



Choosing an international daycare in Finland - perspectives of parents

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The importance of the English language in Finland is constantly growing. Studying in English expands the opportunities to get into an international environment and widens the choice of career paths. More and more parents start looking into these alluring prospects for their children and choosing international-based educational institutions from an early age.

In the scope of the given research, the concept of an English-language daycare has been discussed. The international daycare located in the Helsinki Metropolitan area was a working-life partner of the present thesis. The outcomes have shown the impact of the family language profile and the sociocultural background of the parents and guardians on the choice of daycare. The perspectives for the future education of English-language daycares graduates have also been looked into.

To set a theoretical foundation, the Finnish educational system was explored with a focus on bilingualism and sociocultural development. Finnish National Core Curriculum for early childhood education and care was studied in terms of multiculturalism and language acquisition. Besides this, the position of English-language educational units in the Finnish educational system was described.

The data was collected through a survey conducted among the parents and guardians of the chosen daycare as well as through the interviews held with the teachers. The research results were processed with a quantitative analysis method. The findings indicate parents' desire to make their children bilingual. Also, the parents mentioned their uncertainty about staying in Finland in the future, feeling uncomfortable communicating with the Finnish daycare staff, the child's ability to speak English while travelling to different countries, having more career opportunities in the future, and exploring the world outside Finland.

This research is a foundation for a possible bigger research on bilingualism and multiculturalism in Finland. It gives a clue for the reasons why people choose the English-language educational path staying in Finland and what perspectives they see for their children after graduating from English-language daycares. This topic should be investigated with a deeper look as there are still a lot of concerns and questions without answers.

Keywords: English-language daycare, education in Finland, bilingualism

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1 Introduction

Finland is widely seen as a multilingual country and the popularity of the English language is constantly growing especially in the capital area. Following Juhana Vartiainen, the Mayor of Helsinki, in an interview with the Guardian newspaper in 2021, Helsinki is seen as an English-language city (Henley 2021). Finland is an officially bilingual country with two national languages - Finnish and Swedish. However, English is one of the most popular languages in Finland, especially in Greater Helsinki. According to Statistics Finland (2021), the number of people speaking Finnish, Swedish, or Sami as their native language in Finland decreased to 10,747 persons, and the number of foreign-language speakers increased to 25,195 persons in 2021. As for the growth of the population in Greater Helsinki, it was mainly based on foreign-language speakers as well. The number of people speaking national languages decreased in both Greater Helsinki and the region of Uusimaa in 2021. Interestingly, every third child under seven years old is of foreign background in areas of Vantaa and Närpiö which counts as over 12 percent of under-school-age children.

The importance of speaking the English language in Finland started growing already in the post-war years of 1944 to 1948. Different factors are supposed to have their effect on this process including globalization, modernization, urbanization, and internationalization of society. All of these have had their impact on business, trade as well as educational reforms that contributed to more foreign language teaching. After the Second World War, there was a turn towards the western world and Finland has become more open to European and American values and culture hence the English language was a symbol of modern westernization. (Leppänen et al. 2011.)

In the last 20 years, there has been a fast-growing interest in higher education in Finland. According to the statistics, higher tertiary level of education has increased from 5 % to 10 % between the years 2000 and 2022. (Statistics Finland 2022.) There is also a growing interest in International program exchange among students. The Finnish National Agency for Education (hereinafter referred to as FNAE) supports and sponsors international cooperation between higher education institutions. Among the most popular funding programs are Erasmus+ for Higher Education and the Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument. (FNAE 2022.)

International trade has markedly increased from about 20 to 70 billion euros in a year during the years 1991 - 2021 (WITZ 2022). This process has had its effect on the jobs of ordinary working people as well as highly skilled professionals. Huge corporations such as Nokia, Kone, and Rovio became known in the global market. I feel sure that inter-connectedness in the global economy has generated new working opportunities and prosperity to Finnish societies.

All these factors have worked towards the growing interest in education in English as it expands the opportunities to get into international environments and widens the choices of career paths. More and more parents, both with Finnish and non-Finnish backgrounds, started looking into these alluring prospects for their children and choosing international-based educational institutions from an early age. As the first step in the system of education, the choice turns to international daycare centers.

In the present research, I will be discussing a concept of an English-language daycare as the first stage of education. My study aims to investigate the reasons why families living in Finland choose English-language daycares for their children. The focus of my research will be narrowed down to a particular early childhood education unit I am working in cooperation with. I believe this study to be helpful for both contributors as it widens the understanding of the reasons why English-language daycares are so popular and what paths the graduates mostly take at a later stage.

2 Terminology and Abbreviation

To avoid confusion, it is worth clarifying some terminology that will be mentioned in the research. First of all, the international daycare I cooperated with is officially called a school. This term is applied on the official website of the company. Besides this, the word daycare is also widely used on web pages. In the present research, both terms will be used referring to this preschool educational unit for children under 7 years old. (Daycare`s website, hidden link.)

The Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE) is an agency responsible for all stages of education from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education, as well as for adult education and training (FNAE 2023).

National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (VASU in Finnish) is a national set of rules issued by FNAE. It “determines the framework for the implementation of uniform and equal ECEC according to inclusive principles”. (FNAE 2021, 7.)

English Early Years Curriculum (EYFS) is a mandatory framework for all early years providers in England from 1 September 2021 (Department of education 2021).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is “ a part of the Finnish education system and an important stage on the child’s path of growing and learning” (FNAE 2021, 7).

A native Finnish guardian is a child’s guardian who was born in/outside Finland and speaks Finnish as a native language (own term).

A non-Finnish guardian is a child's guardian who was born in/outside Finland and speaks Finnish as a foreign language or not speaking at all (own term).

3 The Background of the Thesis

My interest in this topic has arisen in my mind some years ago when our family faced the dilemma of choosing a daycare for our child. This choice has become a big challenge in our family weighing up all the pros and cons and also considering the child's best interests. Being an immigrant, you are always between a rock and a hard place with deciding what is better for a child- a Finnish or a non-Finnish path. I know that many families choose a Finnish-language daycare as it contributes to integration purposes as well as Finnish language formation. Others (and I am among them) give a start to an international education path and choose a non-Finnish daycare. The second category probably has different grounds for doing this and I am interested to investigate those and find out whether my own choice was right or not.

My working life partner, an English-language daycare, showed a lot of interest in this topic as the research results would provide them with valuable information on the client's needs and expectations. Some teachers mentioned in the discussions that the results will help them to accommodate the program to the client's inquiries and provide more sufficient service and care. Besides this, the daycare staff will get a fresh perspective on modern trends and organize the settings accordingly. It does not mean that this private curriculum will contradict the main objectives and contents of ECEC declared in FNAE, but rather that it will be customized to the local clients' needs and proposals.

As I have not found enough knowledge on the topic, I became interested in conducting research myself. Based on the theoretical foundation, I will survey the parents/guardians of this particular daycare unit to reveal the questions I am setting for the present research. I wish I will be able to throw light on the issue and arise interest among others in further research. I am supposed to continue developing the topic with a wider perspective. But for the present research, I will focus on the questions stated below.

3.1 Research Questions

The main target of the research is to answer the following questions:

- ✓ Who are the clients of the English daycares in Finland?
- ✓ Why do they choose English daycares for their children?
- ✓ What are their plans for the next stage of education for their children?

The research will be focused on the family language profile as well as the socio-cultural background of the parents or other guardians whose children attend English-language

daycare. I will check the impact (influence) of the mentioned above factors on the choice of daycare.

3.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. Get to know the Finnish educational system and what it is influenced by.
2. Reveal the linguistic and cultural background of the population in Finland.
3. Relate the family's background with the choice of the ECEC unit for children.
4. Identify the reasons for choosing English-language daycares as the first stage of education for children
5. Think of the plans/perspectives for the future education of the children attending English-language daycares in Finland.

3.3 Working-Life Partner - The International Daycare in Helsinki

My working-life partner was one of the International daycare centres situated in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. To protect the privacy of the company, the name, and the links to the website will not be mentioned in the research. The daycare provides places for about 50 children under the age of seven who are divided into 5 age groups: 0-3 years old, 3-4 years old, 4-5 years old, 5-6 years old and 6-7 years old. The company's other centers make eight units in total. (Daycare's website, hidden link.)

The company was founded by a couple from England about 30 years ago. One of the founders was an Early Years Educator with social work experience whose dream had been to create a multicultural creative learning environment for children under 7 years old long before creative learning became a part of the Finnish education system. (Daycare's website, hidden link.)

The daycare has developed from a small group of about 20 children to several centers around the capital area. For over 30 years, the founders and the management team have been guiding all the important processes of setting up and implementing the daycare's philosophy, curriculum, schedules, and routines. It has always been apparent to give the children a coherent and professional curriculum that underpins the creative and multicultural part of the company's philosophy. Later on, the ownership of the company was transferred to another owner. (Daycare's website, hidden link.)

All the company's units are international English-speaking centers with a diversity of staff and rich learning environment. They follow both the English Early Years Curriculum (EYFS) and the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (VASU in Finnish). Emphasis is made on celebrating the diversity of child and family which finds its reflection in food, celebrations, and drama. Participation, planning together with a child, and hearing the

child's voice is what are supposed to be the crucial principles of work. Moreover, children get multicultural awareness and language acquisition and learn to express themselves through art, music, and performance which also aligns with the Finnish ECEC approach.

Ethical principles are also valued and respected in these centers. All children are treated appropriately following the rules and restrictions mentioned in the company's Policy File. The primary functions of the school are to encourage cooperation, understanding, and acceptance of all nationalities and cultures. Gender stereotyping is also prohibited. Both boys and girls are encouraged to participate equally in all areas of the curriculum and discussions to promote equality between men and women are held regularly. (Daycare's Policy File 2017.)

4 Research Framework

The research framework of the present thesis consists of examining the education system in Finland in the context of globalization as well as determining the status of the English-language educational units in the Finnish educational system. I will also focus on the linguistic and socio-cultural development of Finland and bilingualism. Besides this, I will look into the concepts of multiculturalism and language acquisition presented in the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care.

4.1 The Finnish Education System

I will start by presenting a general overlook of the Finnish education system with a deeper look at early childhood education and care in Finland. Also, I will provide information about the possibilities of studying in English language in Finland.

4.1.1 Overlook

The nationwide education system in Finland is believed to be gradually developing from the ideas of Protestantism in the 16th century. In the earlier periods, students from Finland traveled abroad to study at universities. With the Reformation era, studies started mostly serving church purposes. The foundation of the national education system began in the 19th century when every citizen was supposed to get the fundamentals in the folk schools which formed a system of basic education. Uno Cygnaeus, the founder of this system was supported a lot by the Russian senate and Finland's reformer Johan Vilhelm Snellman. Cygnaeus proposed the "Finnish Folk School" as a basic school in Finland. In 1886 folk schools were established by the law for all people throughout Finland as well as the universities to prepare teachers for these schools. Snellman promoted the collective body of the Finnish nation and contributed to the modernization of the Finnish language. (Haarmann 2016.)

The first steps of the schooling program in Finland were quite slow compared to the other European countries. Elementary education of four years started in 1866 but became

compulsory only in 1922. After World War II, the system of education in Finland has been strongly influenced by the idea of the Nordic welfare state. Resembling the other Nordic countries' ideology from 1917, the Finnish school system was a duplex of a Swedish-speaking school system that was parallel to the Finnish-speaking one. Tuition in Sami language was also provided in some regions of Finland. (Paksuniemi & Keskitalo 2019.) There took place a modernization of the teaching methods for the good of the students. Emphasis was made on the flexibility and diversity in learning as well as the broad knowledge considering equality and equity, individual growth, trust through professionalism creativity, personality, etc. The Finnish educational system has been a success due to effective teaching methods focusing more on how to learn than what to learn. (Haarmann 2016.) The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2022) considers education to be a basis for the Finnish welfare society highlighting equal educational opportunities for all people. From pre-primary to higher education is supposed to be free of charge in Finland.

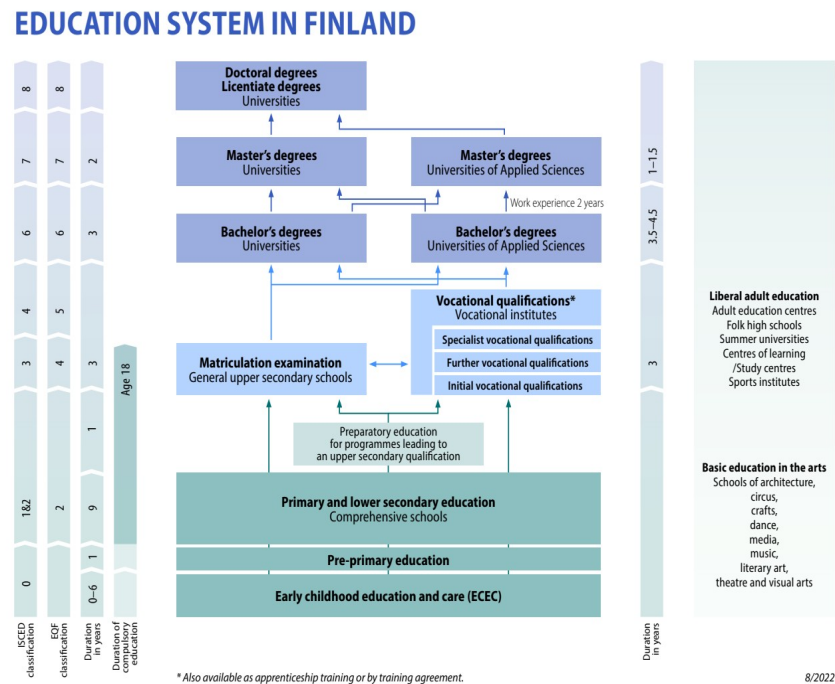


Figure 1. Education system in Finland (Ministry of education and culture 2022)

The above figure illustrates the education system in Finland which implies multiple steps from early childhood education and care to adult education at different levels (Ministry of education and culture 2022).

At this point, I would like to take a closer look at the early childhood education and care in Finland which is provided for children under school age. As stated by the Ministry of education and culture (2022), it implies education, teaching, and care that supports children's development, health, and well-being. Local authorities are responsible for providing ECEC

charging the client fee which depends on the family's income and the number of hours spent in the ECEC. Finland's National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care provides the framework for the local ECEC curricula.

Pre-primary education has become compulsory for all children in Finland in 2015. It is provided free of charge and parents or guardians are responsible for their child participating in pre-primary education four hours a day. The National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary education provides the framework for the local Pre-Primary education curricula. (Ministry of education and culture 2022) Interestingly, the first binding curriculum for ECEC took force only in 2018. Before that, the ECEC curricula had been like unwritten recommendations that were not mandatory to follow. (Eurydice 2022.)

4.1.2 The Concepts of Multiculturalism and Language Acquisition in the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care

Multiculturalism and language acquisition are among the key learning areas of the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care. It is said about the significance of a child's linguistic development and the educators' responsibility to support language acquisition and diversity. Children's various linguistic and cultural backgrounds are supposed to contribute to learning and development processes as well as to enrich society in total. (FNAE 2022.)

The rich world of languages is among the five main areas of learning in ECEC. It is focused on children's skills of recognizing a language as a phenomenon and understanding a linguistic identity. Also, it is about memorization and vocabulary. (FNAE 2022.) In my opinion, it is very important for children especially those who learn more than one language to become aware of the language diversity at an early age as this skill will help them to get the big picture later on as well. It will also contribute to their building connections with people from different language groups and societies.

In the National core curriculum for early childhood education and care language and cultural aspects are respected and valued. Children with different backgrounds are believed to enrich the community. This idea is reflected in the activities provided by ECEC. Moreover, ECEC can be provided in another language than Finnish as long as the main objectives of the core curriculum are achieved. Children are encouraged to interact in a multicultural environment. Developing foreign language speaking skills as well as cultural identities is supported by ECEC. The family linguistic environment and the importance of maintaining the mother tongue are discussed with the guardians. Bilingual early childhood education and care are perceived to support the interest in a variety of languages and to create a platform for children's free acting in the bilingual environment. There are large- and small-scale bilingual early childhood education and care. The local curriculum is supposed to specify the main principles of ECEC. (FNAE 2022.)

According to the research on Immigrant Parents' Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Care Practices in the Finnish Multicultural Context (Lastikka & Lipponen 2016), many parents show a strong interest in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in the ECEC. In the particular daycare center where the research was conducted, parents spoke about the importance of showing their own cultural identity as well as acknowledging and respecting different religions, languages, and cultures. The dual language and culture approach seemed perfect for parents who were worried that their children would lose their mother tongue. They expressed strongly positive towards offering the language clubs in their mother tongues.

In my opinion, this research demonstrates the significance for immigrant families to get the support of their language and culture and as well as shows their worries about children not becoming aware of their identity and family background. I would assume that these thoughts might facilitate parents' solution to choose an international daycare that would work better in supporting these issues. To check this assumption, I will ask the daycare parents' opinions in the survey and report on the results.

4.2 English Language in Finnish Society

In this chapter, I will be discussing the role of the English language in Finland, worldwide trends, and tendencies. I will also focus on linguistic and socio-cultural concepts as well as bilingualism. English is considered to be the symbol of modernization and globalization. At a national level, English is the most widely spoken foreign language in many European countries where it is not an official language. In Finland, it is spoken by most of the Finns as a second language. According to the official statistics from Special Eurobarometer 386 (2012), up to 70% of Finnish people can speak English.

Following the same source, Finland showed up 31% of those who speak English as a foreign language every or almost every day. The proportion of Finnish respondents saying that they can use English to communicate online is 51%, to read newspaper or magazine articles – 49%, to follow the news on radio or television – 50 %, to use at work -61%, to watch foreign films and programs with subtitles - 95 %. (Special Eurobarometer 386 2012.)

Interestingly, Finland strongly disagrees on the issue of whether everyone in the EU should be able to speak more than one language in addition to the mother tongue, ranging it as low as 9 % of responders agreeing and 29% tend to agree. As for the question of whether everyone in the EU should be able to speak a common language, Finland showed similarly low results as well. The portion of those who agree was 12 % and those who tend to agree was 28%. (Special Eurobarometer 386 2012.)

Would any conclusions be made on the represented data or not? In my opinion, the results could be explained by the intention to maintain the mother language since Finnish is not

widely spoken outside the country and compared to other most widely spoken languages around the world, Finland is worried to lose the language and namely their identity as there are lots of people who do not speak Finnish in Finland so they try their best to maintain. However, they should keep up-to-date and consider world changes and global aspects and the importance of foreign languages.

The role of English in public and private domains in Finland is significant. It is widely seen as a national resource used in science and technology, engineering, commerce, business, learning, advertising, and the economy to some extent. In addition to this, there is a strategy of naming Finnish companies and products with English words which are widely spread in the business world. (Haarmann 2016.)

Following Haarmann (2016) states that Finnish has been spoken in America since the 17th century. The first Finnish colonists settled in North America in 1638. Among the immigrants were also Finland-Swedes. Some of the well-known figures in American history are of Finnish origin. Among those are John Morton, whose grandson was in the group of those who signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. In the areas of the American Finnish settlements, English had a position of a dominant language. American Finnish is called *Finglish* which is regarded as a term to characterize a contact language situation. The impact of English on Finnish in America has been huge that can be seen in many terms borrowed - *vamili* (family), *leiki* (lake), *hilli* (hill). Finnish-English contacts found their reflection in the Finnish dialects enrooted in the condition of bilingual language use.

English started displacing German and was firmly established in the academic world in Finland in the postwar years. It was seen as a language of development and technological progress. The influence of American trends and products - Coca-Cola, and fast food - facilitated its popularity as well. The educational reform in the early 1970s made English a compulsory school subject. German was no longer chosen as a first foreign language by comparison to English taking up third place after Finnish and Swedish in the world of learning. Besides, Finnish society has experienced a lot of developmental changes in the last decades that also contributed to strengthening the position of English in Finnish society. Finland has taken an active role in intercultural contact - trade relations with the West, membership in the European Union, economic boom (Nokia), growing shares on the financial markets, expanding tourism, public relations in the field of sport, etc. (Haarmann 2016.)

4.2.1 Bilingualism and Socio-Cultural Development

I would like to start this chapter by defining some concepts discussed in my research. Firstly, I would clarify that by a **bilingual person** I consider a human being who can naturally speak two languages and switch from one to another depending on the context. A person who operates in more than two languages I will call a **multilingual**. Following the definition suggested by a Linguistic Society of America (2023), a **bilingual person** is someone who can

speak two languages. A person who speaks more than two languages is called **multilingual** (however, the term *bilingualism* can be used for both cases). Merriam-Webster dictionary (2023) defines a **bilingual** person as the one who is able to use two languages especially equally and **multilingual** as the one who is “able to use several languages equally.

As stated by Charlotte Hoffmann (An introduction to bilingualism 2014), bilingualism appears as a result of contact with others and its development depends on how good the conditions for it are. She cites Uriel Weinreich, one of the founders of the bilingual studies, who defines bilingualism as “the practices of alternatively using two languages ... and the person involved as a bilingual” (Weinreich 1968, cited in Hoffmann 2014, 15).

She distinguishes individual and societal bilingualism defining the first as a degree of bilingualism regarding individuals and the second as the bilingualism on a societal level. Societal bilingualism can be seen in the countries with more than one official language - Finland, Belgium, Switzerland where language planning policies inoculate it into a nation education system and bilingualism extents among the countries´ minorities. Whereas, individual bilingualism refers to maintaining the use of two or more lanuages among the individuals. (Hoffmann 2014.)

Secondly, **sociocultural context** will refer to situations in which the language is used. The word naturally in my definition implies that a person speaks the language which he/she had absorbed from the environment precisely the family or the educational institution at an early age. According to the definition from the Cambridge dictionary (2023), **sociocultural** refers to the different groups of people in society as well as their traditions and beliefs and the word **context** implies the situation in which things can happen, and that can explain them.

Bilingual children can use two languages concerning their interlocutor´s language suggestion approximately from the age of two. The separation of the two languages by bilingual preschoolers is possible but does not always take place and might be affected by language dominance, the child´s age, and sensitivity to the socio-linguistic environment. This conclusion was done after an experiment among 3-5 year old English-French bilingual preschool children was conducted in some daycares in Canada. The preschoolers who participated in it had English or French as a dominant language. The purpose of the study was to examine the children´s ability to separate the languages in different situations. The results showed that both groups used their dominant language in the dominant language context. However, in non-dominant situations, the French- and the English- dominant children showed differences. The majority of the French were seen to use English in non-dominant contexts, which is explained by stronger adherence to the interlocutor´s language choice compared to the English-dominant children. Interestingly, all the children, regardless of dominance, used English in the English context, however, only the French-dominant used French in the French context. (Paradis & Nicoladis 2007.)

Following Paradis & Nicoladis (2007), code-mixed utterances are more often used by English-dominant children than French when speaking a non-dominant language, French, and seldom when speaking their dominant language, English. On the contrary, French-dominant children used code-mixed utterances more often when speaking a non-dominant language, English. The explanation for this asymmetry has not been given in the research. However, it was assumed that as English is more often used in the bilingual context in French-speaking communities than French in English ones, children are used to switching to English in different situations.

I would agree with this affirmation as I often witness situations when parents switch to English quite often in Finland as well. Most of them are not Finnish speakers and English is chosen as a common language that both interlocutors can use. Conversations with social welfare services, banks, housing companies as well as educational institutions are often held in English. Children present in these situations might absorb the language and also use it in different contexts.

According to the research on bilingualism by Colzato et al. (2008), it is believed to improve brain processes and particularly, executive control. It is supposed that bilinguals differ from monolinguals in performing different cognitive tasks and more inhibitory efficiency on the part of the bilinguals is believed to play a role in creating these differences. A more detailed analysis of active and reactive inhibition has proved that bilinguals differ from monolinguals in the way they attribute to inhibitory processes. In some tests, bilinguals had much more difficulties than monolinguals in processing a temporally close second target while still processing the first. However, this performance difference is also explained by the side effects of processing the first target. Additionally, observations on how bilinguals switch from one language to another suggest that they outperform monolinguals in this by building up and maintaining goal representations more efficiently.

Xiaotong Yang (2021) in the study on Chinese immigrant parents' opinions and experiences related to their involvement in children's early English language learning in Finland, also highlights the Chinese parents' desire to provide their children with the opportunity to learn English from the early age explaining it by a desire that children would develop "high self-esteem", will be able to "cope well with foreign friends", gain "a bicultural identity" and have better job opportunities in a globalizing world in the future. Moreover, a survey of Greek parents showed up that they also claimed that English skills would help their children to "broaden horizons, develop good personalities, and have more job opportunities in the future". (Griva & Chouvarda 2012, cited in Yang 2021, 18.) Similarly, Poland's parents also hoped that good English would help their children to find perfect jobs (Enever 2007, cited in Yang 2021, 1).

Getting back to my research questions, I would assume that many parents prefer international early childhood education units for the reason that they believe the environment will contribute to their children's better learning and successful sociocultural development. Through the survey, I would like to confirm this assumption. In particular, I would be interested to check whether they want to be bilingual, and continue their education in Finland or not. Also, I am interested to investigate if there is a correlation between the parents' origin and background, level of education and field of work, and their desire for children to take an international path as well as where they want to study and live afterward.

4.2.2 English-Language Educational Units in the Finnish Educational System

Being an immigrant in Finland and working in the international environment, especially in the social field (daycare, school) as well as having my child following a study program in English, I assume that, the English-speaking society in Finland stays apart from the Finnish one. This process often starts at an early age when a child is set in the English-language education unit, namely daycare. And although Finnish traditions are supposed to be followed through celebrating national holidays, supporting the Finnish language, offering national cuisine, and so on, English culture has a tremendous effect as well. Dominant language, in this case, English, cannot help form mentality and culture as well as build the environment and social network. Even Finnish speakers who are put in the international environment are affected by its view and traditions which reflects on their view of things happening around them.

I believe that children who start the process of building their communities from approximately 2,5 years old will carry it throughout their whole life. These International communities will develop into working nets later on and these processes happening around the world in total have a global impact on many sectors and influence politics, economics, trade, and so on. Through the survey, I would like to check whether those starting international study paths are willing to stay in Finland or not, taking into consideration those of Finnish origin as well.

I was interested to check how many English-language early childhood education centers and schools there are in Finland. According to the information presented on the website of the city of Helsinki (2022), ECE in English-language is not provided as a municipal service. Private daycare centers organize early childhood education either fully in English or as different kinds of bilingual options with a different portion of English. The number of fully English-language early childhood education in private daycare centers is over thirty and in bilingual centers is about thirteen. Among those are Pilke Playschools, ICEC centers, Bumblebees daycares, and Finnish American daycares located in different cities and towns of Finland.

There are options to get basic education in English as well. One can find about 15 international schools with English as the language of instruction in and around Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Oulu, Pori, Rauma, Rovaniemi, Imatra, Lappeenranta, Tampere, and Turku.

The instruction can be provided entirely in English (however, some compulsory studies in Finnish language and literature are required), 25-50 % in English (bilingual Finnish-English education) or 10-25 % in English and the rest is in Finnish (English-enriched education). (City of Helsinki 2022.)

There are private and a few state-owned comprehensive schools that offer basic education in English in Helsinki and other cities of Finland. Among those are the English School, Ressu Comprehensive School: the International School of Helsinki, the International School of Vantaa, the International School of Espoo, Kielo International School, Kulosaari Elementary and Secondary Schools, and many others. (Expatriate Finland n.d.) The curricula can vary from one school to another and are often based on the frameworks from the UK or US, however, they all follow the standards of the ECEC Curriculum as well. Some schools additionally offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge programs. (Allt 2022.)

Neither public nor private daycares are fully paid for by the customers. The fee for early childhood education and care services can vary and depend on different issues but is supposed to be between 28 € and 295 € per child. The rest of the costs are covered by the government. (Ministry of education and culture. 2023.)

5 Methodology

There is a great number of research methods used in the academic field for collecting and analyzing data. The choice of the data collection method for the particular research depends on the type of data that is needed - qualitative or quantitative, primary or secondary, descriptive or experimental. In the present research, I have used a survey as the main and an interview as an additional data-collecting method. The reasons for the choice of the mentioned methods will be presented further. (Tietoarkisto n.d.)

5.1 Survey as the Main Data Collection Method

The survey allows to collect both quantitative and qualitative primary data from a sample which is very convenient in the case of the present study. It has probably developed into a data collection method from the census conducted by the Government to count the population. The other reason for the survey research was to understand the social problems of the nation. Namely, surveys, have historically included large population-based data collection. (Groves et al. 2009.)

Following Singleton & Straits (2009), the survey method can use both quantitative and qualitative research strategies that are also beneficial for the given research. In the former case, numerically rated items are used in questions, while the second has descriptive questions with in-depth answers then it is a qualitative survey. A mixed method is also frequent in social and psychological research to describe and explore human behavior. In the

present research, I will mostly use quantitative research strategies. However, analyzing interview responses, I will need a mixed type as well.

I chose the survey because it is the most common quantitative data collection method used in the social sciences to understand how societies work. Information is usually collected by questioning big groups of respondents in an oral or written form. The way the survey is designed, processed, and analyzed affects the quality of the results. The principles of different disciplines such as mathematics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and computer science are to be applied to a high-quality built survey. The drawback of the survey is that it is limited to standardized measures. Moreover, they are often conducted in uncontrolled settings which also affects the results. Surveys stay apart from describing people or events. They summarize observations through statistics. (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangeau 2009.)

As has already been mentioned above, I was not able to find much information on the topic of my study. There has not been any relatable research done in Finland or outside to confirm a dependence on the family's background with the choice of the ECEC unit for children. Neither was any data revealed about the possible reasons for choosing English-language daycare as the first stage of education or plans for the future education of the children attending English-language them, particularly in Finland. For these reasons, I decided to conduct a survey to get the answers to my mentioned questions.

5.2 Interview as an Additional Data Collection Method

According to the educational portal for conducting business studies (Business research methodology n.d.), an interview is a qualitative research method that implies conducting individual interviews with a small number of people to ask their opinion on a particular idea or situation. Interviews can be divided into 3 groups: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured.

Structured interviews consist of a set of prior prepared questions that all interviewees answer in the same order. For the data analysis, the researcher compares different answers given to the same questions. Unstructured interviews do not imply pre-determined questions and are held informally. They are usually the least reliable from a research viewpoint. So the comparison of answers given by different respondents is more difficult due to the differences in the formulation of questions. The semi-structured interview is a mix of both structured and unstructured interviews. A set of the same questions can be prepared beforehand, however, some additional questions might be asked during interviews as well. (Business research methodology n.d.)

Following the same source (Business research methodology n.d.), the main advantage of the interview is the possibility to collect detailed information about research questions. Besides,

the researcher has personal control over the process and the possibility to clarify certain questions during the process. As for the disadvantages of the interview, it requires longer time and arrangement difficulties. There is a risk of interviewee bias that would seriously compromise the validity of the research findings. To avoid this the interviewer should not overreact to the responses of the interviewee. Moreover, to reduce interviewer bias, the interviewer should dress and behave appropriately for the environment and mind privacy issues.

In the given research, a structured interview was done. All the respondents answered the same question which gave a possibility to compare and analyze the results later on. It took some time to decide for holding interviews within a given research. After getting a surprisingly low number of survey responses that called into question the validity of the research, and having a discussion about this defeat with daycare staff, the idea additionally to hold the interviews has come up. The interview was seen as an extra source of getting research data as well as clarifying some aspects and confirming the survey results.

6 Responders

The survey was conducted among the parents or guardians of the children attending a chosen English-language daycare in the Helsinki area. The overall sample included approximately 50 people but only 14 responses were got out of this. The questions were aimed to define the main types of families in terms of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds whose children attend chosen daycares centers. I also wanted to find out the factors that were conducive to choosing these early childhood education units. Finally, I asked them about the perspectives they see on the future education of their children.

The interview was conducted among the daycare teacher from three different locations. The question was meant to clarify and double-check the survey results as well as to get more details on the issue. The respondents were asked their opinion about the main reasons why parents choose English-language daycares as a first stage of education for their children.

6.1 Data Collection

The data collection process started by contacting the general manager of the daycare centers and asking permission for conducting research. The manager was contacted through a call to one of the daycare centers and introduced to the thesis topic. After obtaining permission to do research, the details of the process have been discussed. It was planned to survey the daycare parents or guardians. To start with, an informational advertisement for parents/guardians was presented on the information board for the visitors together with my self-introduction as a student who is doing research in cooperation with a center.

Along with that, the form with multiple-choice questions drawn up long beforehand was sent to the manager for approval and forwarding to the children's parents/guardians. The motivation words have been added to the form heading. Those words were aimed to assure the responders of the anonymity of the survey and confidentiality of the data they present as well as of the purpose of the given research. The responders were also informed that the study results will be published at Theseus.fi. The deadline was set for doing the survey and the period was over, and the work with data started.

Additionally, they were a decision made to hold three interviews with daycare teachers to raise the research reliability as well as to get a second opinion on the topic. The interviews were short as there was only one question to be asked. However, all the teachers gave very detailed answers. Each interview lasted about 15-20 minutes. The main aspects were recorded and analyzed mostly by the frequency of the words.

6.2 Content Analysis as a Data Analysis Method

Content analysis is a very popular method for quantitative research. It includes human-coded analysis and computer-aided text analysis. It showed up its reliability, validity and replicability. (Neuendorf 2017.) I chose this method as it allows to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data which is very convenient for the present research done by means of two methods - a survey and an interview. For both data collection methods content analysis is seen mostly applicable for determining the presence of certain concepts. It helps to evaluate the frequency of the answers on the given questions to search for bias or partiality. (Fink 2009, cited in Neuendorf 2017, 379-397.) I am going to use it as a quantitative method to count the frequency of some categories and the amount of variables.

Having familiarized with the main principle of the content analysis presented by Neuendorf (2017), I worked out some stage of analysis which I went through. They are identifying and collecting data, determine coding categories, coding the content, checking validity and reliability, analysing and presenting results. Such elements as words, collocations and sentences were considered for performing content analysis.

First things first, data was collected by means of survey which was held online. Questionnaire consisting of 21 closed questions was offered to a big number of participants who were parents/guardians of the children attending chosen daycare units. I cannot say how many guardians got the invitation to fill in the form as the daycare management was responsible for sharing the survey but in the end of the day, an unexpectedly low number of the answers were got to be able to speak about the reliability of the study. I can explain this little number by the fact that there are a lot of newsletters coming to everyone's mail box with a request to fill in the form and people nowadays feel quite tired and annoyed by this so either they fill the form as soon as they get it (the minority) or they forget about it mediately and never return to it.

Secondly, the collected data was supposed to be determined into coding categories, but since I had very little number of responders and a few questions, there was no necessity in setting categories. Most of the data was analysed manually using filters for Excel tables.

Thirdly, I coded the content, which means that I put labels to some words and collocations. In other words, I transformed long questions into simple collocations to improve visual comprehension of the content. For example, question 5 "How long have been living in Finland?" was labelled as "Years in Finland", question 16 "What language do you want your child to study in during the school years?" as Child/language/study and so on.

Table 1. Illustration chart for content coding

Question No	Full question	Code to the question
3	Are you staying in Finland temporary or permanently?	Residence
8	Where did you get your tertiary education?	Country of education
10	Do you work in the international environment?	International field
12	What language is spoken at the place of your work?	Language at work
13	Are you going to stay in Finland for the next 5 years?	Going to stay in Finland
16	What language do you want your child to study in during the school years?	Child/language/study
18	Where do you wish your child to live in the future?	Where / child /to live
21	Why have you chosen this daycare (up to three option are possible)?	Why this daycare

Table 1 above illustrates the content-coding (Table 1). Numbers were assigned to each category. Every code was exclusive. The idea of coding was to set the rules that will help to identify mainly the frequency the particular code occurred. The full list of questions is presented in Appendix 1.

In the fourth step, I was checking the validity and reliability of the used codes to see if it measures what it was aimed at as well as to check if the results were invariable. To be sure that I captured the relevant information for the content analysis, some questions were rephrased and asked multiply. At this step, I should mention the fact that a sample is very small to declare accurate or representative results. This is rather an attempt to lay a foundation for further research at some point. Nevertheless, the results were predictable and they prove my assumptions to some extent.

Lastly, the data was analyzed and the final results of both a survey and an interview were presented. The review of the main findings was followed by my interpretation and comments. Additionally, the interview analysis was done through word categorization as synonyms and

calculation of the frequency. Its results were compared to the survey results and some correlations were made. More detailed information is presented in chapter 7.

7 Results

7.1 Survey Results

The survey questions aimed to investigate the reasons for choosing English-language daycares and check the correlations of this choice with the parent's background or field of work. The analysis was based on the 14 surveys and 3 interview results. The survey questions were multiple-choice. After the survey had been carried out the data was converted into an Excel document for detailed analysis. Moreover, a structured interview was conducted among the daycare teachers. All the interviewees answered the same question which gave a possibility to compare and analyze the results.

Here below the summary of the findings is presented. The results are left free from judgment because the sample was too little to draw any conclusions. But anyway, the data presented throws light on the situation with English-language daycares in Finland. The results of the survey were analyzed by three criteria: the clients of the English-language daycares, reasons for choosing English-language daycares, and plans/perspectives for future education.

7.1.1 The Clients of the English-Language Daycares

In the given research guardians and parents are meant by the clients of the English-language daycares. In this chapter, they are referred to as clients, respondents, people, parents, or guardians. All these terms have the same meaning.

Table 2. The clients of the English-language daycares

Guardian / parent	3. Residence	4. Country of birth	6. Spouse origin	7. Level of education	8. Country of education	10. International field	12. Language at work
G1	temporary	non EU country	Sri Lankan	Bachelor's	outside Finland	Yes	English
G2	temporary	non EU country	Japanese	Doctoral	outside Finland	No	Japanese
G3	permanently	other EU country	Finnish	Bachelor's	outside Finland	Yes	English
G4	permanently	in Finland		Masters	in Finland	Yes	English
G5	permanently	non EU country	Russian	Masters	outside Finland	Yes	English
G6	permanently	in Finland	Finnish	Masters	in Finland	No	Finnish
G7	temporary	other EU country	Germany	Masters	outside Finland	Yes	German
G8	permanently	in Finland	Finnish	Masters	in Finland	Yes	English
G9	temporary	non EU country	Mexico	Doctoral	outside Finland	Yes	English
G10	permanently	non EU country	Russian	Masters		Yes	English
G11	permanently	non EU country	Russian	Doctoral	outside Finland	Yes	English
G12	permanently	non EU country	Finnish	Doctoral	in Finland	Yes	English
G13	permanently	non EU country	Russian	Masters	outside Finland	Yes	English

G14	permanently	non EU country	Russian	Masterrs	outside Finland	No	English, Russian
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The above table demonstrates some of the responses got from the survey (Table 2). Filters in Excel have been used to hide the responses that are not relevant to this question. The responses to questions 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 12 were analyzed. As we can see from the table (Table 2), most of the clients of the daycare centers who participated in the research area of foreign origin (question 4) and only two couples are both Finnish (questions 4 and 6). As you can see from Table 2 below, 11 out of the 14 respondents, were born outside Finland (question 4) and only 4 people among them are staying temporarily in Finland (question 3). Considering the guardians' level of education, we can see that 12 out of 14 people have higher than Bachelor's degrees (question 7), 10 people got it outside Finland (question 8), 11 people work in the International field (question 10) and same 11 people use English as a working language (question 12). 9 respondents are going to stay in Finland for the next 5 years (question 13).

7.1.2 Reasons for Choosing an English-Language Daycare

In this part, I investigated the preconditions for parents of choosing English-language daycares as the first stage of education for their children. The survey results showed that this choice was conscious for most of them. Questions 14, 15, 19, 20, and 21 were taken into consideration.

Table 3. Reasons for choosing an English-language daycare

Guardian / parent	14. Language at home	15. Child's native language	19. Finnish Curriculum for Education	20. The daycare curriculum	21. Why this daycare
G1	Sinhalese	English	I am not familiar with it	both	native language
G2	Japanese	Japanese	I am not familiar with it	English	be bilingual
G3	Finnish & English	Finnish & English	-	-	you are not satisfied with the previous kindergarten
G4	Finnish	Finnish	I am not familiar with it	English	be bilingual
G5	Russian	Russian	I am not familiar with it	both	be bilingual
G6	Finnish	Finnish	I am not familiar with it	English	the daycare is close to your home
G7	German	German	I do not care which curriculum my child follows	both	be bilingual
G8	Finnish	Finnish	I am familiar and consider it to be better than the English curriculum	both	be bilingual
G9	English	English	I am familiar and consider it to be better than the English curriculum	Finnish	they support your language and culture
G10	Russian	Russian	I am not familiar with it	English	start school in English
G11	Russian	Russian	I am familiar and consider it to be worse than the English curriculum	both	start a primary school in English
G12	Finnish	Finnish	I do not care which curriculum my child follows	both	be bilingual
G13	Russian	Russian	I am not familiar with it	both	be bilingual
G14	Russian	Russian	I am familiar and consider it to be worse than the English curriculum	none	start a primary school in English

As we can see from the table above (Table 3), seven out of the fourteen respondents want their children to be bilingual which makes 50% (question 21). Among those are representatives of different language groups: Finnish (3 people), Russian (2 people), German (1 person), and Japanese (1 person). Among the same seven respondents, six want their children to continue studying in the English language and two also mentioned their native as the second. Interestingly, no one of those speaks English at home (question 14) and the child's native language is other than Finnish (question 15). Question 19 revealed that no one of the respondents is familiar with FNAE, as well as question 20 showed up that parents believe that daycare centers use either English Curriculum or both. By the English curriculum I mean EYFS which is the British study program for ECEC (Department of education 2021). By the Finnish curriculum, a National Core Curriculum for early childhood education and care (FNAE 2022) is implied.

7.1.3 Plans / Perspectives for Future Education

Finally, we are looking into the perspectives the parents see for their children after graduating from the English-language daycares.

Table 4. Plans/perspectives for the future education

Guardian / parent	14. Language at home	15. Child's native language	16. Child/language/study	17. Where /child/get education	18. Where / child /to live
G1	Sinhalese	English	English	-	-
G2	Japanese	Japanese	English	outside Finland	outside Finland
G3	Finnish & English	Finnish & English	Finnish-	-	-
G4	Finnish	Finnish	Finnish	in Finland	Finland
G5	Russian	Russian	English	outside Finland	outside Finland
G6	Finnish	Finnish	English	in Finland	Finland
G7	German	German	German or English	outside Finland	-
G8	Finnish	Finnish	English	outside Finland	outside Finland
G9	English	English	English	outside Finland	outside Finland
G10	Russian	Russian	English	outside Finland	outside Finland
G11	Russian	Russian	English	outside Finland	Finland
G12	Finnish	Finnish	both English and Finnish	in Finland	Finland
G13	Russian	Russian	English	in Finland	Finland
G14	Russian	Russian	English, Finnish, French	outside Finland	Finland

The table above demonstrates the data on the parents' perspectives on their children's future education (Table 4). As we can see, twelve out of fourteen want their children to continue studying in English after graduation from the daycare. Those two respondents who chose to study in Finnish (question 16) are couples with at least one parent of Finnish origin and in both cases the child's native language (question 15) and the language spoken at home (question 14) is Finnish. Eight out of fourteen respondents want their children to get higher education outside Finland, four - were in Finland, and three - did not answer (question 17). Five people want their children to live outside Finland in the future, six - in Finland, three did not answer. Here we cannot conclude that there is a big difference as the sample is too little and not trustworthy.

7.2 Interview Results

The three interviews were held with daycare teachers from different school locations. Two teachers have had more than eight years and one teacher - has two years of working experience with these group of daycares. All three interviewees were asked the same question, namely: "What do they see as the main reasons why parents choose English-language daycares as the first stage of education for their children?" According to the responses of the daycare teachers, the parents mostly were looking into the opportunity for their children to become bilingual.

Teacher 1 "... the parents wanted their children to learn English in preparation to bilingual school ..."

Teacher 2 "... they wanted the child to be educated in English/bilingual settingand want the child to be educated in both languages ..."

Teachers also expressed that some parents feel unsure about staying in Finland for the long term and see no sense in learning Finnish in this case alternatively to English which can be a support in any foreign country.

Teacher 2 “ ... some families are not sure how long they are in Finland for and their child to have English language as a base in case they need to return to their home country ...”

Teacher 3 “... some of them are not planning to stay in Finland in the long term, or it is not their first option. That's why they do not see the importance of learning the Finnish language, as outside Finland they are not going to need it, while English is going to be essential in their future country of residence ...”

One teacher also mentioned the reason that some foreign-origin parents feel uncomfortable in the Finnish environment communicating with the Finnish daycare staff etc. so they choose English-language daycares to avoid this confusion and make their own life easier.

Teacher 3 “ ... they do not speak Finnish and won't be able to feel integrated in a Finnish centre, finding difficulties in communicating with teachers and other staff as well as with other families ...”

The same teacher supposes that Finnish families look into the opportunity to learn one more language additionally the child's native Finnish and see preschool age as the right time to start the learning process.

Teacher 3 “ Their children already speak Finnish as it is their mother tongue and parents want their children to speak more languages, being this the best stage to acquire a new language, and being English the most important language worldwide.”

Among the other once mentioned reasons are the desire to be able to speak English while traveling to different countries, having more career opportunities in the future, and exploring the world outside Finland.

7.3 Discussion on the Results

This study took place during the years 2022-2023. The main target of this study was to discover who the clients of the English daycares in Finland are as well as to understand the reasons why they choose English daycares as the first stage of education for their children. Moreover, I was interested to know about parents'/guardians' plans for the next stage of education for their children. The frames of the research were narrowed to several daycare centers where the questionnaire was offered to parents/guardians in January 2023.

I set the objective for the research and started searching for the theoretical foundation. Soon I got realized that the topic I was studying is very poorly presented. I have not found much

information on the international path possibilities in Finland besides the general information on the number of international daycares and schools. For this reason, I decided to study the question in more detail and conduct research myself.

Regardless of their residence in the country, a family language profile, namely what language or languages are spoken in the family should be considered. Speaking about the families we can define three types: families with two Native Finnish guardians, families with none Native Finnish guardians, and a mixed type with one Native Finnish and one Non-Finnish guardian.

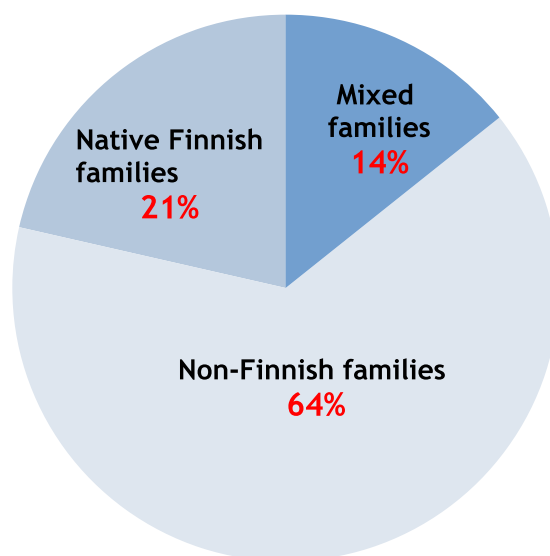


Figure 2. The clients of the English-language daycares (survey data only)

As we can see from Figure 2, the majority of the families are seen as those with none Native Finnish guardians or a mixed type. Consequently, the language used in the family is mostly English or other than English or Finnish. As for the Finnish language, mixed types use Finnish or two languages at a time. With mixed families, this could be explained by the desire to make the child speak the language of the country, and in this case, the choice of the English-language daycare is seen as a good possibility to make a child bilingual. The same situation is with families with both native Finnish guardians who also wish that the child become bilingual.

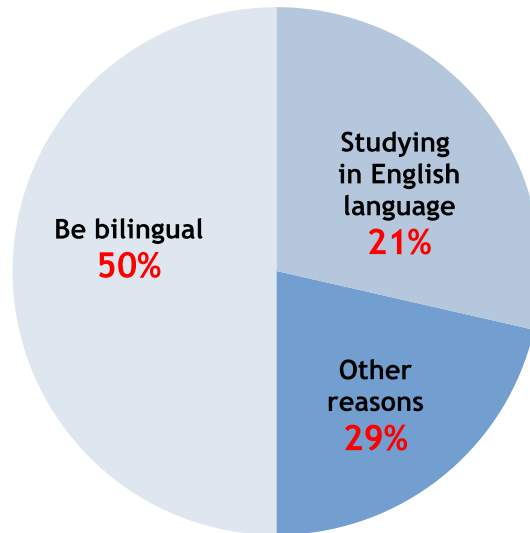


Figure 3. Reasons for choosing an English-language daycare (survey data only)

Bilingualism is seen as the main reason for starting an English-language daycare (Figure 3). This fact was also confirmed by the answers got from the interviews. Among the other reasons for choosing English- speaking daycares is the desire to continue studying in the English language. This reason is chosen mostly by non-Finnish guardians.

Basing the results of the study on Immigrant Parents’ Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Care Practices in the Finnish Multicultural Context (Lastikka & Lipponen 2016), I was interested to evaluate the importance of supporting their language and culture among the respondents. Interestingly, only one respondent from a non-EU country marked this point which was a little bit unusual in my opinion as according to the above-mentioned study (Lastikka & Lipponen 2016), many guardians strongly supported promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in the daycares. Those expressed strong for their cultural identity acknowledgment and thought the dual language and culture approach to be the best. I believe that some respondents who chose the answer “to be bilingual” in my research might also refer to this, however, this phenomenon was left unclear. In the future, the survey questions need to be more concrete to avoid ambiguity.

I also suppose that the difference in the results of my research and the one conducted by Lastikka & Lipponen (2016) can be explained by the fact that the study on Immigrant Parents’ Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Care Practices in the Finnish Multicultural Context (Lastikka & Lipponen 2016) was conducted in the public daycares where parents are not so much concerned about the child’s future at this early age. I mean that they prioritize cultural aspects to a future career. Here, on the contrary, the choice is more deliberate and goals are set already at this early step.

7.4 Assessment from the Workplace

My cooperation with a working-life partner was very successful and mutually beneficial. To start with, the idea of the research topic was in my mind long before I started cooperating with them and I was surprised and delighted to hear from the manager of the daycare that they are also interested to learn about it. I got some tips from them on how to start the process. For example, they suggested making my self-introduction page and placing it on the information board so that the parent can be aware that I was doing my research in the daycare. Also, they floated the idea of doing a questionnaire and they can send it not only to the customers of this particular daycare but to all daycares of their group. Thanks to this, I was able to get at least 14 responses. They initiated sending the form only to the parents of the elder children groups because, in their opinion, those of the younger children (under 2 years old) are not that much aware of their plans for the future. Throughout the process, I contacted the staff members many times when needed some clarification or advice and they were always happy to help.

What I appreciated a lot is that they invited me to come to their company party and later on offered me a possible job in the daycare as soon as I graduate. As they commented that, since now I am a member of their big family and as I know from inside all the process details and aware of the situation on the market, I am ready to join their group. I also appreciated their sincerity and desire to help and support at all stages.

As for the formalities, I followed the questions suggested in Laurea's e-form for Bachelor's Thesis (Laurea n.d.) to get feedback from the workplace. I asked the manager and the teachers how useful the information I got from the research could be for them. All of them said that the results are meaningful for their business development, although the information has not become very surprising for them. It has rather confirmed their understanding of the present situation and their position in the market. One of the teachers also mentioned that this information will give them a better understanding of the customers' inquiries that will contribute to better process planning and accommodating the programme to the clients' needs. For example, the preschool group is supposed to do the activities like Maths and Phonics to get ready for the entrance exam to the 1 grade at school. However, these activities are not regular and mostly happen occasionally. From now on, they will try to include those in their month plan and pay more attention to them. Moreover, in those days I was staying with the daycare while doing my research assignments, I noticed them already starting more activities in Phonics with preschool age groups and they showed me a manual for teaching Phonics with a detailed instruction how to do the activities. In my opinion, this is already a big change in their routine.

Following the manager of the place Heli Kokkonen (2023), this group daycares are highly rated by many English-language schools as the graduates from them are known to have good

level of English and sufficient skills to start the 1st grade successfully. Moreover, one school works in cooperation with one of this group daycare (but not the one I worked with), sharing the day schedule as half a day at school and half a day at a daycare for preschool children.

According to the information got from the manager and the daycare staff, the daycares centers have recently started losing their primordial concept and becoming less attractive to the customers. Having hard times while staying under the rule of another bigger company leads to their customary setup break and a whole educational philosophy change. Still supported by the dedicated staff members who have been working from the company's foundation, the daycare centers are trying their best to stay afloat. They believe that this research will contribute to heightening the interest in the daycare units at least through the marketing buzz. (Heli Kokkonen, 2023.)

Heli Kokkonen (2023) also mentioned budget cutting, the closure of some daycare units, and the stop of their staff training programs have had a lot of consequences. These changes cannot help affect the customers who have partly lost trust and interest in getting into the daycare environment which policy has noticeably changed within 3 years. The daycare staff feels less motivated at work and often leave their jobs. Moreover, the staff is less professional compared to the times when they were trained in company's staff training. Nevertheless, it still functions on the back of the founders who are faithful to the company's idea and support its traditions. And as also confirmed by the given research results, customers are still in demand of international daycares that provide an opportunity to learn in a multilingual environment and get a wider understanding of the worldwide picture. They are interested in bilingual learning and the perspectives of further education in English in or outside Finland. It means that there is a need in places like this.

I assess my cooperation with the daycare center very high also because of the fact that I built connections with a lot of people and had had a real pleasure working with them in the warm and encouraging atmosphere. I tried as much as possible to minimize my interfering in their routine and adjust my interference to their schedule to make it easier for us all. Knowing the place for several years I feel very sad about their current situation and try to make more people aware of the opportunities of learning or working there. I wish it can affect the decision to reduce the number of the daycare units of this group or at least make this process more slow.

I have not decided yet where I am going to work but I am sure it will be in the early childhood education field. The research results confirmed my opinion on the role of English-language educational institutions in Finland and how I see my role as an educator. I appreciate everything the research process taught me about the basics of early childhood education, bilingualism, and multiculturalism. The results of this study were not surprising, however,

they gave me a clue for further development in this field of study and motivation for keeping on working on this topic.

7.5 Trustworthiness and Ethical Issues

Ethical issues play an important role throughout all phases of the research. Policies define the agenda of the research, topics prioritized, questions specification, and also the interpretation of the results. (Journal of clinical epidemiology 2023.)

According to the study on understanding ethics conducted by the University of Stirling (n.d.), ethics is “a personal code of conduct based on respect” for people and surroundings and is based on the principles of behavior for people and organizations. Studying ethics and implying its principles to research activities is essential. Among the major ethical considerations are the protection of participants’ rights and personal data, and respect for intellectual property.

Following Connelly (2016), trustworthiness of a study is a concept related to confidentiality and defining its degree in data, interpretation, and methods used. The researchers should establish the procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers.

Confidentiality and respect were a top priority for the present research. Ethical principles were always followed and a lot of attention was paid to word choice, term use and so on. No real name of people and places were mentioned in the research, some links were hidden on ethical grounds. As the research was done in the scope of multiculturalism, there might have been some questions regarding the national or cultural aspects. So the participants were suggested to skip the questions that they consider sensitive to answer. Before starting the research the staff members and the parents were informed about the process and guaranteed data confidentiality and informed about the publication of the research results to Theseus.fi. Moreover, they were assured that the data got from the survey would be used only for the given research and not be shared with third parties.

While doing interviews with the daycare teachers, I was following the their policy file instructions (2017) that say that everyone working in their schools (= daycares) should be aware of confidentiality matters. For example, names or documents concerning children’s data should be kept strictly confidential. Staff is not allowed to discuss individual children outside the school. Information given by the parents should not be forwarded to other people without permission.

All in all, there have not been many cases important from the ethics side as I was not working directly with the children, and no personal data was needed. Nevertheless, staying polite and respecting people have always been important to me.

8 Conclusion

Now that my thesis process is coming to an end, I can conclude that it was a travel adventure to the world of childhood, education, and relationship between people involved in the upbringing process. I worked in cooperation with an English-language daycare and feel very happy with the research performed. I felt passionate about the topic and it helped me to get other people motivated in the study as well. I do feel the importance of the topic due to several reasons. First of all, being an immigrant parent of a preschool child myself I faced the problem of choosing a daycare at some point. Secondly, the number of non-Finnish people in Finland is increasing every year and the question of choosing an ECEC unit is always controversial. Lastly, this topic is not well-studied. I believe we should talk more about different possibilities of getting the education to make people reach this information and understand that they always have alternatives to choose from.

This thesis was a project done for the Laurea University of Applied Sciences Degree Programme in Social Services. The purpose of this study was to investigate who the clients of the English daycares in Finland are and why they choose English daycares for their children as well as to get at their plans for the next stage of education for their children. The research was focused on the family language profile as well as the socio-cultural background of the parents or other guardians whose children attend English-language daycares in Finland. I was interested to check the influence of the mentioned above factors on the choice of daycare.

What I have learned during the process is the importance of understanding the reasons for people's behavior and actions. At first sight, it can seem that this knowledge does not bring any fruit, however, I consider that knowledge always supports development. Knowing the reasons why the clients choose your company is essential for building a better relationship with them, adjusting the learning goals, and attracting new clients.

I am happy to have found answers to my research questions. The major findings showed that the clients of the English-language daycares in Finland are diverse but generally can be divided into Native Finnish guardians and Non-Finnish guardians (more detailed information was presented in chapter 7.3). The results of both research methods - a survey and an interview - have a lot of coincidences. This proves the assumption that bilingualism plays the first fiddle in the list of reasons for choosing English-language daycares. Along with that, the desire to continue studying in English and the uncertainty about staying in Finland in the future are also clearly seen in both methods.

I found a survey and an interview to be very sufficient and mutually complementary research methods. They are effective for collecting data from a big number of people at a time and make the process of calculation of the results quite easy if done correctly. I was interested to dive into the process of data analysis. I suspect this process could have been done more professionally working with bigger loads of information but the idea of the given research was

to try out the methods and give a start to a new research topic that can be developed and investigated with a deeper dive into the question. As a learner, I have come to understand, that I need to learn more about methodology principles in general as well as the ways of data processing. Working on the theoretical foundation of the research, I realized that I lack the ability to analyze big amounts of information.

Summing up, this thesis was an overview of the current situation in Finland regarding people who choose a non-Finnish educational path. A lot of discussions for and against this alternative are held nowadays. But it remains the case that this option is quite demanding in Finnish society as well. This topic leaves a lot of food for thought and can be learned with a deeper dive but for the present research the goals are reached and the research questions are answered. It was a valuable experience for me that broadened my views on the topic. I hope I will be able to take a new level with this research in the future.

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Appendix 1: Parents/guardians survey

Dear parents/guardians!

My name is Svetlana and I am currently doing research for my Bachelor´s thesis with Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland. The topic of my work is - Grounds and perspectives for the children graduating from English-language kindergartens in Finland. I am kindly asking you to find some 5-10 min to answer the following questions.

As the research is being done in the scope of multiculturalism, there might be some questions regarding the national or cultural aspects. Should You find any questions sensitive to answer, please skip them. Be assured that the data got from the survey will be used only for the given research and not be shared with third parties. However, the thesis will be published at Theseus.fi. The survey is anonymous, and I appreciate Your giving honest answers.

1. Are you ...?
 - mum
 - dad
2. What is your age group?
 - 18-25
 - 26-39
 - 40-70
3. Are you staying in Finland?
 - permanently
 - temporary
4. Where were you born?
 - in Finland
 - other EU country
 - non EU country
5. How long have been living in Finland?
 - from birth
 - over 5 years
 - from 2 to 5 years
 - under 2 years
6. What origin is your spouse?
 - Finnish
 - English
 - other
7. What is the level of your education?
 - Secondary
 - Post-secondary
 - Bachelor´s
 - Master´s
 - Doctoral
 - other
8. Where did you get your tertiary education?

- in Finland
 - outside Finland
9. What was the language of your tertiary study?
- Finnish
 - English
 - other
10. Do you work in the international environment?
- yes
 - no
11. What is the field of your work?
- social- or healthcare
 - technology
 - academics
 - sales and marketing
 - HR
 - finance
 - manufacturing
 - other
12. What language is spoken at the place of your work?
- Finnish
 - English
 - other
13. Are you going to stay in Finland for the next 5 years?
- Yes
 - no
14. What language is spoken in your family?
- Finnish
 - English
 - other
15. What is the child's native language?
- Finnish
 - English
 - other
16. What language do you want your child to study in during the school years?
- Finnish
 - English
 - other
17. Where do you want your child to get a tertiary education?
- In Finland
 - outside Finland
18. Where do you wish your child to live in the future?
- In Finland
 - outside Finland
19. What do you think about Finish Curriculum for Education?
- I am not familiar with it
 - I am familiar and consider it to be better than the English curriculum
 - I am familiar and consider it to be worse than the English curriculum
 - I do not care which curriculum my child follows
20. Do you know what curriculum the daycare follows?
- Finnish
 - English
 - both

- none
21. Why have you chosen the this daycare (up to three option are possible)? |
- it is close to your home
 - they provide better care than others
 - they support your language and culture better than other kindergartens
 - they have better curriculum than the others
 - English is the child's native language
 - you want the child to be bilingual
 - you want the child to start a primary school in English
 - you are not satisfied with the previous kindergarten