



TURUN KAUPPAKORKEAKOULU
Turku School of Economics
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES

The 'Language Need' research project at the Turku School of Economics: Do the language courses meet the need?

Hanna Ruska-Becker & Joachim Schlabach

Turku School of Economics, Department of Languages



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1. Languages in business education in Finland
2. Language need study
3. General information
4. Results
5. Conclusion, implementation, further studies



1. Languages in business education in Finland

University degrees require at least 2+2 languages:

- Mother tongue Finnish: Business communication
- Swedish, 2nd national language
- 2 foreign languages (in fact English + another FL)

At Turku School of Economics

- min. 34 cr language studies for Master's degree (300 cr)
- Finnish, Swedish
- English, German, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese



2. Language need study

- Task: description of language need at TSE graduates' workplace
- Aim: quality assurance – curriculum
- Stage 1: Web based survey, system Webropol Autumn 2007
- TSE-graduates 1997-2006
- sent to 882 graduates (contact information SEFE)
- returned by 444 respondents (rate of return 54%)
- grant from LSR Foundation for Economic Education
- Stage 2: Interviews (2008-10)



2. Language need study

- Web based questionnaire
- Main themes:
 - Personal background information
 - Language studies
 - Self evaluation of language skills
 - Language need at the workplace
 - Language use situation at the workplace
 - Language education and language need, do they meet?
 - Need for actual further language education



3. General information

- Respondents: 444
- Sex: 63 % female, 37 % male
- Age: 82 % 27-36 years
- Year of graduation:
 - 1997-1999 3-11 responses/year; *underrepresented*
 - 2000-2006 46-69 responses/year; *overrepresented*; (equivalent 22-35 % of resp. graduate year)
- Main subject:
 - Accounting, Marketing, International Business, ...



3. General information

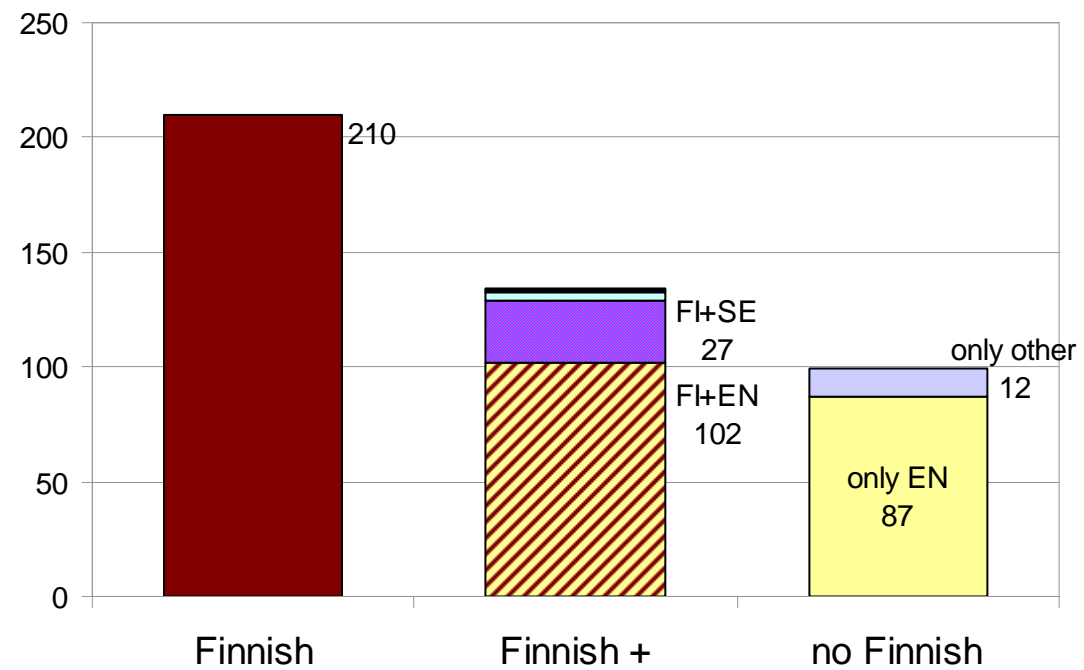
- Work place:
 - Employed mostly in private enterprises, less in public service
- Position in organization
 - Mostly as expert, in middle management or as official
- Size of the company:
 - Mostly big companies (over 500)
- Location:
 - Almost all in Finland



3. General information

Official language(s) of the organization (444):

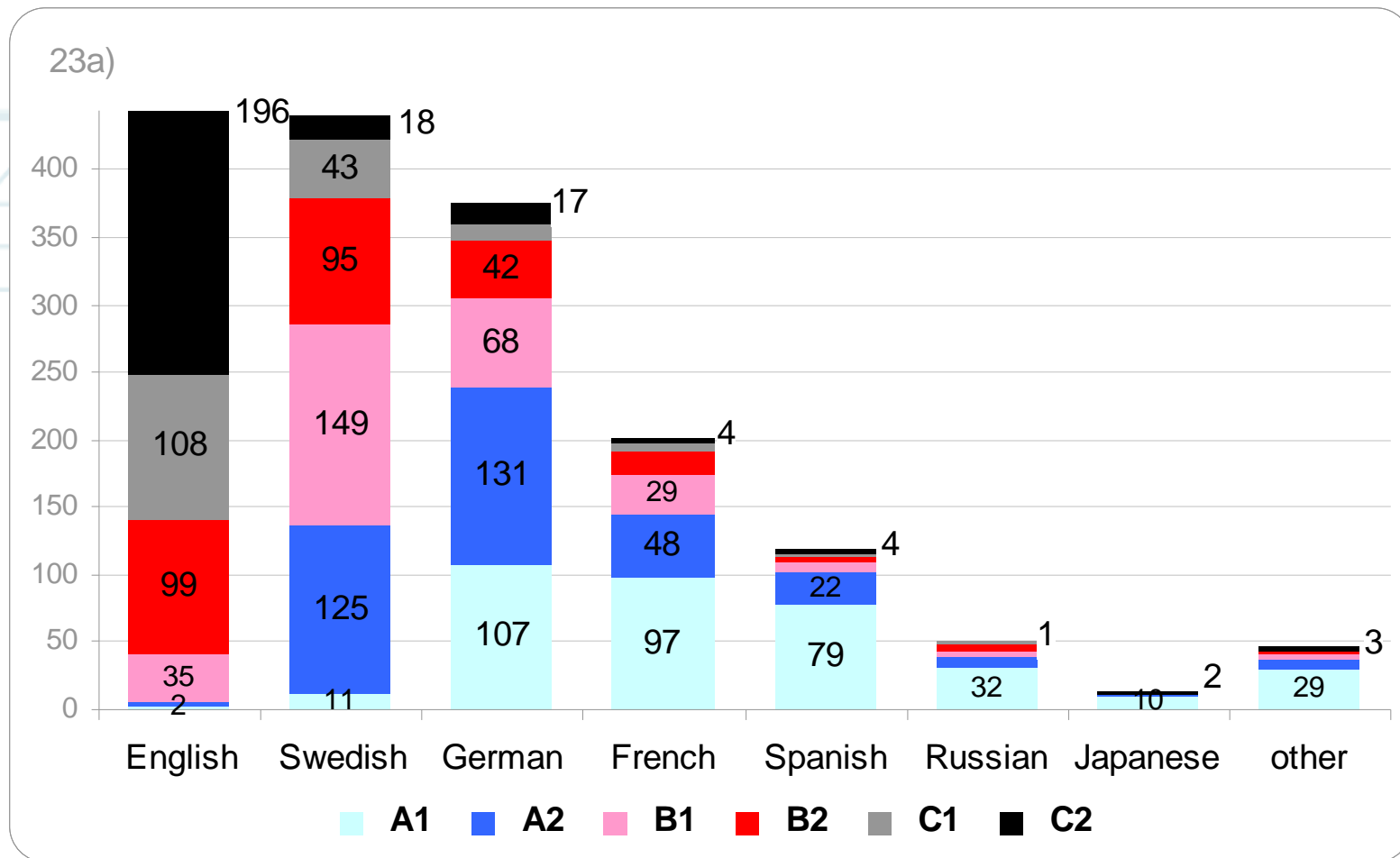
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4. Results

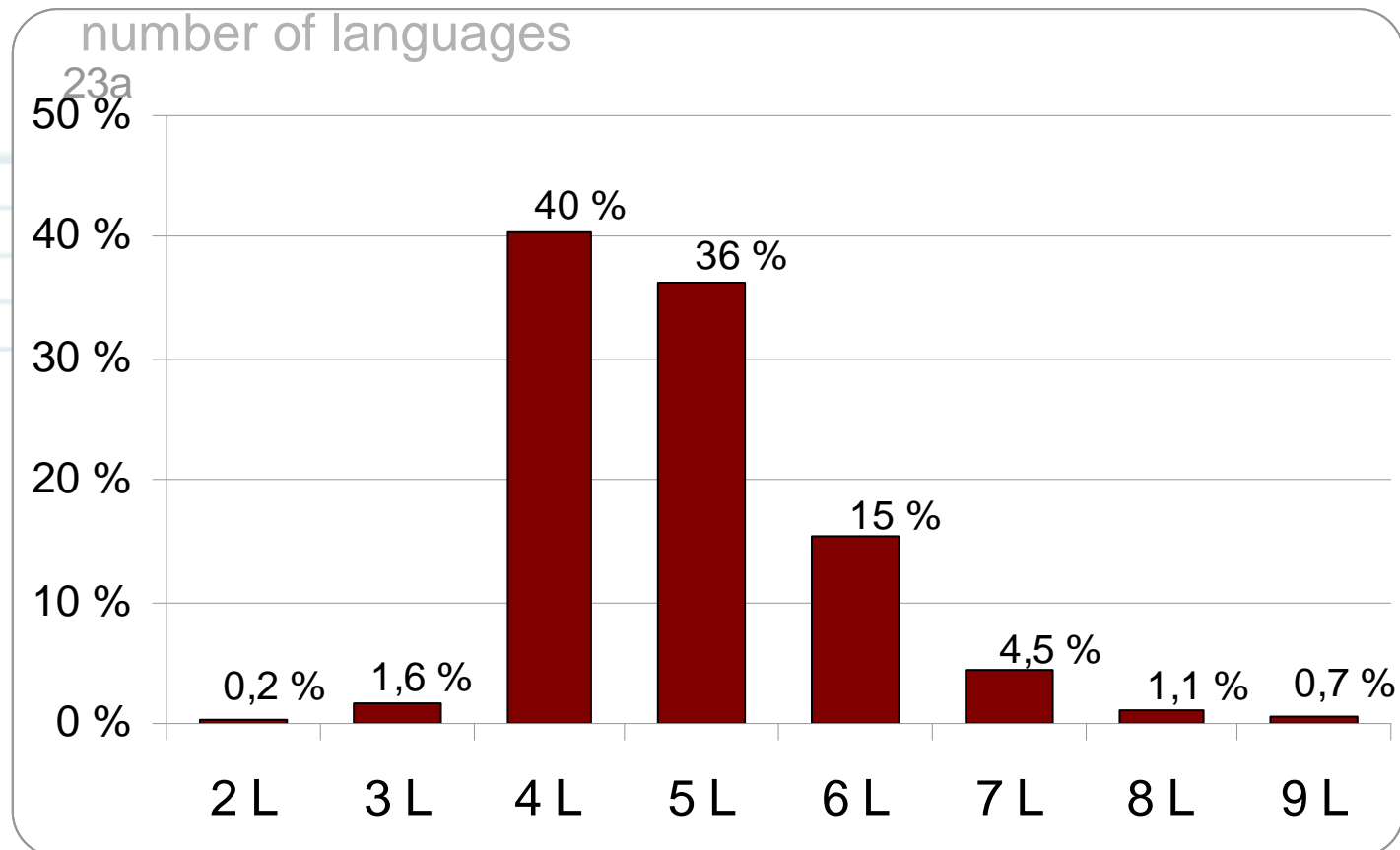
Self-evaluation of language skills (CEF) (444)





4. Results

Self-evaluation of language skills (444)

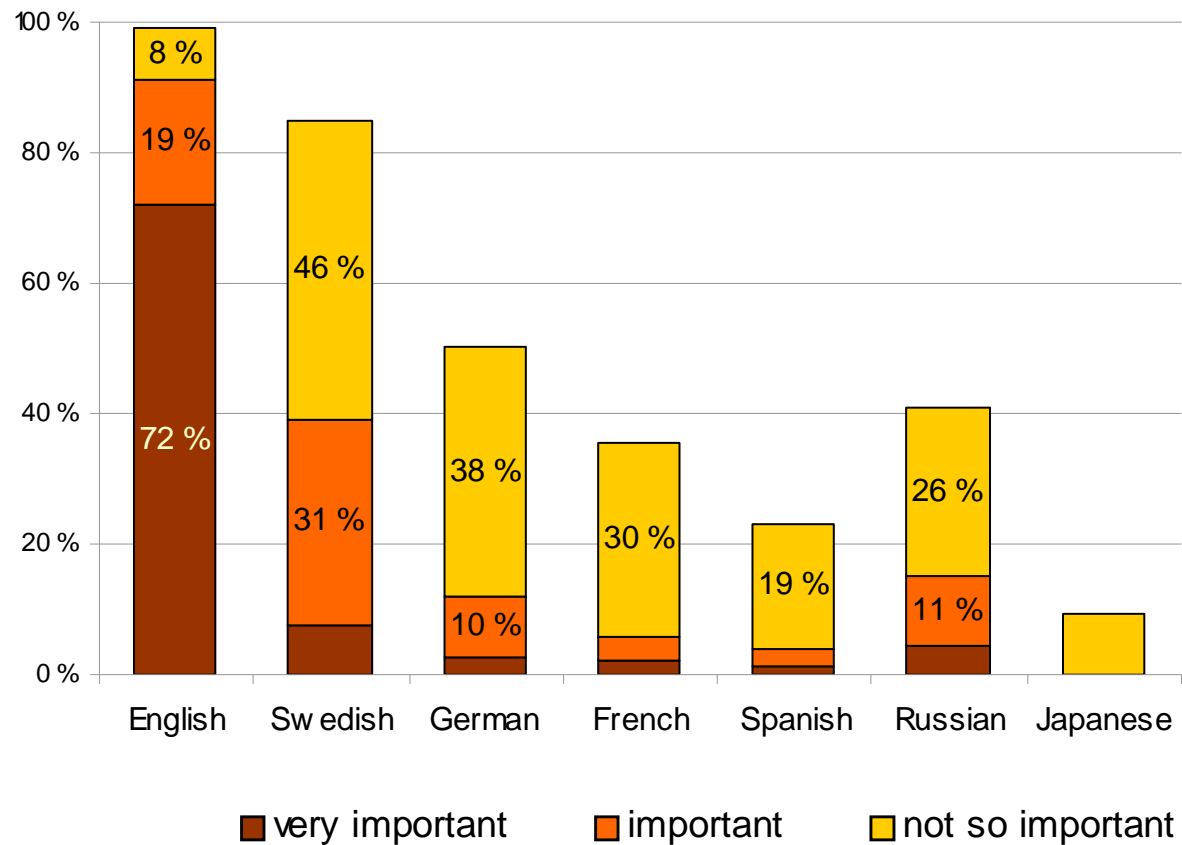




4. Results

Language importance at the workplace (443)

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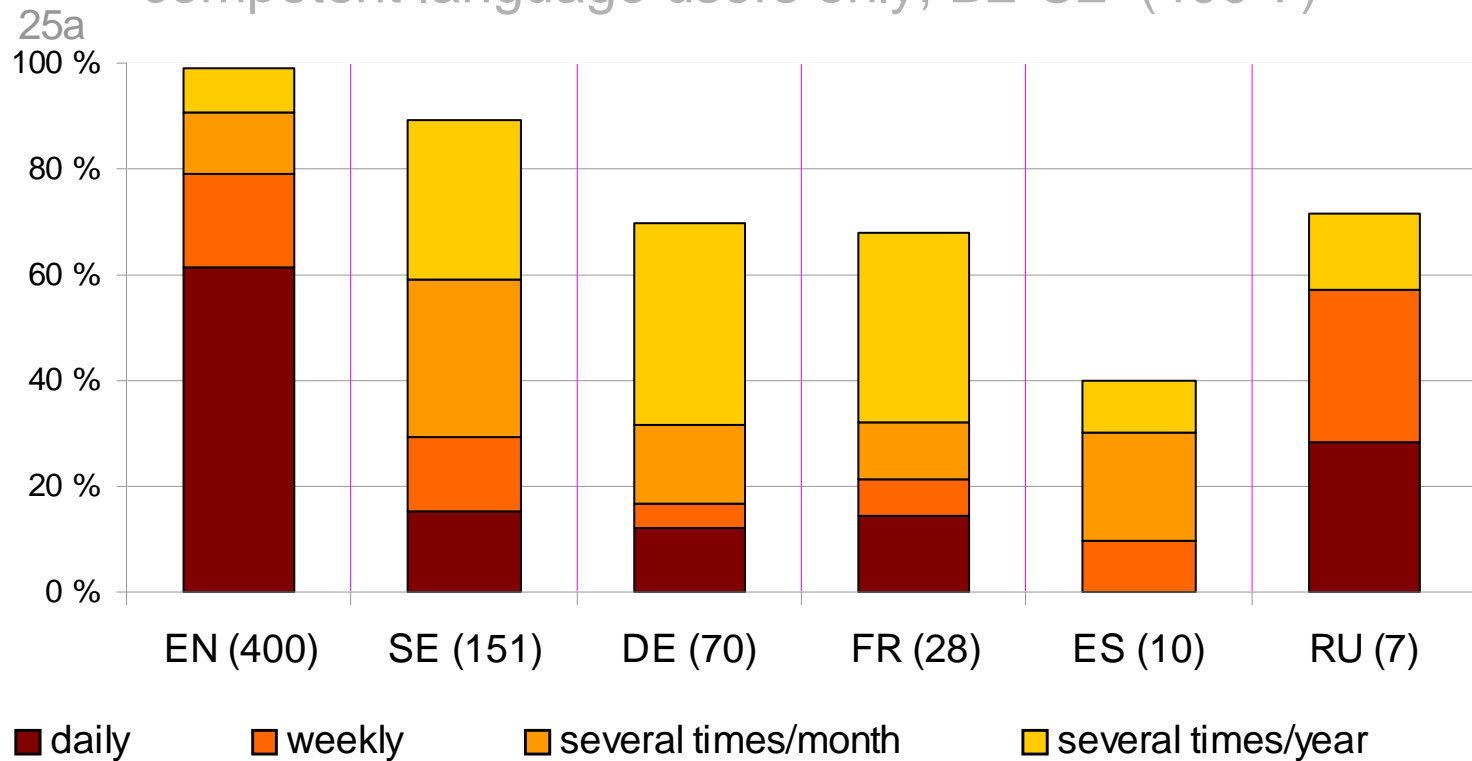




4. Results

Languages used at work

competent language users only, B2-C2 (400-7)





4. Results

Language use specified

1. by languages

English, Swedish, German,
French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese

2. by activity:

a) Reading, b) Writing, c) Listening,
d) Speaking, e) Interaction

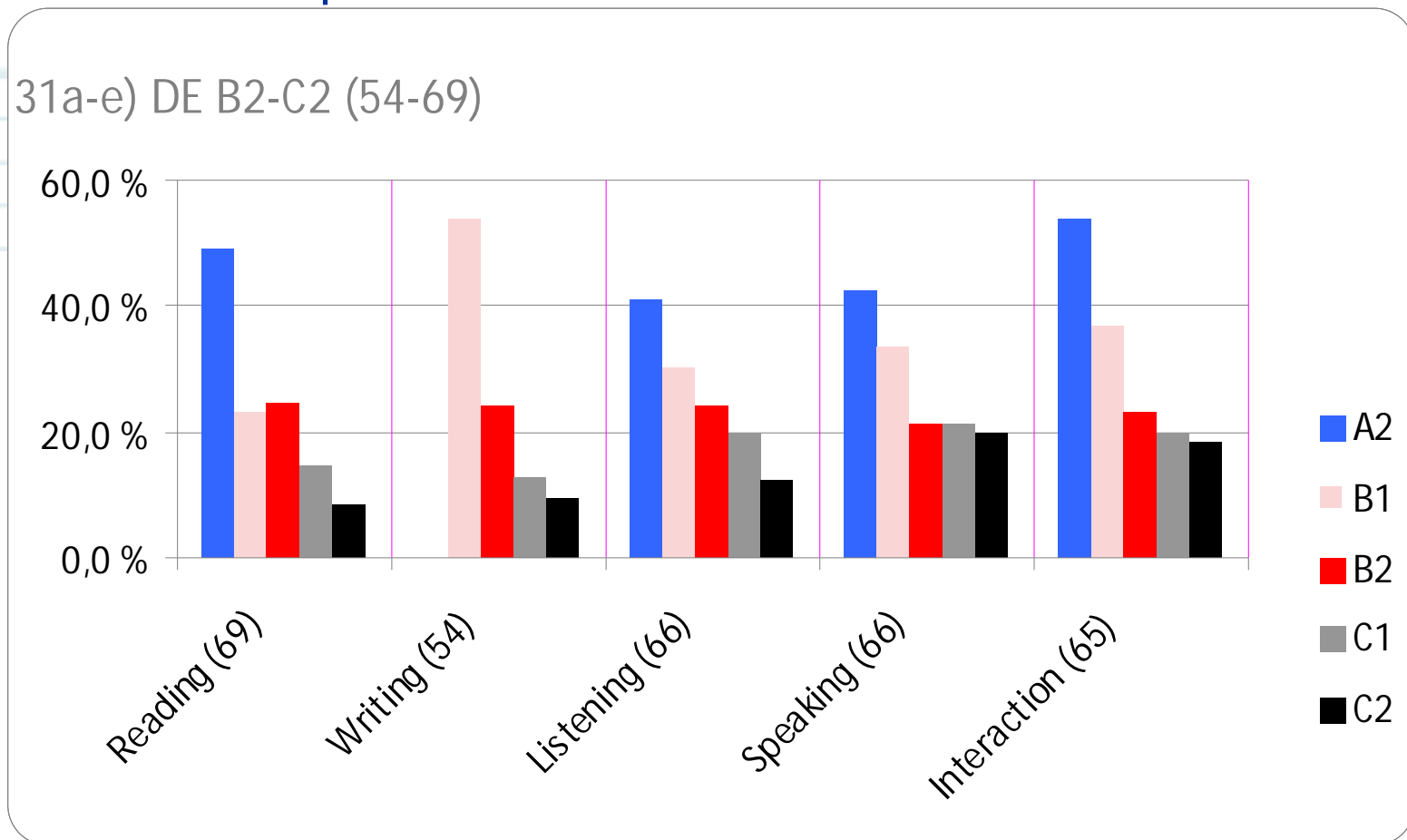
3. by given situations / difficulty

categorized by CEF-scale A2-C2



4. Results

Language use specified:
example: German



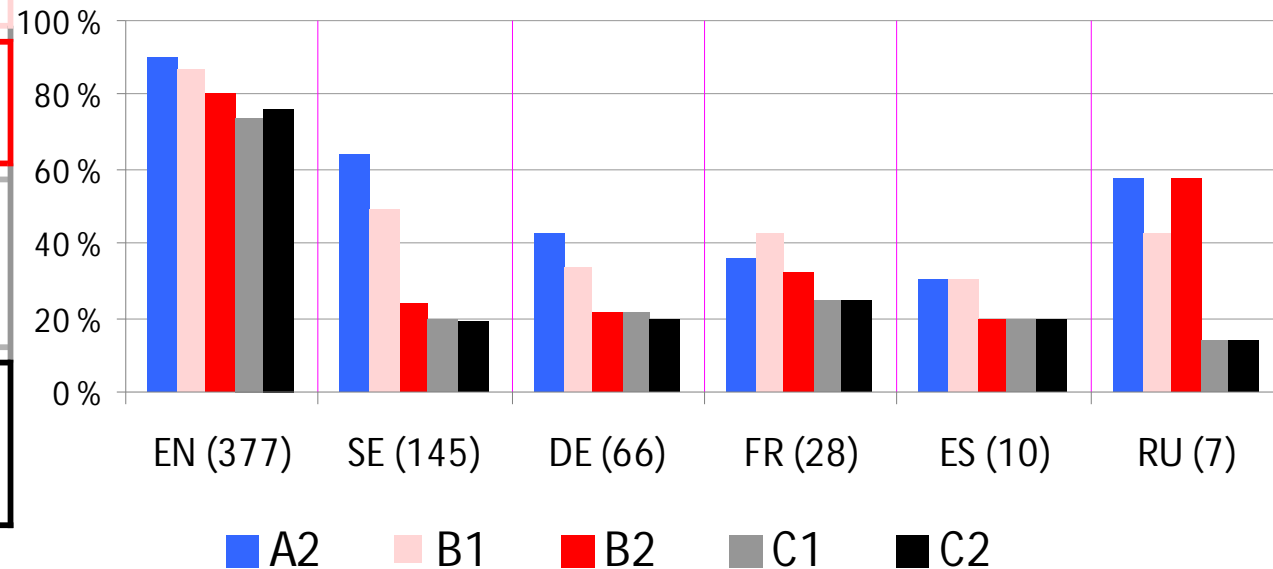


1. 4. Results

Language use specified:
example: Speaking

A2	Making short and simple phone calls
B1	Normal phone calls, coping with routine business travel situations
B2	Giving a presentation, giving reasons, explaining flow of work, making proposal
C1	Responding spontaneously in presentation, arguing clearly and persuasively in work situation
C2	Holding his/her own in discussions of complex issues, coping of unexpected situations

d) Speaking B2-C2 (7-377)

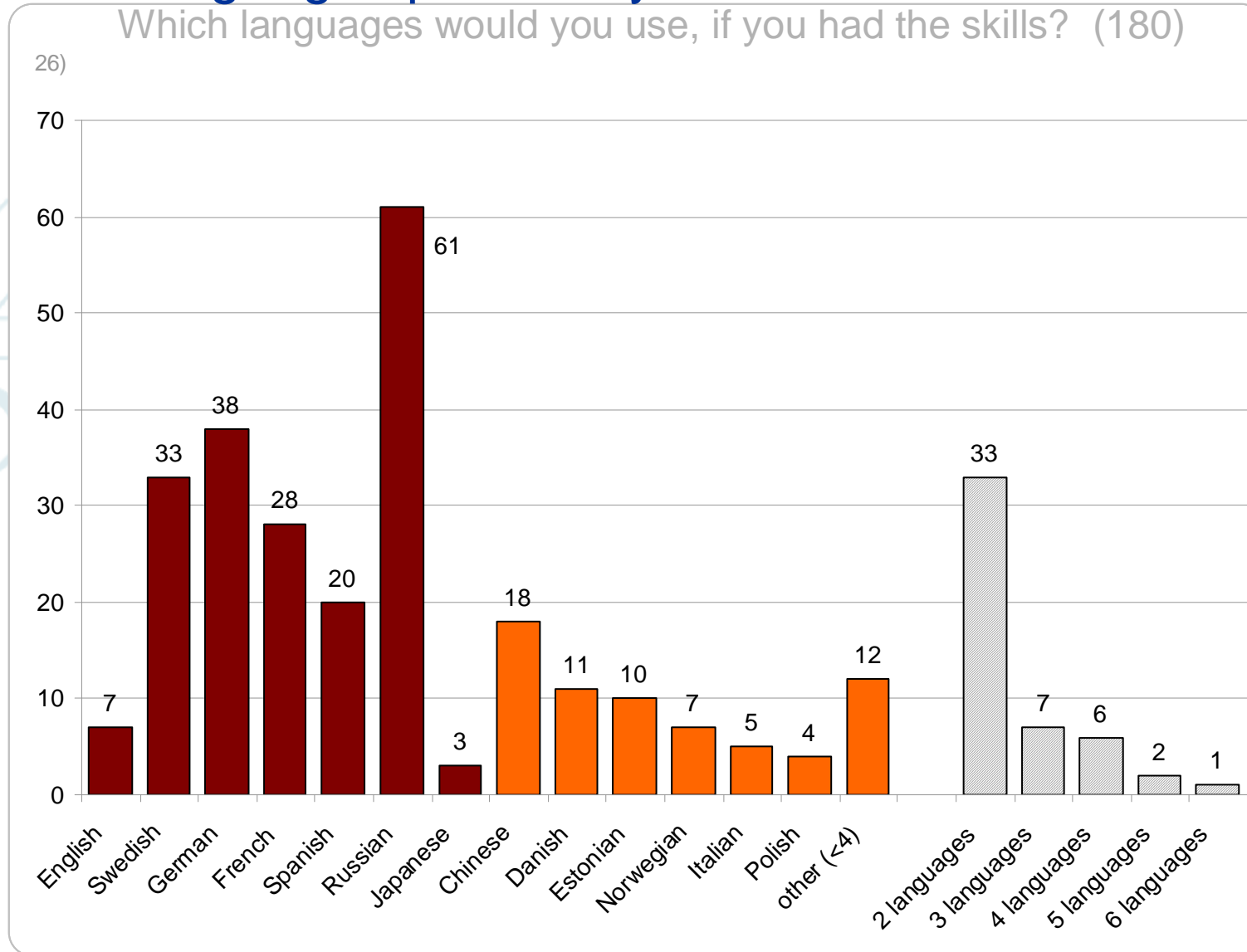




4. Results

Languages potentially used at work

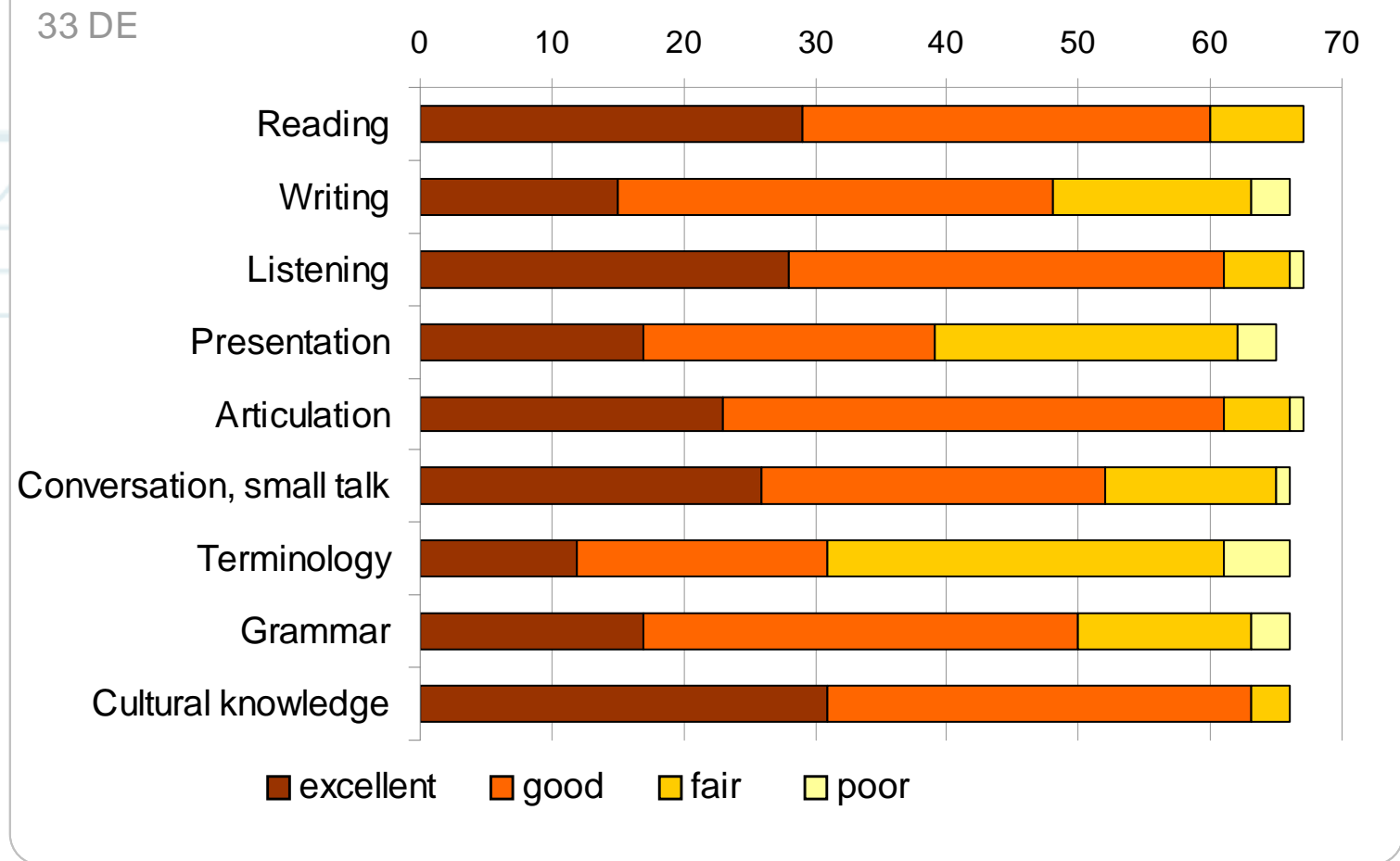
Which languages would you use, if you had the skills? (180)





4. Results

Strengths and weaknesses in language skills (self evaluated) example German competent language users (70)





4. Results

Strengths and weaknesses in language skills (self evaluated)
mean competent language users (402-6)

33 (B2-C2)	EN	SE	DE	FR	ES	RU
n:	402	152	67	27	9	6
Reading	3,85	3,47	3,33	3,22	3,11	3,00
Writing	3,59	2,98	2,91	2,85	3,13	2,33
Listening	3,74	3,27	3,31	3,19	3,11	2,67
Presentation	3,40	2,66	2,82	2,72	3,00	2,67
Articulation	3,38	3,24	3,24	3,00	3,75	3,00
Conversation, small talk	3,43	2,82	3,17	3,08	3,63	2,50
Terminology	3,35	2,48	2,58	2,30	2,38	2,33
Grammar	3,40	3,10	2,97	2,92	3,25	2,67
Cultural knowledge	3,12	3,18	3,42	3,31	3,88	3,33
average:	3,47	3,02	3,08	2,95	3,24	2,72



4. Results

TSE language courses' targetedness

Do TSE language courses meet the need of working life?

Mean (4 excellent – 1 poor) competent language users (369-4)

34 Mean (B2-C2)	EN	SE	DE	FR	ES	RU
n:	369	141	60	21	7	4
Language courses in general	3,06	3,09	3,02	3,24	3,14	3,25
Business vocabulary	2,93	2,95	3,12	2,95	3,29	3,25
Grammar	3,02	3,12	3,20	3,10	3,43	2,75
Business culture	2,66	2,62	3,02	3,38	3,14	3,75
Listening comprehension	3,04	2,93	2,92	3,29	3,00	3,25
Presentation	2,76	2,59	2,57	2,81	2,43	2,50
Business writing	2,99	3,00	3,05	3,00	2,71	3,75
Negotiating	2,62	2,43	2,47	2,71	2,43	2,25
Small talk	2,56	2,50	2,58	3,00	3,00	2,50
average:	2,85	2,80	2,88	3,05	2,95	3,03



5. Conclusion / Implementation / Further studies

- In general: TSE language courses meet the need
- Present status of English:
requisite for general communicative competence
- Two areas to bear in mind:
 - Ø Oral communication, esp. negotiating
 - Ø Integrated courses (business + languages)

 - Ø Personal curriculum Russian, Swedish
- Further studies:
 - § Oral communication situations, negotiation
 - § Plurilingual communication



Relevance of language and communication skills for business life: 443

38 Language and communication skills are a
..... part of the core competence in business Master's degree education

