



Predicting placement decisions and language outcomes in immigrants' L2 Finnish education

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Outline

- Migrants' integration training in Finland
- Placement assessment
- Study
 - Research questions, Data, Analyses
- Results
- Conclusions & discussion
 - Future research

Special thanks to Elina Stordell from Testipiste for the data used in the study

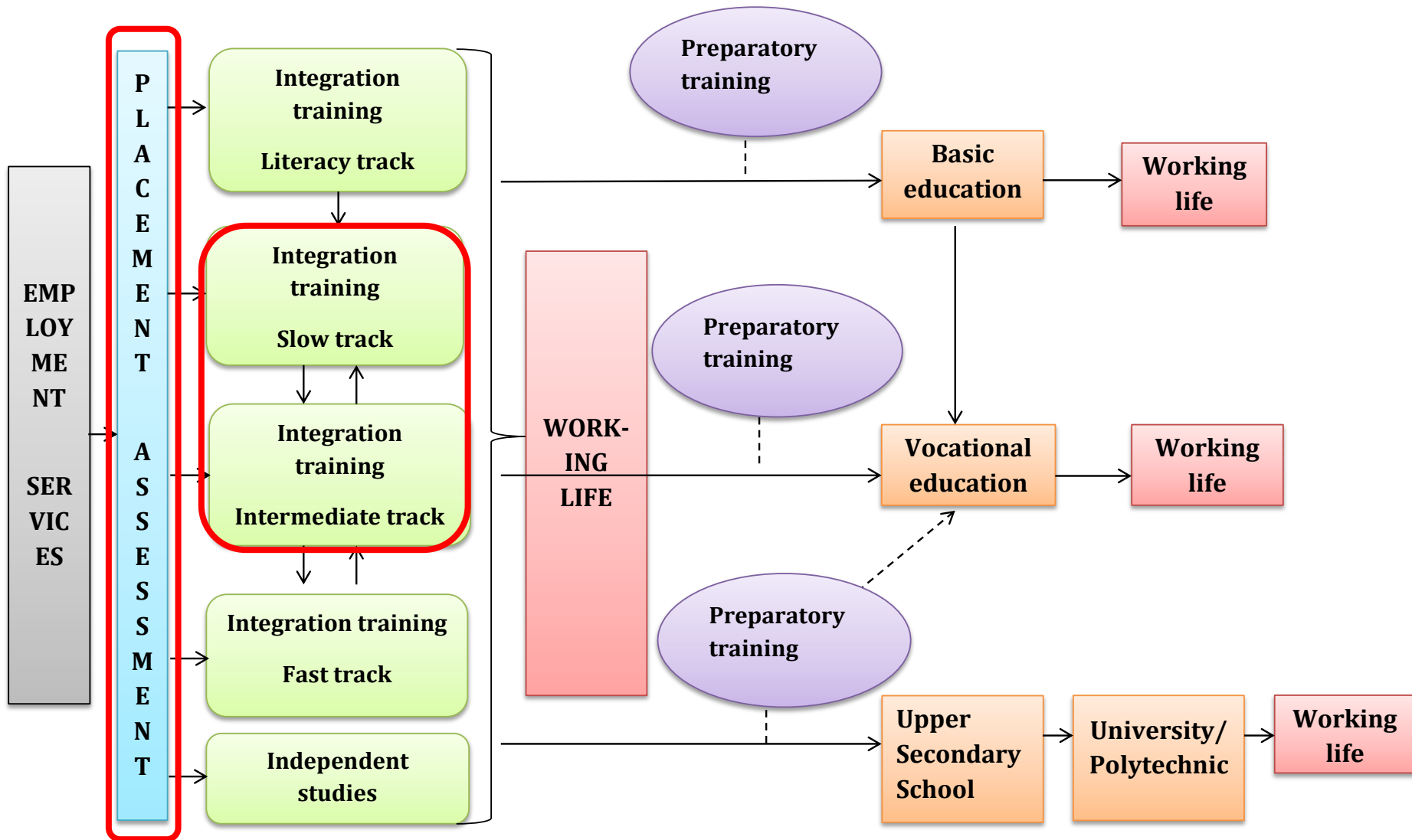


Integration training of adult immigrants

- Integration training includes
 - Finnish/Swedish language and communication skills -
→ level B1.1
 - Civic and working life skills
 - Provided by the state (via employment services)
 - 10-11 months, 5 days a week, 7 hours a day; free + integration allowance (requires active participation)
 - Workplace training included
- Number of students in integration training is currently about 15 000 / year



Typical pathways through integration training for adult immigrants in Finland

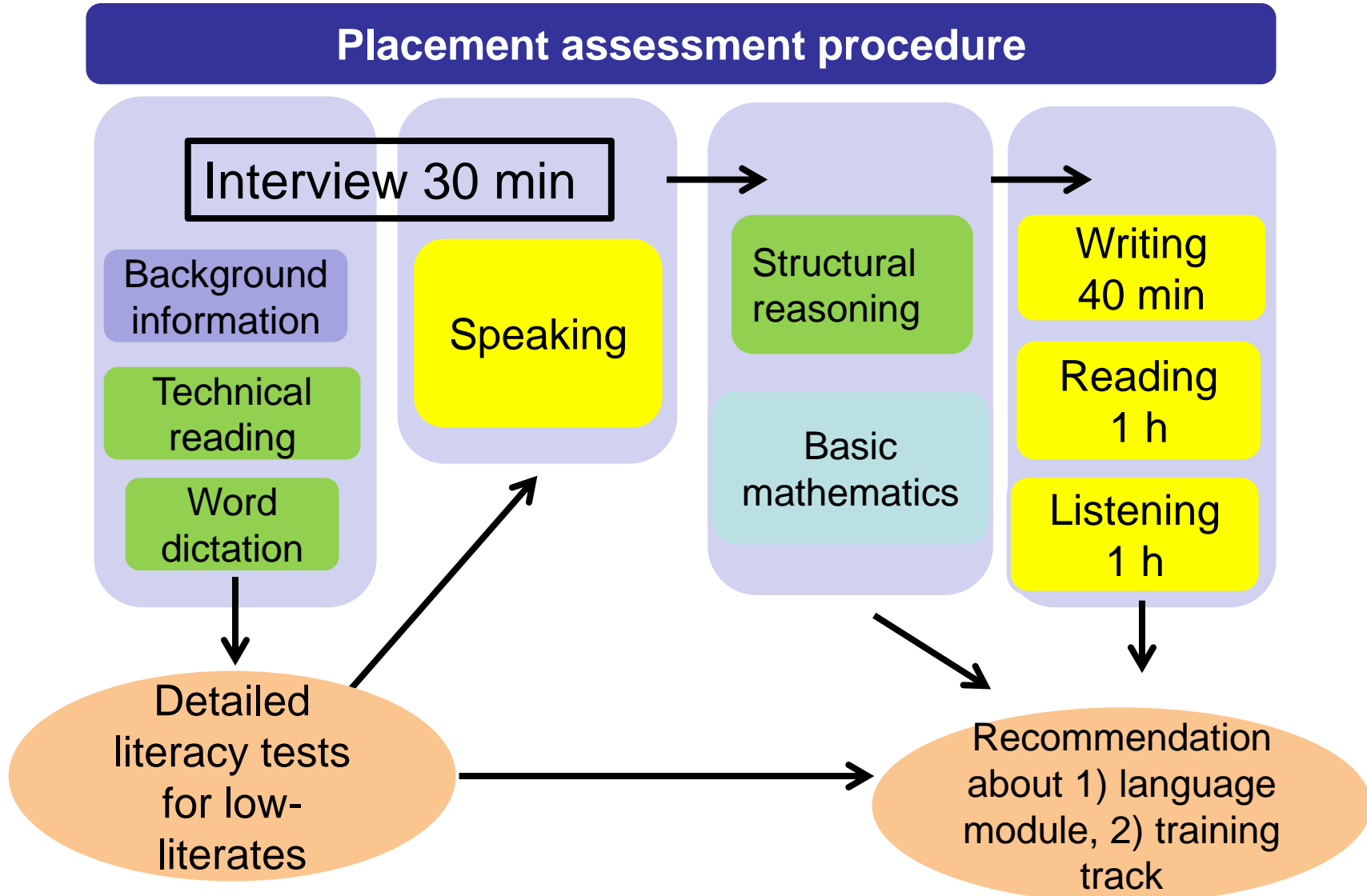


Research context: Placement assessment of L2 Finnish for adult immigrants

- Project funded by Ministry of Employment and the Economy
- The aims of the project
 - to improve comparability and quality of placement assessments by promoting the use of a particular assessment system
 - placement assessment system for L2 Finnish by the **Testipiste** assessment centre (2010-13)
 - to develop the system further
- Included a small research study: A first step in a (hopefully) longer term and more comprehensive study of integration training and the role of assessment in it



Testipiste placement assessment procedure



Structural (morphological) reasoning

- What is the **same word**? Circle only one word.

purri poori rupri purvi puurri poppi puri
 pubbi burri povvi pirru purri borru
 puvri puuri puori purre porri pouri

- Which word is **different** from the others?

hupista mupista muposta kupista huossa kuposta

- What is the best option?

PAD : PADER

NAD : ? a) NADPAD b) ER c) PAD d) NADER



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Dictation task + sample performances

KUNTASANELU

Easier

helpompi vaihtoehto

Part 1

Harder

- | | | |
|----------|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Salo | 6. Töysä | 6. Sysmä |
| 2. Lemi | 7. Pomarkku | 7. Posio |
| 3. Eura | 8. Myrskylä | 8. Halsua |
| 4. Juuka | 9. Janakkala | 9. Liperi |
| 5. Loppi | 10. Mäntyharju | 10. Keitele |

Harder

1. Salo2. Lammi3. Ela4. Juka5. Labi6. Sysmä7. Posio8. Halsua9. Liperi10. Keitele6. Töyssä7. Pommalaku8. Myölskulä9. Janakala10. Möntumaria1. salu2. lime3. jura4. joka5. Labi

Easier

Technical reading

Pasi

On aamu. Kello on kuusi. Pasi nousee ja menee suihkuun. Sitten hän tekee aamupalaa. Hän juo kaksi kuppia kahvia ja syö puuroa. Pasi vie Taunon ulos ja antaa sille ruokaa. Tauno on Pasin siskon koira. Sisko on matkalla Intiassa.

Juna on taas myöhässä. Pasia harmittaa, sillä hänellä on tärkeä kokous. Hän työskentelee insinöörinä laivayhtiössä. Hän pitää työstään, mutta joskus työpäivät venyvät pitkiksi.

Pasi juoksee neuvotteluhuoneeseen läppäri kainalossaan. Huoneessa häntä odottaa jymy-yllätys: koko suunnitteluosaston henkilökunta ja mansikkapäällysteinen syntymäpäiväkakku!



Final summative assessment at the end of integration training

- Continuous teacher assessment +
- Standardised Finnish language tests (by Testipiste)
 - **Listening** comprehension
 - **Reading** comprehension

6-7 tasks with 30-35 multiple choice, true/false, gap-fill, short-answer questions

- **Speaking**: simulated dialogues in language lab and structured discussions with a pair
- **Writing**: writing to a service provider, informal e-mail, opinion on something



Research questions

RQ1: What information determines the placement of learners into the training track (literacy, slow, intermediate, fast)?

- assessors (at Testipiste) don't weigh different types of information mechanically

RQ2: To what extent do the learners achieve the language goals of integration training?

RQ3: Do the different parts of the placement assessment predict final summative assessment at the end of the integration training?



Data

- Placement assessment results and final summative language assessment from **286 learners**

LEARNERS' BACKGROUND (in %)

Gender		Age (in years)		Education	
female	70	under 30	42	ISCED 1-2	23
male	30	30-39	39	ISCED 3	34
		40 or over	19	ISCED 4-6	43
L1		# of studied languages			
Russian	22				
Arabic	12	0	25		
Estonian	6	1	48		
Somali	5	2	25		
Recommended training track		Actual training track			
Literacy	11	Slow	28		
Slow	15	Intermediate	72		
Intermediate	70				
Fast	4				



Analysis of data

RQ1: (training track placement decisions)

- Ordered probit regression analysis (with the track as the dependent variable and the key factors as independent variables) – Mplus

RQ2: (L2 Finnish achievement)

- Percentages of learners achieving B1.1 (or A2.2)

RQ3: (prediction of final L2 Finnish grades)

- Linear regression analysis – Mplus



Results

RQ1: What information determines the placement of learners into the training track (literacy, slow, intermediate, fast)?

- Placement on the **language module**
 - Only the language test results count
 - Systematic: the lowest result determines the starting module
- Placement on the **training track**
 - Language test results NOT used for this
 - A high proportion of the decisions (91%) can be explained with
 - 'Readiness for study' tests of: **mechanical reading, word dictation, structural / morphological reasoning**
 - Background information: **number of studied languages** (excluding Finnish), **educational background**



RQ2: To what extent do the learners achieve the language goals of integration training?

Skill	Intermediate track (n=205)		Slow track (n=81)	
	% B1.1	% A2.2	% B1.1	% A2.2
All skills	26.8	79.0	0.0	27.2
Speaking	58.5	90.7	17.3	76.5
Writing	45.4	86.8	3.7	37.0
Reading	41.0	90.7	3.7	39.5
Listening	38.5	89.3	4.9	64.2



RQ3: Do the different parts of the placement assessment predict final language grades at the end of the integration training?

	Speaking	Listening	Writing	Reading
Age (in years)	+	+	+	+
Gender	+		+	+
# of studied languages	+			
Technical reading				?
Dictation	?			?
Structural reasoning				
Basic math test	+	+	+	+
Speaking (L2 Finnish)	+	+	+	+
R²	28%	25%	38%	36%



Tentative subgroup analyses: immigrants with Western / European education vs. Other type of education (rank order correlations)

Placement information ↓	Western / European education (n = 123)			Other type of education (n = 154)		
	SPEAK	WRITE	READ	SPEAK	WRITE	READ
Age	-.254**	-.212*	-.191*	-.266**	-	-.215**
Gender	.254**	.260**	.285	-	-	-
Education	-	.250**	-	.267**	.481***	.466***
# known lgs	.392***	.326**	.354***	.162*	.237**	-
# studied lgs	.344***	.280**	.368***	.275**	.385***	.263**
Tech. reading	.253**	.327***	.309***	.339***	.481***	.441***
Dictation	.264**	.206*	.291**	.294***	.339***	.363***
Struct.reasoning	.306**	.341***	.319***	.361***	.514***	.525***
Mathematics	.200*	.391***	.355***	.340***	.537***	.530***
Speaking (L2 Fin)	.315***	.220*	.275**	-	-.205*	-.172*



Tentative subgroup analyses: 4 biggest language groups in our data

Placement information	Russian (n=62)		Estonian (n=16)		Arabic (n=33)		Somali (n=13)	
	READ	WRITE	READ	WRITE	READ	WRITE	READ	WRITE
Age	-	?	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender	?	.310*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	.310*	?	-	.377*	.438*	?	.779**
# known lgs	.416**	.313*	.623**	.544*	-	-	?	.793**
# studied lgs	.459**	?	-	-	-	.412	?	.589*
Tech. reading	.316*	.285*	N/A	N/A	.537**	.459**	.621*	.696**
Dictation	?	-	N/A	N/A	.451**	.467**	?	?
Struct. reasoning	.299*	.385**	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics	?	.441**	?	-	.557**	.547**	-	?
Speak (L2 Fin)	-	-	-	-	??	??	?	?

Conclusions and discussion: Placement into training tracks

- Tests of readiness for study and certain background information determine placement into tracks
- Placement is not mechanical but depends on the assessors' judgement
 - Guidelines for new assessors (and old)
 - Individual variation between assessors?
- **Placement decisions \neq placement accuracy: How to study the accuracy of such decisions?**
 - Number of students who change track
 - What else?



Conclusions and discussion: Achieved language proficiency at the end of training

- The national goal of B1.1 is too demanding for many migrants, particularly if they study in the slow track (and presumably if they start without literacy skills)
 - Larger-scale studies with representative samples needed
 - The integration training system is changing: more emphasis on training in the workplace: Effect on language and other outcomes?



Conclusions and discussion: Predicting final summative assessment results for L2 Finnish from placement assessment

- Most of the variance in the final language grades could NOT be explained on the basis of placement assessment
 - Written skills: more than a third of the variance could be explained
 - Oral skills: About a quarter of the variance
- How well should we expect placement instruments to predict learning outcomes in the first place?
- Different groups / types of learners probably differ in 1) how well their achievement can be predicted and 2) what information predicts their achievement best, and 3) how they respond to teaching / what works best with them



Future research

- Investigate what happens during the integration training
 - How do the different training tracks differ from each other? (pace, methods, materials, formative assessment, ...)
 - Language use in workplace training periods & in the free time?
- Qualitative approaches needed, too
- Accuracy of the placement decisions?
- Wider coverage of learners needed
 - Subgroups: L1, educational system, ...





Thank you!

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Tammelin-Laine, T., Huhta, A., Neittaanmäki, R., Hirvelä, T., Ohranen, S. & Stordell, E. (in print). Predicting placement accuracy and language outcomes in immigrants' L2 Finnish education. In J. Davis, J. Norris, M. Malone, T. McKay & Y. Son (eds.) *Useful assessment and evaluation in language education*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

