the upper secondary school students' views of English as a global language. The findings support the assumption that at least the upper secondary school participants in this study acknowledge that English is a global language. In addition, the study revealed that the attitudes of the Finnish upper secondary school students towards English were not notably negative, since they admired sounding similar to a native speaker. This allows a suggestion that the English language would not be seen as a threat to the Finnish language in this study either.

One of the vastest studies carried out in Finland was published in the University of Jyväskylä by Leppänen et al. (2011). The main aim of the study was to provide a wide description of the uses and meanings of the English language and the attitudes towards English among Finnish people. The data for the study were collected with a survey. The participants of the study were from different backgrounds and age groups, since the aim of the study was to construct as broad view of the situation of the English language in Finland as possible.

The results of the study indicated that Finns' attitudes towards English were affirmative, and they did not see the English language as a threat to their native languages, Finnish or Swedish. The participants were divided into three different groups according to their assessments of their usage and knowledge of English. The different groups were described as: "haves, have-nots and have-it-alls". The "haves" were the people who knew English and used it, the "have-nots" were the people who did not know the language, hence they did not use it in their everyday lives (Preisler 2003, quoted in Leppänen et al. 2011, 164). The majority of the participants in the study belonged to the "haves" group, the minority of the participants belonged to the "have-nots" group, and according to the study,

a third group of “have-it-alls” needed to be added to efficiently describe the role of English in the participants lives. In the “have-it-alls” group, English had been fully adopted, and this group consisted of about 16 % of the participants. According to Leppänen et al., English skills and usage could be indexical of, for example, peoples’ educational background and social status: “those who actively use English, have good proficiency in it, and need to use it are more likely to have high social status, a high level of education, and an urban and international lifestyle” (166).

The research is rather closely related to the present study, since a part of it described the attitudes of Finns towards the English language. The assumption is that the participant groups in this study value the English language and learning English. Especially the participants’ educational background and its relation to the attitudes and skills of the English language in Leppänen et al.’s study are interesting from the point of view of this study. Since a high level of English might be indexical of a high level of education, the attitudes investigated in this study assumedly correlate with the English skills and a higher level of education as well.

### 3. DATA AND METHODS

This chapter presents a detailed description of the data and methods used in the study. In sections 3.1 and 3.2 the questionnaire of the research and the analysis of the data are presented in greater detail.

This study was comparative, so it needed at least two participant groups. The two groups this study compared were Finnish upper secondary school students and Finnish vocational school students aged between 15 and 25. The research data were collected from upper secondary schools and vocational schools around Finland with an online questionnaire in Google Forms (found in appendices A & B). The sizes of the target groups were 289,269 students in vocational school and 103,440 students in upper secondary school in the year 2018 (Education statistics Finland 2020).

To collect the data, the schools were reached first via phone, and afterwards an email with a cover letter (found in appendix C) was sent to the school institutions' contact people. The link to the questionnaire was shared to the participants of the study via the contact people in upper secondary and vocational schools, and in social media. The schools that were contacted for this study were chosen arbitrarily. To collect the data from Tampere vocational college, a research permission (found in appendix D) from the city of Tampere had to be applied. The data were collected during the months of November, December, and January 2019-2020. The total number of participants in the study was 225, from which the number of accepted answers that met the prerequisites of the research was 178.

The response activity varied rather distinctively according to the gender, age and school institution of the respondents. The response rate was highest among females in upper secondary school and lowest among upper secondary school males. "A weighting method based on post-stratification" used in Leppänen, et. al (2011, 38) was not applied in this study, since the participant groups were rather small. The use of the weighting method would have been convenient in order to balance and correct the distortion of the results if the number of participants would have reached over

500. As a result of the lack of the weighting, there was an overrepresentation of female participants in this study.

### **3.1 Questionnaire**

In this section, the questionnaire used in this study is presented. The questionnaire of this study was based on the language disposition questionnaire by Leppänen et al. (2011) and Dörnyei et al. (2006) with slight modifications. The modifications in the questionnaire ensured the suitability of the questions for the present study. The questionnaire consisted of open- and closed-ended questions. Unfortunately, time limitations prevented the possibility of a pilot study for testing the functionality of the questionnaire. Instead, the questionnaire was tested by university students in my master's thesis seminar, and slight changes to the questionnaire were made based on the comments of my fellow university students.

A Decision to provide solely nominal level yes/no questions in this study was made for the comfort of the participants. Answer options “maybe” and “I do not know” were intentionally omitted from the questionnaire to avoid indecisive responses. Nominal level questions provide descriptive data, and the data can be described in terms of percentages or frequencies that represent the number of the participants that fall into a certain category (Wrench et al. 2008). In addition to the yes/no questions, the questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions. In the multiple-choice questions, an empty row “other” was provided for the participants, in which they could elaborate their answer if they so wished. Since there were blank spaces in the questionnaire for the participants to elaborate their answers, the analysis was not solely dependent on the yes/no answers. Admittedly the way in which the questionnaire was formulated decreased the reliability of the study. The decisions were taken into consideration in the analysis of the data.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: background information, the English language in your life, the significance of learning English, the uses of English, and the significance of English in Finland. In the first section, the background information of the research participant was examined with nominal level questions, keeping the participant anonymous. Important background variables for the research were the age, gender, and school institution of the participants as well as the school branch of the vocational school participants, and the area in which the participants had lived the greatest part of their life. In addition, the participants' first language and their parents' first language were enquired. For the purposes of the study, it was also important to investigate whether the participant had lived outside Finland for longer than three months.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about the personal significance of the English language in the participants' life. In this section, questions such as "Do you like the English language?", "Is knowing English important to you?", and "How often do you hear or see English?" were presented. The third part of the questionnaire investigated the significance of studying English for the participant. The participant answered to questions about the years of studying English, whether they had studied other languages, and their perspectives on the importance of learning English in general. In this section, there was one question where an "I do not know" option was provided for the participant. The question was: "Do you think preponing English teaching is important?" As discussed earlier in this thesis, a decision by the Finnish national agency for education was to begin teaching foreign languages to school children from the first grade onwards in the Finnish basic education, and although it has been present in the media, it is possible that the upper secondary level students do not have a wider understanding of the phenomenon, hence they might not have an opinion on the issue. In addition, in this section of the questionnaire the participants did a self-evaluation on their English level according to *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (henceforth CEFR), which uses a six-point scale to describe one's language level. The self-evaluation should have been provided for the participants in the section of the background

information, since it was more related to the linguistic background of the participants. For this reason, in the presentation of the data, the self-evaluation is introduced in section 4.2 that represents the linguistic background of the participants. The fourth part of the questionnaire consisted of questions considering the participants' usage of English. In this part, questions such as "Where do you use English the most?", "How often do you hear, see or speak English in your free time?" were provided. In the last part of the questionnaire the participant was provided with ten different statements of the English language in Finland. These statements required yes/no answer. One of the statements was for example: "English language is a threat to the position of Finnish, Swedish and Sámi language in Finland".

The questionnaire was rather extensive, and the answers it provided were versatile. Nevertheless, in case the questionnaire will be used in the future for similar purposes, it should be shortened to make it more approachable for the participants. In addition, some questions should be provided in different order, for example as mentioned above, the self-evaluation of the participants' language level should be presented in the background section of the questionnaire. In order to receive more numerical results, for example a four point Likert scale measuring should be considered as an option instead of or in addition to nominal level yes/no questions.

### **3.2 Analysis of the data**

The data of this study were analysed in the same manner as in Leppänen et al. (2011). The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The open-ended answers were analysed qualitatively, and the yes/no and multiple-choice answers were analysed quantitatively. The quantitative results are illustrated in the figures and tables. The percentages of the quantitative analysis were rounded to the nearest percent. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, weighting was not applied for the data in this study because the number of participants was inadequate for such statistical measures. Chi-square testing was also excluded from the data analysis for the same reason. In case a similar research will be conducted in the future, with over 500 participants, the weighting and chi-square testing should be conducted accordingly.

Since this study was comparative, the participants were separated and analysed in two groups, upper secondary school students and vocational school students. In addition, there was a third group that consisted of students with courses from both vocational school and upper secondary school (discussed in subsection 2.2.2). This group of double degree students was not vast, hence it did not provide any reliable or beneficial research results for the present study. The data from the participants in both vocational and upper secondary school were not analysed as a part of this comparative study, since the main aim was to provide a comparison between upper secondary school students and vocational school students.

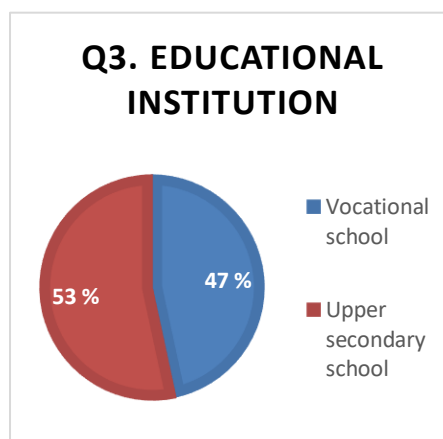
Furthermore, there are many different departments in vocational school, for example hair and beauty department, logistics department, and business department, etc. This was taken into consideration in the analysis of the data, since the decision to study, for example, in a more customer service-oriented branch, such as hair and beauty department, would have assumedly influenced the participants' attitude towards English and using English.

## 4. RESULTS

The questionnaire provided an adequate amount of data for the analysis, and in this chapter the results of the analysis are presented. This chapter begins by a presentation of the demographic and linguistic background of the participants in sections 4.1 and 4.2. Later in sections 4.3-4.6, the significance of English in the participants' life, the significance of learning English, the uses of English, and the significance of English in Finland according to the participants are described and analysed in greater detail.

### 4.1 Demographic background of the participants

The number of the accepted participants with the required prerequisites for this research was 178. The minimum anticipated number of participants for this study was 80 from both upper secondary school and vocational school. The minimum number of participants was reached, since there were in total 95 (53 %) participants from upper secondary school, and 83 participants (47 %) from vocational school. The groups were almost equal in size, and because the number of the participants was in relation to the total number of the participants in each group, the groups were comparable. The percentages of the two participant groups can be seen in Figure 3 below.

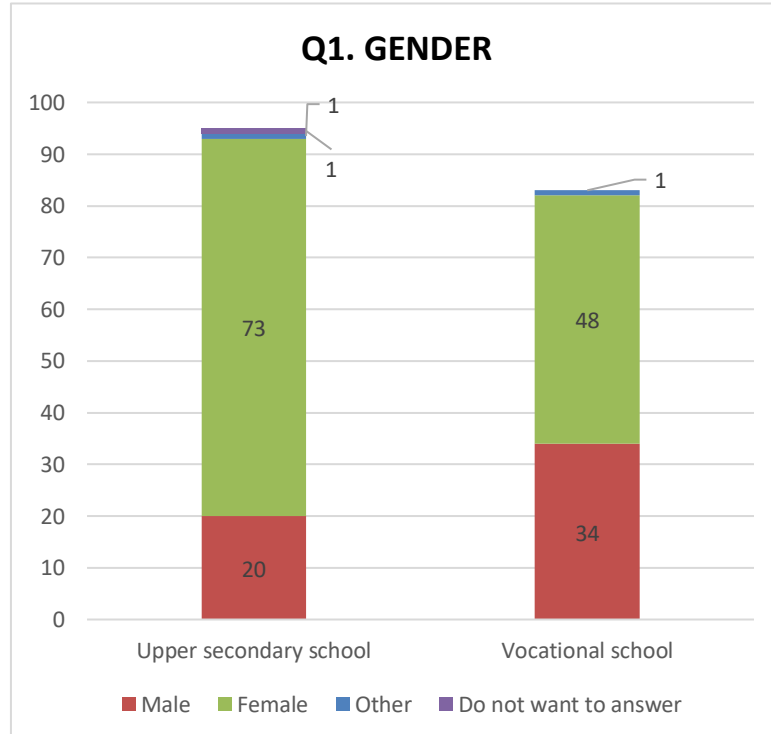


*Figure 3 The participants' educational institution.*



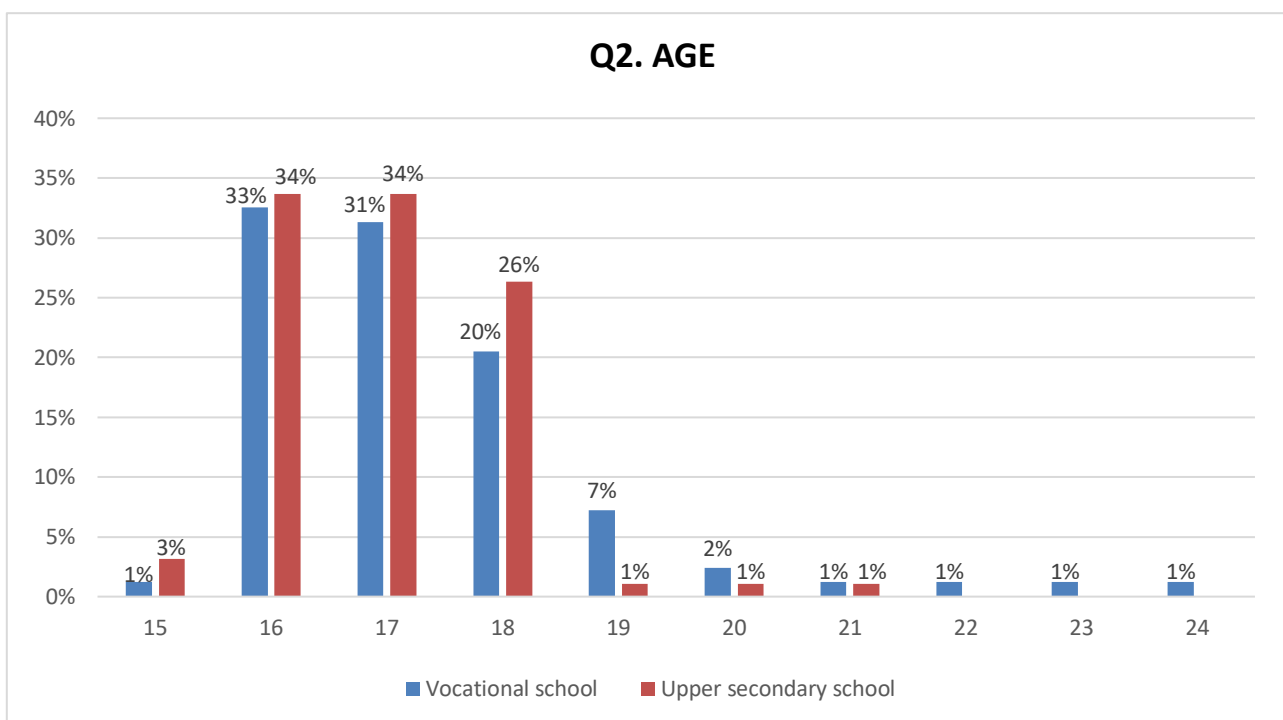
Questions 1, 2, 4, and 9 asked the participants' gender, age, vocational school branch, and residence. In total 121 (68 %) participants in this study were female. The number of male participants in this study was 54 (30 %). Two (1 %) participants were other, and one (1 %) participant did not want to answer to the question relating to their gender.

In the upper secondary school group, 73 (77 %) participants were female. The number of male participants in the group was 20 (21 %). In the upper secondary school group, 1 (1 %) participant was other, and 1 (1 %) did not want to answer. In the vocational school group, 48 (58 %) participants were female. There were in total 34 (41 %) male participants in the vocational school group, and 1 (1 %) participant was other. Female participants were overrepresented in this study, since the frequency of females in both groups of comparison was higher than the frequency of males. This most certainly distorted the results of the study, and was taken in consideration in the analysis (see Chapter 5). The gender distribution and frequencies of the participant groups are presented in Figure 4 below.



*Figure 4 The participants' gender distribution.*

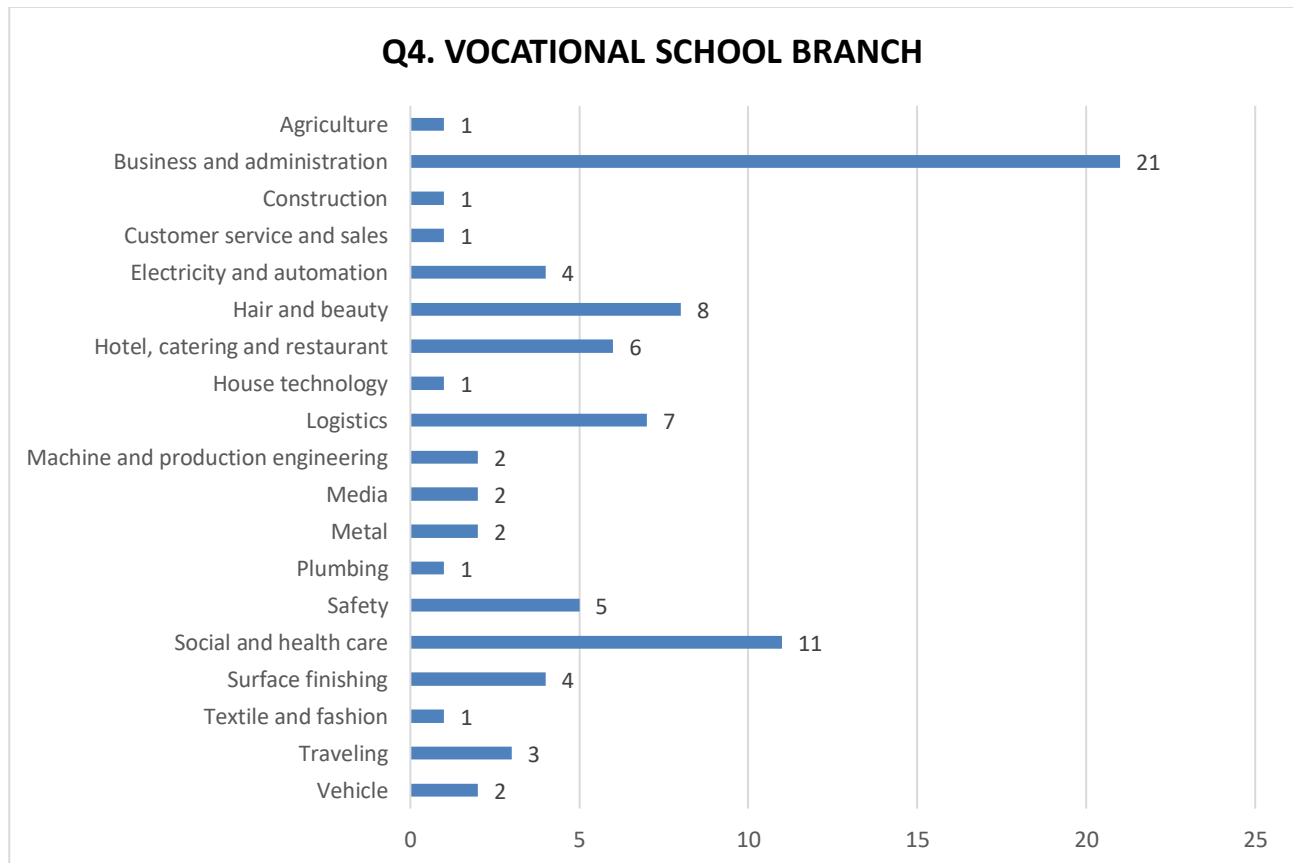
The age distribution of the total number of the participants in this research was from 15 to 24, from which the majority (89 %) of the participants were aged between 16 to 18. In the vocational school group, clearly a higher percentage of the participants were aged 19 or over when compared to the upper secondary school group. The age distribution was expected, since the typical age for entering the upper secondary level education is after comprehensive school, in the age of 16. The duration of upper secondary level school is normally three years, and after turning 18 or 19 the student most assumedly graduates (see Figure 5 below).



*Figure 5 The participants' age distribution.*

The vocational school group participants were studying in 19 different branches. The branches were agriculture; business and administration; construction; customer service and sales; electricity and automation; hair and cosmetic care; hotel, restaurant and catering; house technology; logistics; machine and production engineering; media; metal; plumbing; safety; social and healthcare; surface finishing; textile and fashion; traveling; and vehicle [author's translation]. The majority, 21 participants, were studying in the business and administration branch. The second highest frequency

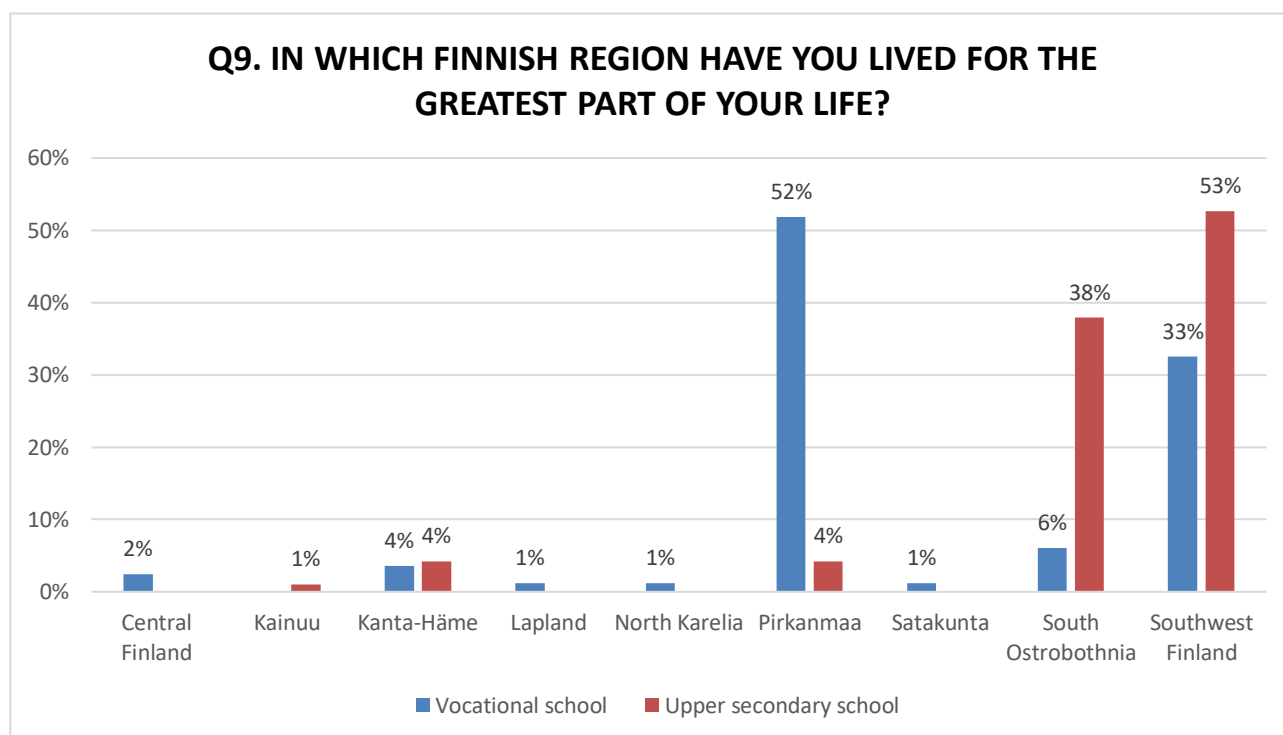
of the participants were studying in social and health care, and hair and beauty branches. The frequencies were not surprising since the most popular branches in vocational school in the year 2018, for instance, were social and health care branch and business and administration branch (Ministry of Education 2020). The frequencies of the vocational school branches in which the participants were studying can be seen in Figure 6 below.



*Figure 6 The distribution of the vocational school study branches.*

Lastly, the residence in which the participants had lived a greater part of their life was enquired in the background section of the questionnaire as one of the prerequisites of this study. The translations of the terms for the residences were retrieved from the list provided by the Prime minister's office (Valtioneuvoston kanslia 2019). According to the results, it seems that the biggest frequency of vocational school students in this study were from Pirkanmaa and Southwest Finland, whereas the biggest frequency of the upper secondary school participants were from the regions of

South Ostrobothnia and Southwest Finland. In upper secondary school, 50 (53 %) participants and 27 (33 %) participants in vocational school were from Southwest Finland; in vocational school 43 (52 %) participants and 7 (4 %) in upper secondary school were from Pirkanmaa; in upper secondary school 36 (38 %) participants and 5 (6 %) participants in vocational school were from South Ostrobothnia. Other residences of the participants were Kainuu, Kanta-Häme, Central Finland, Lapland, North Karelia, and Satakunta as can be seen in Figure 7 below.



*Figure 7 The participants' residence distribution.*

Furthermore, an additional question of the places of residence abroad in which the participants would have had lived a greater part of their life was provided (Q9.a). There were five participants who had lived outside Finland. Two of the participants had lived in Estonia, one in upper secondary and one in vocational school, one of the upper secondary school participants had lived in Germany and one of had lived in Malawi.

There were in total 47 omitted answers from the analysis of the data. The omissions were conducted because the participants' answers did not meet the prerequisites of the study. The reasons

for the omissions were, for instance, a lack of required background information, which means that for instance the vocational school participant had not answered to the question regarding their vocational school branch. Additionally duplicate answers, in other words, the same participant had given an answer to the questionnaire twice, were omitted from the results. Moreover, a group of double degree students was not taken into consideration in the analysis of the data, since the students would have been in both groups of the comparison. It was also taken into consideration in the analysis of the answers that the questionnaire was open for everyone, thus there was no absolute certainty that the answers given were true. For instance, a participant might have, for example answered to the questionnaire twice and given different answers. This weakened the reliability of the data.

## **4.2 Linguistic background of the participants**

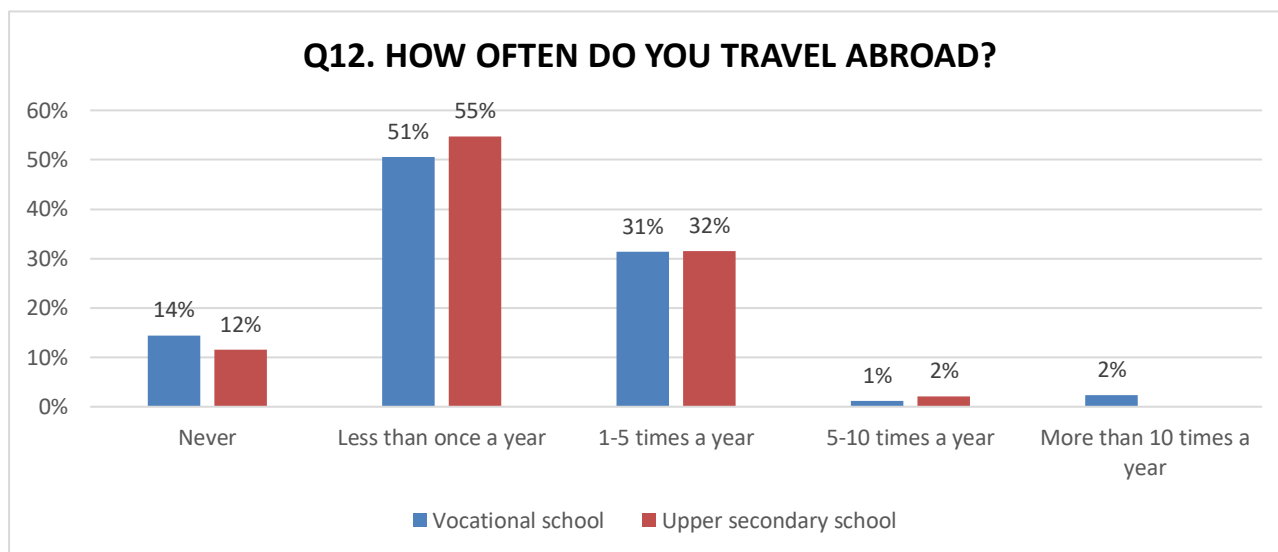
The linguistic background of the participants was also relevant for the purposes of this study to discover whether there were correlations between the attitudes and the participants' linguistic background. In this section, the linguistic background of the participants is presented in greater detail. Questions 5-8, 10-16, and 31 concerned the linguistic background of the participants.

Almost all participants in this study had Finnish as their native language (99 %). From the vocational school group, one participant had Finnish and Estonian as their native languages. From the upper secondary school group, one participant had Swahili and Lingala as their native languages (Q5). In total 6 (3 %) participants in this study had parents with different native language than the participants themselves. The native languages of the parents were English, Estonian, Spanish, and Swedish. There was no distinct difference between the two groups compared (Q6). The participants' close circle of friends consisted of people with different native languages than the participants themselves. In total 71 (40 %) participants in this study had close friends with other native languages. When comparing the frequencies of the two groups, 34 (41 %) of the participants were in vocational

school and 37 (39 %) in upper secondary school. Hence, there was no notable difference between the two groups. The languages of the close circle of friends of the upper secondary school group participants were Arabic, Danish, Daria, Dutch, English, Estonian, Polish, German, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish, and the vocational school group were English, Estonian, German, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Ukrainian (Q7).

The language of the participants' comprehensive school and upper secondary school was Finnish, the native language of majority of the participants. Minority of the participants had studied in other languages than in Finnish in their basic education. The languages in which the minority had studied in their basic education were English, Chichewa, French, German, and Swedish, with varying combinations. In the vocational school group, the languages were English and Swedish, and in the upper secondary school group, the languages were Chichewa, English, French, and German. Clearly in the upper secondary school group, the language variety was vaster (Q8). In upper secondary education also a minority, 14 (7 %) participants were studying additionally in English, German, Spanish, and Swedish, with varying combinations. In the vocational school group, the languages were English and Swedish, and in the upper secondary school group, the languages were English, German, Spanish and Swedish. Again, there was a difference between the variety of the languages in the two school groups (Q11).

The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding how often the participants travel abroad and whether they have lived abroad for more than three months, in a student exchange, for example. These questions were asked to receive information about whether the participants use English or other languages outside Finland, and whether they have had possibilities to travel in foreign countries in general. According to the results, in total 94 (53 %) participants travelled abroad less than once a year. The minority travelled abroad more often than ten times a year. There was no distinct difference between how much the two participant groups travelled (see Figure 8 below).



*Figure 8 The distribution of the frequency of traveling abroad.*

Minority of the participants had lived abroad more than three months, for example in a student exchange. The countries in which the participants had lived were Argentina, Estonia, France, Germany, the Great Britain, India, Spain, Tanzania, Thailand, the United States of America, and Zambia. In the vocational school group, the countries were Estonia, the Great Britain, India, Spain, and Thailand, and in the upper secondary school group the countries were Argentina, France, Germany, the Great Britain, Tanzania, the United States, and Zambia. There was no distinct difference between the number of countries in which the two groups' participants had visited. The most frequent language used while living or visiting abroad was English in both groups (Q13).

One of the linguistic background questions relating to the participants' attitudes towards English was whether the participants considered themselves *mono-*, *bi-* or *multilingual*. Although almost all the participants had Finnish as their only native language, fairly many, 56 of them considered themselves bilingual. When comparing the two groups, 29 (35 %) participants in vocational and 27 (28 %) in upper secondary school considered themselves as bilingual, hence there is a slight difference in the frequencies. Only 14 participants considered themselves multilingual,

majority, 13 (14 %) of them in upper secondary school. Still, the biggest number of the participants saw themselves as monolinguals, 53 (64 %) in vocational school and 55 (58 %) in upper secondary school. In addition, there was one vocational school participant in this study with two native languages according to their own answer, but they still regarded themselves as monolingual. Percentages of the two groups are presented in Table 1 below.

*Table 1 The distribution of the participants' mono- bi- or multilingualism.*

| <b>Q10. Do you think you are...</b> | <b>Upper secondary school</b> | <b>Vocational school</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Bilingual</b>                    | 28 %                          | 35 %                     |
| <b>Multilingual</b>                 | 14 %                          | 1 %                      |
| <b>Monolingual</b>                  | 58 %                          | 64 %                     |

To provide a background to which the participants' attitudes can be related to, the languages that they had studied during their previous years of education were enquired in this study as well. The languages that the participants had studied from the time before comprehensive school until their recent education, answers to question 15, are presented in the following paragraphs.

Before comprehensive school, the most studied languages according to the results were Finnish and English. There was no notable difference between the two groups. In comprehensive school, the most studied languages were English and Swedish. Other languages studied were French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. In the upper secondary school group, the most studied languages were English and Swedish. Other languages studied were French, German, and Spanish. English and Swedish were the most studied languages in the vocational school group as well. In the vocational school group, the variety of languages studied was surprisingly vaster when compared to the upper secondary school group. Other languages studied in the vocational school group were French,



German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. In upper secondary level, the most studied languages in the upper secondary and vocational school were English and Swedish. It seems that the quantity of different languages studied decreased in the vocational school group after basic education. The languages studied were German, Russian and Spanish. In the upper secondary school group, the quantity of languages studied increased. The other languages studied in the upper secondary school were Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

In addition to the language studies at school, the participants had studied on language courses abroad, and the sole language studied abroad was English. One participant from vocational school had taken part in a language course abroad, and three of the participants were from upper secondary school, hence it seems that in upper secondary school taking a language course abroad would be slightly more common. Since the number of the participants taking a language course abroad in general was rather low, vaster conclusions could not be made.

From the languages that were self-learned, the most common language was English. Other self-studied languages were Arabian, Chinese, Estonian, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. In total, 88 (49 %) of the participants had studied a language by themselves. When comparing the frequencies between the two groups, 42 (51 %) were vocational school students, and 46 (48 %) were upper secondary school students. There was no great difference in the frequencies of self-studying a language. Nevertheless, the variety of different self-studied languages was again wider in the upper secondary school group.

In question 16, the participants were asked which languages they had used during their lifetime. Not surprisingly, the most used language during the participants' lifetime was English. List of the languages used during the two participant groups' lifetimes is presented in the following paragraphs.

English was the most used language at work in addition to the participants' native language. In total 40 (22 %) participants used one or two languages in addition to their native language at work,

from which 39 participants used English. In upper secondary school 14 (15 %) participants and 25 (30 %) participants in vocational school used English at work. Clearly in the vocational school group, the usage of English at work was more common. Since a bigger number of the participants in the vocational school group were over 20 years old, a bigger number of them was already assumedly in working life compared to the upper secondary school group. This might be one reason for the bigger difference between the detected frequencies in the usage of English at work. In addition, the usage of English in working life is emphasised in the vocational school curriculum (see subsection 2.2.2), suggesting that vocational school students are encouraged to use the language at work more by their language teachers. Swedish was spoken at work by 8 participants, from which half were from vocational and half from upper secondary school. Other language used at work was German.

The most used language at school or while studying was English, with in total 92 (52 %) participants using it. From upper secondary school, 58 (61 %) participants, and from vocational school 34 (41 %) participants used English at school. In the light of the results, upper secondary school students clearly use English more at school or while studying when compared to the vocational school group. This might be a result of the fact that in upper secondary school curriculum the number of English courses provided for the students is bigger, so the usage of English could be more frequent there than in vocational school (see subsection 2.2.2). Swedish was the third most used language among the participants. Other languages used at school were French, German, Russian, and Spanish. These languages were used in upper secondary school solely. The variety of different languages used was greater in upper secondary school, hence upper secondary school students might be more keen on learning other languages in addition to English when compared to the vocational school students.

The most used language at home was English, in total 46 (26 %) of the participants using it. From vocational school, 18 (22 %) students and 28 (29 %) upper secondary school students used English at home. Again, a difference between the groups could be detected in the usage of English at home, and it cannot be explained via a correlation between the usage of English or other languages

among the participants' close circle of friends, since both groups have the same number of friends who do not share the same native language with the participants. The assumption is that upper secondary school students are encouraged to use the English language and other languages more or they are in general more oriented towards practicing their language skills at home. The second most used language at home was Swedish, with 10 participants from upper secondary school using it. Other languages at home were Estonian, Chinese, German, Japanese, Spanish, and Russian. The variety of languages used at home was again vaster in the upper secondary school group than in the vocational school group.

Also during free time, the most used language was English. In total 88 (49 %) of the participants used English during their free time. There were 38 (46 %) vocational school students and 50 (53 %) upper secondary school students that used the language. The frequency of the usage of English during free time in the upper secondary school group was higher than in the vocational school group. In LOPS (2015) as has been discussed earlier (see subsection 2.2.2), the usage of English during free time is emphasised, whereas in vocational school curriculum it is not. This might be one factor explaining the differences between the two groups. Swedish was the second used language during free time, with in total 8 upper secondary school students using it. Other languages used were French, German, Japanese, and Spanish.

While traveling, the most used language among the participants was clearly English with in total 138 (78 %) participants using it. From the participants, 62 (78 %) were vocational school students and 76 (80 %) were upper secondary school students. The second most used language while traveling was Swedish, in total 17 participants used it, 3 vocational students and 14 upper secondary students. Other languages used were Estonian, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. A wider variety of languages was again used by the upper secondary school students while traveling abroad when compared to the vocational school group.

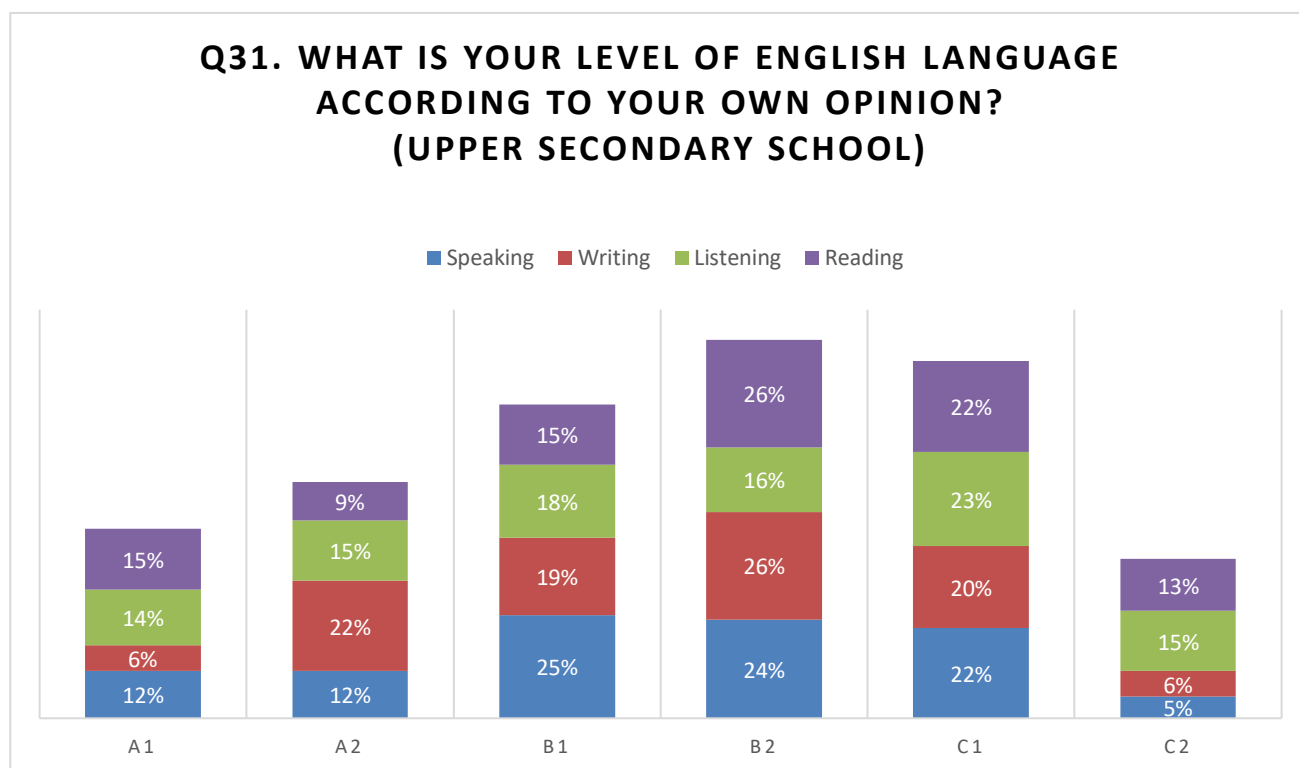
The participants were also enquired to evaluate their level of spoken and written English, and their level of listening and reading comprehension (Q31). Self-evaluation has been proven to be a valid and reliable way to measure language skills (Ashton 2013). Although, since the students did a self-evaluation based on approximates of the different levels provided on a webpage by themselves, the evaluations might provide inaccurate information. The evaluations were made based on CEFR (see section 3.1). The actual average language levels of the students might thus be higher or lower in both groups.

Majority of upper secondary school students were in the areas from B1 to C1 in their overall level of English. In vocational school, the level of English was in the areas from A1 to B1. The reasons for this might be that there is a wider variety of English courses provided in upper secondary school, the upper secondary school students' overall orientation towards learning English might be slightly more positive, hence the attitude towards learning a language is more affirmative, which influences the motivation to study, for example.

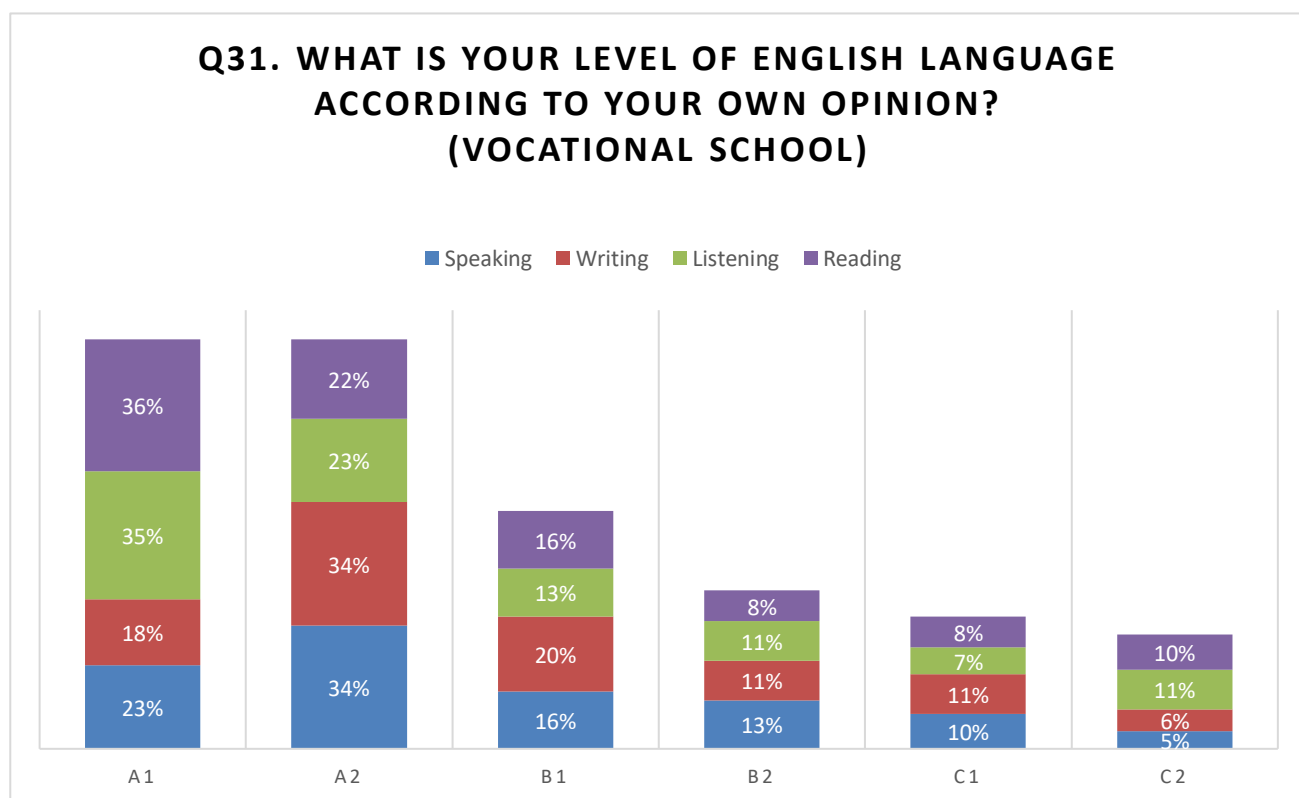
When examining the statistics of the participant groups' skills in English more closely, it could be detected that in the upper secondary school group, majority of the participants had level C1 in listening, B2 in reading and writing, and level B1 in speaking. The *receptive* (listening, reading) and *active* (speaking, writing) skills of majority of the group were mostly in the same level. In the vocational school group, majority of the participants had level A1 in listening and reading, and A2 in writing and speaking. Clearly in the vocational school group the receptive skills were lower than the active skills. This would allow a suggestion that the active language usage in vocational school is higher than the receptive usage.

The participants' self-evaluations are presented below (Figures 9 and 10). The overall English levels of the participant groups can be seen as the vertical bars above each language level, so for example, B2 is the most frequent level of the participants in upper secondary school. The percentages of the different areas of skills, for example speaking, are presented above each level in different

colors. For example in upper secondary school, 24 % of the participants estimated their spoken English to be on level B2.



*Figure 9 The upper secondary school participants' self-evaluation of their level of English.*

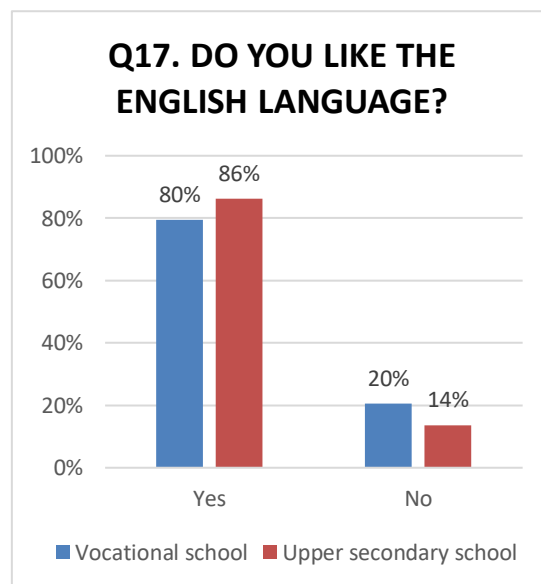


*Figure 10 The vocational school participants' self-evaluation of their level of English.*

### 4.3 The significance of English in the participants' life

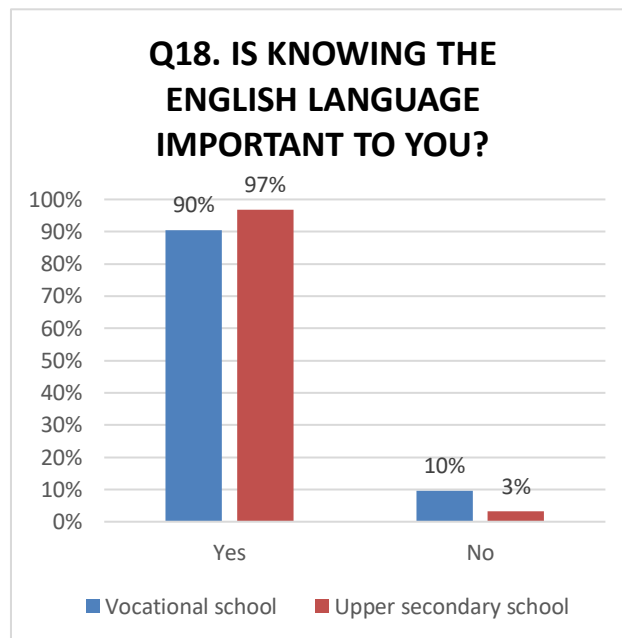
The questions regarding the significance of the English language in the participants' life were important for the purposes of this study, since they provided information on the explicit attitudes that the participants might have towards the language in general. Questions 17-25 were related to the significance of English for the participants, and the results are presented in this section.

In total 148 (83 %) participants answered affirmatively to the question of whether they like the English language, and 30 (17 %) answered negatively. When comparing the answers of the two groups, upper secondary school students had more affirmative answers than vocational school students, in total 82 (86 %), and less negative answers, in total 13 (14 %). Vocational school students had 66 (80 %) affirmative answers and 17 (20 %) negative answers. It appeared that the overall attitude towards the English language among the upper secondary school students was slightly more positive than it was among the vocational school students (see Figure 11 below).



*Figure 11 The participants' opinion on the English language.*

In question 18, in total 167 (94 %) participants considered that knowing the English language is important. From upper secondary school, 93 (97 %) participants and 75 (90 %) vocational school participants answered affirmatively. There were in total 11 (6 %) participants who did not find knowing the language important. From upper secondary school 3 (3 %) and 8 (10 %) vocational school participants answered negatively. Again there was a slight difference between the frequencies. It seems that in upper secondary school, knowing English was regarded as more important than in vocational school (see Figure 12 below).



**Figure 12** The participants' opinion on the importance of knowing the English language.

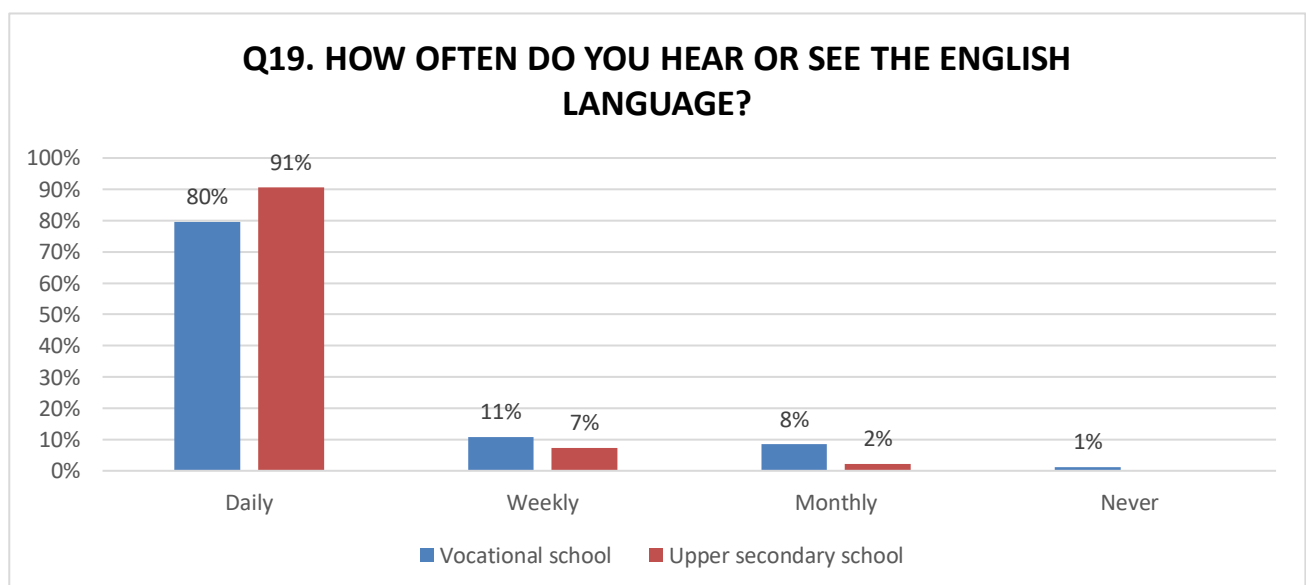
In question 18.a.) the participants could elaborate their answers by explaining why they thought knowing the English language was or was not important for them. There were different themes under which the answers could be categorised. The themes for the positive answers are listed in the following: *international language; generally used and needed language; important in working life; important in studies; important in communication with foreign tourists, friends, and relatives; important while traveling abroad; important in hobbies; important in the internet, for instance in social media; important in playing online games.*

Interestingly, there were a few participants who admitted that they did not like the language or did not know it well enough according to their own evaluation but they still thought knowing the language was important, which can be seen for instance in the following example.

- (1) “I do not like the English language because I never learned it. Knowing English is still important for the future profession.” P149

In addition, one of the participants did not think knowing the English language was important but they would have wanted to learn it because it provides possibilities in their future. The participant also thought that learning was difficult for them. The only theme for not thinking that knowing English was important was that the participants evaluated their own skills in English as weak.

In question 19, the majority, in total 158 (85 %) participants, answered that they had heard or seen the English language daily. From upper secondary school 86 (91 %) participants and from vocational school 66 (80 %) participants had heard or seen the language daily. There were more participants in vocational school that had heard or seen the language more seldom, for example monthly or weekly (see Figure 13 below).



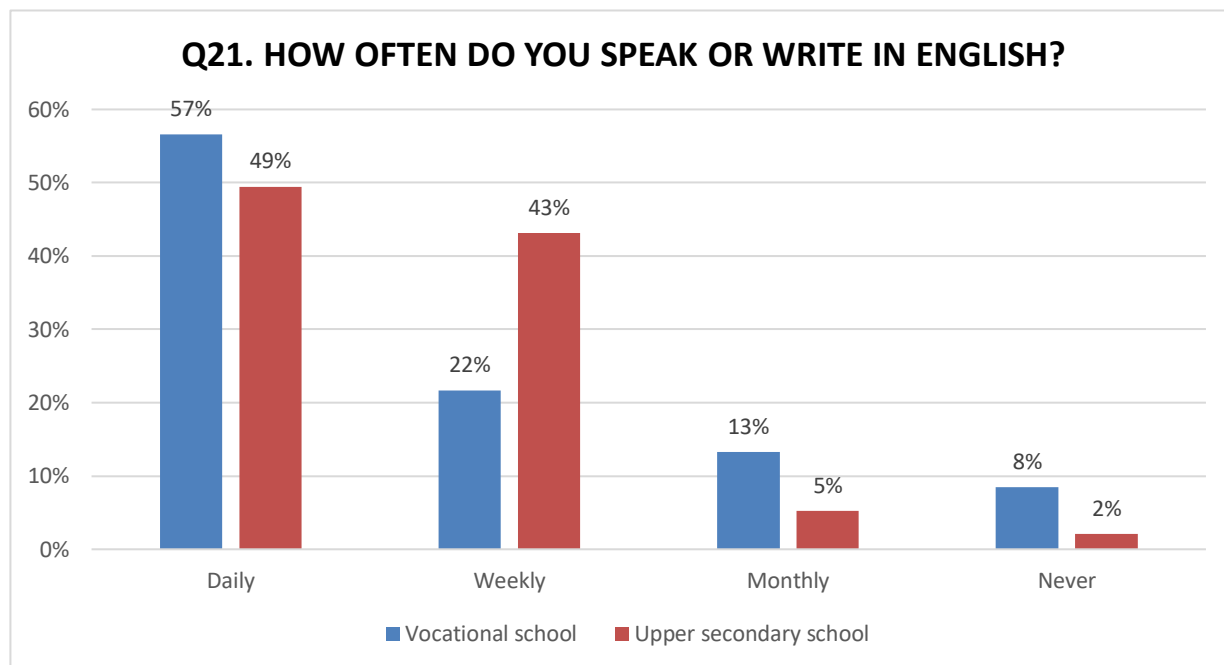
*Figure 13 The frequency of hearing or seeing the English language.*



The participants were also enquired to inform where they had heard or seen the English language (Q20). The biggest number, in total 136 (76 %), of the participants had heard or seen the language at school. When comparing the two groups, 85 (89 %) participants were from upper secondary school and 51 (61 %) were from vocational school. Clearly in upper secondary school, English was heard or seen more frequently. The next most frequent answer was during free time with 127 (71 %) participants in total. Again, when comparing the two groups, from upper secondary school 67 (71 %) and from vocational school 60 (72 %) students had heard or seen the English language during free time. The third most popular place was while traveling with a total of 112 (63 %) participants. While traveling, 60 (63 %) participants from upper secondary school and 52 (63 %) from vocational school had heard or seen the language. In total 98 (55 %) participants had heard or seen English at home. From vocational school, 47 (57 %) students and 51 (54 %) upper secondary school students had heard or seen the language at home. There were no great differences between the two groups. Other places mentioned were work, internet in general, online games, movies, and videos.

In question 21, about half of the participants, 94 (53 %), answered that they had spoken or written in English daily, and only 9 (5 %) participants answered that they had never spoken or written in English. In upper secondary school and vocational school, the same number (47) of participants had spoken or written in English daily. Still, there was a difference in the relative percentages of the answers, since 57 % of the vocational school group participants and 49 % of the upper secondary school group participants had spoken or written in English daily. In upper secondary school, clearly a bigger number of the participants, 41 (43 %) had spoken or written in English weekly, while 18 (22 %) of the vocational school participants had spoken or written it weekly. While it seems that in vocational school the percentage of speaking and writing English is higher than in upper secondary school, there is still a higher percentage of vocational school students that had spoken or written in

English more seldom, since 11 (13 %) vocational school participants answered monthly, and 7 (8 %) participants never (see Figure 14 below).



*Figure 14 The frequency of speaking or writing the English language.*

The most common places in which the participants had spoken or written English were at school with in total 128 (72 %) participants, during free time with in total 114 (64 %) participants, at home with in total 80 (45 %) participants, and while traveling, with in total 71 (40 %) participants.

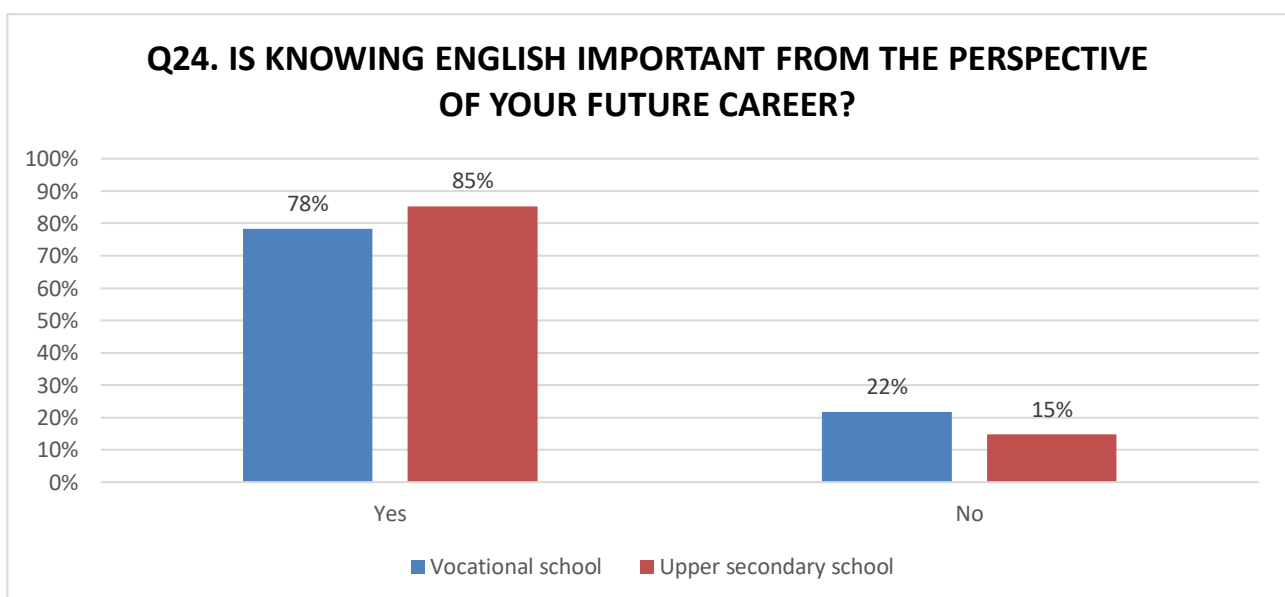
In vocational school, 50 (60 %) and in upper secondary school 78 (82 %) participants had spoken or written English at school. There were 51 (61 %) participants in vocational and 63 (66 %) participants in upper secondary school that had spoken or written English during free time. At home, 37 (45 %) participants in vocational and 43 (45 %) in upper secondary school had spoken or written English. In vocational school, 30 (36 %) participants and 41 (43 %) in upper secondary school had spoken or written English while traveling. As in question 20, the other places in which the participants had spoken or written in English were at work, in the internet in general, and while playing online games (Q22).

In question 23, the places in which the participants found the English language most useful, were *while traveling*, *when working*, *during free time*, and *at school*. In total 82 (46 %) participants found English most useful while traveling, 33 (18 %) participants found English most useful while working and the same percentage found it most useful during their free time. Smaller frequency, 17 (9 %) participants, found English to be most useful at school. Surprisingly, although the participants had heard, seen, spoken or written English most at school, they still did not find it the most useful place for the language. This might be because in other environments the language is not consciously learned as it is in school. Instead, it is a way of communicating in the “real world”. The greatest difference between the two participant groups was in the usefulness of English at school and during free time. For the upper secondary school students, English was more useful at school and during free time than it was for the vocational school students, since 12 (13 %) upper secondary school students and only 5 (6 %) vocational school students found English the most useful at school, and in upper secondary school, 20 (21 %) students found English most useful during free time whereas in vocational school, 13 (16 %) of the students found English the most useful during free time. This could be a result of reflecting the values of LOPS (2015), in which the free time usage of English is encouraged.

Again in this question (Q23.a.), the participants could elaborate their answers. For the participants who chose traveling as the most useful place for the English language, the argument was that English was the most general language used and understood by everyone abroad, and without it communication would be more difficult. The participants who claimed that the most useful place for the English language was at work, elaborated that English is, for instance, expected from employees, it makes group work and internationalisation easier, it provides career opportunities inside and outside Finland, and customer service with people who they do not share the same native language with would be easier. The participants who found English the most useful during free time saw it as a good language to communicate with friends, relatives, and people who they do not share the same native

language with, a way to read and watch English material, and for playing games online. Some participants elaborated that they test and apply their language abilities during free time. Although a smaller percentage of the participants found English the most useful at school, some elaborations were given for this answer. For two vocational school students, the reason for the usefulness of English was that knowing English well would probably help them receive good grades, and an upper secondary school student elaborated that the language would be useful since it is studied at school a lot. In addition, an upper secondary school student elaborated that studying in general at school is easier if one knows English well.

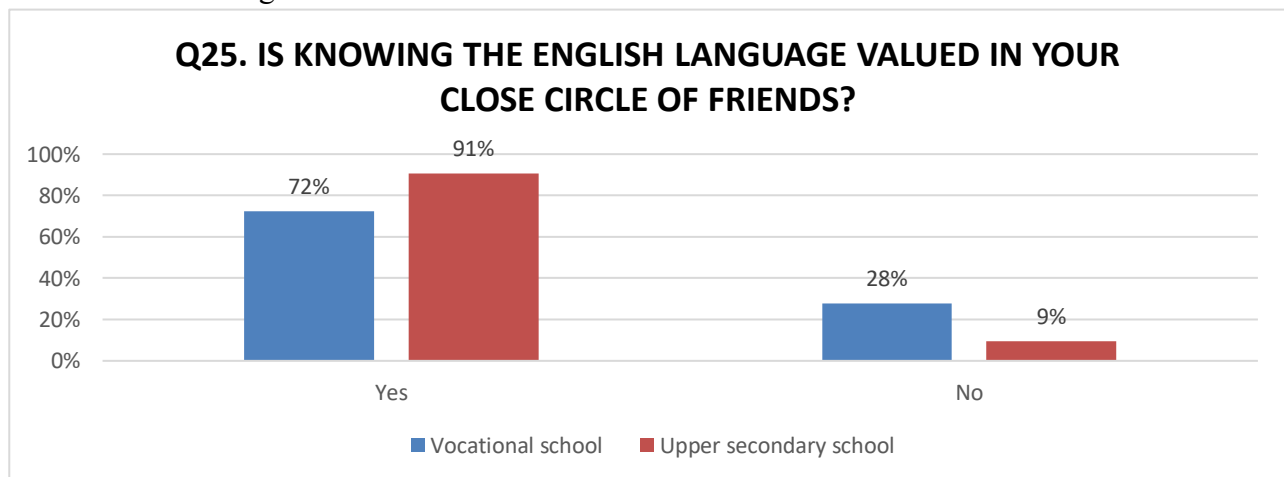
In question 24, the English language was evaluated by the participants from their future career perspective. Knowing English was important for most of the participants. In total 146 (82 %) participants answered affirmatively. Of the participants in upper secondary school, 81 (85 %) and 65 (78 %) participants in vocational school saw English as an important part of their future career. For the remaining 32 (18 %), knowing English was not important from the point of view of their future career. In vocational school, 14 (22 %) participants, and in upper secondary school 18 (15 %) participants thought that English was not important for their future working life. There was a slight difference between the groups (see Figure 15 below).



*Figure 15 The importance of the English language for the participants' future career perspectives.*

The participants were again asked to elaborate their answers (Q24.a). The elaborations could be categorised under different themes. Majority of the arguments for the positive answers were that the career they aspired to requires skills in English. A High frequency of the participants also emphasised that because of globalisation, English skills are important for their future career. In addition, customer service, university materials, and multicultural working environment were mentioned frequently. For many, the English language was important in general for their future career perspectives. The participants who found the English language not important, elaborated most often that the English language was not a necessity in their future career.

Question 25 asked about the appreciation of knowing the English language in the participants' close circle of people. In majority of the participants' close circles, knowing the English language was valued. From the participants in total 146 (82 %) answered affirmatively and the rest 32 (18 %) answered negatively. When comparing upper secondary school and vocational school, there were clearly more negative answers in vocational school, in total 23 (28 %), which was 14 more than in upper secondary school. From the upper secondary school group, 86 (91 %) participants answered affirmatively. There were 60 (72 %) affirmative answers from the vocational school. English language was distinctively less valued in the close circles of the vocational school group participants, as can be seen in Figure 16 below.



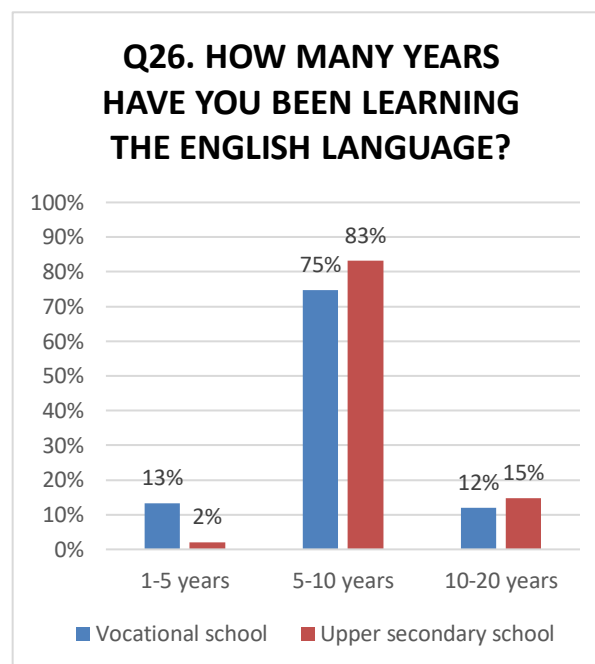
*Figure 16 The appreciation of the English language in the participants' close circle of friends.*

#### 4.4 The significance of learning English

This section provides information about the participants explicit attitudes towards learning English.

Questions 26-33 asked about the significance of learning English for the participants.

Majority of the participants had studied the English language for five to ten years, and minority for one to five years. Since majority of the participants were under 20 years old, five to ten years of studying English was not surprising (see Figure 17 below).



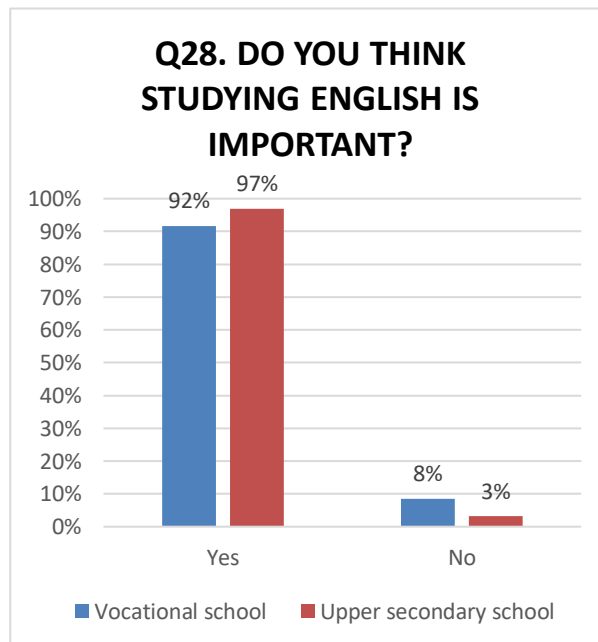
*Figure 17 The duration of studying English.*

In total, according to the answers of the questionnaire, the three most important languages for the participants' studies were Finnish, English, and Swedish (Q27). In vocational school, 82 (99 %) participants found Finnish, 72 (87 %) participants found English, and 35 (42 %) participants found Swedish the most important language from the point of view of their studies. In upper secondary school 92 (97 %) participants found Finnish, 85 (89 %) found English, and 51 (54 %) found Swedish as the most important language. The differences in the most important languages according to the participant groups were not distinctive, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 The most important languages for the participants.*

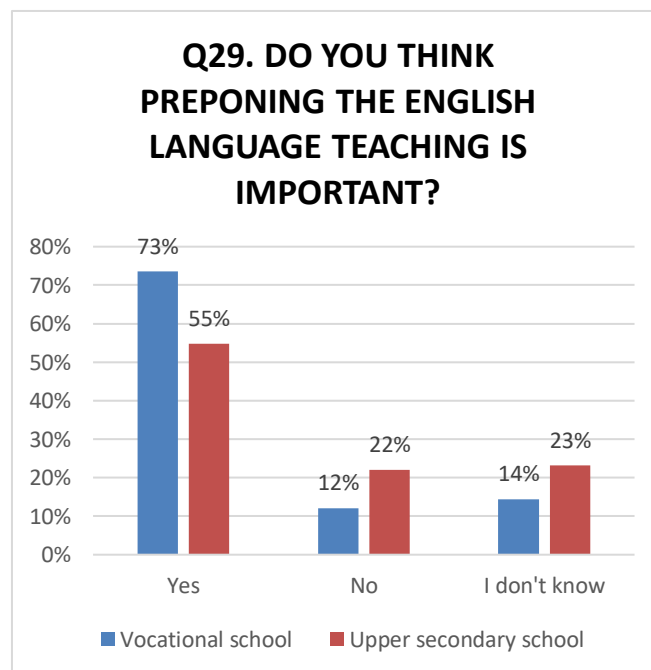
| <b>Q27. What are the most important languages for your studies?</b> | <b>Upper secondary school</b> | <b>Vocational school</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Finnish</b>  | 97 %                          | 99 %                     |
| <b>English</b>  | 89 %                          | 87 %                     |
| <b>Swedish</b>  | 54 %                          | 42 %                     |

The majority, 168 (94 %) of upper secondary level students found English as an important language to study. A small percentage, 10 (6 %) participants, found English as not an important language to study. The biggest number of the negative answers were from the vocational school group 7 (8 %), and only 3 (3 %) participants from upper secondary school answered similarly. It seems that in vocational school the attitudes towards the English language as a school subject were slightly more negative than in upper secondary school (see Figure 18 below).



*Figure 18 The importance of studying the English language for the participants.*

As mentioned earlier in this thesis (see section 3.1), one of the questions in the survey allowed an “I do not know” answer, since the question was regarding a pedagogical term that everyone cannot be expected to be familiar with. Although the term was explained in the questionnaire, the rather recent phenomenon was not expected to be known by a bigger audience. The question was about preponing language teaching. In total 113 (64 %) participants answered that preponing English teaching was important, 34 (19 %) did not know, and 31 (17 %) answered that it was not important. From vocational school, 61 (73 %) participants found preponing the English language teaching important, 12 (14 %) did not know and 10 (12 %) did not find it important. From upper secondary school, 52 (55 %) participants found it important, 22 (23 %) did not know and 21 (22 %) did not find it important. It seems that the vocational students found preponing the English teaching more important than the upper secondary school students, as can be seen in Figure 19 below.

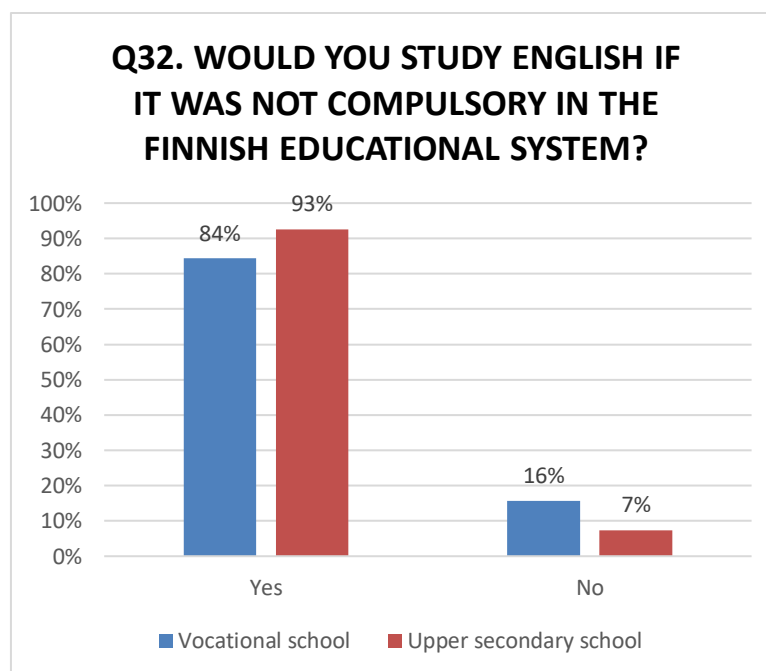


*Figure 19 The importance of preponing the English language teaching for the participants.*



To question 30, whether the English language learning or studying was easy, majority of the participants, 128 (72 %) answered affirmatively. The remaining 28 %, 50 of the participants answered that learning English was not easy. In total, 69 (73 %) upper secondary school students and 59 (71 %) vocational school students found learning English easy, while 26 (27 %) upper secondary school students and 24 (29 %) vocational school students did not find learning English easy.

The participants answered a question considering whether they would study English if it was not compulsory in the Finnish educational system, and the biggest number of participants would study English. Only 20 of them would not study English. Rather expectedly, 13 of the participants who would not study English if it was not compulsory, were in the vocational school group (see Figure 20 below).



*Figure 20 The participants' opinion on the compulsory*

*English studies.*

The participants were also asked to elaborate why they would or would not study English (Q32.a.). The reasons for the participants to study English even if it was not compulsory, could be categorised according to the qualitative answers. The reasons to study English were *globalisation, living or traveling abroad, working life, free time, and future*. In addition, some of the participants thought that the language was easy for them or that they liked the language in general. In addition, many participants found the language important and useful. For the participants who did not think English should be compulsory in the Finnish educational system, the reasons were either that they did not like the language or that they never learned the language well enough in their own opinion. An example of an elaboration to a negative answer below.

- (2) “I have never learned the English language enough and it did not get to my head although I have studied.” P65

It seems that the participant was rather disappointed in their ability to learn the language, although they assumedly tried. This would suggest that their attitude towards learning English is not completely negative. There were other similar answers from which it was transmitted rather clearly that the participant liked the language, but they had problems in acquiring it. In addition, there was an interesting answer from one of the participants, who in fact thought that they were adequate in English and used the language a lot but they would have wanted to spend their time on studying other subjects instead of English. The answer can be seen below.

- (3) “Because it is so easy for me and I use it a lot so I would not want to use more time studying it.” P146

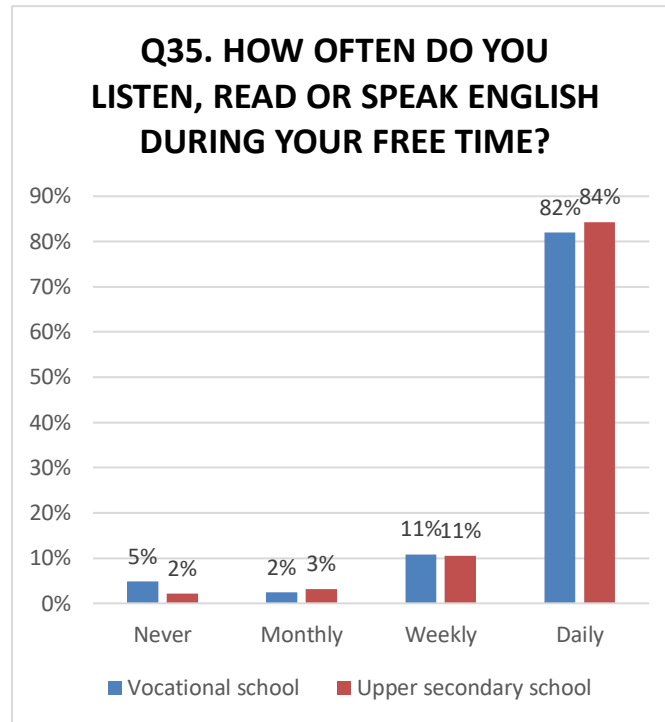
Majority of the participants had learned English outside school as well (Q33, Q33.a.). There was no significant difference between the two participant groups. It seems that English was mostly learned during free time, by 140 (78 %) participants, while traveling, by 81 (46 %) participants and with family, by 68 (38 %) participants. Other ways to learn English were for example at work, and in social media. In upper secondary school, 77 (43 %) participants and in vocational school 63 (35 %) participants had learned English during free time. While traveling, 44 (24 %) participants in upper secondary school and 37 (21 %) in vocational school had learned English. With family English was learned by 37 (21 %) participants in upper secondary school and 31 (17 %) in vocational school.

#### **4.5 The uses of English**

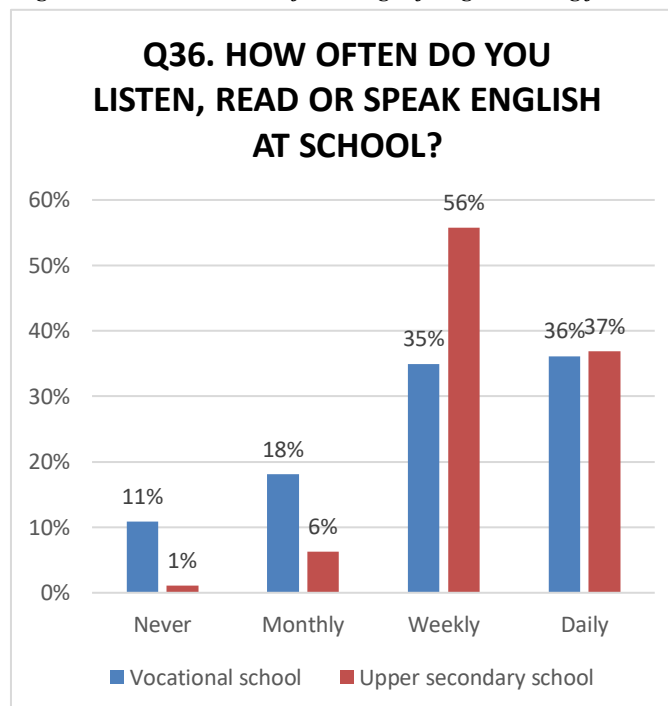
This section provides information about the uses of English among upper secondary level students. In the fourth part of the questionnaire, questions 34-37 asked about the participants' uses of English. This part of the questionnaire was analysed briefly since the focus of the study was on describing attitudes rather than the usage of the language. Nevertheless, the different uses of English might still provide information about the behaviour of the participants, for example in reflecting the participants' implicit attitudes, it was suitable for the purposes of this study.

The participants in general used English the most during their free time and at school. Other places mentioned frequently were the internet and social media. Upper secondary school students used English more at school than during free time, and for the vocational school students the situation was opposite. They used English more during free time than at school. This could be the result of different numbers of English courses provided in the two school institutions, since in vocational school, as discussed earlier in this thesis (see subsection 2.2.2), there are less English courses available for the students than in upper secondary school.

In total, 148 of the participants had listened, read or spoken English during their free time daily. Majority, 82 of the participants had listened, read or spoken English at school weekly. It seems that upper secondary school students had listened, read or spoken English both during free time and at school more often than the vocational school students (see Figures 21 and 22 below).



*Figure 22 The distribution of the usage of English during free time.*



*Figure 21 The distribution of the usage of English at school.*

Majority of the participants thought that they will use English in their future working life weekly (Q37, Q37.a.). In total 157 (88 %) of the participants thought they will use English at work in the future, and 21 (12 %) did not think they will use the language. According to the results, a bigger number of vocational school students, 13 (16 %) of the groups' participants, thought that they will not use English in their future working life when compared to the upper secondary school group, which consisted of 8 (8 %) participants.

#### 4.6 The significance of English in Finland

The last part of the questionnaire, question 38. asked about the significance of the English language in Finland. The participants were provided with different arguments about the language in Finland, and a choice to agree or disagree. In this section, the answers to the questions are presented.

According to the results, majority of the upper secondary school and the vocational school participants agreed on the following statements: *people of all ages must know English, the youth must know English, the working-aged people must know English, all Finnish enterprises must provide their services also in English, and for multicultural development, it is important that every Finn knows how to speak English*. In addition, majority of both groups disagreed on the following statements: *the spread of the English language is a threat to the Finnish culture, the English language is a threat to the position of the Finnish, Swedish and Sámi language in Finland*.

Majority of the vocational school students disagreed on the statement, *the elderly must know English*. In the upper secondary school group, majority of the students agreed on the statement but the difference between the yes and no answers was rather small. Interestingly, in upper secondary school, the participants agreed on the statement *Finns must know other languages in addition to English* but in vocational school the opinion was rather opposite. The differences in the opinions were not surprising, since throughout the results of this study it has become clear that the variety of other

languages in addition to English was wider among the upper secondary school participants. A Bigger number of participants in the upper secondary school group disagreed on the statement, *all Finnish upper secondary level institutions must provide teaching also in English* whereas a bigger number of participants in the vocational school group agreed on the statement. In the following (Table 3), the frequencies of the answers according to the school institution of the participants are presented.

*Table 3 The statements of the significance of the English language in Finland.*

| Q38. Mark yes/no to the statement according to your own opinion.   | Upper secondary school |           | Vocational school |           |
|--|------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|  | YES                    | NO        | YES               | NO        |
| <b>1. People of all ages must know English.</b>  | <b>55</b>              | <b>40</b> | <b>50</b>         | <b>33</b> |
| <b>2. The youth must know English.</b>   | <b>92</b>              | <b>3</b>  | <b>78</b>         | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>3. The working-aged people must know English.</b>   | <b>91</b>              | <b>4</b>  | <b>76</b>         | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>4. The elderly must know English.</b>   | <b>50</b>              | <b>45</b> | <b>36</b>         | <b>47</b> |
| <b>5. The spread of the English language is a threat to the Finnish culture.</b>                                 | <b>12</b>              | <b>83</b> | <b>11</b>         | <b>72</b> |
| <b>6. The English language is a threat to the position of the Finnish, Swedish and Sámi language in Finland.</b> | <b>23</b>              | <b>72</b> | <b>14</b>         | <b>69</b> |
| <b>7. Finns must know other languages in addition to English.</b>  | <b>74</b>              | <b>21</b> | <b>35</b>         | <b>48</b> |
| <b>8. All Finnish enterprises must provide their services also in English.</b>                                   | <b>56</b>              | <b>39</b> | <b>63</b>         | <b>20</b> |
| <b>9. All Finnish upper secondary level institutions must provide teaching also in English.</b>                  | <b>44</b>              | <b>51</b> | <b>65</b>         | <b>18</b> |
| <b>10. For multicultural development, it is important that every Finn knows how to speak English.</b>            | <b>69</b>              | <b>26</b> | <b>64</b>         | <b>19</b> |

## 5. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to examine whether the educational background of upper secondary level students influenced their attitudes towards the English language. Furthermore, the aim was to reveal the possible differences in the attitudes between the upper secondary school and the vocational school students. To achieve this comparison, data from upper secondary schools and vocational schools around Finland were collected with an online questionnaire. Since this study was conducted in Finland, wider conclusions cannot be made about the attitudes towards English in upper secondary level education in other countries, for instance. Broader scale conclusions of the attitudes would require further research. This chapter discusses the results of the data analysis, answering to the four research questions presented in the introduction.

The first question of this research was, “What kinds of attitudes do the Finnish upper secondary level students have towards the English language?” Based on the information retrieved from the data analysis, the overall attitude of the upper secondary level students towards the English language is positive. The result was not surprising, since in earlier research conducted on language attitudes in Finland (Leppänen et. al 2011; Hämäläinen 2016) the results were similar, hence the English language was highly valued among young, educated people.

According to the results, English has a positive significance in the lives of upper secondary level students. Majority of the upper secondary level students liked the English language, found knowing the language important, were in contact with the language on a daily basis, understood the significance of the language from the perspective of their future career, and were aware of the position of English in the globalising world. The close circles of the participants appreciated the language as well. The open-ended questions provided additional information about why the participants found knowing English important from different perspectives, and the reasons listed were rather diverse.

Additionally, it appears that the English language was not seen as a threat to the native languages of Finland or to the Finnish culture among the participants, even though there has been discussion on the negative influences that foreign languages might have on the Finnish and Swedish language and culture (Kotimaisten kielten keskus 2018). All the findings support the assumption that the position of English is going towards a shift from a foreign language to a second language in Finland, at least among upper secondary level students.

Although in this study the uses of English were not investigated in greater detail, some relevant information from the point of view of language attitudes was retrieved. After Finnish, English appeared to be the most used language among the participants. For instance, at work, at school, at home, during free time, and while traveling, English was the first language choice of the participants. Moreover, the information on the participants' level of English is closely related to the uses of English. As mentioned in the data analysis (see section 4.2), it is possible that the self-evaluations in general do not provide completely reliable results. Nevertheless, rather surprisingly, majority of the upper secondary level participants evaluated their overall language level in English as basic, between the levels A1 and A2. The level of the participants' spoken and written English according to their self-evaluation was somewhere between A2 and B1, whereas their listening comprehension was somewhere between A1 and A2. Highest frequencies of participants evaluated their skills in reading to be A1 and B2. The results were unexpected, since according to earlier research (Leppänen et. al 2011), Finnish people are more skilled in receptive English. It appears that the difference between the participants' active and receptive skills in English in the present study was not distinctive. The fact that in upper secondary level the active uses of English are in the same level as the receptive uses allows a suggestion, that in upper secondary level education for instance teaching methods might encourage students to speak or write the language at language lessons or at home. Nevertheless, among the participants, the active uses of English occurred more seldom than the receptive uses of



English. This might also explain why the receptive English skills of Finns have been better in the past.

The second research question was, “What kinds of attitudes do the Finnish upper secondary level students have towards learning English at school?” Majority of the participants in this study had positive attitudes towards learning English at school. In general, the participants considered English as an important language to study, and it was evaluated as the most important language for their studies after their native language, Finnish. The English language was more valued than the Swedish language, in fact it was considered almost as important as Finnish, although Swedish is the other official language of Finland. Interestingly, about half of the participants considered themselves bilinguals although they are, according to the traditional point of view, monolinguals, since they have one native language. Assumedly the participants’ regarded themselves as bilinguals because Finland is a bilingual country, and generally Swedish could be considered the second language of the participants. It is also possible that the participants saw English, instead of Swedish, as their second language. This argument would be supported by the fact that English was the most studied and used language after Finnish among the participants in this study throughout their education. These findings again support the view that English is beginning to have a second language position for the people in Finland (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003; 2008), or at least for the upper secondary level students.

In addition, the participants expressed that they would study English if it was not compulsory in the Finnish school system, which revealed that the participants do not only study the language solely because they are obliged to. In other words, willingness to study English voluntarily certainly implies that the attitudes towards learning the language were highly affirmative. Moreover, majority of the participants found learning and studying English easy. This could be either because the attitudes of the participants, in the first place, have been positive towards studying the language, which has lead to better study results or that they have received good grades that have lead to the positive attitudes (Gardner & Lambert 1972). Additionally, the participants found the preponing of the

English language as a good reform to the educational system. This supports the argument that at least Finnish upper secondary level students do not find the strengthening position of the English language in the educational system problematic.

The third research question was, “What are the differences or similarities between the attitudes of the upper secondary and vocational school students?” Although throughout the results, it was rather clear that in general both upper secondary school and vocational school students found English as an important language in their life, and they had studied it willingly, slight differences could be detected in the attitudes of these two groups. The differences between the groups were small, and for this reason wider generalisations cannot be made. It still seems that throughout the questionnaire, upper secondary school students were slightly more positive and slightly less negative towards the English language and learning English when compared to the vocational school group.

The greatest differences between the groups were in the ways in which the language was used. For the upper secondary school group, English was important in a wider variety of contexts than for the vocational school group. This might have resulted from the fact that the upper secondary school students are more interested in the English language and practicing their skills in general than the vocational school students. It also seems that the attitudes towards other languages and the usage of other languages in addition to English in the upper secondary school group were more positive than in the vocational school group. English was not found as the only important language, as appeared to be the opinion of the vocational school students. The reason for this could be that in upper secondary school, studying other languages in addition to English is easier because there are more different foreign language courses available. It could be that in vocational school attitudes towards other languages in addition to English would be more affirmative if the vocational schools offered more other language courses.

Clearly the upper secondary school participants’ English language level, according to their self-evaluations, was higher when compared to the vocational school participants. This could be a

result of the different emphasis on the guidelines of the curricula of the two school institutions. In upper secondary school, there is clearly a bigger number of English courses available for the students when compared to the vocational school. The vocational school students' skills might thus not improve as much after the comprehensive education when compared to the upper secondary school students. It might also be that since the people who decide to go to vocational school are aware that the institution is more oriented towards learning a profession, also their own interest is on practical skills of that profession. In other words, the students in vocational school might think they need the basic skills of communication in English in their future profession. In comparison, in upper secondary school, the students might be more oriented towards a scientifically emphasised, theoretical profession, for example, in which they need a higher-level level in the language, not solely the abilities in basic communication.

Although the results seem rather straight-forward, it must be taken in consideration that the participant groups were somewhat insufficient. Earlier in this thesis (see section 4.1) it was stated that the data was overrepresented by female participants in upper secondary school and underrepresented by the same school institution male participants. It can be speculated whether the results would have been different with more male participants in the study. Furthermore, the results of the study could have been different with a wider number of participants that were over the age 19, and with a vaster frequency of participants from more diverse variety of regions. In addition, the results could have altered if the distribution of the vocational school branches was vaster, for instance if majority of the vocational school participants had studied in less customer service oriented or less international branches. Moreover, because in this study the upper secondary school participants were not enquired to inform whether their upper secondary school was oriented towards a specific area, sports for example, the results of the upper secondary school group were somewhat lacking. Additionally, the results of the study could have been different if there were more participants that had other native

languages than Finnish. In this study, there were no participants who had, for instance Swedish as their first language.

The linguistic background of the participants revealed that a rather high frequency had multicultural people in their close circle of friends. As it has been discussed in this thesis (see subsection 2.2.1), English is a common language, *lingua franca*, that can be spoken among people who do not share the same native language, and Finnish people use English as a *lingua franca* to a greater degree. The participants' attitudes towards English might have turned out positive because it is the common language that facilitates communication with people. It could also be that the ingroup of the participants has affected the way in which they perceive the English language. According to the results of the study, the participants' ingroups consist of multicultural people whose attitudes towards English are rather positive, hence the participants' attitudes may be similar to that of their ingroups' attitudes (see section 2.3).

This study also revealed that Finnish upper secondary level students had a rather wide variety of different languages in their linguistic repertoire in addition to English. This allows an assumption that the students in upper secondary level in Finland are encouraged to study different languages. In fact, a broad linguistic range is favored in Finland because Finns are speakers of two small languages, and foreign languages have been seen as an important way to communicate with people from other countries (Numminen & Piri 1998, 7-21). Also the fact that the participants had a wide range of different languages in their repertoire might have influenced on their interest of taking part in this study in the first place. Speculations about whether the results of the study would have been different if the participants had a smaller repertoire of languages, should be made.

Altogether, it is apparent that opinions towards English and learning English among educated young people in Finland are affirmative because the language has a strong position globally. Furthermore, in Finnish education the language has been and is highly valued. A Conclusion can be made based on the differences between the two groups compared. Firstly, for upper secondary school

students English serves as a language for more varied purposes when compared to the vocational school students. Secondly, English seems to have a greater role in general in the lives of the upper secondary school students. Lastly, other languages in contrast with English do not seem to have distinctively less important position for the upper secondary school students, whereas for vocational school students, English seems to be the only important foreign language after their native language.

The information of this study is valuable from the point of view of language education and curricula in upper secondary level institutions. Perhaps more attention should be directed towards the vocational school language teaching. Students should be encouraged to use English in diverse settings, and maybe the importance of other languages in addition to English should be emphasised. The long-term aim of this action could be leveling out the differences in the language skills between the vocational school and upper secondary school students.

## 6. CONCLUSION

To summarise, this thesis investigated the Finnish upper secondary level students' attitudes towards the English language and learning English in school to compare upper secondary school and vocational school students' perceptions. The attitudes were studied from the perspective of the participants' educational background. This small-scale study was conducted with an online questionnaire, and it provided an adequate amount of data. Since the number of participants in this study was rather low, the results cannot be generalised. Instead, this study contributes to the field by giving indications on the current position of English among upper secondary students in Finland.

The conclusion is that in general upper secondary level students in Finland have positive attitudes towards English and learning English. There is a difference between the attitudes of the students in the two school institutions, yet the difference is not remarkable. Upper secondary school students seem to value the English language slightly more than vocational school students. The main reason for this could be the different emphases in the curricula of the school institutions. For instance, in upper secondary school, the number of English courses provided for the students is bigger than in vocational school. Also, the requirements for the students relating to the English language skills are vaster in upper secondary school curricula. However, it must be kept in mind that the educational background is not the only factor affecting peoples' attitudes towards languages. This research has been conducted from one point of view, and the results would be different if the main perspective of the analysis was, for example, the region or the gender of the participants.

This thesis contributes to the field of attitude studies by providing current information about the status of English among upper secondary level students in Finland. Further research could be conducted for instance with bigger participant groups, in different countries, and with different languages in focus.

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## **APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE STUDY (ORIGINAL)**

### **Suomalaisessa toisen asteen koulutuksessa opiskelevien asenteet englannin kieltä ja opiskelua kohtaan**

Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on kerätä tietoa suomalaisten toisen asteen oppilaitoksen opiskelijoiden asenteista englannin kieltä ja opiskelua kohtaan.

Kyselyn vastauksia käytetään pro gradu -tutkielmassa, joka tehdään englannin kielen oppiaineeseen Tampereen yliopiston Kielten tutkinto-ohjelmassa kevään 2020 aikana.

Kyselyyn vastaamiseen menee noin 10-15 minuuttia, ja siinä on viisi osiota. Kaikki vastaukset säilyvät anonyymeinä, kysely on luottamuksellinen, ja kyselyyn osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Osallistumalla kyselyyn annat tutkijalle luvan käyttää lomakkeella kerättyä aineistoa pro gradu -tutkielmassa.

Mikäli haluat poistaa vastauksesi tai sinulle herää kysymyksiä tutkimuksesta, voit ottaa yhteyttä kyselyn laatijaan.

Susanna Mäkinen

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Kiitos etukäteen vastauksestasi!

Ystävällisin terveisin

Susanna Mäkinen

## 1. Taustatiedot

### 1. Sukupuoli

Mies                      Nainen                      Muu                      En halua vastata

### 2. Ikä

---

### 3. Oppilaitos

Lukio                      Ammattioppilaitos

### 4. Ammattioppilaitoksen suuntautumislinja

---

### 5. Äidinkieli

|         |        |          |        |
|---------|--------|----------|--------|
| Suomi   | Ruotsi | Englanti | Arabia |
| Espanja | Italia | Japani   | Kiina  |
| Ranska  | Saksa  | Saame    | Venäjä |
| Viro    | Muu... |          |        |

### 6. Onko huoltajillasi/vanhemmillasi eri äidinkieli kuin sinulla? Jos on, mikä?

|         |        |          |        |
|---------|--------|----------|--------|
| Suomi   | Ruotsi | Englanti | Arabia |
| Espanja | Italia | Japani   | Kiina  |
| Ranska  | Saksa  | Saame    | Venäjä |
| Viro    | Muu... |          |        |

### 7. Onko lähipiirissäsi ihmisiä, joilla on eri äidinkieli kuin sinulla? Kyllä                      Ei

a.) Vapaa kommenttikenttä. Voit halutessasi kertoa lisää lähipiirisi äidinkielistä.

---

### 8. Millä kielellä/kielillä kävit peruskoulun? Mikäli kävit peruskoulun äidinkielelläsi, vastaa ”äidinkieli”.

|            |         |        |          |
|------------|---------|--------|----------|
| Äidinkieli | Suomi   | Ruotsi | Englanti |
| Arabia     | Espanja | Italia | Japani   |
| Kiina      | Ranska  | Saksa  | Saame    |
| Venäjä     | Viro    | Muu... |          |

9. Missä Suomen maakunnassa olet asunut suurimman osan elämästäsi?

|                 |                   |                 |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Ahvenanmaa      | Etelä-Karjala     | Etelä-Pohjanmaa |
| Etelä-Savo      | Kainuu            | Kanta-Häme      |
| Keski-Pohjanmaa | Keski-Suomi       | Kymenlaakso     |
| Lappi           | Pirkanmaa         | Pohjanmaa       |
| Pohjois-Karjala | Pohjois-Pohjanmaa | Pohjois-Savo    |
| Päijät-Häme     | Satakunta         | Uusimaa         |
| Varsinais-Suomi |                   |                 |

- a.) Jos olet asunut muualla kuin Suomessa suurimman osan elämästäsi, voit halutessasi kirjoittaa sen tähän. Esim. ”Olen asunut Ruotsissa lapsuuteni.”
- 

10. Oletko mielestäsi...

yksikielinen          kaksikielinen          monikielinen

11. Millä kielellä/kielillä opiskelet oppilaitoksessasi tällä hetkellä? Mikäli opiskelet oppilaitoksessasi äidinkielelläsi, vastaa ”äidinkieli”.

|            |         |        |          |
|------------|---------|--------|----------|
| Äidinkieli | Suomi   | Ruotsi | Englanti |
| Arabia     | Espanja | Italia | Japani   |
| Kiina      | Ranska  | Saksa  | Saame    |
| Venäjä     | Viro    | Muu... |          |

12. Kuinka usein matkustat ulkomaille?

En koskaan                                  Harvemmin kuin kerran vuodessa  
 1-5 kertaa vuodessa                      5-10 kertaa vuodessa  
 Useammin kuin 10 kertaa vuodessa

13. Oletko asunut ulkomailla pidempään kuin kolme kuukautta? Jos vastauksesi on ”ei”, voit ohittaa kaksi seuraavaa kysymystä.

Kyllä          Ei

- a.) Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen ”kyllä”, missä maassa/maissa olet asunut?
- 

14. Mitä kieltä/kieliä käytit asuessasi ulkomailla?

|            |         |        |          |
|------------|---------|--------|----------|
| Äidinkieli | Suomi   | Ruotsi | Englanti |
| Arabia     | Espanja | Italia | Japani   |
| Kiina      | Ranska  | Saksa  | Saame    |
| Venäjä     | Viro    | Muu... |          |

## 15. Mitä kieliä olet opiskellut elämäsi aikana (muu kuin äidinkieli)?

|                        | Suo<br>mi | Ruo<br>tsi | Eng-<br>lanti | Ara-<br>bia | Es-<br>panja | Ita-<br>lia | Ja-<br>pani | Kii<br>na | Rans<br>ka | Sak<br>sa | Saa<br>me | Ve-<br>näjä | Vi<br>ro |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|----------|
| Ennen peruskoulua      |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |          |
| Peruskoulussa          |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |          |
| Lukiossa               |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |          |
| Ammattioppilaitoksessa |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |          |
| Kielikoulussa          |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |          |
| Itseopiskeluna         |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |          |

- a.) Voit halutessasi kertoa, mikäli olet opiskellut jotain kieltä, joka ei ole listattuna. Kirjoita myös missä opiskelit kieltä.

---

## 16. Mitä kieliä käytät, ja missä käytät niitä (muu kuin äidinkieli)?

|                | Suo<br>mi | Ruo<br>tsi | Eng-<br>lanti | Ara-<br>bia | Es-<br>panja | Ita-<br>lia | Ja-<br>pani | Kii<br>na | Rans<br>ka | Sak<br>sa | Saa<br>me | Ve-<br>näjä | Viro |
|----------------|-----------|------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------|
| Töissä         |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |      |
| Koulussa       |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |      |
| Kotona         |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |      |
| Vapaa-ajalla   |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |      |
| Matkustellessa |           |            |               |             |              |             |             |           |            |           |           |             |      |

- a.) Voit halutessasi kertoa, mikäli käytät jotain kieltä, joka ei ole listattuna. Kirjoita myös, missä käytät kieltä.

---



## 2. Englannin kieli ja sen merkitys elämässäsi

Tässä osiossa vastaat kysymyksiin koskien englannin kielen merkitystä omassa elämässäsi.

17. Pidätkö englannin kielestä?

Kyllä Ei

18. Onko englannin kielen osaaminen sinulle tärkeää?

Kyllä Ei

a.) Miksi?

---

19. Kuinka usein kuulet tai näet englannin kieltä?

En koskaan Päivittäin  
Viikoittain Kuukausittain

20. Missä kuulet tai näet englannin kieltä?

Töissä Koulussa Kotona  
Vapaa-ajalla (esim. harrastuksissa, ystävien kanssa...)  
Matkustaessa Muu

21. Kuinka usein puhut tai kirjoitat englanniksi?

En koskaan Päivittäin  
Viikoittain Kuukausittain

22. Missä kirjoitat tai puhut englanniksi?

Töissä Koulussa Kotona  
Vapaa-ajalla (esim. harrastuksissa, ystävien kanssa...)  
Matkustaessa Muu

23. Missä englannin kielen osaamisesta on sinulle eniten hyötyä?

Töissä Koulussa Kotona  
Vapaa-ajalla (esim. harrastuksissa, ystävien kanssa...)  
Matkustaessa Muu

a.) Miksi?

---

24. Onko englannin kielen osaaminen tärkeää tulevan urasuuntautumisesi näkökulmasta?

Kyllä                      Ei

a.) Miksi?

---

25. Onko englannin kielen osaaminen arvostettua lähipiirissäsi?

Kyllä                      Ei

### 3. Englannin kielen opiskelun merkitys

Tässä osiossa vastaat kysymyksiin koskien englannin kielen opiskelun merkitystä omassa elämässäsi.

26. Kuinka monta vuotta olet opiskellut englannin kieltä?

1-5 vuotta      5-10 vuotta      10-20 vuotta

27. Mikä/Mitkä kielet ovat opintojesi kannalta tärkeimpiä?

|            |         |        |          |
|------------|---------|--------|----------|
| Äidinkieli | Suomi   | Ruotsi | Englanti |
| Arabia     | Espanja | Italia | Japani   |
| Kiina      | Ranska  | Saksa  | Saame    |
| Venäjä     | Viro    | Muu... |          |

28. Pidätkö englannin kielen opiskelemista tärkeänä?

Kyllä      En

29. Pidätkö englannin kielen opetuksen varhentamista\* tärkeänä? \*Kielen opetuksen varhentamisella tarkoitetaan kielen opettamista jo peruskoulun ensimmäiseltä luokalta lähtien.

Kyllä      Ei      En osaa sanoa

30. Onko englannin kielen opiskelu mielestäsi helppoa?

Kyllä      Ei

31. Mikä on englannin kielen tasosi omasta mielestäsi? Mikäli et ole varma tasostasi, tarkista kuvaukset sivulta: <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/fi/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

|                      | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | C2 |
|----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Suullinen taito      |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Kirjallinen taito    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Kuullun ymmärtäminen |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Luetun ymmärtäminen  |    |    |    |    |    |    |

32. Opiskelisitko englantia, ellei se olisi pakollista suomalaisessa koulujärjestelmässä?

Kyllä            En

a.) Miksi?

---

33. Oletko oppinut englantia muualla kuin koulussa?

Kyllä            En

a.) Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen ”kyllä”, merkitse luetteloon paikat, joissa olet englantia oppinut.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Töissä       | Vapaa-ajalla (esim. harrastuksissa, ystävien kanssa...) |
| Matkustaessa | Perheen kanssa            Muu...                        |

#### 4. Englannin kielen käyttö

Tässä osiossa vastaat kysymyksiin koskien englannin kielen käyttöä.

34. Missä käytät englannin kieltä eniten?

|        |                |   |
|--------|----------------|---|
| Töissä | Koulussa       | Vapaa-ajalla (esim. harrastuksissa, ystävien kanssa...) |
|        | Perheen kanssa | Muu...  |

35. Miten usein kuuntelet, luet tai puhut englantia vapaa-ajallasi?

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| En koskaan  | Päivittäin    |
| Viikoittain | Kuukausittain |

36. Miten usein kuuntelet, luet tai puhut englantia koulussa?

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| En koskaan  | Päivittäin    |
| Viikoittain | Kuukausittain |

37. Uskotko, että tulet käyttämään englantia työelämässä?

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| Kyllä | Ei |
|-------|----|

a.) Jos vastasit kyllä, miten usein?

|            |             |               |
|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Päivittäin | Viikoittain | Kuukausittain |
|------------|-------------|---------------|

## 5. Englannin kielen merkitys Suomessa

Tässä kyselyn viimeisessä osiossa vastaat kyllä/ei -väittämiin englannin kielen merkityksestä Suomessa.

38. Merkitse kyllä/ei lukemaasi väittämään oman mielipiteesi perusteella.

|   | Kyllä | Ei |
|---|-------|----|
| 1. Kaikenikäisten ihmisten on osattava englantia.   |       |    |
| 2. Nuorten on osattava englantia.   |       |    |
| 3. Työikäisten on osattava englantia.   |       |    |
| 4. Ikääntyneiden on osattava englantia.   |       |    |
| 5. Englannin kielen levinneisyys on uhka suomalaiselle kulttuurille.                                    |       |    |
| 6. Englannin kieli uhkaa suomen, ruotsin ja saamen kielen asemaa suomessa.                              |       |    |
| 7. Suomalaisten täytyy osata muitakin kieliä kuin englantia.  |       |    |
| 8. Kaikkien suomalaisten yritysten täytyy tarjota palveluitaan myös englanniksi.                        |       |    |
| 9. Kaikkien suomalaisten toisen asteen oppilaitosten täytyy tarjota opetusta myös englanniksi.          |       |    |
| 10. Monikulttuurisuuden kehittymisen vuoksi on tärkeää, että jokainen suomalainen osaa puhua englantia. |       |    |

39. Vapaa kommenttikenttä.

Mikäli jokin kyselyn kysymyksistä jäi askarruttamaan, tai haluat kommentoida kyselyä, voit tehdä sen tässä.

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## **APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE STUDY (TRANSLATED IN ENGLISH)**

### **The upper secondary level students' attitudes towards English and learning English in Finland.**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about Finnish upper secondary level institution students' attitudes towards the English language and learning English.

The answers will be used in a master's thesis written for the English language subject in the Tampere university Programme for Languages during the spring 2020.

It takes approximately 10-15 minutes to answer to the questionnaire, and it consists of five sections. All answers stay anonym, the questionnaire is confidential, and taking part in it is voluntary. By taking part in the questionnaire you give the researcher a permission to use the material collected with the form in their thesis.

If you want to remove your answer or there are some questions that you have about the research, you may contact the author of the questionnaire.

Susanna Mäkinen

A Student of English language and literature

Tampere university

Email: [susanna.makinen@tuni.fi](mailto:susanna.makinen@tuni.fi)

Thank you in advance for your response!

Best wishes,

Susanna Mäkinen

## 1. Background information

### 1. Gender

Male                  Female                  Other  
I do not want to answer

### 2. Age

---

### 3. Educational institution

Upper secondary school                  Vocational school

### 4. Vocational school branch

---

### 5. Native language

|          |          |          |         |
|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Finnish  | Swedish  | English  | Arabic  |
| Spanish  | Italian  | Japanese | Chinese |
| French   | German   | Sámi     | Russian |
| Estonian | Other... |          |         |

### 6. Do your guardians/parents have different native language than you? If yes, what?

|          |          |          |         |
|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Finnish  | Swedish  | English  | Arabic  |
| Spanish  | Italian  | Japanese | Chinese |
| French   | German   | Sámi     | Russian |
| Estonian | Other... |          |         |

### 7. Are there people in your close circle of acquaintances/friends, that have different native language than you?

Yes                  No

a.) Free space for comments. If you so wish, you can tell more about the native languages in your close circle.

---



8. In which language/languages did you perform your comprehensive school?  
If you performed the comprehensive school in your native language, answer “native language”.

|                 |          |          |          |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Native language | Finnish  | Swedish  | English  |
| Arabic          | Spanish  | Italian  | Japanese |
| Chinese         | French   | German   | Sámi     |
| Russian         | Estonian | Other... |          |

9. In which Finnish region have you lived for the greatest part of your life?

|                      |                    |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Åland                | South Karelia      | South Ostrobothnia |
| South Savo           | Kainuu             | Kanta-Häme         |
| Central Ostrobothnia | Central Finland    | Kymenlaakso        |
| Lapland              | Pirkanmaa          | Ostrobothnia       |
| North Karelia        | North Ostrobothnia | North Savo         |
| Päijät-Häme          | Satakunta          | Uusimaa            |
| Southwest Finland    |                    |                    |

- a.) If you have lived somewhere else than in Finland for the greatest part of your life, you may write it here.

For example. “I have lived in Sweden during my childhood.”

10. Do you think you are...

monolingual      bilingual      multilingual

11. In which language/languages do you study in your school institution at the moment? If you study in your native language, please answer “native language”.

|                 |          |          |          |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Native language | Finnish  | Swedish  | English  |
| Arabic          | Spanish  | Italian  | Japanese |
| Chinese         | French   | German   | Sámi     |
| Russian         | Estonian | Other... |          |

12. How often do you travel abroad?

Never      Less than once year  
1-5 times a year      5-10 times a year  
More than 10 times a year

13. Have you lived abroad for longer than three months? If your answer is “no”, you may skip the two following questions.

Yes                      No

- a.) If you answered “yes” to the previous question, in which country/countries have you lived?

---

14. What languages did you use while living abroad?

|                 |          |          |          |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Native language | Finnish  | Swedish  | English  |
| Arabic          | Spanish  | Italian  | Japanese |
| Chinese         | French   | German   | Sámi     |
| Russian         | Estonian | Other... |          |

15. What languages have you studied during your lifetime (other than native language)?

|                             | Finnish | Swedish | English | Arabic | Spanish | Italian | Japanese | Chinese | French | German | Sámi | Russian | Estonian |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|------|---------|----------|
| Before comprehensive school |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| In comprehensive school     |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| In upper secondary school   |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| In vocational school        |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| In a language course abroad |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| Self-studying               |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |

- a.) If you have studied some other language that could not be found in the list, you may write it here. Also write where did you study the language.

---

16. What languages do you use, and where do you use them (other than native language)?

|                  | Finnish | Swedish | English | Arabic | Spanish | Italian | Japanese | Chinese | French | German | Sami | Russian | Estonian |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|------|---------|----------|
| At work          |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| At school        |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| At home          |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| During free time |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |
| While traveling  |         |         |         |        |         |         |          |         |        |        |      |         |          |

- a.) If you use some other language that could not be found in the list, you may write it here. Also write where you use the language.

---

## 2. The English language in your life

In this section you will answer questions regarding the significance of the English language in your life.

17. Do you like the English language?

Yes                  No

18. Is knowing the English language important to you?

Yes                  No

a.) Why?

---

19. How often do you hear or see the English language?

Never                  Daily

Weekly                  Monthly

20. Where do you hear or see the English language?

At work                  At school                  At home

During free time (for example in hobbies, with friends...)

While traveling                  Other

21. How often do you speak or write in English?

Never                  Daily

Weekly                  Monthly

22. Where do you speak or write in English?

At work                  At school                  At home

During free time (for example in hobbies, with friends...)

While traveling                  Other

23. Where do you find knowing the English language the most useful?

At work                      At school                      At home

During free time (for example in hobbies, with friends...)

While traveling                      Other

a.) Why?

---

24. Is knowing English important from the perspective of your future career?

Yes                      No

a.) Why?

---

25. Is knowing the English language valued in your close circle of friends?

Yes                      No

### 3. The significance of learning English

In this section you will answer questions regarding the significance of learning the English language in your life.

26. How many years have you been learning the English language?  
1-5 years                      5-10 years                      10-20 years
27. What are the most important languages for your studies?
- |                 |          |          |          |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Native language | Finnish  | Swedish  | English  |
| Arabic          | Spanish  | Italian  | Japanese |
| Chinese         | French   | German   | Sámi     |
| Russian         | Estonian | Other... |          |
28. Do you think studying English is important?  
Yes                      No
29. Do you think preponing the English language teaching\* is important?  
\*Preponing language teaching means that the language teaching begins in the first grade of the comprehensive school.  
Yes                      No                      I do not know
30. Do you think learning the English language is easy?  
Yes                      No
31. What is your level of English language according to your own opinion? If you are not sure of your level, check the descriptions from the webpage:  
<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/fi/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

|           | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | C2 |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Speaking  |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Writing   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Listening |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Reading   |    |    |    |    |    |    |

32. Would you study English if it was not compulsory in the Finnish educational system?

Yes                      No

a.) Why?

33. Have you learned English somewhere else than in school?

Yes                      No

a.) If you answered “yes” to the previous question, mark in the list the places in which you have learned English.

| At work   | During free time (for example in hobbies, with friends...)  |
|---|---|
| <p>1. I have a lot of things to do.</p> <p>2. I have to work hard.</p> <p>3. I have to be on time.</p> <p>4. I have to be careful.</p> <p>5. I have to be responsible.</p> <p>6. I have to be organized.</p> <p>7. I have to be efficient.</p> <p>8. I have to be productive.</p> <p>9. I have to be motivated.</p> <p>10. I have to be focused.</p> <p>11. I have to be patient.</p> <p>12. I have to be calm.</p> <p>13. I have to be polite.</p> <p>14. I have to be respectful.</p> <p>15. I have to be honest.</p> <p>16. I have to be truthful.</p> <p>17. I have to be fair.</p> <p>18. I have to be just.</p> <p>19. I have to be kind.</p> <p>20. I have to be gentle.</p> <p>21. I have to be soft.</p> <p>22. I have to be sweet.</p> <p>23. I have to be nice.</p> <p>24. I have to be friendly.</p> <p>25. I have to be helpful.</p> <p>26. I have to be useful.</p> <p>27. I have to be valuable.</p> <p>28. I have to be important.</p> <p>29. I have to be significant.</p> <p>30. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>31. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>32. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>33. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>34. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>35. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>36. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>37. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>38. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>39. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>40. I have to be meaningful.</p> | <p>1. I have a lot of things to do.</p> <p>2. I have to work hard.</p> <p>3. I have to be on time.</p> <p>4. I have to be careful.</p> <p>5. I have to be responsible.</p> <p>6. I have to be organized.</p> <p>7. I have to be efficient.</p> <p>8. I have to be productive.</p> <p>9. I have to be motivated.</p> <p>10. I have to be focused.</p> <p>11. I have to be patient.</p> <p>12. I have to be calm.</p> <p>13. I have to be polite.</p> <p>14. I have to be respectful.</p> <p>15. I have to be honest.</p> <p>16. I have to be truthful.</p> <p>17. I have to be fair.</p> <p>18. I have to be just.</p> <p>19. I have to be kind.</p> <p>20. I have to be gentle.</p> <p>21. I have to be soft.</p> <p>22. I have to be sweet.</p> <p>23. I have to be nice.</p> <p>24. I have to be friendly.</p> <p>25. I have to be helpful.</p> <p>26. I have to be useful.</p> <p>27. I have to be valuable.</p> <p>28. I have to be important.</p> <p>29. I have to be significant.</p> <p>30. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>31. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>32. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>33. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>34. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>35. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>36. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>37. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>38. I have to be meaningful.</p> <p>39. I have to be purposeful.</p> <p>40. I have to be meaningful.</p> |

|                 |             |       |
|-----------------|-------------|-------|
| While traveling | With family | Other |
|-----------------|-------------|-------|

#### 4. The uses of English

In this section you will answer questions regarding the uses of the English language.

34. Where do you use the English language the most?

At work

At school

During free time (for example in hobbies, with friends...)

With family

Other

35. How often do you listen, read or speak the English language during your free time?

Never

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

36. How often do you listen, read or speak English at school?

Never

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

37. Do you believe that you will use the English language in the working life?

Yes

No

a.) If you answered “yes”, how often?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly



### 5. The significance of English in Finland

In this last section of the questionnaire, you will answer to yes/no -statements about the significance of the English language in Finland.

38. Mark yes/no to the statement according to your own opinion.

| STATEMENT   | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. People of all ages must know English.  |     |    |
| 2. The youth must know English.   |     |    |
| 3. The working-aged people must know English.   |     |    |
| 4. The elderly must know English.   |     |    |
| 5. The spread of the English language is a threat to the Finnish culture.                                 |     |    |
| 6. The English language is a threat to the position of the Finnish, Swedish and Sámi language in Finland. |     |    |
| 7. Finns must know other languages in addition to English.  |     |    |
| 8. All Finnish enterprises must provide their services also in English.                                   |     |    |
| 9. All Finnish upper secondary level institutions must provide teaching also in English.                  |     |    |
| 10. For multicultural development, it is important that every Finn knows how to speak English.            |     |    |

39. Free comment space. If there is something you want to ask or comment regarding this questionnaire, feel free to do so.

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## **APPENDIX C. COVER LETTER OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Hello,

I'm an English language and literature student from Tampere University, writing my Master's thesis on upper secondary school and vocational school students' attitudes towards the English language and studying the language.

The main aim of my research is to describe and compare the attitudes of these two upper secondary level student groups. To collect the data, I use a questionnaire which is made with Google Forms.

The questionnaire is anonymous, reliable, and the participant who has given an answer to the questionnaire can remove their answer by contacting me if they so wish. It takes about 10-15 minutes to answer to the questionnaire, and it can be opened with a mobile phone as well.

The best way to get answers to the survey is that for example a teacher shares the link to this questionnaire for their students, and it will be answered to during a lesson.

The most important thing is that the link reaches as many upper secondary level students as possible.

The link and the QR-code to the questionnaire are provided below.

<https://forms.gle/EAbiYk5tYcKEDXhZA>



Thank you a lot! 😊

Best wishes,

Susanna Mäkinen

## APPENDIX D. RESEARCH PERMISSION (TAMPERE VOCATIONAL COLLEGE)

Hei, tutkimuslupahakemuksesi "Students' attitudes to English in Finnish second degree education: A comparative approach on attitudes to English in Finnish upper secondary and vocational school Oppilaiden asenteet englantia kohtaan suomalaisessa toisen asteen koulutuksessa: Vertaileva tutkimus asenteista englannin kieltä kohtaan suomalaisessa lukiossa ja ammattikoulussa" on käsitelty seuraavin tiedoin. Tämä viesti on lähetetty tiedoksi myös tutkimuksesi yhteyshenkilölle kaupungissa sekä tutkimuksesi ohjaajalle, jos kyseessä on opinnäytetyö.

Hakija 1:

Sukunimi: Mäkinen

Etunimi: Susanna

Organisaatio: Tampereen yliopisto

Tutkimus- tai oppilaitos: Tampereen yliopisto

Koulutusohjelma: Kielten tutkinto-ohjelma

Tutkimuksen taso: Pro gradu

Opinnäytetyönä tehtävän tutkimuksen ohjaaja oppilaitoksessa:

Sukunimi: Nevala

Etunimi: Minna

Oppilaitos: Tampereen yliopisto

Oppiarvo ja ammatti: Englannin kielen, kirjallisuuden ja kääntämisen professori

Opettaja on hyväksynyt tutkimussuunnitelman: Kyllä

Tutkimuksen nimi: Students' attitudes to English in Finnish second degree education:

A comparative approach on attitudes to English in Finnish upper secondary and vocational school

Oppilaiden asenteet englantia kohtaan suomalaisessa toisen asteen koulutuksessa:

Vertaileva tutkimus asenteista englannin kieltä kohtaan suomalaisessa lukiossa ja ammattikoulussa

Tutkimuksen lyhyt kuvaus (keskeiset tavoitteet, tutkimusmenetelmät, kohderyhmä): Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kerätä tietoa suomalaisten toisen asteen oppilaitoksen opiskelijoiden asenteista englannin kieltä ja opiskelua kohtaan.

Tutkimuksessa vertaillaan lukion ja ammattioppilaitoksen opiskelijoiden asenteita englannin kieltä ja opiskelua kohtaan.

Tutkimusmenetelmä on määrällinen ja laadullinen, ja se suoritetaan kyselylomakkeen avulla.

Kyselyn vastauksia käytetään pro gradu -tutkielmassa, joka tehdään englannin kielen oppiaineeseen Tampereen yliopiston Kielten tutkinto-ohjelmassa kevään 2020 aikana.

Pääasiallinen tutkimustapa/metodi:

Kysely: Kyllä

Haastattelu: Ei

Havainnointi: Ei

Asiakirja-/tilastoanalyysi: Ei

Muu, mikä: Ei

Mikä muu?:

Osallistuminen: Ei

Henkilötietopohjainen tutkimus...: Ei

Edellyttääkö lupa eettisen toi...: Ei

Minkä eettisen toimikunnan?:

Myönteisen lausunnon päivämäärä:

Aineiston keruu alkaa: 2.12.2019  
 Aineiston keruu päättyy: 15.3.2020  
 Tutkimuksen arvioitu valmistumisaika: 30.05.2020  
 Lisätietoja:  
 Rekisteritietojen käyttö: Ei  
 Tutkimusaineisto ei sisällä tunnistetietoja: Kyllä  
 Tunnistetiedot poistetaan analysointivaiheessa: Ei  
 Aineisto analysoidaan tunnistetiedoin: Ei  
 Peruste tunnistetietojen säilyttämiselle:  
 Sähköinen arkistointi: Kyllä  
 Paperinen arkistointi: Ei  
 Aineiston arkistointipaikka: Muu sähköinen aineisto  
 Aineistoa kuvaavat asiasanat (YSA): attitudes, english learning, english teaching  
 Aineiston jatkokäyttöä koskevista tiedusteluista vastaava henkilö:  
 Päiväys: 14.11.2019  
 Allekirjoitus: Susanna Mäkinen  
 Tutkimussuunnitelma: Kyllä  
 Kysely-/haastattelulomake: Kyllä  
 Muu aineistonkeruuseen liittyvä materiaali: Ei  
 Hakemus tietojärjestelmien käyttöoikeuksiin: Ei  
 Tietojen ja tietojärjestelmien käyttö- ja salassapitositoumus: Ei  
 Eettisen toimikunnan lausunto: Ei  
 Henkilötietolain mukainen rekisteriseloste: Ei  
 Muu liite: Ei  
 Liitteen/liitteiden nimi: Kyselylomake, tutkimussuunnitelma  
 Tutkimus voidaan julkaista Tampereen kaupungin Internet-sivuilla: Tutkimusta ei voida julkaista Tampereen kaupungin Internet-sivuilla  
 Tutkimus on salassapidettävä: Tutkimus ei ole salassapidettävä  
 Tutkimus on salassapidettävä Tutkimus ei ole salassapidettävä  
 Tutkimusluvan myöntäminen Tutkimuslupa myönnetään  
 Päiväys 4.12.2019