

Language learning at Finnish workplaces (01/04, G05, 11:30–11:55)

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This paper draws together some key findings of the project, *Finnish as a work language: Sociocognitive perspectives on work-related language skills of immigrants (2011-2013)*. The aim of the project was to find out how immigrants learn Finnish needed at work, and what constitutes sufficient language skills in different jobs and situations. Special attention was paid to the role of the surrounding work community members in language learning (see e.g. Roberts 2010). In some sub-studies, also recent development projects in language education (e.g. the ESR-funded e-learning platform kotisuomessa.fi) were examined.

The theoretical framework of the project was socio-cognitive, combining dialogical, sociocultural and ecological perspectives (van Lier 2000; Dufva et al. 2011).

Methodologically the project was based on ethnographic approaches and qualitative case studies. The results show that informal learning opportunities available at work often play a crucial role in development (Virtanen, forthcoming). In addition to the nominated mentors, colleagues from similar language background provide particularly well-tailored support for the new employees. However, there is an obvious risk for immigrants to get stuck in low-paid entry-level jobs and relatively tight “niches” in working life (Strömmer, in press). In language education, in turn, the close collaboration between vocational teachers and second language teachers was proved fruitful.

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Strömmer, M. (in press). Affordances and constraints: Second language learning in cleaning work. *Multilingua*.

van Lier, L. 2004. *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. New York: Springer.

Virtanen, A. (forthcoming). The multivoicedness of workplace literacies: An international nursing student reporting in a second language. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*.