



## Pupils' experiences of the learning process and use of the target language in a local, experimental language-enriched programme in Finland

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In Finland, national curricula for early childhood education and care (ECEC), pre-primary and basic education underline the importance of offering all children access to multilingualism. This explicit incentive has brought forward an early introduction of the first foreign language in grade 1 (from 2020 onwards) as well as a spurred interest in language-enriched programmes and bilingual pedagogy.

In our study we present and discuss results from a questionnaire, distributed in late November 2023, to 26 pupils in grade 4, who take part in a locally developed, experimental language-enriched programme for promoting the learning of the other national language, Finnish, in a Swedish-dominant municipality. The language situation of the municipality differs significantly from the national context, as only 6.5% of the inhabitants are registered as Finnish-speakers forming a language group smaller than speakers of other languages (8.7%). Thus, the use of Finnish is not part of most families' languages, and there is a shared vision among both the local education authorities and guardians to promote the instrumental use of Finnish to encounter bilingual Finnish-Swedish realities nationally. Since an early introduction of Finnish in grade 1 as a language subject was considered insufficient, a language-enriched programme that allows a maximum of 25% of instruction time in a language other than the language of education was introduced in 2018 (Hansell & Björklund, 2022; Björklund et al., 2018).

The pupils in our study have participated in the language-enriched programme since ECEC (5-year-olds), and thus have several years of experiences of Finnish both as a communicative means in classroom interaction and as a language subject. Using both qualitative and descriptive quantitative analysis, the views of the pupils are presented within categories dealing with their attitudes towards the Finnish language, their learning process and use of Finnish during specific language lessons and across subjects, as well as their willingness to use the language in and out of school.

**Keywords:** Language-enriched programme, Pupils' experiences, Learning process, Use of language, Willingness to use language.

### References

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