

“Hyppy, jump, hoppa” - Multilingual dog handling in Finnish dog sports

A mixed methods study

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This master's thesis studies how multilingual commands are used in Finnish dog sports. The study focuses on the language used by Finnish agility and rally obedience athletes in training and competition situations. The goal of the thesis is to find out how and why multilingual commands are used in dog sports and how they reflect the language identity of the dog handler.

The material for the thesis was collected through an open survey and half structured interviews. The participants for the study had to do agility or rally obedience and use commands in multiple languages, and they were searched for through social media. The results were analyzed using quantitative data analysis and thematizing, and the results were inspected through the perspectives of human-animal communication, multilingualism and language identity.

The study shows that multilingualism in dog handling most often occurs as singular stand-alone command words. The reason for using multiple languages is usually to fill a need, such as a need for new or different command words. While for some people the choice to use multiple languages is tied to multilingualism or their language identity, for most the choice to use multiple languages is out of practicality.

Key words: dog sports, agility, rally obedience, human-animal communication, multilingualism, language identity, thematizing

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1 Introduction

“A dog is a man’s best friend”, is a saying known all over the English-speaking world, and not for nothing. Dogs have been a part of human life for centuries. They have been used for hunting, guarding, herding and perhaps most importantly for companionship. There are countless pieces of media and literature surrounding dogs and they have also been the subject of many a study and research. Humans as a species have learned to communicate with many animals, probably most notably with dogs. Dogs have been trained to be our helpers from the beginning of mankind, and today communicating and training your dog with the right tools and gentle disciplines is more popular than ever. Different types of dog training have become so popular that organized sport and competitions have formed around this phenomenon.

The popularity of dog sports in Finland has been on the rise ever since the Finnish Kennel Club was established at the end of the 19th century (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026). Today Finland is globally known to be one of the top countries when it comes to many dog sports, such as obedience and agility. There are over half a million people who participate in a hobby with their pet (Suomen Kennelliitto 2025). After dog shows, agility is the second most popular dog sport in Finland when looking at the number of competitions held in a year (ibid). Another sport that has gained popularity in Finland in the recent years is rally obedience, a sport which lowers the bar of traditional obedience training. Agility and rally obedience have gained popularity for being fast-paced sports that have something to offer to all kinds of dogs and owners. Through dog sports it is possible to find ways to communicate with our canine friends even better.

The way we communicate with our dogs in sports is special because we train them specifically for the different tasks in specific sports. In agility we of course have to teach our dog to jump and weave the poles, but it is also necessary to teach them more unusual commands, such as running ahead of us, turning away from us or to slow down their pace. In rally obedience there can be tens of tricks or moves that the dog needs to learn, and they all need a distinct command word. In these fast-paced sports, that require many different commands, dog handlers often favour short and easy commands, utterances that do not necessarily mean anything, and physical cues like pointing. Handlers can also often use different languages, often mixing and switching them depending on the command.

In this thesis I examine the way Finnish multi-lingual dog sport athletes communicate with their dogs during training and competitions using multiple languages. The topic of this thesis was chosen because of the popularity of dog sports and especially agility at the moment in Finland. The Finnish Agility organization is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2026, and the Agility World Championship are held in Turku, Finland. This is predicted to make agility known for an even broader audience. To my knowledge, while many other aspects of human-dog relationships have been widely researched over different fields of study, there have been no studies about multilingual dog handling, therefore the topic is motivated by the lack of research as well.

The material for this thesis was collected in three ways. I examined three Finnish dog sport athletes by conducting an interview about their dog sporting experiences and language use. I observed and recorded their training to examine the way they use language in a training setting (agility and rally-obedience). I also conducted a separate anonymous survey to collect data about Finnish agility and rally obedience athletes who use two or more languages in their training. I examine the collected data through human-animal communication, multilingualism and language identity theories. This is a mixed methods study, in which methods of thematic, qualitative data and quantitative analyses are used.

My research questions for this thesis are:

1. How are multilingual commands used in dog sports training?
2. Why are multiple languages used in dog sports training?
3. How is the language identity of the handlers manifested in this phenomenon?

With the first question my goal is to find out how multiple languages are used in dog sport training and in which situations. For the second question I intend to find out why so many dog handlers use foreign languages in training and competing. My hypothesis for the second research question is that some words are easier or faster said in English and/or the handlers need more words for commands and the Finnish word is already “reserved” for another command. There are also some commands coined by professional trainers which have made some command words almost universal in many cases, which could be one of the causes of multilingualism. Lastly, I examine how the language identity of the handler influences the languages used, or if using multiple languages in dog sports has an effect on their language

identity. I hypothesize that for many people, using multiple languages is not a clear matter that is tied to their language identity, but a choice for practicality.

Next, I will give a brief overview of the thesis. In the background section I introduce dog sports in Finland, focusing on training and competing in agility and rally obedience. In section 3, I discuss human-animal communication, multilingualism and language identity. Section 4 is to present the material, explain how it was collected and discuss the methods used in the analysis of this thesis. In section 5 I present the results of the study and what follows is the discussion of those results in section 6. Lastly, I end the thesis in section 7, which is the conclusion.

2 Background

In this section I introduce various backgrounds for this study. I start with a short general overview of dog sports in Finland and then discuss agility and rally obedience deeper in their own subsections. Lastly, I introduce some common methods of dog training.

2.1 Dog sports in Finland

Organized dog sporting in Finland began at the end of the 19th century. Finska Kennelklubben (later Suomen Kennelliitto, the Finnish Kennel Club), was established and the first official dog show and hunting dog trial were held (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026). Today there are over 70 different sports and trials that can be competed in. Compared to many other countries, Finland is known for investing into ethical dog handling in breeding and sport settings (ibid.). For most dog owners in Finland dog sports are just a hobby and a way of spending time with their pets. However, Finland is also known for often getting podium placements in world championship competitions of different dog sports, such as obedience, rally-obedience and agility (Palveluskoirat.fi 2025, Suomen Agilityliitto 2026). To conclude, dog sports in Finland are taken seriously, but the dog's wellbeing is considered always to be the top priority.

2.1.1 Agility

Agility was first introduced in the United Kingdom in the 1970s as a show event based on horse showjumping. It came to Finland in 1986 as a show performance in a dog show in Helsinki and has been growing rapidly as a sport since the turn of the century. The goal of agility competitions is to run through a course of 12 to 20 as obstacles fast as possible and without mistakes, such as dropping a jump bar or going obstacles in the wrong direction (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026).

Agility can be used as the umbrella term for five different events that can be competed in, in Finland, as well as the name for one of the competition events. The other four events are jumping, snooker, gamblers and hoopers. In this thesis I concentrate on agility and jump events, as they are the most popular in Finland (Suomen Agilityliitto 2026). Moving forward I use the term *agility* as an umbrella term for the sport and *agility event* for the competition event.

According to Suomen Agilityliitto and the FCI there are four types of obstacles in agility competitions: jumps, contact obstacles, weave poles and tunnels. The jumping obstacles include hurdles, spread hurdles, the tyre, the wall and the long jump. The dog has successfully completed the obstacle when it jumps over the obstacle without dropping or knocking over any parts of it. Contact obstacles include the dog-walk, the see-saw and the a-frame. All contact obstacles have a clearly marked contact area at the start and the finish of the obstacle, which the dog needs to hit with one or more paws to successfully complete the obstacle. The weave poles are a set of 12 poles that the dog needs to weave through without interrupting. The tunnel is a tube that can be either straight or curved, and the dog needs to go through the tunnel for the obstacle to be completed. Jump event courses only include jumping obstacles, tunnels and the weave poles (Suomen Agilityliitto 2023,14-35, Federation Cynologique Internationale 2025).

In Finnish competitions the dogs are categorized by the size of the dog in five different classes, small mini, mini, medium, intermediate and large; these classes determine the height of the jumps. In international competitions there are four size classes; small mini and mini are combined (Suomen Agilityliitto 2023, 3-4). The dogs are also separated by their skill level, or grade, from one to three. Every competitor starts from the first grade and is able rise to the next grade after three 0-results from at least two different judges (Suomen Agilityliitto 2023, 4-5). 0-results indicate the instances where the course has been cleared within the time limit without any mistakes. Each mistake, for example dropping a jump pole, is worth five minus points which influence the ranking of the course. Some mistakes, such as performing the obstacles in the wrong order, results in a failed course. The national and world championships are competed in grade three courses.

Finnish agility competitions and their rules are upheld by the Finnish Agility Association, which operates under the Finnish Kennel Club. The Finnish Kennel Club, in turn, operates under FCI, which is the World Canine Organization. FCI has international rules for agility, but they do not remarkably differ from the Finnish rules.

One of, if not the most important aspect of agility is the co-operation and communication between humans and dogs. Dogs lack the cognitive abilities to determine the correct order of obstacles that the judge has set for the course and in general dogs do not naturally learn complex obstacles or handling patterns on their own. This is where the dog handlers are

needed. Even if only the dog is judged for its speed, people are the ones deciding to practice and compete. The handler's role in agility is to guide the dog through the course and to complete the obstacles in correct order and without mistakes. A successful run in a competition is possible only with good co-operation between the handler and the dog. Hours of training and communication between the dog and the handler are needed to achieve the level of co-operation needed in the sport.

2.1.2 Rally-Obedience

Rally-obedience is an obedience-based dog sport that mixes elements from dog agility, musical canine freestyle (or dog dancing) and obedience. It is considered to be more relaxed than traditional dog obedience and good spirit and cheerful co-operation of the dog and the handler is highly encouraged. Unlike in traditional dog obedience, the handler is allowed to use multiple verbal and gestural commands and cues and praise the dog throughout the course (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026). Rally obedience is a relatively new sport. It was developed in the early 2000s in the United States and the first ever world championships for rally-obedience were held in 2024 in Lieto, Finland.

According to Suomen palveluskoitraliitto, in Finnish rally-obedience competitions, there is a course of 10 to 20 signs that each describe a trick or a move that the dog and the handler must complete in order. During the course the dog is in a heeling position and the tricks can vary from sitting, standing or laying down in different positions, to different kinds of spins and twirls performed by the dog or the dog and the handler together. There are four classes to compete in, beginner, open, winner and master. Everyone starts from the beginner class where the courses are a bit shorter, and the tricks are not as advanced. The beginner class is also the only one where the dog is competing in a lead. When starting a course, the competitor has 100 points. Points are reduced from failures to perform the tricks correctly, but also from for example, barking, sniffing, reluctance to perform the tricks or commanding the dog too harshly or in a negative manner. The competitor needs at least 70 points to pass the course, and three passed courses are needed to advance to the next class. The courses get longer and more advanced as one moves up the classes (Suomen palveluskoiraliitto 2022).

Similarly to agility, the dog cannot compete and complete a rally-obedience course on its own. They need the human to read the signs and tell them the right order to do the tricks in.

Before this the dog has to have learned all of the correct tricks or moves and their corresponding commands and cues, which has happened through communication between the animal and the human.

2.2 Dog training

One connective factor for both agility and rally obedience is that they both need hours of training. Understanding the basics of how dogs learn and are taught is an important part of any dog sport. Therefore, this section focuses on some basic aspects of dog training.

One of the most traditional approaches to animal training is associative learning, where the subject, such as a dog, makes an association between two events. This could mean for example the association between a stimulus and a behaviour (the owner grabbing a leash indicates a walk), a behaviour (the animal learns that by pawing the human it receives attention) and a stimulus or the association between two behaviours (the animal learns a behaviour that always follows another behaviour and starts to execute them seamlessly). The four tenets which support this kind of association are frequency, contiguity, contingency and reinforcement (Mills 2005, 209). Frequency describes the number of times which the events are paired, which increases the forming of the association. Contiguity refers to the time and space of the events. The closer the events are in time and space, the more likely an association is being formed (*ibid.*). This is especially important in animal training since animals do not understand the concept of future. The stimulus has to happen soon after the event, for example rewarding with a treat after a successful trick, for the association to be formed. Contingency refers to the predictability of the associations; the more predictable the associations are the more easily they are learned (Mills 2005, 210). According to Mills (2005, 210) “Reinforcement describes a procedure which alters the probability of a response with which it is associated”. Reinforcement can be positive or negative, something that the dog likes, such as treats or attention from the owner or something the dog dislikes like being hit, although being aggressive or abusive towards dogs is not considered good training today. The most effective results for training are achieved when the dog has both positive and negative reinforcement (Mills 2005, 210). However, this does not mean that the dog should be abused for not completing a command, but the dog being denied the reward is a negative reinforcement in itself (*ibid.*).

The cognitive approach to dog training suggests that dogs may be able to develop an understanding of the concepts linked to the command (Mills 2005, 212). Kaminski et al. (2004, 1682) studied a border collie called Rico and presented evidence for the dog's ability to "fast map", that is he is able to form a rough understanding of the meaning of the word after just one exposure. They studied the dog's ability to acquire relation between words and objects by playing a fetching game with familiar and novel items. His owner reported that Rico was able to recognize over 200 items. When adding new items, e.g. toys, the owner would introduce the item and say the name of it two to three times, after which Rico would be able to recognize the item. During the experiment, Rico was able to correctly fetch "37 out of 40 items" requested, which showed that Rico was able to recognize the items by their label (Kaminski et al. 2004, 1682). In a second experiment Rico was able to fetch an item unknown to him from a group of known items, through the process of elimination. Rico correctly recognized the correct new item in 7 out of 10 sessions, without ever seeing the item or hearing the label before. According to Kaminski et al. this experiment demonstrated that Rico was able to reliably associate human words with items in his environment.

Although most dogs are probably not like Rico, these studies present the abilities of word learning that dogs have. This ability to learn multiple command words is important in all dog sports, especially if one is aiming to compete. There are many different ways to train dogs, but in today's dog sports positive reinforcement is the most popular method. Positive reinforcement is one aspect of human-animal communication, which is introduced in the next section.

3 Theory

In this section I present the various theoretical backgrounds that are used in this thesis. I start with some views on human-animal communication and focusing deeper on commands. Next, I present some issues of defining multilingualism and end with a brief overview of language identity.

3.1 Human-animal communication

The concept of communication usually refers to the information exchange that happens between people. Humans understand to look where a hand is pointed, even if the pointer does not say anything, and we can usually determine what is meant from the context (Tomasello 2008, 2). The study of communication between humans and animals is a broad field and it is difficult to place it under just one branch of science. Human-animal communication can be studied from a linguistic standpoint, but it is also often studied from points of zoology and social sciences for instance. When human-animal communication is studied, it is done through the lens of human language. When we talk about human-animal communication, we refer to communication between humans and non-human animals, meaning all animals that are not humans, as humans can also be referred to as animals.

In a broader sense communication between two animals takes place “when an observer can detect predictable changes in the behaviour of one of the animals after signals from the other” (Elgier et al. 2009, 402). For example, a dog looks where a human points or does a task after a human says a command word. Communication such as this occurs in the daily lives of many animal species in problem solving scenarios, like playing or searching for food and mates (Elgier et al. 2009, 402). Members of different species are able to communicate with each other (ibid.). Humans have communicated with domesticated animals for a long time and the communicative skills of other non-domesticated animals, such as primates, have been studied 20th and 21st century. Non-human animals of different species can also communicate in nature when they have learned it to be beneficial to them. For example, animals can learn to react to other species’ alarm calls (Miklosi 2009, 55).

Dogs in particular have evolved in a way that enriches their capacity to communicate with humans. Some of this evolution can be credited to the extensive selective breeding that humans have practiced since dogs were domesticated. Suitable individuals were picked and

bred for different activities such as guarding and hunting and later even for just companionship. This conscious and unconscious selective breeding has enhanced dogs' abilities to take part in communicative events with humans (Miklosi 2009 53-54).

Kaminski (2009, 104) suggests that dogs have evolved social skills to be able to read communicate gestures of humans. Unlike many other animals that have been studied, eg. Primates, dogs are able to follow many human cues, such as pointing and looking. It is suggested to be a result of domestication and selective breeding of dogs since wolves do not exhibit this behavior in the same capacity, whereas six-week-old dog puppies were able to follow a pointing human hand (ibid.).

We humans have also designated particular words or interjections to call for different animals in different languages. When an English-speaking person calls for a cat, they say *pss pss*; when a Finnish person does it, they say *kss kss*. Peltola, Jääskeläinen and Harjunpää (2021, 133–134) suggest that human language includes its own words for communicating with animals. These include calls and commands or terms for endearment. When we communicate with animals, we stride towards intersubjectivity, or mutual understanding between different subjects. The animal is given a role instead of being treated as an object (Peltola, Jääskeläinen and Harjunpää 2021, 138). Miklosi (2009, 55) refers to these communication situations of a human and a dog, where typically the human is often commanding the dog to do something, as *hetero-specific interactions*. This means that the communication signal signifies different functions for the human and the dog (Miklosi 2009, 55). When a command is successfully taught to the dog, for the human the word is “a part of a rich linguistic structure with special meaning” while for the dog it’s “a special acoustic signal for a given bodily action on its part” (ibid.).

In addition to being able to follow many human cues, dogs are able produce their own communicative cues targeted to humans. These cues or signals usually tell something about the inner state of the dog, such as fear or excitement, rather than a referring to an aspect of environment (Miklosi 2009, 54). These cues include positions of body, such as lowered tail or ears and verbal cues, such as barking, growling and whining.

3.1.1 Commands

When we communicate with animals, especially dogs, in training situations we mostly use commands, cues and praises. A *command* is an utterance that functions as a way to get someone to do something (Mitchell 2020, 329). When we talk about commands, in linguistic terms we usually mean imperatives, such as *Sit down!* or *Stop!* (Chalker and Weiner 2003). In human communication commands can have a lot of other pragmatical meanings, such as invitations or requests (ibid.). In dog training commands are usually short verb imperatives, such as *sit*, *come* or *lay down* (Mitchell 2020, 332). When dog trainers talk about *cues*, they can mean verbal commands or non-verbal gestures. When commanding a dog, there are multiple aspects that affect the outcome. In addition to the command word itself, dogs can react to non-verbal cues, like eye contact or pointing, and the pitch and tone of the command (Fukuzawa, Mills and Cooper 2004, 130).

The commands or cues humans use usually depend on the language we speak, but it has been studied that commands for working dogs have similar phonetic properties in different languages (Ann Young 1991, 76). Dogs tend to be more interested in a person who speaks to them in a high pitch, exaggerated prosody and with words they recognize, for instance their name or being called “a good dog” (Reeve and Jaques 2022, 2). As previously stated, there are studies on individual dogs who were able to recognize hundreds of human words, such as Rico mentioned in section 2.2. Reeve and Jaques (2022) intended to find out on a more general level which words could be easier to learn for dogs. The study did not yield remarkable results regarding any significant words but instead revealed that the dogs’ breed and training history affected its ability learn multiple words.

In this thesis I concentrate on the linguistic aspect of commands and dog-human communication. When I refer to commands, I mean the word assigned to a task that the dog has been trained to perform.

3.2 Multilingualism

For dogs it might not make a difference in which language they are spoken to, but humans make a clear distinction between languages. Multilingualism or bilingualism is an old phenomenon that is more relevant than ever in today’s world. The reasons people learn

additional languages vary from person to person. Indigenous people speaking their own native languages and the common state language, immigrants learning the languages of the countries they migrate to, learning a language for school or work opportunities or just living in a multilingual environment. English in particular has a status as a lingua franca and is the most popular language to study as a second language (Cenoz 2013, 4). Cenoz (2013, 4) lists three main reasons why multilingualism has risen significantly in the 21st century. First, people are not as geographically restricted; we are able to learn languages from the other side of the world and not just our neighboring countries (ibid.). Second, multilingualism is not tied to any particular socio-economic standing anymore (ibid.). When before mainly scholars and the upper class were able to speak multiple languages, today people from various different backgrounds can be multilingual, because language learning has become easier and more accessible. That is tied to the third reason, which is the abundance of mediums we have today (ibid.). The internet and the virtual globalization that has come with it enable language learning all over the world.

It is difficult to determine who is multilingual and how it can be defined. In order to focus on multilingual commands and multilingual handlers, it is necessary to first discuss the definition of multilingualism. Often, we think that a person has to have two equally strong languages, preferably learned at the same time in childhood, to be considered multilingual. Some definitions for multilingualism have been presented, for example, “anyone who can communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading) or “the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives” (Cenoz 2013, 5). Cenoz (2013, 5-7) suggests that multilingualism can be discussed through various comparing dimensions. The first dimension is social versus individual dimensions. Multilingualism can refer to the abilities of the individual or the community. Finland is considered a multilingual country since it has two official languages, but there are many different types of multilingual people in Finland. Some of them speak the official languages of Finnish and Swedish, but others only speak Finnish and English, which is a foreign language in Finland. The second dimension is proficiency versus use; this considers how much a person has to know of the two languages to be considered multilingual. Cenoz (2013, 5-7) discusses the problems of maximal and minimal proficiency, both of which are problematic and the issue of balanced multilingualism, where one would have to have equal proficiency in both languages. These are not considered requirements on being multilingual

anymore today. Cenoz (2013, 5-7) suggests that a person who is able to switch from one language to another without major difficulty can be considered multilingual. The third dimension is the differences in the terms of bilingualism and multilingualism. Bilingualism is a more traditional term that usually focuses on two languages but can include more. Multilingualism is the more common term used today, as it can refer to the competence to speak two or more languages (ibid). Multilingualism can be used as an umbrella term, under which bilingualism can be placed. In this thesis I examine the use of multiple languages in a specific context, so I use the term of multilingualism.

As this thesis studies multilingual dog handling in Finland, a brief look over the language policies of Finland is needed. Finland is a multilingual country, with the official languages of Finnish and Swedish. Most Finnish people can be considered to be multilingual at least on some level, since it is mandatory to study both of the official languages, as well as a foreign language in Finnish primary and lower secondary education (Leppänen and Laitinen 2025, 145). On the other hand, despite the official state of bilingualism, almost 87 percent of Finns speaks Finnish as their native language and most of them live their day to day lives only using Finnish (Leppänen and Laitinen 2025, 146). At the same time multilingualism is on the rise in Finland due to immigration and globalization (ibid.). The role of English in this cannot be dismissed. Leppänen and Laitinen (2025, 153) suggest, that English has become a third domestic language in Finland, since it is used in so many contexts actively today.

The Finnish multilingual speaker might or might not consider themselves as a bi- or multilingual. Compared to many countries which do not have the same kind of influence of additional languages, for example the UK, Finnish people have a lot more multilingual tendency. Multilingual people have a lot more resources to use in their everyday communication and they often are able to use their existing knowledge of languages to learn additional languages (Cenoz 2013, 11). When monolingual speakers only have one language to use in all situations, multilingual speakers may use many different languages in one situation or have designated languages for designated situations (ibid). The reasons can often be cultural, and these kinds of situations might often include codeswitching, meaning switching languages in one communicative period, between multilingual speakers. Later in this thesis, I examine the experiences of multilingualism of Finnish dog sport athletes, and how they see their own language identity.

3.3 Language identity

One of the themes discussed in this thesis is language identity and if and how multilingual dog handling is connected to the handler's language identity. The language or languages a person uses are an essential part of their identity. The links of language and identity have been studied by philosophers since the era of European Enlightenment (Evans 2018, 7). The English philosopher Locke wondered if an individual's identity is constituted within language or if the identity preexists language (ibid.). Historically, there have been different points of view of the relationship of language and identity, which comes first and how they affect each other (Evans 2018, 8). Today however, in applied linguistics, we can see a shift from seeing language identity as a set of fixed attributes, to seeing it as a multi-faceted social construct (Preece 2016, 3). We can see that language is one of the most important parts of our identity, as it often is linked to our ethnicity, culture and nationality (Preece 2016, 5).

Identity itself is also a widely researched topic in fields outside of linguistics, such as psychology. Benson et al. (2013, 17) define identity as “an historically evolving, multifaceted concept with particular relevance to ways of thinking about the ‘self’ and its relations to a changing world; narratives of the self play an important role in the development of individual identities”. They also argue, that second language learning plays a big role in the identity of people who can be considered multilingual (ibid.). What constructs identity and how it can be seen have also been widely debated. According to Benson et al. (2013, 18) identity can refer to “how people see themselves, how they represent themselves to others, how they are seen or represented by others or how they are positioned by social forces outside their control”. However Benson et al. (2013, 18) consider these debates unnecessary, since identity is constructed of several internal and external facets. In the past the identity of a person was heavily influenced by factors such as their class, gender and occupation, since these were relatively fixed positions that could not be changed. Today, these are seen more as more flexible categories and new categories of aspects of identity have been given more weight (ibid.). Benson et al. (2013, 19) talk about a poststructuralist view of identity, which argues that identity is “neither immanent nor entirely socially determined”, which makes identity a something that individuals work on. This makes second language learning, and multilingualism that can be acquired through it, an important part of identity building. Second language learning and its effects on language identity play a role in this thesis as well, since

many of the participants reported that the languages they use came from school or other instances, where they learned the language as a second language.

The everyday language a person uses can be considered to be a part of their identity. A Finnish university student with a major in English may use a lot of English in their everyday life and switch between Finnish and English with their native Finnish speaking peers. A person who was on a study exchange in Germany might use German words here and there, even if their peers will not understand them. The experiences we have with languages move with us through life. This is one of the many reasons why someone whose native language is Finnish, might use foreign languages in dog handling, even in fully Finnish contexts.

4 Material & Methods

In this section I introduce the material, explain how it was collected and what kinds of methods are used to analyze the material. The material for this thesis was collected in two parts. In the first section I start with introducing the first type of material collected, an open survey. The following second section deals with the interviews. All of the material was collected in the spring of 2026 and all of the material collected is anonymous. Since the material is broad and the analysis combines qualitative and quantitative methods, the study is a mixed methods study. The reasoning for multiple data sets and using mixed methods is to acquire a broad perspective on the phenomenon, since it has not been studied widely previously.

Originally the material for this study was collected in three parts; an open survey, interviews and observation of the language used in dog training situations. The last set of data, the observation of the training, was later discarded as it did not add any significant value to the study. Surveys and interviews are a common way to gather information especially on social issues. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, ch. 3.1.) argue that when we want to know what a person thinks or why they act the way they act, it is smart to ask them. This method of collecting material is not free of problems, for example it has been criticized for sometimes considering the thoughts and experiences of an individual as absolute truths (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, ch 3.1.). The positive sides of surveys and interviews, which influenced why they were chosen as materials for this thesis, are the way the participants can be chosen or limited. To participate in the survey or the interviews there were criteria that a person must fill, which in turn makes the results more reliable in the light of this topic (ibid.).

4.1 Open survey

The first way material for the study was collected was an open survey that had eleven questions in total, nine of which were multiple choice questions and two were open-ended questions where the participants could write freely about their own ideas and experiences. The aim of the survey was to acquire a broad picture of what factors influence people to use multilingual commands in dog training and to get a broad variety of experiences on why and how multilingualism manifests in Finnish dog sports. The survey also included questions on training habits and language identity, to get a scope for the underlying reasons of the

phenomenon. The open survey was formulated using the base for a good survey interview by Hyvärinen et al (2017, book 2 ch. 3.). The survey questions aimed to answer the research questions of the thesis and were designed to follow the research plan for the thesis. The survey was structured and the length of the survey was reasonable. In addition to the original Finnish the survey was translated to English and the questions were formulated to be precise and easily understandable. The answer options were chosen carefully for each question ranging from multiple choice to open ended questions.

The survey was made using Webropol, so that the participants could remain completely anonymous. The survey was published in two Finnish dog sporting Facebook groups, Agility Suomi (Agility Finland) and Rally-tokon harrastajat (Rally-obedience hobbyists). The survey was open to anyone who was part of those groups and who uses commands in at least two languages. Participation to the survey was voluntary and the participants were provided with a privacy notice in the survey (see Appendix 1). The survey was published in February of 2026, and it was open for three days. In total there were 256 answers. The questions of the survey were in Finnish and English, as well as the prompt for the survey sent to the Facebook groups. Both Facebook groups are Finnish and mostly, if not only, Finnish is used in those groups. In the following subsections I introduce the questions in the survey in more detail.

4.1.1 Multiple choice questions

Questions one to nine of the survey were multiple choice questions and all of them mandatory to answer. Some questions allowed multiple answers and in others only one option could be chosen.

The first question was “Which sports do you train or compete in?” and the answer choices given were agility, rally obedience and something else. This answer allowed multiple answers be selected. The aim was to get answers from people who trained at least in agility or rally obedience but additional sports, and the language used in them, could be taken into consideration. The second question was “How often do you train?” and only one answer was accepted. The answer choices were less than once a week, 1-3 times a week, 4-7 times a week and over 7 times a week. The aim of this question was to see what kind of training habits these handlers have and if the amount of training can be taken into consideration regarding the research questions. The third and fourth questions were “Are you competing or aiming to

compete at the moment?” and “If yes, do you consider yourself to be an ambitious competitor?” in these questions only one choice was accepted, and the choices were yes, no and “I don’t compete” for the fourth question. These questions set out to find out what kinds of training and competing habits these dog sport athletes have and whether it could influence the language they use.

The fifth question asked the participant their native language and multiple answers were again accepted. The answer choices for this question were Finnish, Swedish, English and something else. The only named languages were Finnish, Swedish and English, since those were the languages expected to mostly come up in Finnish dog sport context. Question six was a yes or no question where the participants were asked whether they considered themselves to be bilingual or multilingual. This question calls back to the previously discussed issues of defining multilingualism and who is considered to be multilingual.

The next question aimed to see how different languages manifest in dog sport training. The answer options were “multiple languages in one sport” and “different languages for different sports”. In addition to languages, the participants were asked if they use “non-words”, such as shushing, rolling the *r*, made up words such as *zip* or other specific utterances and this was a yes or no question. The ninth and last multiple-choice question was “How do you estimate your use of different languages?” and the answer options were “most commands in my native tongue”, “most commands in a foreign language”, “most commands are non-words or utterances” and “the languages are used equally”. These questions aimed to find out if doing multiple sports has an effect on using multiple languages, what is used in addition to “real” words and if the speaker’s native language still is prioritized.

Questions from 1–9 of this survey produced numerical data through percents that can be presented in tables and charts. This part of the data was analyzed using quantitative analysis methods. According to Alasuutari (2011, ch. 2) quantitative analysis uses the correlation of numerical and statistical data to find answers to the research questions. Different variables are named from the data and statistical truths that link different variables together are highlighted. Quantitative analysis is viewed as deductive where conclusions are drawn from premises that are viewed as proven or true, the desired outcomes of the analysis are generalization and predictability of the data (Grbich 2013, 26-27). To make analyzing the data easier, it was visualized in multiple charts that highlight the important findings.

4.1.2 Open ended questions

Questions ten and eleven were open ended questions, in which the participants could explain their own thoughts about and experiences with this phenomenon. Question ten was “What kind of commands or cues do you use in different languages?” Additionally, the participants were instructed that they could tell in their own words how or use examples of the commands and cues. The last question of the survey was “Why do you use different languages in dog sports?”. The aim of these questions was to collect a multifaceted dataset with a lot of examples that could potentially answer the research questions of this study. For this data set, methods of qualitative data analysis and thematizing were used. These methods are further introduced in section 4.2.

4.2 Interviews

The second set of material was collected through half structured interviews of three participants. Volunteers to participate in the study were looked for in dog sporting community groups on Facebook. The qualifications to take part in the study were that the person was actively training and or competing in agility and or rally obedience, used multiple languages, but at least and preferably English in addition to their native language, was able to take part in an interview and had training situations that could be observed and filmed. Three people were chosen for the study. All the participants had years of experience of different dog sports and all of them had at least one dog currently in training and or competing. One of the participants is mainly doing rally obedience and two of the participants told their main sport to be agility. The volunteers were contacted through social media channels, and the interviews were held via Zoom in March 2026. The zoom meetings were recorded, and the recordings were transcribed using transcribe.utu.fi, a transcribing tool provided by the university of Turku. The transcript was then checked with the original audio and any mistakes made by the tool were fixed manually. This was done to avoid any misunderstandings or falsehoods that could come up in machine transcribing that could then falsify the participants’ answers. Falsifying the answers of the interviewees is one of the ethical problems of interviews studies discussed in *Doing Interviews* by Brinkmann and Kvale (2018, 28-29). Other ethical questions discussed in the book and taken into consideration when conducting the interviews were obtaining the participants’ informed consent by providing them with a privacy notice (see Appendix 1) and making sure that participating in the study would not negatively impact on

the participants (ibid.). The interviews were held in Finnish as it is the native language of the participants and the interviewer, and relevant parts of the interview were translated into English for the results.

One of the facts that need to be taken into consideration is that these interviews are what Hyvärinen et al. call (2017, book 3 ch.19) “insider interviews”, since the author of this thesis is also a part of these dog sporting communities. Being an insider is something that the interviewer and interviewee share and something that separates them from the “general public”. Often being an insider is based on being a part of some community that could be linked to religion, nationality, sexual orientation or some communities that hold lesser value to one’s identity, such as hobbies or sports (ibid.). Insider interviews have positive and negative aspects just as any other type of interview. When the community and topic of the research are familiar to the author, it can be easier to find people to interview, and the interview situations can be a lot more relaxed than in other circumstances. This relaxed atmosphere can sometimes create issues, when the participants make assumptions over their shared knowledge of the topic (ibid.). This has been taken into consideration in conducting the interviews and in the making of this thesis by the interviewer asking additional questions and keeping in an outsider perspective in mind.

While the open survey presented in 4.1.2 could be considered a structured interview, the interviews themselves were half structured. In short, this means that the interviewer has formulated a series of questions that are presented to the interviewee and they in turn are able to answer the questions freely in their own words (Hyvärinen, Suoninen and Vuori 2021). Half structured interviews also allow the interview situation to be more of a conversation, which can lead to broader answers and more data than strict structured interviews in which the interviewer does not react to the answers (ibid.). In conducting these interviews, additional questions and clarifications were asked when needed. The interview was led by the interviewer, and the interviewees were instructed to answer in their own words and according to their own experiences. The questions were designed to be precise but open to interpretation; the interviewees could ask clarifying questions to help them understand what was meant. The interview was designed to be rather short and concise, lasting approximately 20 to 25 minutes each.

For the interviews and the open-ended questions of the survey, thematic and qualitative data analysis were used to discuss the results. These two methods are very closely linked to each other, share characteristics and are sometimes even used interchangeably. Qualitative data analysis, or sometimes qualitative content analysis, can be summed up in four steps: deciding what is interesting in the data, finding and coding the interesting elements in the data, typing or theming the data and summing up or making conclusions (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, ch 4.1). The data examined in this thesis was collected only for this study and the primary aim of the study is to answer the research questions. Because of this, only the data that can help answer the research questions are taken into consideration. Typing or theming the data can be very close to thematic analysis. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (ibid.) suggest that before theming, the data can be divided by the information of the participants, for example age or gender. Since the participants for this study are part of a quite small demographic, and their age or gender will not affect the study, the data will not be divided. In theming it can be decided if the data is searched for similarities or differences. We can also look for logic of action or a typical case of the phenomenon with theming (ibid.).

Thematic analysis aims to find relevant topics, or themes, in the data which can be used to answer the research questions (Juhila 2021). The data is gone through with the intention to find recurring topics that are relevant to the issue researched and this process can be called coding (ibid.). In comparison to many other methods, thematic analysis can rely more on interpretation, which can cause concern of reliability (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012, 10-11). Despite this, thematic analysis is the most common method of qualitative research, and it is the most effective tool to capture complex meaning in textual data sets (ibid.) One of the reasons for thematic analysis' popularity is its ability to cover many lengths of text. It can be used to study the shortest answers or pages of text (ibid.). For this interview, thematic analysis was used to find common themes from three different participants to see how the results could answer the research questions.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018 ch. 4.6) see a bigger difference between qualitative and thematic analyses. They argue that the progress of thematic and qualitative analyses is quite similar, but their execution is different. In qualitative analysis, there should be a strong sense of what is looked for or what is interesting in the data, whereas in thematic analysis that is not necessary and the important points of the data are picked in thematizing. For both types of analyses data driven analysis is possible, and it has been used in this thesis. In data driven

analysis the aim is to create a theoretical complex out of the data (ibid. ch 4.2). The units of analysis are not decided beforehand but found from the data and the previous research on the phenomenon does not play a big role on the research. For this thesis, the aim is to create a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of multilingual dog handling and ascertain how and why multiple languages are used in dog handling.

The methods of thematic and qualitative data analyses can be summed up in similar processes. Braun, Clarke and Weate (2016, 8-16) describe thematic analysis as a six-part process. *Phases 1-2: familiarization and coding*. Familiarization means reading the data and making notes of what is interesting, to generate meaning from it. What follows is coding, meaning tagging the points of interest and the data that has the potential to answer the research questions. Next, *phases 3-5, theme development, refinement and naming*. The phases of the analysis where the analytic work is done. Organizing the codes into themes, reviewing those themes and developing an analysis with the finalized themes. Lastly, the *phase 6: Writing up*, where the analysis is written, gone through, edited and situated in the study at hand. For this thesis, this six-part process started with a close reading on the open-ended questions and the interviews. After the close reading, the important points, or codes, were picked out from the data. Then the similar codes were put together and named in a separate Word document. Lastly, these themes are presented in section 5. Results.

4.2.1 Interview questions

In this section I present the questions asked in the interviews. For the sake of the interview and clarity for the interviewees, the questions were divided into five different groups. The groups loosely tied some questions together to help stay in topic during the interview.

First the participants were asked what their native language is, what languages they speak, if they consider themselves to be multilingual and where the languages used or multilingualism come from. These questions were asked, so that there would be a base understanding of their current language use and the history of their language identity. The next set of questions was what languages they use in dog handling and how, if they use “non-words” in dog training and where they have come from or how they have been formed. These questions aimed to see how they currently use different languages in the dog training context. In the next question they were asked why they use different languages, how these languages affect the handling of

the dog and why those languages and commands have been chosen. These questions aimed to more directly answer the second research question of this thesis. Next the interviewees were asked which (dog) sports they do, if the fact that they do multiple sports influences using multiple languages, if the languages mix between sports, if they use some “established” (sport specific) commands, and if so which. Additionally, the participants were asked if they have more than one dog, if it influences the language use and do they have different commands for different dogs. These questions aimed to see what kind of effects having or training multiple dogs has on this phenomenon. Lastly, the participants were asked whether they think they are an ambitious athlete or competitor, how many times a week they train, do they compete and if language used in competitions differs from the language used in training situations. This group of questions aimed to find out if the motivation or frequency of training increases the instances of multilingualism in dog sport handling.

5 Results

In this section I present the results of the study. I start with the results of the open survey, first with the results of the multiple-choice questions, followed by the results of the open-ended questions. I end this section with the results of the interviews.

5.1 Open survey

In this section the results of the open survey are presented in various forms. First the results of the multiple-choice questions are presented, followed by the two open-ended questions. I start with the survey results for the multiple-choice questions that are presented in different figures to help conceptualize the results. The figures and the data in them are then discussed. The open-ended questions are dealt with one by one and the themes emerging from them are introduced.

5.1.1 Multiple choice questions

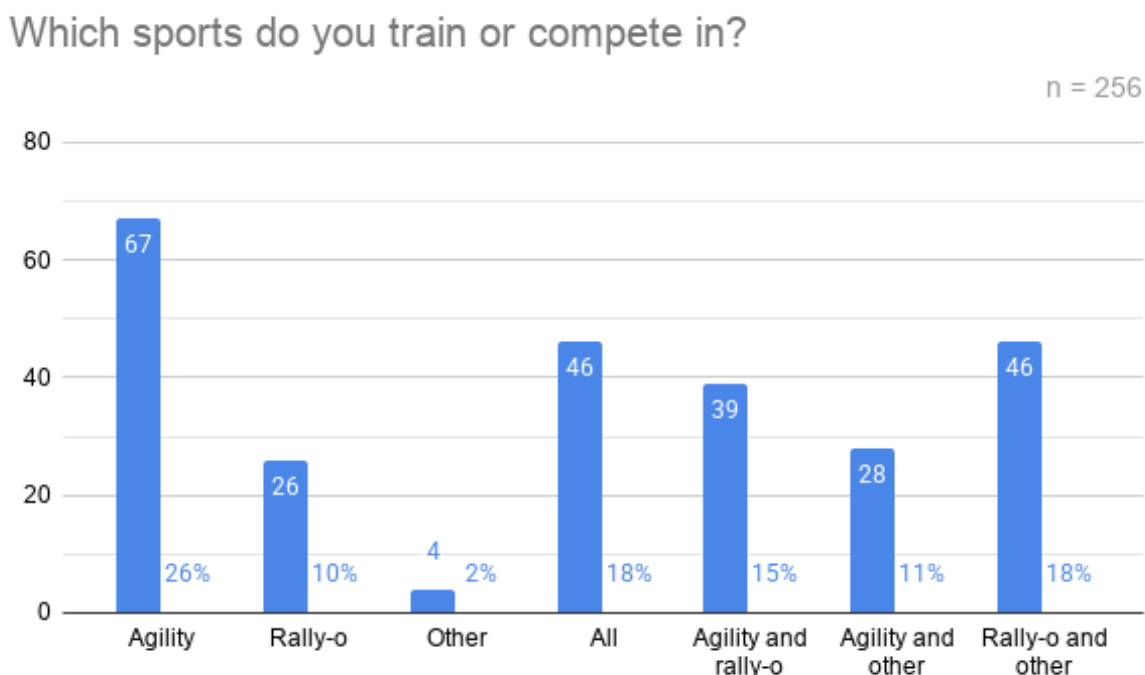


Figure 1 The sports of the participants. Rally obedience is shortened to rally-o and something else is changed to other.

The answers to question one are presented in *Figure 1*. The first question of the survey was “which sports do you train or compete in?”. Out of the 256 participants 26% answered only agility, 10% only rally obedience, 2% other. 18% of the participants answered all three

options: agility, rally obedience and something else. 15% answered agility and rally obedience, 11% agility and other and rally obedience and other was chosen by 18%. The results indicate that most people who participated in the survey were training agility and from the results it can be seen that people who do rally obedience, more often also do some other sport as well.

How often do you train?

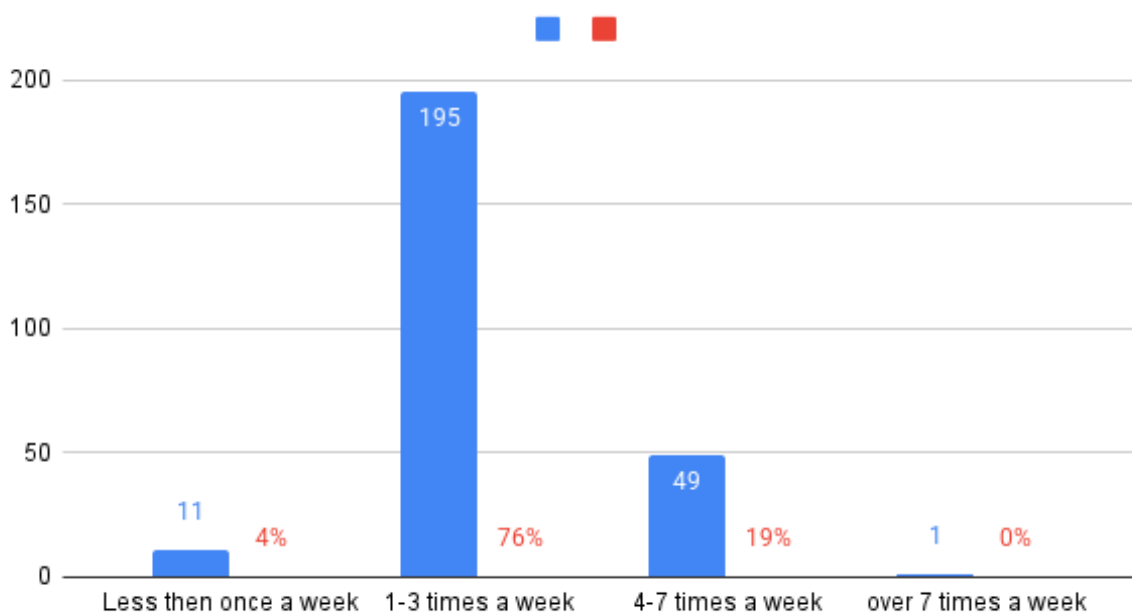


Figure 2 The participants' training times per week.

The results for question two “how often do you train?”, can be seen in *Figure 2*. The overwhelming majority, 76%, answered that they train 1-3 times a week. 19 % answered that they train 4-7 times per week, 4% less than once a week and under 1% meaning just one answer was given for over 7 times a week.

The next questions were “are you competing or aiming to compete at the moment?” and “if yes, do you consider yourself to be an ambitious competitor?”. For the first question 96% of the participants chose yes, and 4% chose no. The second question was dependent on the first one and 82% of the people answered yes, that they do consider themselves to be ambitious, only 14% said no. The “I don’t compete” answer was chosen by 4% of participants, which was 10 people, and 11 people chose no for the first question, so there is a tiny inconsistency there.

Questions two, three and four were asked to see if the training habits, goals or motivation had an effect on the use of multiple languages. What emerges from the results is that people who participated in the survey are most likely quite active dog sport athletes who also train to compete. This works in accordance with the fact that the participants were looked for in the dog sporting Facebook groups. It is likely people who participate in online discourse about their hobbies also use time to participate in the hobby or sport.

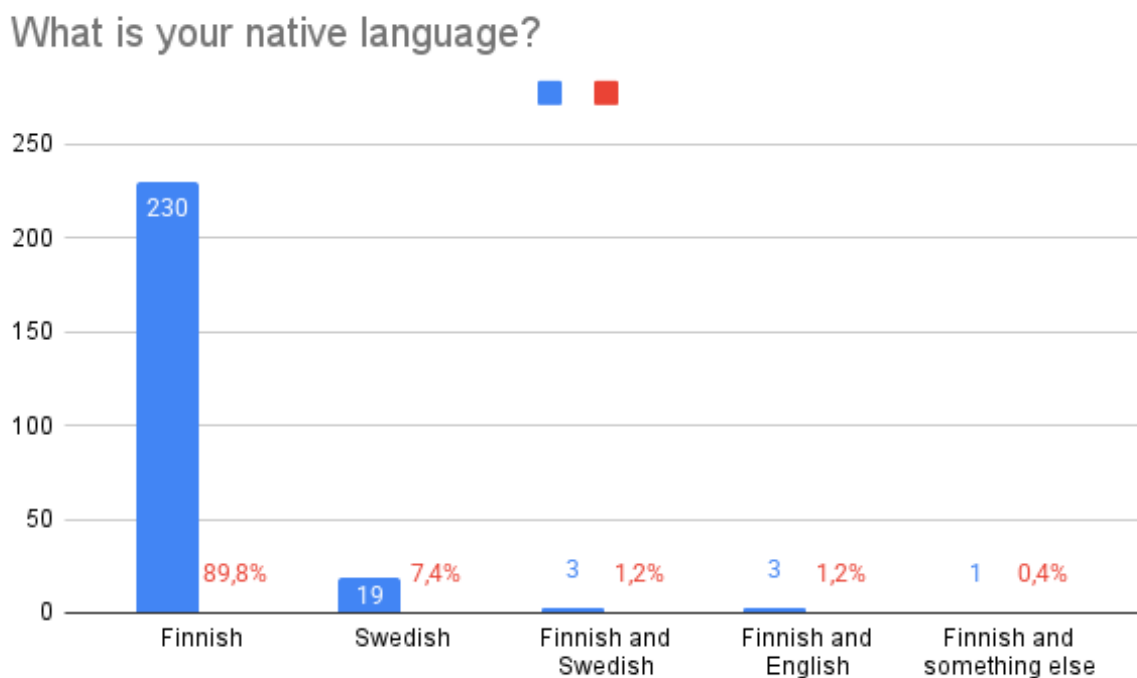


Figure 3 Native languages of the participants.

The next question was “What is your native language?” and the results can be seen in *Figure 3*. The majority of the responders chose Finnish as their native language. The responders were able to choose multiple answers, and some participants chose combinations of Finnish, Swedish, English or “something else”. None of the participants chose only English or something else as their native language. Almost 90% of the participants reported Finnish to be their native language, under 8% chose Swedish and under 3% chose some combination of the three. The participants were looked for in Finnish speaking Facebook groups, which reflected the results. In 2020 the amount of people speaking Swedish as their native language was little over 5% of the Finnish population (Saarenmaa, Tilastokeskus). The number of participants and the amount of people speaking Swedish as their native language reflect the language situation in Finland.

Do you consider yourself to be multilingual?

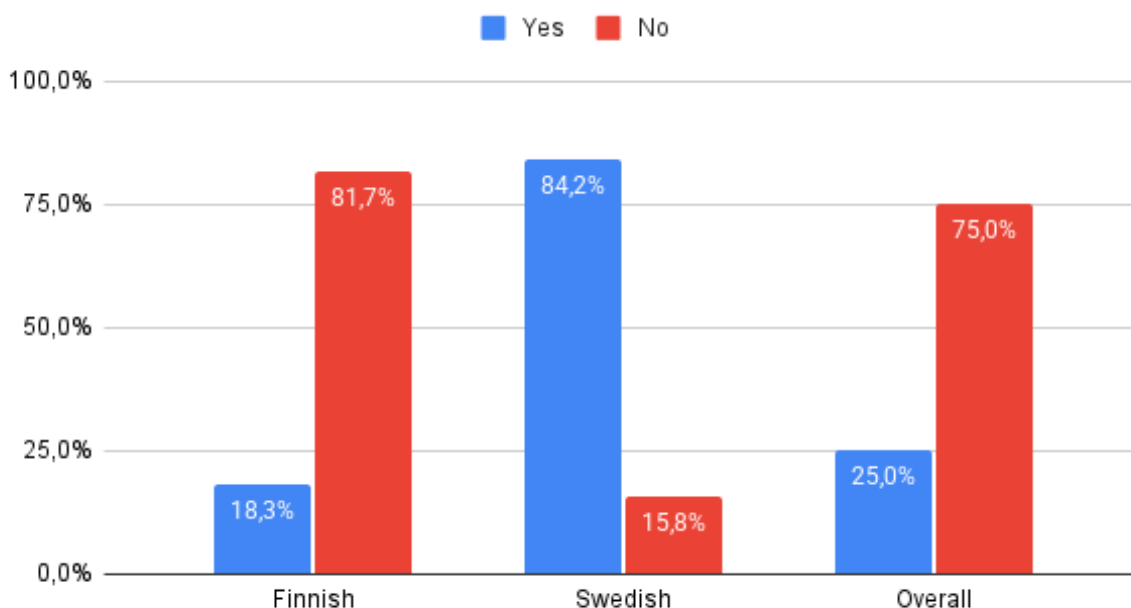


Figure 4 The number of participants who considered themselves to be multilingual.

The next question was “Do you consider yourself to be multilingual?”. Overall, only 25% (64 participants) of the participants considered themselves to be multilingual, even if they all agreed that they use commands in multiple languages in dog sports, since that was one prerequisite to take part in the study. 75% or 192 participants chose no. In *Figure 4* we can see that just little over 18% of the Finnish speaking participants considered themselves to be multilingual, when over 84% of the Swedish speaking participants chose yes for this question. These results reflect the previously discussed problems of defining multilingualism and the question of who is multilingual. It seems that according to this survey, the Swedish speaking population of Finland is much more likely to consider themselves to be multilingual, compared to the Finnish speaking population.

How do you use different languages in different sports? (red)
Do you use "non-words" or utterances? (blue)

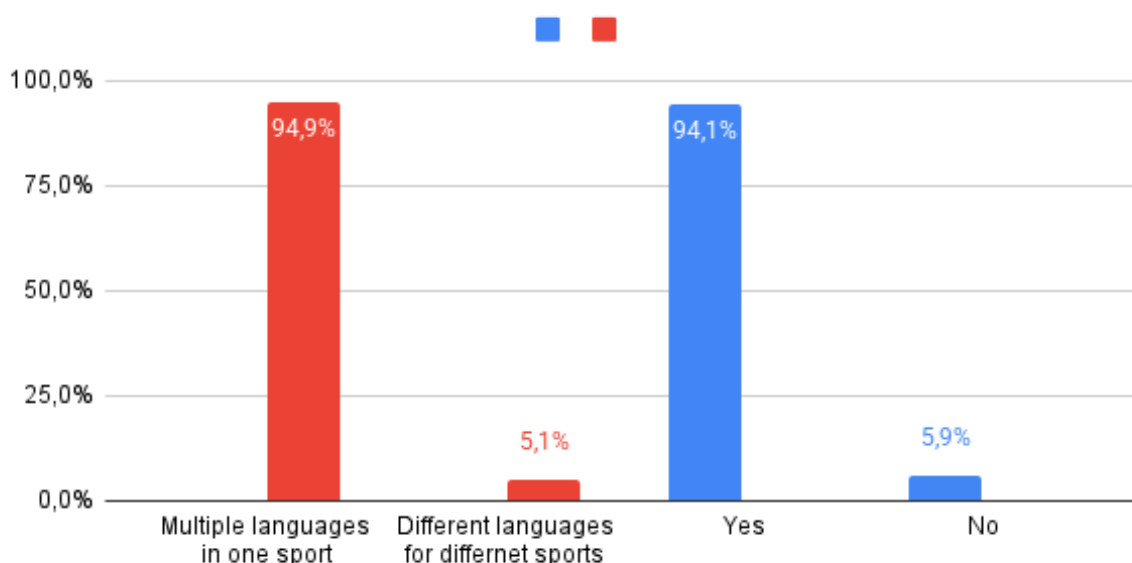


Figure 5 How the languages divide in different sports and the number of participants who use non-words or utterances.

Figure 5 depicts the results to questions “How do you use different languages in different sports?” and “Do you use “non-words” or utterances (as commands)?”. “Non-words” refer to words that have no real established meaning outside of the dog sport context. For example, one instance of “non-word” that came up multiple times in the results of the open-ended questions and the interviews was the word “zip” or some variation of it, which was used as a marker for the dog to get the reward. Utterances in this context meant things such as rolling the r or shushing as a command; these were also given as examples in the survey (see appendix 1.). For the first question, almost 95 percent, or 243 of the participants, indicated that they use multiple languages in one sport and a little over 5 percent, or 13 of the participants, told that they use different languages for different sports. For the second question regarding “non-words” and utterances, the results look similar to the first. Almost 95 percent, or 241 people, said that they do use “non-words” or utterances and almost 6 percent, or 15 people, told that they do not. As stated previously, there are many “non-words” that have various established meanings in the dog sporting community. Many dog sports have words that some trainers have used that have been unofficially established as words that the people of that community know. For example, in agility *siksik* or *zikzik* usually means a tight jumping turn towards the handler.

How do you estimate your use of the different languages?

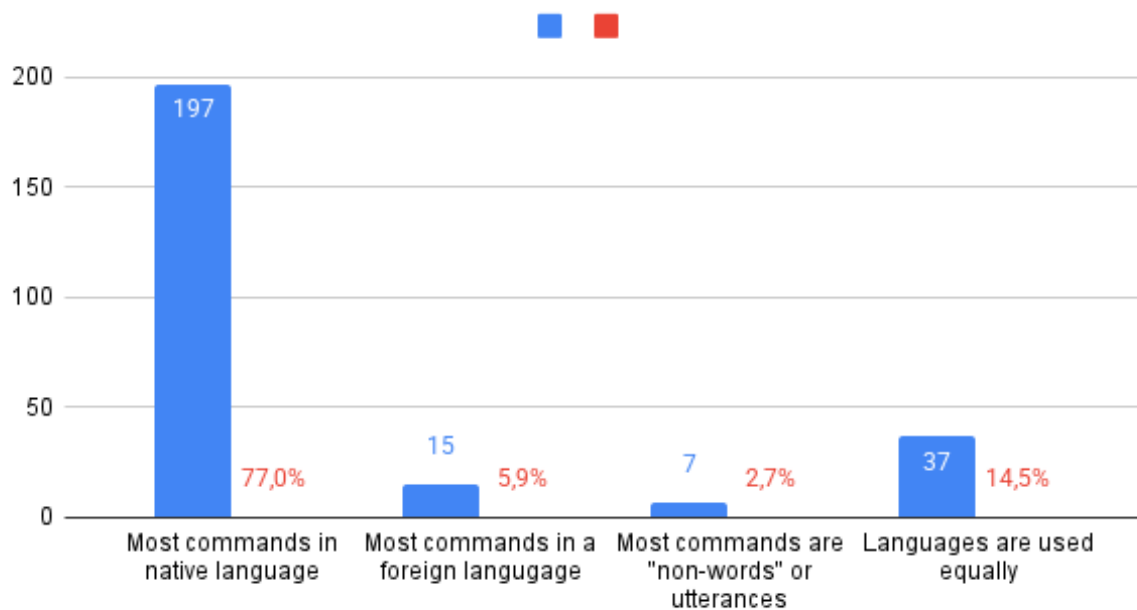


Figure 6 Estimated use of languages.

The results of the last question “How do you estimate your use of the different languages (in dog sports)?” can be seen in *Figure 6*. A large majority of the participants, 197 people which was 77% of them, told that they use the most commands in their native language. Only fifteen participants or 5,9% told that most of their commands are in a foreign language and seven participants, or 2,7% said that most of their commands are the previously discussed “non-words” or utterances. Lastly, 37 participants or 14,5% estimated that the languages used are used equally, meaning the same amount in this context.

5.1.2 Open-ended questions

The last two questions of the survey were open-ended questions where the participants were able to explain and clarify their answers. The previously discussed methods of thematic analysis by Braun, Clarke and Weate (2016, 8-16), were used to collect and compile the results of the open-ended questions.

The prompt for the first open-ended question was, “What kind of commands or cues do you use in different languages? You can tell in your own words or use examples.” The goal was to see what kind of patterns and similarities of the words and languages used would rise from the results. Many participants provided lists of their command or cue words in different languages

as well as brief explanations of what kind of words they used. There was some overlap with the second open-ended question of “Why do you use different languages in dog sports?”, where some participants had answered similar things on both questions. The types of words used were divided into four themes 1. *easy to say*, 2. *sport specific or established*, 3. *easy to differentiate* and 4. *easy to remember*. These themes could be understood as qualifications of classifications for the words chosen. The overall criteria for the commands in the *easy to say* theme were that the words were “short and snappy” and easy to pronounce, no matter the language. Many people who did agility also reported that the words should be easy to say while running or out of breath or easy to say for a long duration. This included examples of utterances like rolling the r or shushing or words with long vowel sounds that could be easily said for a long time. From the answers I deduced this to be linked to tasks that the dog needed to do for a longer period such as the weave poles. One thing that came up in the results multiple times was that no matter the language, the commands often were shortened in use in a way so that the first syllable or sound was the most important for the command, for example *mm* for *maa*, meaning lie down.

The next theme was *sport established or sport specific*, meaning commands that are commonly used in specific dog sports. The results included examples from herding and agility. In herding there are a lot of established commands in English, such as *come by* and *lie down*. In agility on the other hand many of the commands are just the names of the obstacles, but there were also a lot of real and “non-word” commands used by the agility community that have established meaning. Examples of real words would be different jumping cues such as *in* or *in-in* and *out* or *out-out* and “non-word” examples included words such as *siksik* and *vekvek*. Many people reported that they used “basic” commands in Finnish (or their native language), such as commands for heeling, sitting or lying down, and other languages for more “advanced” or more difficult commands.

The next theme was *easy to differentiate*. A lot of people reported that they used different languages, so that the commands did not sound similar. This was not so much a problem for the humans to discern between similar sounding commands, but a lot harder for the dogs. Many people also said that they needed a clear way for themselves to differentiate for example, two similar tasks that the dog has to do, such as spinning in opposite directions. In this, using a direct translation and the Finnish equivalent became useful, such as *pyöri* and *spin*.

The last theme risen from the results of this question was *easy to remember*. A majority of the participants said that they chose cues and commands that were easy to remember for the handler. In this aspect different languages became useful. The translated command words had real meaning, which made them easier to remember. It was often reported that people who did multiple sports needed so many commands that using different languages and translations felt natural. One of the frequently mentioned examples was command for different directions. People reported that they needed direction cues for multiple sports, so they started to use different languages instead of made-up words.

The second open-ended question of the survey was “Why do you use different languages in dog sports?”, and the participants were instructed to answer based on their own experience. This question aimed to answer the research question of why multiple languages are used in dog sports? Five main themes emerged from the answers of the participants. The themes that emerged were 1. *language identity*, 2. *memorability*, 3. *differentiating*, 4. *need for new words* and 5. *need for difference*. These names for the themes were chosen to describe the phenomenon that was found from the data, as closely as possible. All of the themes are explained in the following paragraphs.

The first theme identified was *language identity*. The participants named many factors that influenced their use of multiple languages that had to do with language identity. This theme had to do with factors that influenced their language use that could be tied to their language identity. One of the things that came up frequently was language environment. Many people reported that they themselves or their families are bilingual or multilingual and that has an effect on the languages used to communicate with the dogs. One participant told that “We have a trilingual family, so it was natural to use all of those languages”. For other participants the language situation of the family had an opposite effect,

- (1) We are a bilingual family (Finnish and English), so when we got a puppy, it felt natural to train the dog in English. I usually clarify the situation in group trainings, since it feels funny to speak Finnish with humans and English with my dog.

Many people also had a lot of other reasons why they used different languages in their everyday life and additionally in dog sports. Having to use certain languages, mostly English,

for work was one of the reasons mentioned frequently. Another one that had to do with the language identity of the person, was having lived in another country, which influenced them to use different languages, mostly English. The sporting or training environments also had an effect on the language used. Many people reported that words or commands had stuck in use from different trainings and coaches or trainings. People said that they had been in trainings where the trainer was from a different country and had used commands that seemed to fit the situation so well that they started using it. Some people whose native language was Swedish told that they use mainly Finnish commands and cues, since the people in their training environments had mostly Finnish speaking people in it. Some people had the opposite experience,

- (2) Language environment has an effect. For example, our rally obedience group has Finnish Swedish people in it, so it felt natural to take heel commands on the right side of the handler in Swedish.

Some participants also told that they were passionate about languages and found finding and using new languages and commands simply fun and enjoyable. What is noteworthy about the results from both the multiple-choice and the open-ended questions, is that not many people considered themselves to be multilingual or did not acknowledge the aspect of multilingualism when reflecting on their own language use, even if all of the people who answered the survey admitted that they used multiple languages.

One of the most frequently occurring themes rising from the survey was *need for new words*. Many participants explained that they felt like there were not enough fitting words in their native language to use as commands. Since most of the participants reported Finnish as their native language, most of the people said that they felt like the Finnish language did not have enough fitting words, since so many of them already were in use, that they could use so they started to use the equivalent words in other languages. Many participants reported that doing multiple sports influenced their need of new commands and that some sports such as rally obedience and canine musical freestyle (dog dancing) have so many tricks and moves that need to be performed, that new command words were needed for those. One participant said:

- (3) Especially dog dancing and rally obedience have so many different tricks and tasks that it felt like the easiest solution was to include commands in English. I also feel like the English commands I use are the easiest to remember.”

One of the underlying reasons for the need for new words was the increasing difficulty when the dog and the handler got to higher levels of competing. Participants reported that in both agility and rally obedience the need for new commands rises when competing in a higher level, “so many words are needed when progression is made and the number of cue-words and words gets so high that it is natural that not all of them are in Finnish”. The highest competing classes of rally obedience have a lot more tricks and moves than the lower classes, and in the highest class of agility a lot more precise cues are needed for a successful run, since the courses get increasingly difficult. What also came up frequently was the Finnish concept of *suuhun sopiva* which can be directly translated to *fitting in mouth*. Roughly this could mean what kind of words the person likes to use or what feels natural to them. Many people said that no matter the language, the word needs to feel natural to them. This could be seen in the data with some people saying that they did not care what the language used was, as long as the word felt good, and some people telling that commands in foreign languages sometimes felt or fit the situation better. According to some of the participants “in agility specifically English words fit better” and “the commands I use are easy and feel natural (fit in mouth). There are not such good words in the Finnish language.”. In addition to new words in foreign languages, many participants reported that they used some foreign words and “non-words” that have been established in different sport communities. Herding was one of the examples that many people use English commands for. *Come by*, *lie down* and *away* are some examples of this. In agility many “non-words” were reported, such as *zikzik* or *siksik* and *vekkek*, some of which might have been a word from some language at some point.

Probably the second most frequent theme from the survey was *memorability*. This simply meant that the words used needed to be easy to remember. Many participants reported that they often used direct translations for words that were already “taken”, meaning that the word already marked a move or a trick for the dog. The participants told that since sometimes the same task needs to be performed in different ways, a direct translation from the Finnish word helps the handler remember the command word. For example, the survey showed that many participants who did rally obedience used different languages depending on which side of the handler the dog was on. Many of the tricks or moves in rally obedience can be performed on either side of the handler and many handlers wanted to teach different cues for different sides.

An example of this could be that heeling or following on the left side of the handler, which is more common, is *seuraa*, which is “heel” in Finnish and heeling on the right side of the handler would be *heel*. Most of the participants who talked about memorability said that they need some kind of association between the word and the task they want the dog to perform. Many people felt that it would be difficult to remember a command that had no association to the task, such as the word *apple* would not be a good command for the task of sitting. The direct translation was usually found to be the easiest association, but many people reported that they also started using other foreign words, if they were able make an association to the task. Participants said that

- (4) I wanted easy and clear command words so that I can remember them, they need to have a logic for me. My thought was to use the same word in Finnish and in English and modify them to be easy to say.

And “The best way is to use multiple languages, so that the command is as clear possible to the handler as well.” The need for memorability also came up because many dog sports are hectic, fast and sometimes stressful situations. People reported that the commands need to be easy to remember while in these fast and hectic situations.

- (5) It (multiple languages) helps to conceptualize the words. It is easier in high-speed situations to remember the tens of command and cues when they actually have something to do with the task.

All in all, direct translations and the associations that came with it were felt as easy to remember.

The next theme risen from the results was *need for difference*. In short this meant that the commands needed to be different from other commands in many aspects. Many participants reported that they wanted or needed shorter words, since Finnish words can be quite long. The participants reported that English or Swedish words are often shorter and so can fit these situations better. There was also a need for different intonations. Dogs respond differently to different intonations of speech and the participants felt that sometimes the intonation that induces excitement in dogs could be better achieved with English.

- (6) I use Finnish words because of the hard sounds that are more clear for the dogs to hear than the Swedish ones. English words are softer and I use them often when the dog needs to pay more attention to speed, like contacts or doing certain turns. Swedish is good for rewards since it sounds more happy often and I need to be faster with those cues and Swedish comes faster forward in my brain. I also mix the languages to get a widespread in the way that the words sound and what letters they contain, as to not confuse the dog when they react quickly.

The need for different sounding phones was one of the emerging themes as well. The pronunciation of Finnish differs from other languages on the phonetic level, so different languages help to create differently sounding commands. One participant brought up that many common commands in agility have many similar sounds, vowels and consonants, that can easily get mixed up or “slurred” together.

- (7) Many of the words start with the consonants p or k and include a long e sound, such as *put-keen, kii-pee, ke-pit, puo-mi, e-teen, kei-nu*. In agility especially ... (obstacles) are important to set apart, so the commands need to be as different as possible.

Many people also said that in addition to difference, English commands can be easier to say in some cases. One of the examples was *to bow*, which in Finnish is a three-syllable word *ku-mar-ra* and in English just one syllable *bow*.

The last theme that emerged from the results was *differentiating*. Some overlapping can be found from need for difference and differentiating, but they differed from each other enough to be considered their own themes. In short, differentiating meant that there were multiple aspects separating the words and commands or the language itself. The results that came up from this theme were things such as commands in different languages can be more easily differentiated from each other, which makes it easier for the handler and the dog. Things that influence this are factors that are mentioned in the previous paragraphs such as pronunciation and association. One of the concepts that was found in the results was the need to differentiate commands from other the commands of other handlers. Many participants reported that they wanted to have commands that sound different from commands that other people use, so that their dogs will not react to the commands used by other handlers. This was especially important in situations where the dogs are performing the course at the same time with other dogs. This came up for obedience, where the dogs can be in the ring with multiple dogs at the same time, but also in agility and rally obedience, where another dog can be performing the

course in the adjacent ring. Another aspect that came up was differentiating training situations and commands from everyday speech, so that the dog would hear the commands only in the training context. Some people reported that they wanted to keep specific commands separated from other communication with the dog, so that it would be clearer for the dog what to do when training and competing. This is where foreign languages became useful, so that the handler does not accidentally use the commands in wrong situations. One participant said, “I did not want the everyday life commands get mixed up (with the specific commands).” One thing that overlapped with some of the earlier discussed themes was differentiating similar tasks with different languages. The association aspect of differentiating is for the handlers to help them memorize the commands while the aspect of the command sounding different is to help the dog differentiate the commands.

5.2 Interviews

In this section I go over the results of the interviews. I present the results and the themes risen by the question groups that were presented in section 4.2.1. I again use thematizing in going over the results of the interviews. Some of the questions serve the function of producing some background information about the interviewee and the results of those questions are not thematized. As there were three interviewees, I have numbered them from one to three and refer to them by those numbers. This means that interviewee 1 is the same person for every question. Interviewee 1 told that their main sport is rally obedience, while 2 and 3 told that their main sport is agility. For this section, the interviews were read through, and the most important aspects of the answers were compiled together.

The first group of questions aimed to find out some background information about the interviewees. All of the interviewees reported that their native language is Finnish. In addition to Finnish, interviewee 1 told that they speak English and some Korean and Swedish. Interviewee 2 said that they speak Finnish and English and that at some point spoke Swedish and Korean, but cannot say that they speak them anymore. Interviewee 3 told that they speak Finnish, English, Swedish and Japanese, the last two a little less than the others. They also specified that they are a beginner in Japanese. Only interviewee 1 said that they consider themselves to be multilingual. Interviewee 2 said that at a point in their life they would have said that they are multilingual, since at the time they were using English more than Finnish, but do not think they are multilingual anymore. Interviewee 3 said that they do not consider

themselves to be multilingual. All of the interviewees told that they started to use English and Swedish because of school or education. Interviewee 2 reported that they studied in an international degree programme, which led to them using a lot more English than Finnish. Interviewees 1 and 3 also said that a lot of their free time activities require English, since much of the media they consume is only available in English. Interviewees 1 and 2 reported that they had lived in Korea and learned the language that way. Number 1 also added that they have Korean independently since they consume a lot of media from Korea, in Korean. Interviewee 2 also reported that they used to live in Sweden and use Swedish at work in Finland. Interviewee 3 wanted to learn Japanese because they were interested in Japan and its language.

The second set of questions took a closer look at the languages used in dog training. The interviewees used languages mostly corresponded to the languages they mentioned for the second question, but interviewee 1 had one command in German, which they do not speak, and interviewee 3 had no commands in Japanese. They all told that they use Finnish for “normal” communication with the dogs, meaning speaking to them or praising them, and the foreign languages were only reserved for the specific commands. The interviewees mentioned that they wanted a clear separation of the commands from other speech. Interviewee 2 mentioned that they use praise phrases such as *okay* and *yes* but said that it is a bit hard to differentiate what language these represent, since they could also be the Finnish equivalent of *okei* and *jes*. Interviewee 1 said that most of their commands are in Finnish, while 2 and 3 reported to use more or equal number of foreign languages. For interviewee 3 agility commands are fully in English.

All of the interviewees also reported that they use some non-words in their training. For interviewee number 1, the non-words were mostly short cues indicating that the dog had done the task correctly, such as *zip*. They also reported that some commands have gotten shortened so much that the starting sound of the word is enough to make the dog perform the task, such as *mm* for *maahan*, meaning lie down. The others reported that they have at least one command that is a non-word, like *zikzik/siksik* and rolling *r*. Interviewee 2 reported that they wanted a command that was distinctly different from other commands, so that the task would be clearer for the dog. Many of these mentioned non-words came to use from instances where the participants had heard the expression being used and started to use it as well. Many of these words came from foreign trainers or training videos or were just used frequently in

training situations. Based on the answers the phenomenon of linguistic lexical borrowing is common in building commands and training vocabulary.

In the next group of questions, the goal was to find out why different languages are used. When the interviewees were asked why they use different languages, the answers were similar to the results from the survey. All of the interviewees told that they need many different command words, since they have multiple different sports. Interviewee 1 also said that they wanted to have different commands from other handlers, so that the dog would not react to commands of other trainers. They also said that they have a language distinction depending on which side of the handler the dog is performing the task. Interviewee 2 said that sometimes the distinctions between tasks can be very fine. They said that there are not enough good command words in Finnish and gave the example of a right turn in agility and hoopers. In agility the dog turns while jumping over the obstacle and in hoopers the dog turns while running through the hoop without jumping. Different turning cues are needed, so one language and one word for right and left is not enough. One reason interviewee 3 gave was to make clear criteria for the dog. They had started with rally obedience and realized when they started agility that many similar commands are needed. They also had children who would get excited about agility but did not know English yet. So English was chosen to differentiate the commands of different sports and so that the commands would be used only in the right contexts and not mistakenly by children in wrong situations. All of the interviewees said that one of the most important aspects is to build an association between the task and the command word, so that the commands are easier to remember.

The interviewees also reported that the language used does not really have an effect on the dog handling, since the words have been made easy to remember no matter the language. The dog does not really care or understand what language is used. This comes back to the issue of associations. The different languages are for the handler, since the same command in a different language can be easier to remember. Sometimes words that seem good in theory do not work in practice. Interviewee 3 told that they had originally used the word *climb* for contact obstacles but soon realized that it sounded too similar to their command word for the tunnel, *pipe*, and had to change the command.

The interviewees reported that they chose languages that they knew, since they have an association with it. It would be difficult to use a language that they did not know at all. The

words for the commands also need to be easy to remember and easy to pronounce.

Interviewee 1 said that they find code-switching between Finnish and Swedish easy, but think that using Korean would be hard, since it has a lot of words with multiple syllables.

Interviewee 2 said that in addition to the languages they speak, they find it easy to use commands that they have heard being used by other trainers. They also said that especially in agility, the word can come from the obstacle, what it reminds you of or the first letter or syllable, for example. Interviewee 3 said that the switch to English in agility felt natural, since they used it daily already.

The next group of questions linked together the multilingual commands and multiple sports and the reasons behind using multiple languages. The interviewees were asked what sports they do. Interviewee 1 had the most sports with rally obedience, obedience, dog dancing, dog water rescue, dog shows and tracking for hunting dogs. They said that they plan on starting some new sports as well. Interviewees 2 and 3 said that they do agility and rally obedience, additionally number 2 named hoopers and 3 named nosework.

Interviewee 1 said that they do not feel like doing multiple sports has an effect on using multiple languages. They said that multiple languages are mostly for the obedience sports. They explained that they have most commands for rally obedience and that in other sports, such as dog water rescue, multiple languages are often not needed, since the sport is done separately from other handlers and dogs. Interviewees 2 and 3 said that they felt like doing multiple sports influences their use of multiple languages. Number 2 said that there are not enough good command words in just one language. Especially with hoopers being a similar sport to agility, they had to think a lot if they can use the same commands as in agility, or are new ones needed. As previously stated, interviewee 3 wanted to make a clear distinction between agility and rally obedience, so doing multiple sports is the main reason for using different languages to them. All of the participants also said that the languages do mix between sports at least to some degree. Interviewee 3 had the clearest distinction between sports and languages, but they still have two commands in Finnish in agility and one command in Swedish in rally obedience. Interviewee 2 said that at one point there was more English in agility and more Swedish in rally obedience, but the languages have since mixed so much that there is not distinction. Interviewee 1 said that they have no one language for one sport, so they are mixed.

The participants were asked whether they use sport specific or established commands and all of them answered that they do use at least some. Interviewee 1 said that many of their “basic” commands are quite established in obedience sports. They reported that they use the basic *istu, maahan, seuraa* (sit, down, heel), for example, which are widely used in Finnish obedience sports. They mentioned that rally obedience specific commands have more variation in their own command repertoire and in the sport in general. Interviewees 2 and 3 both said that agility has a lot of sport specific and established commands, such as aforementioned *siksik/zikzik, vekvek, out, in* and *go-go*. Some of these could be classified as non-words, but they might have been a word of some language at some point. Interviewee 2 also mentioned that it is common in agility to use the name of the obstacle as a command word. They said that they use the Finnish word for the tunnel *putki* or *putkeen* as the command for that obstacle. According to interviewee 2, different kinds of jump cues have more variation, for themselves and for the sport in general. Even if many handlers use the same command words, the desired task can still be different. Interviewee 3 explained that the criteria for the task can be slightly different, even if same command word is used.

Lastly for this group of questions, the interviewees were asked, if they have multiple dogs and if that has an effect on the handling. Interviewees 1 and 2 said that they have more than one dog and that they use different commands with different dogs. They both said that this does make the handling a bit more difficult sometimes. Interviewee 1 told that they have two dogs of their own and up to seven dogs of other people, which they train and compete with. They said that the command words have changed through time, so a lot of the older dogs have similar commands, and the younger ones have a lot more foreign languages in their commands. Interviewee 2 said that they have different commands for their younger dog, that they have found through trial and error with the older dogs. Through time they have also found commands that “fit” better to them or work better in practice. Interviewee 3 said that at the moment they do not have more than one dogs but had at one time. They said that when they were training multiple dogs, they did not have different commands and felt like it did not make a difference. They also told that they have sometimes trained and competed with other people’s dogs, which have their own commands, so that has had an effect on their language and command use.

The last group of questions aimed to find out more about the motivation and training habits of the interviewees. All of the interviewees said that they feel like they are varying levels

ambitious or goal-oriented athletes. Interviewee 1 said that they feel like they are very ambitious and train usually five to six times a week. They clarified that one dog does not train that many times, but they as a handler do. Interviewee 2 said that they feel like they are quite ambitious and that they train on average two times a week. Interviewee 3 said that they are not “shooting for the stars”, but that they think that they are goal oriented. They said that they train two to three times a week.

Lastly, the participants were asked if they compete and if the language used in competition differs from the language used in training. They all do compete and all said that the language does not significantly differ and that their aim is to make the competition seem just the same as a training situation. Interviewee 1 said that they can emphasize the clarity of their commands in competitions and 2 said that sometimes they can have more filler words in competitions.

5.2.1 Thematizing of the interviews

Next, the results of the interviews were thematized in a way that would answer the research questions. The research questions of this thesis are *How are multilingual commands used in dog sport training?*, *Why are multiple languages used in dog sport training* and *How is the language identity of the handler manifested in this phenomenon?*

In trying to answer to the first research question, the following themes were identified from the results of the interviews, *1. consistency*, *2. borrowing* and *3. lived experience*. First, consistency means that according to the results of these interviews, multilingual commands are used (and not used) in a consistent manner. Multilingualism in dog handling usually happens as isolated command words, meaning that the language is not otherwise used in the communication. Other speech or communication, such as praises, take place in the native language, Finnish. In the theme of consistency, it was also found that the language used in training does not differ in competitions. There might be some very minor changes, but the commands used are consistently the same as in training situations. Lastly, the results indicated that there were no cases where the languages were definitively divided between sports, since all of the participants had at least some mixing between the sports and languages. This in turn supports the first claim presented in this thesis, that the foreign languages are used as isolated words in otherwise Finnish context.

The second theme answering the question of how, was *borrowing*. This theme came up in all the interviews. The theme of *borrowing* means instances where the handler has taken a foreign word or a non-word from someone else. The examples given for this were instances where a trainer had used a word or a word appeared in a video of a handler outside of Finland. The participants described that it is often easier to take an existing command that they have heard someone use, rather than come up with a command word of their own. Many of the sport specific or established commands are also instances of borrowing.

Lastly for this question, there is the theme of *lived experience*. This meant instances where the words formed or changed through some sort of natural trial and error process and instances, where the handler was building an association between the command word and the task that the dog was performing. For the first instance, the participants told that having multiple dogs usually did influence their commands and foreign language use. They reported that in practice they had noticed some things working and other not working with their older dogs and changed the commands or came up with new ones for their younger dogs. Often this seemed to result in more foreign language use. The second instance of association building has already been discussed in the previous sections. To summarize, the handlers find it easier to make associations to direct translations of the Finnish words, or to foreign words that remind them of what the dog is doing, which makes the command easy to remember.

Next, we aim to answer the second research question, why are multiple languages used?

There is some overlap between the answers of the how and why questions, since some of the results might be something in between these two questions. Some of the results for this question fit into the themes presented in section 5.1.2, such as *sport specific or established*, *memorability*, *differentiating* and *need for new words*. A new theme that emerged from the results of the interview was *inner motivation*. The results that corresponded to the previously presented themes were mostly same kinds of phenomena that were discussed in section 5.1.2. For example, for the theme of need for new words the interviewees said that multiple sports are the reason that they need multiple languages, new words for commands, but also sometimes one sport can also have so many moves that it is enough to require multiple languages. The new theme presented from these results is *inner motivation*, which means factors coming from the handler. The results of the interview indicated that the participants used languages that they personally knew or spoke and usually languages that they actively

used. Another instance of inner motivation was their motivation to train and how ambitious and goal oriented the interviewees were. All of them told that they did think themselves as ambitious dog sport athletes and they all reported that they trained multiple times a week.

Lastly the third research question about the handler's language identity was answered based on the results. From the results, two themes are presented 1. *multilingualism* and 2. *frequency of use*. *Multilingualism* or the lack of it was a theme that manifested in multiple ways in the results. Only one of the interviewees considered themselves to be multilingual, even though all of the interviewees reported that they knew or spoke (at least at a point in their life) four languages. This raises the problem of how a speaker of a language is classified. Most people would say that a couple of words would not qualify someone as speaker of a language, but fluency is hardly ever required either. In this interview the participants had to make the decision of which languages they consider themselves to be able to speak, their level of knowledge of the language was not specified. The participants also reported that they only used languages that they know or speak personally, with the exception of one German command that the interviewee in question did not speak.

The second theme of *frequency of use* referred to the amount the language was used in the participants' everyday life. English was the most used foreign language and all of the interviewees also reported that it felt natural to use English, since they used it a lot in their day to day lives. The participants also reported that they did not use all of the languages they knew, for example the interviewees had no commands in Japanese or Korea, at least yet. The most frequently used languages were also the ones that the interviewees had acquired through education (English and Swedish) while the Asian languages that they had learned mostly through general interest in the language were not used.

6 Discussion

In this section I discuss the themes that emerged from the results and apply them to the research questions. The aim of this study was to find out how and why multiple languages are used in Finnish dog sports and how this phenomenon can be seen in the handler's language identity. Before conducting this research, I had made hypotheses on the answers to these research questions, based on my own experiences and views on the issues. I start the discussion with the results of the open survey and conclude with the discussion of the results of the interview. Lastly, I tie the discussion together with a summary of the answers to the research questions.

First, I deal with with the results of the open surveys multiple choice questions. The results show that most of the people who answered the survey did agility in some capacity; therefore the results heavily reflect agility or agility mixed with another sport. The majority of participants also reported that their native language is Finnish. Even though all of the participants reported the use of multilingual commands, the majority of the native Finnish speakers did not consider themselves multilingual, while most native Swedish speakers did. This correlates with the notion, that many people think that a person needs to be bilingual or multilingual "from birth" (or that the languages are passed down from ones parents) to be classified as multilingual. Using individual words from another language hardly qualifies someone as multilingual, however other results from the surveys show that the people mostly use the languages they speak or know. I argue that many of these people could be classified as multilingual as it is suggested that a person who can switch from language to another without major difficulties, could be called multilingual (Cenoz 2013,5-7).

There were few cases in which people had reserved a specific language fully for one sport, and people mainly used commands in their native language. Almost all of the participants reported that they used at least some non-words. The combined results suggest that foreign language use usually happens as individual words, hence most commands are in the handler's native language. Many of the popular or established non-words seem to have originated from other languages. It seems that for example, *vekvek*, which in agility usually means that the dog makes a turning jump away from the handler, has originated from the German word *Weg* meaning away is this context. Using multiple languages in commands seems to be random in

the sense that the handlers usually choose words that they deem fitting, rather than sticking to a language or the correct term in the language.

Most of the people who answered the survey said that they train one to three times a week, or even more. Most of the participants also said that they are competing or are aiming to compete. This would suggest that people who use multiple languages in their dog handling are at least relatively motivated about their sport. Even though the topic warrants more research, the results of my study suggest that the more actively you train, the more commands you need, which in this study has resulted in increased usage of other languages.

From the first open-ended question of the survey, *what kind of commands or cues do you use in different languages*, four themes for the command words were found. The themes were 1. *easy to say*, 2. *sport specific or established*, 3. *easy to differentiate* and 4. *easy to remember*. They could be classified as the most common criteria that the people used when they chose a command word. The command words chosen would have to fit at least in one category, but it seems that the best or most efficient words would fit in at least the *easy to say*, *easy to differentiate* and *easy to remember* themes. There is also a lot of overlap and co-operation of these themes. Command words that are easy to say tend to be shorter and simpler which makes them easier to remember than complex or long words. When the results of this question are applied to the research questions, the themes show how different languages are used, as simple, easily differentiated and easily remembered solitary words or utterances, or as borrowings from another language or a sporting community. The borrowing argument could be made especially for the *sport specific or established* theme, where the examples included a lot of command words borrowed from English, especially in agility.

The second open-ended question aimed to answer the question of why multiple languages are used in dog sport handling. From the results to this question five themes were found, *language identity*, *memorability*, *differentiating*, *need for new words* and *need for difference*. These could be classified as the reasons why multilingualism happens in dog sports. These themes also answer the second research question of this thesis. The reasons why multiple languages are used mostly tied to memorability and needs. For many of these actively training and competing handlers the number of commands needed is big and as they progress, they often need even more words. In these cases, there are not enough suitable words in their native language, in this case Finnish, which “forces” them to use either other languages or

made-up words. The results show that many people find using different languages easier than completely made-up command words. One aspect that came up multiple times in the results, and especially in the *memorability* theme, was association building. For the command to be easily remembered the handler needs to have some kind of association between the word and the task that the dog is performing. This study shows that many people found using the direct translations of Finnish words the easiest. The foreign commands often seem to act as counterparts to the Finnish commands, or as additions to the repertoire of Finnish commands.

One of the major themes that came up in the results of this question was *language identity*. The last research question of this thesis aims to see how the handler's language identity is manifested in multilingual dog handling. Even if the results of the multiple-choice questions show that not many people considered themselves multilingual, it can nevertheless be seen from the results that the use of multiple languages is tied to their language identity. Some people reported that they or their families are bilingual, for example, and because of it using multiple languages felt natural in dog handling as well. Some people also reported that even if they do not consider themselves to be multilingual, they do use foreign languages (usually English) so much in their everyday lives, that it felt easy to incorporate it into dog handling. Still, for most people, the act of using multiple languages is more of a choice of practicality rather than something that they deeply link with their own identity.

From the results of the interviews, the following themes were identified: *consistency*, *borrowing*, *lived experience*, *inner motivation*, *multilingualism* and *frequency of use*. The results of interviews showed that using multiple languages in dog handling was usually consistent, but not so that one language would be reserved for a specific activity or sport. The consistency meant that certain words in other languages were used as command words and not so much in "normal speech" or communication with the animal. The words used were reserved for specific tasks that the dog performs, despite the language. There were also multiple instances of borrowing, which could occur with words from foreign languages or with "non-words" with possible origins in foreign languages. The results also showed that using multiple languages in dog sports is not static but can increase over time. The evidence of this study indicates that the interviewees used more multilingual commands now than they did previously. It could also be argued that the usage of multilingual commands can decrease over time, but that was not evident from this study. The results also showed that the personal opinions of the handlers affected the command words chosen. Both in the survey and in the

interview, many participants mentioned that it was important to them that the command word “fits”. The interview results indicated that some command words can be modified or changed entirely through a trial-and-error process that happens during training.

The aspect of multilingualism and language identity came up in the results of the interviews in the last two themes of multilingualism and frequency of use. As in the results from the survey, in the light of this study it can be said that the use of multiple languages in this context does not equate that the participants are or even consider themselves to be multilingual. From the results it can be seen that foreign language use often happens as an isolated incident, rather than a result of the handler’s language identity. What can be linked to the language identity of the handler are the languages they use, both in their everyday lives and in dog sport handling, and how frequent the use is. Both the survey and the interview showed that people use mostly the languages they know or speak and that they use the languages they use more in their everyday life the most in dog sports.

On the basis of the results of this study, it can be said that multilingualism in dog handling happens because of multiple different factors. From this study it is not possible to comment if there is more multilingualism in one sport (agility or rally obedience), but doing multiple sports seems to increase the use of multiple languages. What also seems to increase the usage of multiple languages is training or competing with more than one dog. There were a lot of similarities between the multiple language use of agility and rally obedience, most of the influencing factors presented in this study fit the language usage of both sports. There seems to be differences as well. There usually needs to be more commands for rally obedience, so the need for new command words is higher for that group. For agility there seems to be more sport specific or established commands, many of which are in foreign languages, mostly in English, or are non-words.

Multilingualism in dog sports usually manifests as singular command words of different languages, while other communication between the dog and the handler is in the handler’s native language. The languages a handler uses are usually languages that the handler knows or speaks, but the words or languages chosen are most often chosen because of practicality and not because of a link to one’s identity. People who use multilingual commands usually still have the most commands in their native language and the foreign languages usually work as an addition to the commands in the native language. Multiple language use in dog sports can

also be a product of borrowing, where a command word is first introduced by one handler and starts gaining popularity in the community. From the perspective of human-animal communication, it can be seen that in both sports' success cannot happen without communication. The processes of choosing or modifying command words can be seen as bettering that communication, it is often done to make it easier for the dog to understand what is meant or what they are asked to do. Peltola, Jääskeläinen and Harjunpää (2021, 133-134) suggest that people have designated certain words for general animal communication; certain words have also been designated for dog sports. There are words that have been designated to agility or to rally obedience and these can be upheld by the sporting community or used by one person. It has been previously studied that commands for working dogs have similar phonetic properties in different languages (Ann Young 1991, 76), and this is something that could be the next step in this field of study. Are there types of commands that are more beneficial in the dog sport context and is one language better than others?

Multilingualism in dog sport handling is often tied to different needs. The handlers need more words, they need different words or they need memorable words. In these situations, using multiple languages is seen as an easy and natural solution. This study showed that multiple language use is also often tied to memorability and association building. Using existing words in other or foreign languages is easier and more memorable than using made up words, since it can be easier to build an association. Using multiple languages is also tied to the handler's inner motivations. Based on the results it can be argued that people who use more time in training their dogs and who see themselves as ambitious athletes use commands in multiple languages. This could be because the command words are established by other motivated handlers or because with increasing difficultness, more command words are needed.

One aspect that can additionally be tied to inner motivation is the choice of what languages the handler uses. This study showed that people tend to use the languages they know and the usage of languages in everyday corresponds to the amount they are used in the dog sporting context. The problems of multilingualism have often been discussed through this thesis. The results showed that the people who reported Swedish to be their native language, more often identified as being multilingual. This can be tied to the issues Cenoz (2013) raises about the persistent notion that multilingualism is something that you have since birth or childhood. Most native Swedish speakers would need to learn more Finnish faster than native Finnish speakers would have to learn Swedish as Finnish is the dominant language of Finland, which

is shown by Leppänen and Laitinen (2025, 146). Since the language identity of a person is built from internal and external factors, it can be argued that the languages a person uses in dog sport handling are a manifestation of their language identity. The languages or commands a handler uses is a conscious choice that can also be used to present their identity to others. The study showed that the language environment of the dog sporting also affected the use of multiple languages. Choosing to use certain words or languages could be out of a want to fit in a certain community, which could then become a part of one's identity. It could be argued that for multilingual people the usage of multiple languages does not limit to certain aspects of their life but rather it is a constant aspect that follows them everywhere, even hobbies.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to find out how and why multiple languages are used in Finnish agility and rally obedience training and competitions. The material for this study was collected through an open survey and video call interviews. The participants of both material collecting methods were recruited through social media channels. The material was then analyzed by using the methods of quantitative data analysis and thematizing.

The results of the study were presented in three parts, first the multiple-choice questions of the survey, then the open-ended questions of the survey and lastly the interviews. The results of the multiple-choice questions were presented in figures, while the results from the open-ended questions and the interviews were presented via thematizing. For all of the material, I first familiarized myself with the material by close reading and then sorted the most important results in different categories, ergo themes. The themes were presented in the results section and brought together and discussed in more depth in the discussion section.

The results of the study showed that multiple languages in dog sport handling are most often used as solitary command words, while other communication between the dog and the handler is in the handler's native language. The results indicate that the handlers use more commands in their native language and that the foreign languages are often additions or borrowings from other languages and handlers.

The reasons why multiple languages are used in dog sport handling were tied to different needs and memorability. This study indicates that the biggest reason for using commands in dog sport handling is the need for new and different words that are easy to remember. The study showed that people deem direct translations or commands derived from other languages easier to understand than made-up words.

The usage of multiple languages is also tied to the handler's language identity. The study showed that most of the people who use multiple languages do not consider themselves to be multilingual. Even so, some of the participants did name multilingual backgrounds as the reason that they use multiple languages. It could also be seen from the results that languages people used in dog sport handling are mostly the languages that they know or speak. In the

end most people the usage of multiple languages is a choice of practicality and not a presentation of their language identity.

Further study is needed on this front as the multilingualism of dog handling, or multilingual human-animal communication, has not been studied a lot previously. It would be beneficial to dive even deeper to the individual language use of the handlers. One interesting aspect that could be studied more are the borrowings and established, sport specific commands and their origins.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Privacy notice, survey and interview questions in English

Privacy notice

Privacy notice for participating in the study spring 2026

Participation in the study is voluntary, none of the information is not obligatory to be provided and the volunteer can discontinue or withdraw their participation.

1. Register holder and researcher

Veera Purhonen, phone number, email

2. Description of research and personal data processing

The goal of the study is to find out how and why multilingualism manifests in Finnish dog sports. Finnish dog sport athletes' views and experiences regarding their language use in competition and training situations is collected for the study. The data will be collected anonymously, and no direct personal information will be used in the study. Data collection and the study will take place in February and March 2026.

3. Contact information of the data protection officer

The email address of the data protection officer of the university of Turku is: dpo@utu.fi.

4. Lawful basis for personal data processing

The processing of personal data is based on Article 6(1) of the GDPR:

consent of the data subject

5. Personal data included in the research and data protection measures

No direct personal data of the participants is collected for the study. Information about the language skills and experiences in dog sports of the participants is collected anonymously.

6. Sources of data collection

The data for the study is collected through a Webropol survey, interviews and observation of the dog sporting situations. The volunteers for the study were looked for in social media channels.

7. Possible harm or benefit that the participants could gain from participating in the study

There is no harm in participating in the study for the participants.

8. Transfer or sharing of the personal data with third parties

Personal data is not transferred outside the university of Turku and data controller.

9. Transfer or sharing of the personal data outside EU or EEA

Personal data is not transferred outside the European Union or the European Economic Area.

10. Automatic decision making and data protection

No automatic decision making is used for the data.

11. Processing of the personal data after the study ends

The data is deleted.

12. Rights of the data subjects

The participants can withdraw their consent to the processing of the data they have given. If a participant withdraws their consent, the data they have given will not be used for the study.

Participants have the right to make a complaint to the data protection officer if they feel that their data has not been treated according to the privacy legislation.

Open survey

Thank you for participating in my master's thesis study! The study is intended for dog handlers who train and/or compete in Finland and who use multilingual commands in dog handling.

The purpose of the study is to find out how and why multilingualism manifests itself in Finnish dog sports. For the study, I am collecting data on how Finnish dog sport athletes use multilingual commands and cues in training and competition situations.

Which sports do you train or compete in?

1. Agility (all of the events)
2. Rally obedience
3. Something else

How often do you train?

1. Less than once a week.
2. 1-3 times a week.
3. 4-7 times a week.
4. Over 7 times a week.

Are competing or aiming to compete at the moment?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes, do you consider yourself to be an ambitious competitor?

1. Yes
2. No

What is your native language?

1. Finnish
2. Swedish
3. English
4. Something else

Do you consider yourself to be bilingual/multilingual?

1. Yes
2. No

How do you use different languages in different sports?

1. Multiple languages in one sport.
2. Different languages for different sports.

Do you use "non-words" or utterances? (Such as zip, vek, sushing or rolling r)

1. Yes
2. No

How do you estimate your use of the different languages?

1. Most commands in my native language
2. Most commands in a foreign language
3. Most commands are “non-words” or utterances
4. I use the languages equally

What kind of commands or cues do you use in different languages? You can tell in your own words or use examples.

Why do you use different languages in dog sports? (Your own experience)

I have read the privacy notice and give my consent to use the of the information I have provided in this survey. (Link to the privacy notice)

1. Yes

Questions for the interviews

What is your native language?

What languages do you speak? (Your own experience)

Do you consider yourself to be bilingual or multilingual?

Where do you think the languages you use come from? Where does the multilingualism come from?

What languages do you use in training and dog handling?

How?

Do you use non-words in dog handling? (Made up words, utterances or shortenings)

Where have these words come from or how have they been formed?

Why do you use different languages?

How does using different languages affect dog handling?

Why have you chosen to use these languages or commands?

What dog sports do you do?

Is using multiple languages connected to doing multiple sports?

Do the languages mix between sports?

Do you use any sport specific or established commands?

Do you have more than one dog in training? Does that have an effect? Do you have different commands for different dogs?

Do you consider yourself to be an ambitious or goal-oriented athlete?

How many times in a week do you train?

Do you compete? Does the language used in competitions differ from the language used in training?

Appendix 2 Privacy notice, survey and interviews question in Finnish

Tietosuojailmoitus

Tietosuojailmoitus tutkimuksesta tutkimukseen osallistuvalla keväällä 2026

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista, mitään tietoja ei ole pakko toimittaa ja tutkimukseen osallistumisen voi keskeyttää tai perua.

1. Rekisterinpitäjä ja tutkimuksen vastaava taho

Veera Purhonen, numero, sähköposti

2. Kuvaus tutkimuksesta ja henkilötietojen käsittelystä

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten ja miksi monikielisyys ilmenee suomalaisessa koiraurheilussa. Tutkimusta varten kerätään näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia suomalaisten koiraurheilijoiden käyttämistä käskyistä ja kielenkäytöstä kilpailu- ja koulutustilanteissa. Tiedot kerätään anonymisti ja tutkimukseen ei käytetä suoria henkilötietoja. Tietojen keräys ja tutkimus toteutetaan helmi- ja maaliskuussa 2026.

3. Tietosuojavastaavan yhteystiedot

Turun yliopiston tietosuojavastaava on tavoitettavissa sähköpostitse osoitteesta: dpo@utu.fi.

4. Henkilötietojen lainmukainen käsittelyperuste

Henkilötietoja käsitellään seuraavan, tietosuojalainin 6(1) artiklassa mainitun, käsittelyperusteen nojalla:

rekisteröidyn suostumus

5. Tutkimusmateriaaliin sisältyvät henkilötiedot sekä suojatoimenpiteet

Tutkimukseen ei kerätä suoria henkilötietoja. Tutkimukseen kerätään anonymisti tietoja tutkittavien henkilöiden kielitaidosta ja kokemuksista koiraurheilusta.

6. Henkilötietojen keräämisen lähteet

Tutkimukseen kerätään tietoja Webropol-kyselyllä, haastatteluilla, sekä koiraurheilutilanteiden observoinnilla. Tutkimukseen on etsitty vapaaehtoisia sosiaalisen median kanavilla.

7. Tutkimuksen mahdolliset hyödyt ja haitat tutkittavalle

Tutkimukseen osallistumisesta ei ole haittaa tutkittavalle.

8. Henkilötietojen siirtäminen ja jakaminen kolmansille osapuolille

Henkilötietoja ei siirretä Turun yliopiston/tutkijan ulkopuolelle.

9. Henkilötietojen siirtäminen EU:n tai ETA:n ulkopuolelle

Henkilötietoja ei siirretä Euroopan unionin tai Euroopan talousalueen ulkopuolelle.

10. Automaattinen päätöksenteko ja noudatettavat suojaustoimet

Automaattista päätöksentekoa ei toteuteta käsiteltäviin henkilötietoihin.

11. Henkilötietojen käsittely tutkimuksen päättymisen jälkeen

Tutkimusaineisto poistetaan.

12. Oikeutesi tutkittavana

Tutkittavalla on oikeus peruuttaa antamansa suostumus tietojen käsittelyyn. Jos tutkittava peruuttaa suostumuksensa, ei hänen antamiaan tietoja käytetä tutkimukseen.

Tutkittavalla on oikeus tehdä valitus tietosuojavaltuutetulle, jos koet, että henkilötietojasi on käsitelty soveltuvan tietosuojalainsäädännön vastaisesti.

Kyselyn kysymykset

Kiitos osallistumisesta pro gradu tutkimukseeni! Tutkimus on tarkoitettu suomessa harjoitteleville ja/tai kilpaileville koirakoille, jotka käyttävät monikielisiä käskyjä koiran ohjauksessa.

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten ja miksi monikielisyys ilmenee suomalaisessa koiraurheilussa. Tutkimusta varten kerätään näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia suomalaisten koiraurheilijoiden käyttämistä käskyistä ja kielenkäytöstä kilpailu- ja koulutustilanteissa.

Mitä lajeja harrastat tai missä kilpailet?

1. Agility (kaikki tai jokin alalaji)

2. Rally-toko
3. Jokin muu

Kuinka usein harjoittelet?

1. Alle kerran viikossa
2. 1-3 kertaa viikossa
3. 4-7 kertaa viikossa
4. Yli 7 kertaa viikossa

Kisaatko tai tähtäätkö kisaamiseen tällä hetkellä?

1. Kyllä
2. En

Jos kyllä, pidätkö itseäsi tavoitteellisena kisaajana?

1. Kyllä
2. En

Mikä on äidinkielesi?

1. Suomi
2. Ruotsi
3. Englanti
4. Jokin muu

Koetko olevasi kaksikielinen/monikielinen?

1. Kyllä
2. Ei

Miten käytät eri kielisiä komentoja/käskyjä eri lajeissa?

1. Saman lajin sisällä
2. Eri kieliä eri lajeissa

Käytätkö sanallisten komentojen lisäksi ”epäsanoja” tai huudahduksia? (Esimerkiksi, zip, vek, suhiseminen, ”ärrän pärisyttäminen”)

1. Kyllä

2. Ei

Miten arvioit kielten jakautuvan?

1. Käytän eniten käskyjä äidinkielelläni
2. Käytän eniten käskyjä vieraalla kielellä
3. Käytän eniten ”epäsanoja” tai huudahduksia
4. Käytän kieliä ”tasaisesti”/en osaa sanoa

Millaisia erikielisiä käskyjä käytät? Voit selittää vapaasti tai antaa esimerkkejä käyttämistäsi käskyistä ja komennoista.

Miksi käytät eri kielisiä käskyjä koiraurheilussa? (Oma kokemuksesi asiasta)

Olen tutustunut tietosuojailmoitukseen ja annan suostumukseni antamieni tietojen käyttämiseen Pro gradu tutkielmassa. (Linkki tietosuojailmoitukseen)

1. Kyllä

Haastattelukysymykset:

Mikä on äidinkielesi?

Mitä kieliä puhut? (oman kokemuksen mukaan)

Koetko olevasi kaksi- tai monikielinen?

Mistä luulet käyttämiesi kielten tulevan? Mistä monikielisyys juontaa juurensa?

Mitä kieliä käytät treeni tilanteissa koiran ohjauksessa?

Miten?

Käytätkö ohjauksessa epäsanomia? (Itsekeksittyjä sanoja tai äännähdyksiä, lyhenteitä.)

Mistä nämä ovat tulleet tai miten ne ovat muodostuneet?

Miksi käytät eri kieliä?

Miten eri kielet vaikuttavat ohjaukseen?

Millä perusteilla kielet ja/tai sanat (käskyt) valikoituvat?

Mitä lajeja harrastat?

Liittyykö useamman kielen käyttö siihen, että harrastat useampaa lajia?

Sekoittuvatko kielet lajien sisällä?

Käytätkö jotakin lajin sisällä ”vakiintuneita” käskyjä? Mitä?

Onko sinulla enemmän kuin yksi koira? Vaikuttaako se? Käytätkö eri käskyjä eri koirille?

Koetko olevasi tavoitteellinen harrastaja/urheilija?

Monta kertaa viikossa treenaat?

Kilpailenko? Miten treeneissä ja kisoissa käytetty kieli eroavat toisistaan?

Appendix 3 Finnish summary

Johdanto

Tämä tutkielma käsittelee monikielistä koiranohjausta suomalaisessa agilityssä ja rally-tokossa. Suomalainen koiraurheilu lähti nousuun Suomen Kennelliiton perustamisesta 1800-luvun lopulla. Nykyisin Suomi on yksi koiraurheilun kärkimaista ja yli puoli miljoonaa suomalaista harrastaa jotakin koiransa kanssa (Suomen Kennelliitto 2025). Agility on koiranäyttelyiden jälkeen Suomen suosituin koiraharrastus (ibid.). Toinen nopeasti suosiota kasvattanut laji on rally-toko, jota voisi kutsua rennommaksi versioksi perinteisistä tottelevaisuuskokeista. Koiraurheilun kautta on mahdollista löytää yhä enemmän tapoja kommunikoida koiraystäviemme kanssa.

Ihmisen ja koiran välinen kommunikaatio koiraurheilussa on erityistä muuhun kommunikaatioon verrattuna, sillä opetamme koirillemme niin paljon erilaisia käskyjä ja niihin liittyviä komentoja. Koska agility ja rally-toko ovat nopeatempoisia lajeja, ohjaajat usein suosivat lyhyitä ja helppoja käskyjä. Usein ohjaajat käyttävät eri kieliä ohjauksessaan ja kielet vaihtelevat lajista tai käskystä riippuen.

Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on selvittää, miten ja miksi suomalaiset koiranohjaajat käyttävät monikielisiä käskyjä agilityn ja rally-tokon harjoittelu- ja kilpailutilanteissa, ja miten tämä näkyy ohjaajan kieli-identiteetissä. Tutkielman aineisto kerättiin haastatteluilla ja avoimella kyselyllä. Haastatteluiden ja kyselyn tuloksia peilattiin ihmisten ja eläinten väliseen kommunikaatioon, monikielisyyteen ja kieli-identiteettiin. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin sisällönanalyysin, teemoittelun ja kvantitatiivisen analyysin metodeja.

Suomalainen koiraurheilu

Koiraurheilu Suomessa alkoi 1800-luvun lopussa, kun Suomen Kennelliitto perustettiin ja ensimmäiset koiranäyttelyt ja viralliset metsästyskokeet järjestettiin (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026). Tänä päivänä Suomessa voi harrastaa ja kilpailla yli 70 lajissa (ibid.). Suomi on niittänyt kansainvälisesti menestystä monissa eri lajeissa (Palveluskoirat.fi 2025, Suomen Agilityliitto 2026). Suomalaiset kuitenkin panostavat eettiseen koiranpitoon ja harrastamiseen (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026).

Agility on syntynyt Britanniassa 1970-luvulla, jossa se esiteltiin hevosten estehyppyyn perustuvana näytösohjelmalla. Suomeen laji tuli vuonna 1986, ja se on kasvanut räjähdysmäisesti vuosituhannen vaihteesta lähtien. Agilitykilpailujen tavoitteena on suorittaa 12–20 esteen rata virheettömästi ja mahdollisimman nopeasti (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026).

Agilityn alle kuuluu viisi alalajia; agility, hyppy, gamblers, snooker ja hoopers (Suomen Agilityliitto 2026). Agilityn kilpailuradalla on neljä eri estetyyppiä; hypyt, kontakti esteet, kepit ja putket. Hyppyesteisiin kuuluvat aita, pituus, muuri ja rengas. Kontaktiesteitä on kolme; puomi, a-este ja keinu. Hyppyradat koostuvat hyppyesteistä, kepeistä ja putkista (Suomen Agilityliitto 2023, 14-35, Federation Cynologique Internationale 2025). Suomessa agilityssa koirat jaetaan viiteen kokoluokkaan niiden säkäkorkeuden mukaan; kokoluokka määrittelee hyppyesteiden korkeuden. Suomalaiset kokoluokat ovat pikkumini, mini, medi, pikkumaksi ja maksi (Suomen Agilityliitto 2023, 3-4). Koirakot jaotellaan tasojen mukaan kolmeen luokkaan. Jokainen koirakko aloittaa 1. luokasta ja pääsee siirtymään seuraavaan luokkaan kolmella nollatuloksella. Nollatuloksen koirakko saa suoritettuaan radan ilman virheitä (Suomen Agilityliitto 2023, 4-5).

Rally-toko on tottelevaisuuteen pohjautuva laji, joka yhdistelee agilityä, koiratanssia ja perinteistä tottelevaisuutta. Rally-tokossa painotetaan iloista ja rentoa yhteistyötä koiran ja ohjaajan välillä (Suomen Kennelliitto 2026). Rally-toko on saanut alkunsa 2000-luvun alussa Yhdysvalloissa. Lajin ensimmäiset maailmanmestaruuskilpailut järjestettiin Liedossa, Suomessa vuonna 2024.

Rally-toko-kilpailuissa kilpaillaan 10–20 kyltin rata, jonka koira kulkee seuruussa ohjaajan vierellä. Kylteissä on erilaisia liikkeitä ja temppuja, jotka koiran tulee suorittaa. Rally-tokossa kilpaillaan neljässä eri luokassa: aloittelija, avoin, voittaja ja mestari. Koirakko pääsee etenemään seuraavaan luokkaan, kun he ovat saaneet kolme hyväksytyä tulosta. Kun koirakko aloittaa radan, heillä on 100 pistettä, josta tehdään vähennyksiä väärin suoritetuista tehtävistä ja epätoivotusta käytöksestä. Hyväksytyyn tulokseen koirakko tarvitsee vähintään 70 pistettä. Ratojen pituus ja haastavuus nousee luokan noustessa (Suomen palveluskoiraliitto 2022).

Molempia lajeja yhdistää koiran koulutus. Yksi koiran koulutuksen peruspilareista on ehdollistuminen. Ehdollistumisessa subjekti, tässä tapauksessa koira, luo assosiaation kahden asian, esimerkiksi stimulantin ja tapahtuman, välille (Mills 2005, 209). Koiran koulutuksessa ehdollistumisen yhteydessä puhutaan vahvistamisesta, joka voi olla positiivista tai negatiivista

(Mills 2005, 210). Toinen yleinen suuntaus koiran koulutuksessa on kognitiivinen koulutus, jossa koira oppii ymmärtämään käsitteen, joka linkittyy tiettyyn käskyyn (Mills 2005, 212).

Eläinten ja ihmisten välinen kommunikaatio

Kommunikaatio kahden eläimen välillä tapahtuu, kun odotettavissa olevia tuloksia voidaan havaita eläimen elehtiessä toiselle. Tämän kaltaista kommunikaatiota tapahtuu monien eläinlajien välillä päivittäin ongelmanratkaisutilanteissa, kuten ruoan hankinnassa (Elgier et al. 2009, 402). Ihmiset ovat olleet kommunikaatiossa muiden eläinten kanssa pitkään, ja monien eläinten kommunikatiivisia kykyjä on tutkittu 1900- ja 2000-luvuilla.

Koirat erityisesti ovat kehittyneet kommunikoidaan ihmisten kanssa. Tähän suuresti vaikuttanut tekijä on ihmisten harjoittama valikoiva kasvatus, jossa ihmiset ovat valinneet lisääntymiseen sopivat yksilöt. Tämä on parantanut koirien kykyä kommunikoida ihmisten kanssa (Miklosi 2009 53–54). Ihmiset ovat myös keksineet ja määritelleet tiettyjä sanoja juuri eläinten kanssa kommunikoidamiseen, kuten kutsuja, komentoja ja hellyttelynimityksiä. Eläinten kanssa kommunikoinnissa ihmiset pyrkivät muodostamaan yhteisymmärryksen ihmisen ja eläimen välille (Peltola, Jääskeläinen ja Harjunpää 2021, 133–134). Ihmiselle ja eläimelle kommunikaatiotilanteet toimivat kuitenkin eri rooleissa (Miklosi 2009, 55).

Iso osa ihmisten ja eläinten, erityisesti koirien, välistä kommunikaatiota ovat käskyt ja pyynnöt. Käskyllä tarkoitetaan ilmaisua, jolla halutaan saada joku tekemään jotain (Mitchell 2020, 329). Koiran koulutuksessa käskyt ovat yleisimmin lyhyitä imperatiivi muotoisia verbejä (Mitchell 2020, 332). Käytettävät käskyt riippuvat koiran ohjaajan käyttämästä kielestä, mutta on havaittu, että työkoirilla käytettävillä käskyillä on samanlaisia foneettisia ominaisuuksia (Ann Young 1991, 76). Koirat innostuvat herkemmin korkeasta puheesta, jossa käytetään sanoja, joita ne tunnistavat (Reeve and Jaques 2022, 2).

Monikielisyys

Kaksi- tai monikielisyys on vanha ilmiö, joka on nykyään yleisempi kuin koskaan. Ihmiset puhuvat useita kieliä monesta syystä, ja yleinen *lingua franca* englanti, on maailman yleisin kieli opiskella toisena kielenä (Cenoz 2013, 4). Syitä monikielisyyden yleistymiseen ovat

esimerkiksi maantieteellinen ja sosio-ekonominen vapaus, sekä uudet tavat ja lähteet kielenoppimiselle (ibid).

Monikielisyyden määrittely on usein vaikeaa. Usein ajatellaan, että ihmisen täytyy osata kahta kieltä yhtä paljon, jotta hänet voidaan luokitella monikieliseksi. Monikielisyyden ehdoiksi on ehdotettu esimerkiksi sitä, että pystyy kommunikoimaan enemmällä kuin yhdellä kielellä (Cenoz 2013, 5). Suomi on monikielinen valtio, sillä Suomessa on kaksi virallista kieltä (Leppänen and Laitinen 2025, 145). Vaikka suomalaisten täytyy opiskella edes jonkin verran molempia kieliä peruskoulussa, melkein 87 % suomalaisista käyttää arjessaan vain suomea (Leppänen and Laitinen 2025, 146). Vaikka suomalaiset puhuvat useimmin useampia kieliä, kuin monen muun valtion kansalaiset, on vaikea sanoa, kuka kokee itsensä monikieliseksi.

Kieli-identiteetti

Ihmisen käyttämä kieli tai kielet ovat tärkeä osa hänen identiteettiään. Tänä päivänä kieli-identiteetti voidaan nähdä monikerroksisena sosiaalisen konstruktiona (Preece 2016, 3). Toisen kielen oppiminen ja osaaminen vaikuttaa ihmisen identiteettiin, ja se vaikuttaa siihen, miten ihminen nähdään ja miten hän näkee itsensä. Identiteetti on tehtävä, jota ihminen työstää (Benson et al. 2013, 19). Tämä tekee kielen oppimisesta osan identiteetin työstämistä.

Aineisto ja metodit

Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin kahdella tapaa, kyselyllä ja haastatteluilla. Kysely koostui yhdeksästä monivalintakysymyksestä ja kahdesta avoimesta kysymyksestä. Kysely toteutettiin Webropol-alustalla. Kyselyn tarkoituksena oli saada kuva siitä, miten ja miksi monikielisiä käskyjä käytetään ja mitkä tekijät siihen vaikuttavat. Monivalintakysymyksissä osallistujilta kysyttiin kysymyksiä liittyen heidän kielihistoriaansa, harjoittelurutiineihin ja siihen, miten he käyttävät eri kieliä. Avoimissa kysymyksissä osallistujilta kysyttiin esimerkkejä heidän käyttämistään käskyistä ja heidän kokemuksiinsa siitä, miksi he käyttävät monia kieliä.

Tutkimuksen haastattelut toteutettiin puolistrukturoituina haastatteluina Zoomin välityksellä. Haastattelija ohjasi keskustelua ennalta valituilla kysymyksillä, mutta haastattelijat saivat vastata omin sanoin perustuen kokemuksiinsa. Tutkimukseen osallistumisen edellytyksenä oli

agilityn tai rally-tokon aktiivinen harjoittelu ja se, että koiran ohjauksessa käytettiin ainakin kahta eri kieltä.

Aineiston analysointiin käytettiin kvantitatiivisen data-analyysin, sisällönanalyysin ja teemoittelun metodeja. Sisällönanalyysi ja teemoittelu ovat kaksi hyvin samanlaista analyysimenetelmää, joiden erot ovat jopa kiisteltäviä. Niiden erona pidetään sitä, että sisällönanalyysissa päätetään etukäteen, mikä aineistossa on tärkeää ja aineisto jaotellaan sen pohjalta. Teemoittelussa aineiston tärkeät osat nousevat aineiston tarkastelussa, jonka jälkeen ne jaotellaan teemoihin. Kyselyn avointen kysymysten ja haastatteluiden analysointiin käytettiin Braunin, Clarken ja Weaten (2016, 8-16) kuuden vaiheen menetelmää. Menetelmässä vaiheet 1–2 ovat aineistoon tutustuminen ja koodaaminen, vaiheet 3–5 ovat teemojen kehittäminen, hiominen ja nimeäminen ja vaihe 6 on kirjoittaminen.

Tulokset

Monivalinta kysymysten tuloksista selvisi, että suurin osa kyselyyn vastanneista harrasti agilitya tai agilitya ja jotain toista lajia. Suurin osa vastaajista myös vastasi, että he harjoittelevat 1–3 kertaa viikossa. 96 % kyselyyn vastanneista kertoi, että he kilpailevat tai tähtäävät kilpailemaan tällä hetkellä, ja heistä 82 % kertoi kokevan olevansa tavoitteellinen urheilija. Melkein 90 % vastaajista kertoi äidinkielen suomen, kun taas ruotsia äidinkielenään puhui hieman alle 8 %. Vastaajista 25 % koki olevansa kaksi- tai monikielinen. Äidinkielenään ruotsia puhuvista yli 84 % koki olevansa monikielinen, kun taas suomea äidinkielenään puhuvilla luku oli alle 19 %. Melkein 95 % vastaajista kertoi, että he käyttävät eri kieliä eri lajien välillä, eli kielet sekoittuivat lajien välillä. Sunnilleen sama määrä osallistujista kertoi myös käyttävänsä epäsanuja tai ilmaisuja koiranohjauksessaan. 77 % vastaajista kertoi, että käyttää eniten käskyjä omalla äidinkielellään.

Avointen kysymysten vastaukset käsiteltiin teemoittelun kautta. Ensimmäisessä avoimessa kysymyksessä kysyttiin, millaisia käskyjä ohjaajat käyttävät eri kielillä. Vastauksista nousi esiin seuraavat teemat: *1. helppo sanoa*, *2. lajiin liittyvä*, *3. helppo erotella* ja *4. helppo muistaa*. Tämä tarkoitti siis sitä, että sanat valikoituivat sen perusteella, että ne ovat helppoja sanoja, muistaa ja erotella tai ne ovat lajiin liittyviä tai sidonnaisia.

Toisella avoimella kysymyksellä pyrittiin selvittämään miksi ohjaajat käyttävät eri kieliä. Tästä kysymyksestä nousseet teemat olivat: *1. kieli-identiteetti*, *2. muistettavuus*, *3. erottelu*,

4. *tarve uusille sanoille* ja 5. *tarve erilaisuudelle*. Kieli-identiteetti liittyi ohjaajaan tai harjoitteluympäristön monikielisyyteen. Muistettavuudessa monet osallistujat mainitsivat assosiaatioiden rakentamisen käskyn ja tekemisen välille. Käskyjen erottelu koettiin usein helpoimmaksi tehdä eri kielillä. Monet vastaajat kertoivat, että he tarvitsivat paljon erilaisia käskyjä, koska he harrastivat useampaa lajia korkealla tasolla.

Myös haastatteluiden tuloksia tarkasteltiin teemoittelun ja tutkimuskysymysten kautta. Kun tuloksia teemoiteltiin sen kautta, miten monikielisiä käskyjä käytetään, tuloksista löydettiin teemat 1. *johdonmukaisuus*, 2. *lainaaminen* ja 3. *eletty kokemus*. Johdonmukaisuus viittaa siihen, että monikielisyys ilmenee yleensä vain yksittäisinä käskyinä. Lainauksissa on kyse muilta lainatuista sanoista, joiden alkuperästä ei aina ole tarkkaa tietoa. Eletty kokemus tarkoitti tilanteita, joissa sanat ja käskyt muuttuivat käytössä tai uusien koirien myötä. Seuraavaksi haastatteluja analysoitiin sen kannalta, miksi monikielisiä käskyjä käytetään. Vastauksista nousi paljolti samoja teemoja kuin kyselyssä. Uusi löydetty teema oli *sisäinen motivaatio*, mikä tarkoitti, että monikielisuuden valinnat liittyivät ohjaajaan. Esimerkiksi ohjaajat käyttivät kieliä, joita he osasivat. Viimeiseksi tuloksia analysoitiin monikielisuuden kautta, jolloin aineistosta löytyi kaksi teemaa 1. *monikielisyys* ja 2. *käytön yleisyys*. Monikielisyys näyttäytyi aineistossa monella eri tapaa, esimerkiksi suurena vaihteluna siinä, kuka kokee olevansa monikielinen. Kielen käytön yleisyys viittasi siihen, että kielet, joita käytettiin koiranohjauksessa, olivat yleensä kieliä, joita käytettiin myös arjessa.

Pohdinta

Tuloksista huomattiin, että suurin osa vastaajista harrasti ainakin agilitya, joten tulokset heijastelevat vahvasti agilitya ja suurin osa vastaajista puhui suomea äidinkielenään. Vaikka monet vastaajista eivät kokeneet olevansa monikielisiä, voitaisiin heistä monia tämän tutkimuksen perusteella pitää monikielisinä. Tulokset osoittivat, että vieraiden kielten käyttö koiraurheilussa tapahtuu useimmiten yksittäisinä sanoina, kun muu kommunikaatio koirakon välillä tapahtuu ohjaajan äidinkielellä. Monet osallistujat kertoivat harjoittelevansa useita kertoja viikossa ja kokevat olevansa tavoitteellisia urheilijoita, joten tulokset viittaavat siihen, että korkea motivaatio ja useammin harjoittelu nostavat useamman kielen käyttämisen mahdollisuutta.

Käytetyt käskyt olivat lyhyitä ja helppoja muistaa. Sanojen lainaaminen oli yleistä erityisesti agilityssa. Syyt monikielisuudelle liittyivät useimmiten muistettavuuteen tai johonkin tarpeeseen. Kun harrastuksen taso nousee, tarvitaan enemmän erilaisia käskyjä, mikä usein lisää monikielisten käskyjen käyttöä. Muistettavuus liittyi siihen, että ohjaajan täytyi pystyä rakentamaan assosiaatio käskyn ja tekemisen välille, jolloin suora käänös on helppo tapa muistaa käsky. Kielet, joita käytettiin, olivat kieliä, joita ohjaaja puhui ja usein myös käytti arjessaan. Tuloksista havaittiin myös, että useampien kielten käyttö ei ollut staattista vaan saattoi kasvaa ajan myötä. Monien eri lajien harrastaminen lisäsi monikielistä ohjausta.

Lopuksi

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli selvittää, miten monikielisyys näkyy suomalaisessa koiraurheilussa, miksi monikielisiä käskyjä käytetään ja miten tämä näkyy ohjaajan kieli-identiteetissä. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin kyselyllä ja haastatteluilla, joiden tulosten analysointiin käytettiin kvantitatiivisen data analyysin ja teemoittelun menetelmiä. Tulokset esiteltiin kolmessa osassa ja niistä nousseista teemoista keskusteltiin pohdintaosiossa.

Tulokset osoittivat, että monikielinen koiranohjaus esiintyy yleensä yksittäisinä käskysanoina, kielillä, jota ohjaaja osaa. Syyt monikielisuuden käyttöön liittyivät useimmiten muistettavuuteen tai erilaisiin tarpeisiin uusille ja erilaisille käskysanoille. Monikielisuuden esiintyminen ei tarkoittanut sitä, että ohjaaja kokee itsensä monikieliseksi, mutta kieli-identiteettiin yhdistettäviä tekijöitä tunnistettiin tuloksista. Tulevaisuudessa aiheesta voitaisiin tutkia esimerkiksi tarkemmalla tasolla ohjaajien kielenkäyttöä ja lajisidonnaisten käskyjen muodostumista.