A cancer of Finnish or a great happiness to us all? A corpus-assisted discourse study on the English language in the Suomi24 discussion forum

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Increased use of English has brought about a massive change in the sociolinguistic landscape of the Nordic countries during the past few decades (see Peterson & Beers Fägersten 2024). This change is not welcomed by all: in Finland, the prominent role of English in the public sphere is also a cause for concern and produces heated discussion in the media as well as among the general public, whose views both reflect and contribute to the broader discourses pertaining to English (Saarinen & Ennser-Kananen 2020). In this study, we examine a popular online discussion forum to uncover layman views related to the English language in Finland and the emerging attitudes and ideologies.

The study utilizes digital methods and data in the form of corpus-assisted discourse analysis. Our focus is on the word *englanti* 'English (language)' and its common collocates in Suomi24 Corpus (Lagus et al. 2016), based on Finnish language discussions on the Suomi24 online forum in the years 2018-2020. Through the study of collocates, i.e. commonly co-occurring words (see Scott & Tribble 2006), it is possible to identify recurring themes, which are then further analyzed qualitatively through the lens of language ideologies and discourses. Our research questions are:

1) What are the most common collocates of the word *englanti* in the Suomi24 Corpus and, based on the collocates, what are the central topics of discussion on English in Finland?

2) What kinds of discourses can be identified around these collocates, and what do the findings reveal about linguistic ideologies and the current sociolinguistic climate in Finland?

The emerging discourses reflect language speakers' reactions to and attitudes towards the changing linguistic sphere in Finland. While Finland as well as other Nordic countries have always been multilingual, English has fairly rapidly begun to occupy the space of national languages, which causes tensions. One of the most prevalent themes in the discussions is English as a threat vs. opportunity, which is also observed in public opinions in other Nordic countries (Mortensen 2024). By comparing the findings to studies conducted in other Nordic countries, it is possible to gain a broader perspective into the public discussion on the role of English in Finland.

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