

Attitudes and Motivational Factors behind Finnish Business Students' Choices of Foreign Languages

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International Conference & 28th Summer School 2010

Attitudes and Motivational Factors behind Finnish Business Students' Choices of Foreign Languages

STRUCTURE:

1. **INTRODUCTION:** Aims, survey, background, languages in academic business education
2. **FINDINGS:** Background, language biography, attitudes, motivational factors
3. **FINDINGS:** Plurilingualism
4. **Summary and Conclusions**



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1. INTRODUCTION: **Survey**

Aims

- Languages before university
- Attitudes towards different languages and plurilingualism
- Motives for choosing certain languages and not choosing others
 - Improvement of study guidance and language curricula

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1. INTRODUCTION: **Survey**

Survey

- 25 Questions; mostly closed, some open
 - I. Background information
 - II. Language Background
Languages already acquired? Experiences?
 - III. Language choice and language studies at the university
Effort attitude for language learning
Positive / negative factors choosing languages
 - IV. Plurilingualism
Attitudes towards language learning in general and plurilingualism
- Online survey: Webropol
- Funded by LSR

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1. INTRODUCTION: Survey

Time frame for survey: 16.-30.04.2009

Target group

- 6963 business / economics students
 - Helsinki School of Economics
 - University of Jyväskylä
 - University of Kuopio
 - Lappeenranta University of Technology
 - University of Oulu
 - Turku School of Economics (Turku & Pori)

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1. INTRODUCTION: Survey

- Respondents: 2412
- Response rate : 34,6 %

University	Respondents	Response rate
	2412	34,6 %
HSE Helsinki	794	39,6 %
Univ. Jyväskylä	231	29,8 %
Univ. Kuopio	17	32,7 %
Lappeenranta UT	367	33,7 %
Univ. Oulu	247	22,0 %
TSE Turku	619	40,9 %
TSE Pori	131	32,7 %

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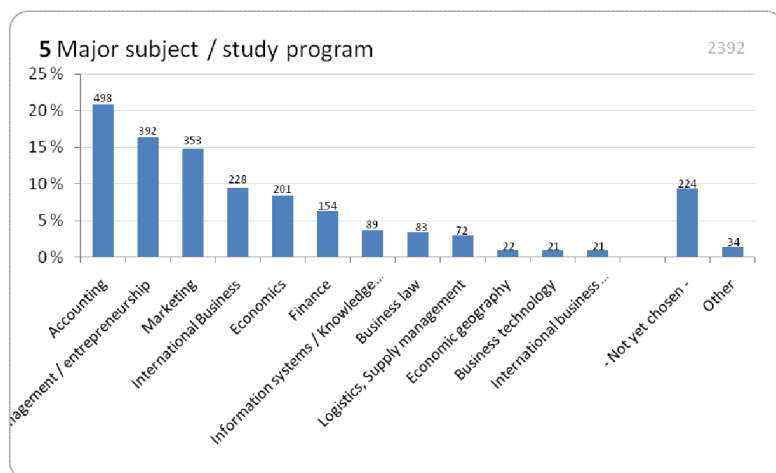
1. INTRODUCTION: Languages in academic business education

- **Legal regulation** (§6 Universities Act, decree 794/2004):
 - Finnish and Swedish: subject related competence
 - at least 1 foreign language: subject related and onto international cooperation related competence, de facto B2
- **Languages in academic business education**
 - in addition to 2 national languages mostly 2 foreign languages compulsory
 - BA (180 op) min. 16-30 op thereof foreign languages: min. 12-18 op
 - BA+MA (300 op) min. 18-40 op
 - minor subject language(s): 25 op
- **Foreign languages to choose:**
 - English, German, French, Spanish, Russian
 - Japanese, Italian, Chinese, Estonian

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2. FINDINGS: BACKGROUND

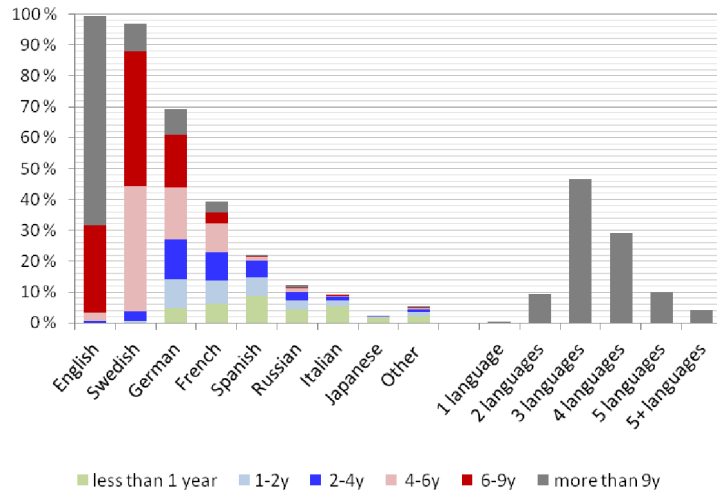
- **Sex: female 57 %, male 43 %**
- **Study year: approx. equal representation**



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2. FINDINGS: Language biography

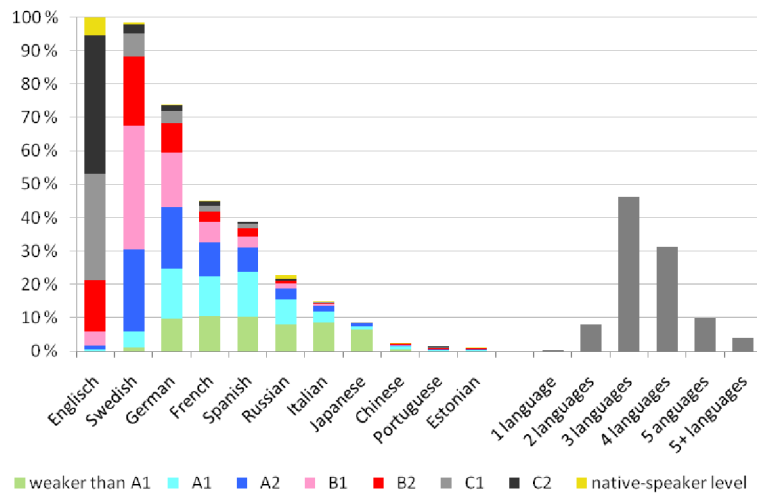
8 Languages before university: How many years? 2329/2409



9

2. FINDINGS: Language biography

10 Evaluate your present language proficiency in the different languages 2410



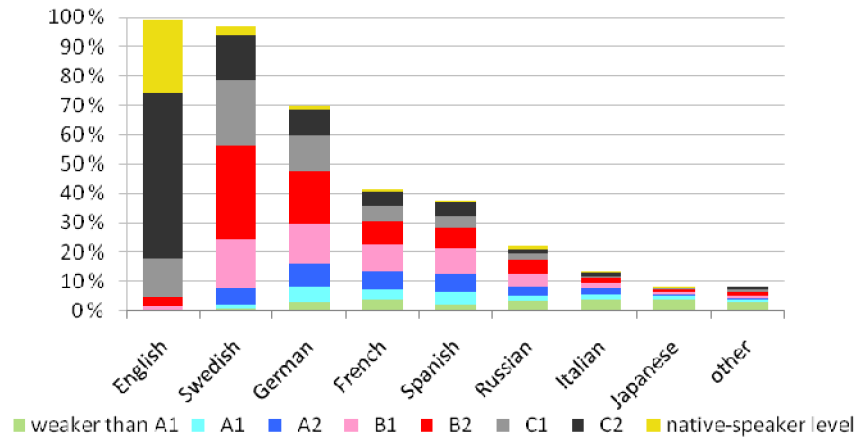
10



2. FINDINGS: Language biography

11 What level of proficiency do you aim to reach in the different languages

2404

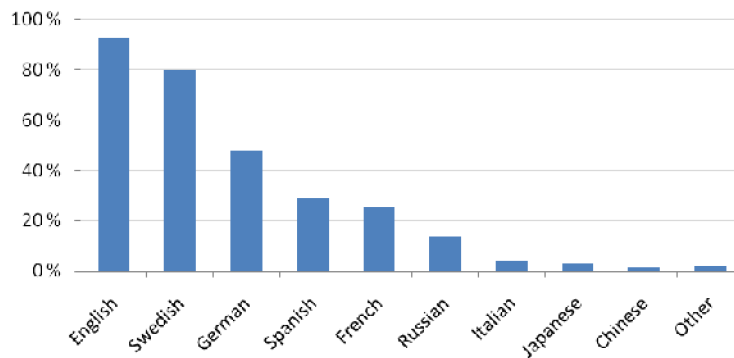


11

2. FINDINGS: Language biography

12 Languages taken at university

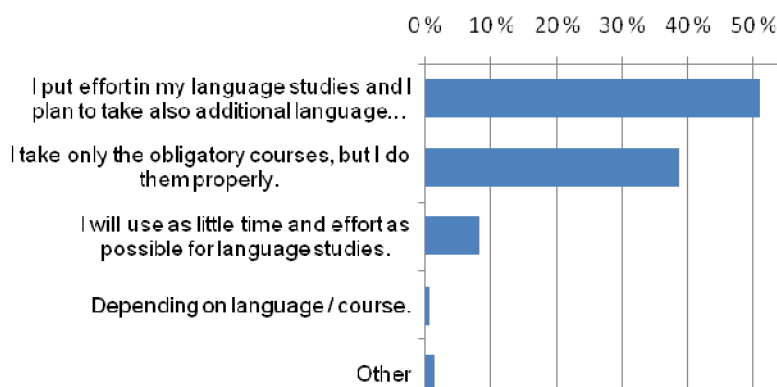
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2. FINDINGS: Language biography

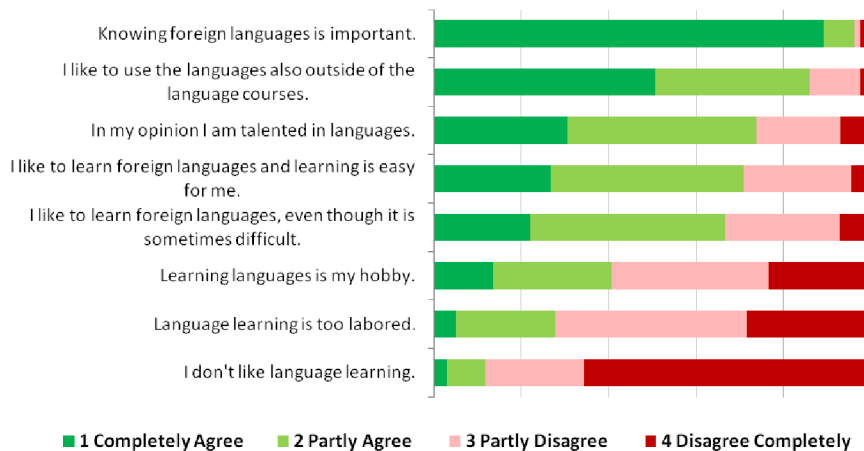
16 Your own effort for language learning in general 2392



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2. FINDINGS: Attitudes

17 Attitudes towards foreign languages, foreign language learning and communication in foreign languages 2411



14

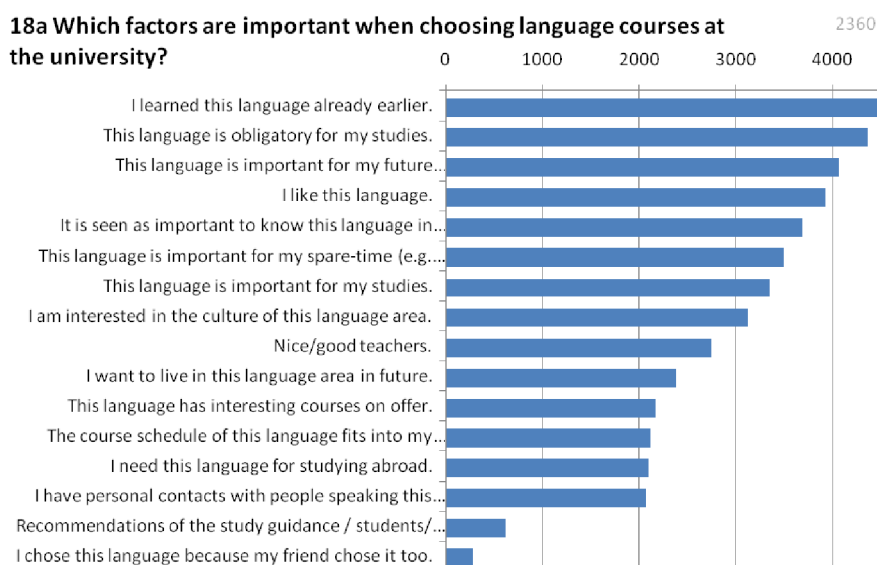
2. FINDINGS: Factors

1. - I learned this language already earlier.
2. - This language is obligatory for my studies.
 - Recommendations of the study guidance / students / tutors.
 - The course schedule of this language fits into my time-table.
 - This language has interesting courses on offer.
 - Nice/good teachers.
3. - This language is important for my studies.
 - I need this language for studying abroad.
 - This language is important for my future profession/job.
4. - I like this language.
 - I am interested in the culture of this language area.
 - I have personal contacts with people speaking this language.
 - I want to live in this language area in future.
5. - This language is important for my spare-time (e.g. travelling, hobbies).
6. - It is seen as important to know this language in Finland.
7. - I chose this language because my friend chose it too.

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2. FINDINGS: Factors

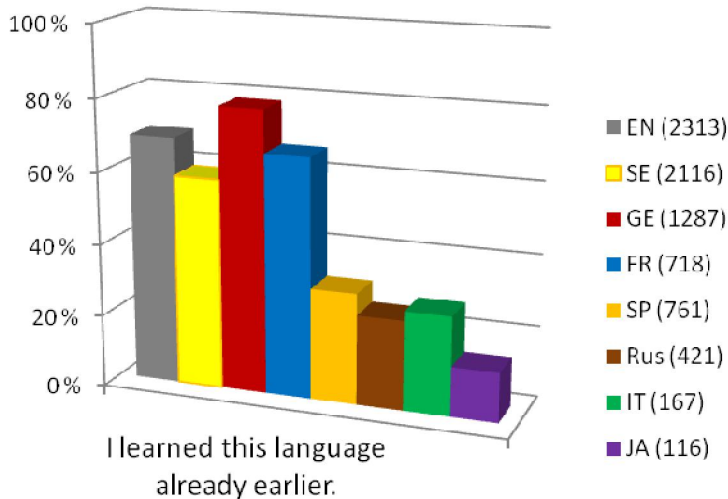
18a Which factors are important when choosing language courses at the university?



2. FINDINGS: Factors

18a) Which factors ...?

2390



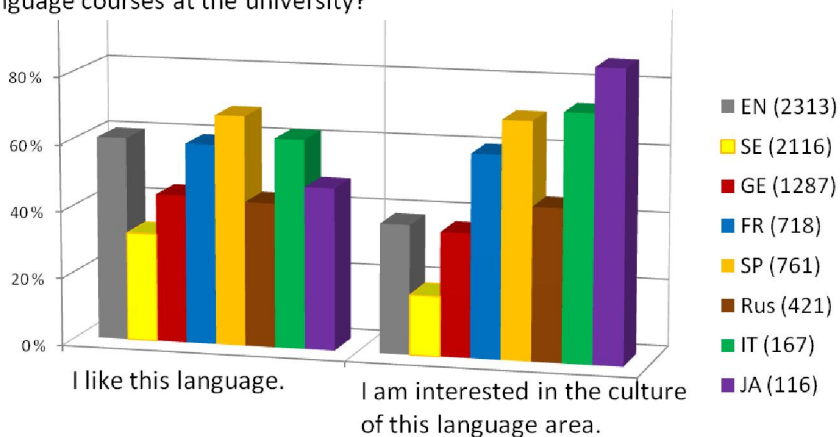
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2. FINDINGS: Factors

18a) Which factors are important when choosing language courses at the university?

2390

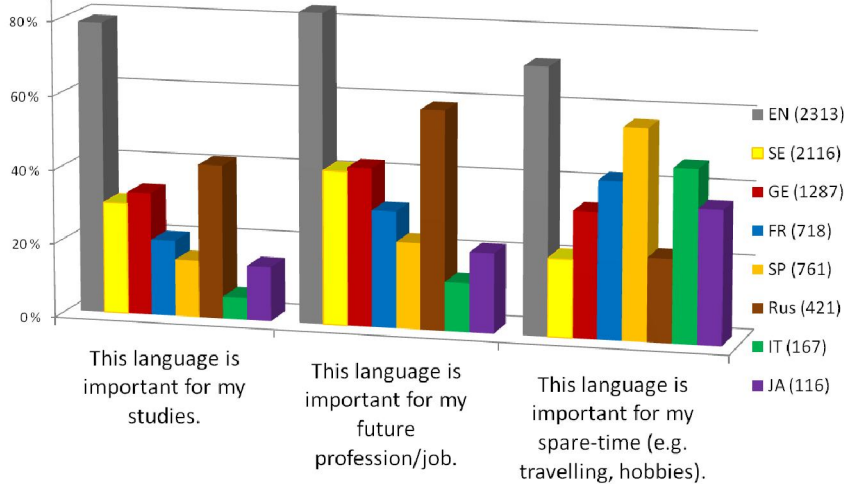


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2. FINDINGS: Factors

18a) Which factors are important when choosing language courses at the university?

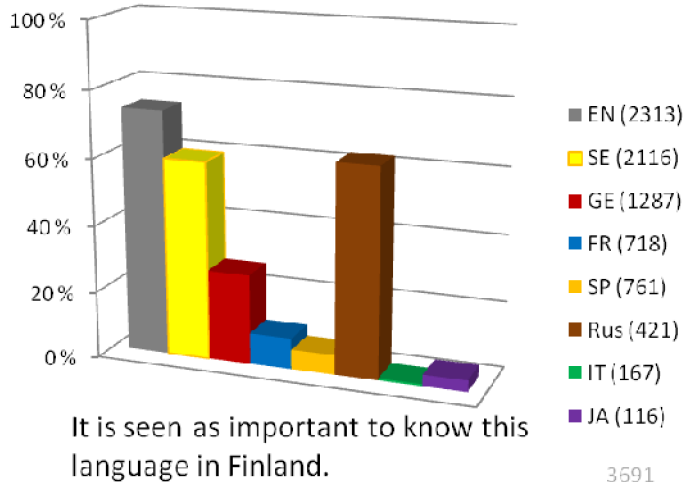
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2. FINDINGS: Factors

18a) Which factors ...?

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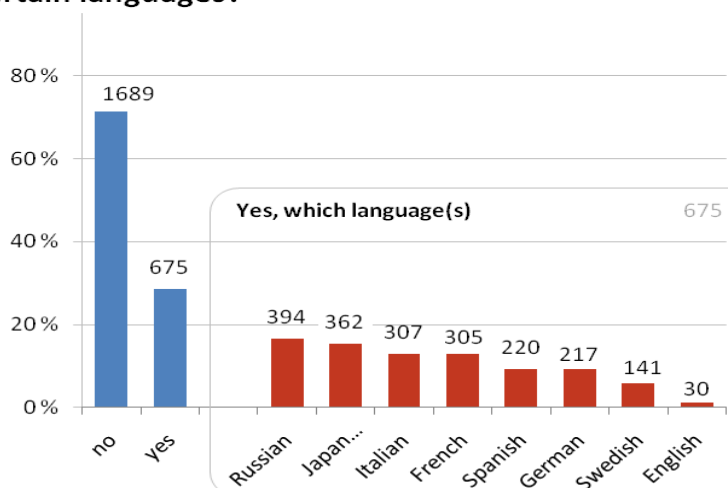
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2. FINDINGS: Factors

19 Do you have special reasons for not choosing certain languages?

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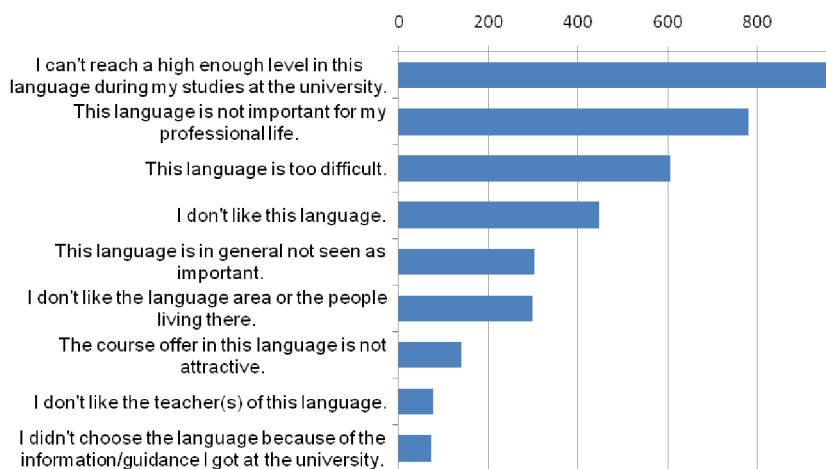


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2. FINDINGS: Factors

19b Why do/did you not choose certain languages?

659



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2. FINDINGS: Factors

- **Factors for choosing English (2313)**

High: important for professional life and studies, obligatory, it is seen important in Finland

Low: contact to English speaking people, interest in the culture

- **Factors for not choosing English (30)**

I don't like the teachers; unattractive course offer

2. FINDINGS: Factors

- **Factors for choosing Swedish (2116)**

High: obligatory, it is seen important in Finland, learned the language before, important for professional life

Low: I want to live in the lang. area, interest in the culture, contact to Swedish speaking people

- **Factors for not choosing Swedish (141)**

I don't like the language; not important for my professional life

2. FINDINGS: Factors

- **Factors for choosing German (1287)**

High: learned the language before, I like the language, important for professional life, nice teachers

Low: contact to German speaking people, I want to live in the lang. area, it is seen important in Finland

- **Factors for not choosing German (217)**

I don't like the language; I can't reach a high enough level

2. FINDINGS: Factors

- **Factors for choosing Spanish (761)**

High: interest in the culture, I like the language, important for spare-time, nice/good teachers

Low: it is seen important in Finland, important for studies, important for professional life

- **Factors for not choosing Spanish (220)**

I can't reach a high enough level; it is not important for my professional life

2. FINDINGS: Factors

- **Factors for choosing Russian (421)**

High: it is seen important in Finland, important for professional life, interest in the culture, I like the language

Low: I want to live in the lang. area, important for spare-time, contact to Russian speaking people

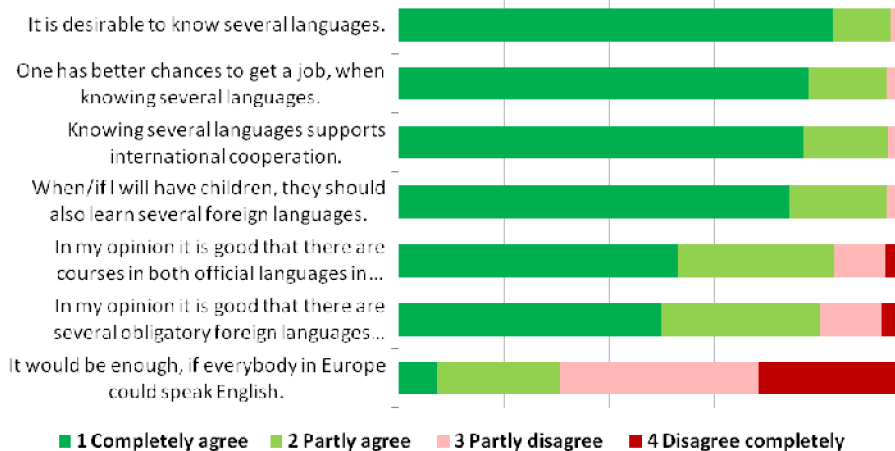
- **Factors for not choosing Russian (394)**

It is too difficult; I can't reach a high enough level; I don't like the lang area or the people living there

3. FINDINGS: Plurilingualism

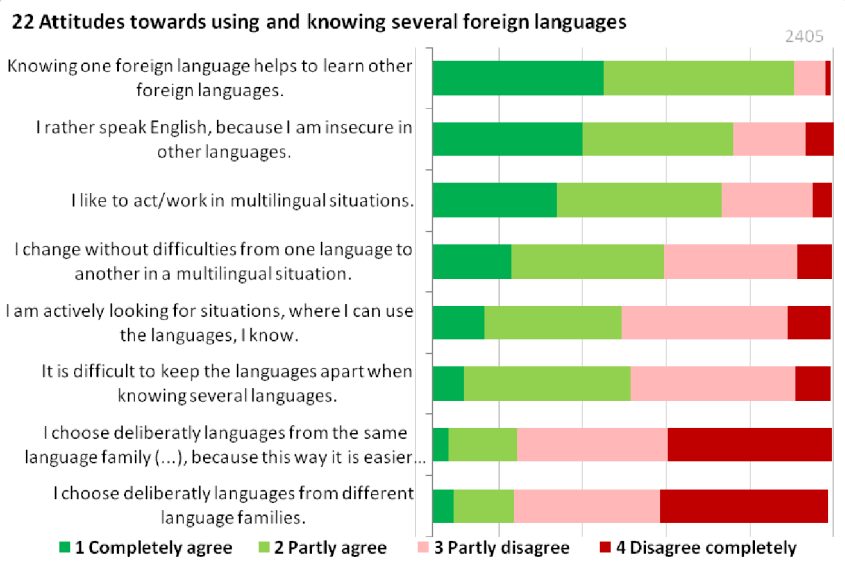
21 Attitudes towards plurilingualism

2404



28

3. FINDINGS: Plurilingualism



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4. Summary and Conclusions

Positive attitudes towards foreign language learning and plurilingualism

- Languages are an important part of studies
- It is good that several obligatory languages are demanded
- It is good that there are courses in both official languages
- **Threats:** problems with the timetables; time; combining working life and studies; language learning requires continuous effort; question of priorities

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4. Summary and Conclusions

Different factors influence choosing certain languages

3 groups:

English and Swedish

German

“minor” languages

But it seems that prior studies is the most important factor for continuing studies at the university

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4. Summary and Conclusions

- **Very important factor for choosing a language: earlier experiences**
 - Aim: reaching functional skills at least on CEFR-B-levels in more than two languages, difficult to reach, when starting at the university
 - Importance of schools: early beginning and continuity of language studies
 - Language policy, society and institutions
 - **Threat:** Decrease of Language competences

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Kiitos!
Thank you!
Tack.
Vielen Dank!

Infos: tinyurl.com/kielivalinnat



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