

Finnish Society and Language (Finnish Language)

Orientation, Autumn Semester 2023

Ph.D. Hanna Jokela, University Lecturer
Finnish Language and Finno-Ugric Languages
hanna.jokela@utu.fi



Finnish language

- Languages and language situation of Finland
- Finnish language: different, exotic, European?
- Some characteristics of Finnish language

Languages of Finland

- The official languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish.
 - In Turku, approximately 5.4 % of population speaks Swedish as their first language.
- Biggest numbers of foreign-language speakers (2021):
Russian, Estonian, Arabic, English, Somali (stat.fi)

Finnish & Swedish in Turku

(Photos: Hanna Jokela)



Languages of Turku?



Languages of Finland

- The Saami (*Sámi* or *Sami*) languages are the languages of the indigenous population of Finland. There are three different Saami languages spoken in Finland: Inari Saami, Skolt Saami and Northern Saami.
 - Finnish Romani, Finnish sign language, Finland-Swedish sign language and Karelian have special status.
- www.kotus.fi (Institute for the Languages of Finland)

Finnish language – Finno-Ugric language family

- There are three language families in Europe: Uralic, Indo-European, and Basque.
- Hungarians, Finns, and Estonians make up the majority of Uralic language (Finno-ugric languages) speakers.
- Finnish and Estonian are Baltic-Finnic languages.
- Estonian and Finnish have the official status of national languages.
- For more information: <https://fennougria.ee/en/peoples/baltic-finnic-peoples/>

Finnish language – Finno-Ugric language family

- Finnish is also one the Nordic languages – but Finnish is not related to Scandinavian languages.
- Close contacts: Finnish and Swedish have more shared words than, for example, Finnish and Hungarian, even though Finnish and Swedish are not related.

Some characteristics of Finnish language

- There are **no articles** in Finnish.
- The words have **no grammatical** gender.

• **Hän** on onnellinen.

***She** is happy.*

• **Hän** on onnellinen.

***He** is happy.*

Sounds

- Most sounds can be either short or long:

Tuli *fire*

Tuuli *wind*

Tulli *customs office*

Tapaan sinut *I meet you*

Tapan sinut *I kill you*

Sounds: plenty of diphthongs

Suomi

soutaa *to row*

pöytä *a table*

pyörä *a bike, a wheel*

kieli *a tongue/language*

keitto *a soup*

Lots of endings and suffixes

- Turku
 - Turun, Turkua, Turussa, Turusta, Turkuun, Turulla, Turulta, Turulle, Turkuna, Turuksi...

- **Vasta-*isi-t-ko*?**

Would you answer?

***To have* -construction**

-lla/-llä -ending:

Minu**lla** on kirja. *I have a book.*

Hann**alla** on kirja. *Hanna has a book.*

Finnish words: original or international?

- hotelli
- yliopisto
- rautatieasema
- ravintola
- kahvila
- pankki
- lentokenttä
- kirjasto

FINNISH NIGHTMARES

FINNISHNIGHTMARES.BLOGSPOT.FI - FACEBOOK.COM/FINNISHNIGHTMARES - TWITTER.COM/FINN_MATTI



WEATHER IS HORRIBLE, BUT THE ONLY SHELTER IS OCCUPIED.

Politeness strategies and addressing in Finnish

- Highly respected personal space
- High tolerance of silence
- Are there less politeness phrases?

Politeness strategies and addressing in Finnish

- Addressing:
 - The 2nd person singular pronoun *sinä* is commonly used; the 2nd person plural pronoun *te* is more formal
 - Titles are less frequently used than in many other languages
- Finnish speech culture is similar to Swedish (Scandinavian) speech culture (languages not related)
- Situational and areal variation

Isosävi, J. & Lappalainen, H., 2015. *Saako sinutella vai täytyykö teititellä? Tutkimuksia eurooppalaisten kielten puhuttelukäytännöistä*. Tietolipas 246. Helsinki: SKS.



**TURUN
YLIOPISTO**

Kiitos!

hanna.jokela@utu.fi