



**Name:** Irina

**Home countries:** Canada and Romania

**Education:** Master's degree in Marketing

**Moved to Finland:** in 2010

**Languages:** Romanian, English, French, Finnish. Studied German and Spanish.

**Intercultural relationship:** Irina is married to a Finnish man

More information: [www.irinapravet.com](http://www.irinapravet.com)

Contact: [irina@languagecatalyst.com](mailto:irina@languagecatalyst.com)

### **"MY PATH": my story before Finland, in Finland, my goals and hopes**

Irina was born in Romania but moved to Canada with her family when she was 5 years old. She also lived in Germany as an exchange student where her path collided with a Finn who later became her husband. After the exchange semester was over, she realised that she misses Europe and decided to move to Finland. Apart from her partner living in Finland, there were other reasons to opt for Finland. Canadian culture is very job-centered and Irina felt a lot of pressure not having a clear career plan after university. Moreover, being keen on languages, she was eager to have a linguistic challenge, so Finland seemed to be inviting at that time.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

Irina had several jobs in Finland that she got by sending online applications and following a standard application process. Irina thinks that she succeeded in getting those jobs because she was able to clearly explain not only what she could bring to a company but how she could benefit herself working there. Moreover, she was honest explaining her motivations and believes it helped her to find a human connection with an employer. Besides, Irina recommends applying only for positions that one is interested in. It will help to increase the quality of applications that one sends compared to a situation where one applies for every job one sees.

However, soon Irina realised that an office job was not something she would like to do for the rest of her life and started thinking of setting up her own business. Later, while chatting with her friends, she found out that she had a skill of learning languages and has already overcome a lot of challenges related to language learning. That was how she came up with an idea of becoming a language and cultural transitions coach helping people on their path on learning Finnish.

*Irina's tip № 1: During a job interview, be clear on your motivations for getting a job and explain in detail why you would like to do what you applied for.*

### **INTERCULTURAL FAMILY/COUPLE**

Irina met her Finnish partner during her exchange semester in Germany. After their studies were over, both went back to their home countries to complete their degrees. When Irina graduated, the couple decided that she would move to Finland to live together with her partner.

Irina and her husband are actively working on creating traditions and holidays that would be special for both of them. Irina explains that they come from different cultures, each with their own holidays, so they

would not like to celebrate all those. Moreover, neither of them is religious and Christmas has lost its charm for them a long time ago. That is why they decided to create their own meaningful occasions, which would be dear and special for both of them and unite them as a couple.

Despite the fact that Irina and her husband have very different personalities, they are united by love for messing around and having fun together. She especially enjoys knowing that there is always a room for fun inside their couple.

*Irina's tip № 2: Consider creating your own special occasions within your couple that have meaning for both of you.*

## FINNISH LANGUAGE

Irina has extensive experience in learning Finnish both together with her partner and independently. However, she feels that she is not entitled to give general recommendations, as she believes that an individual approach is crucial in language learning. Nevertheless, she shares what helped her on her language learning path.

Irina started learning Finnish when she first visited Finland as a guest and bought a studybook. In the beginning, she started with Googling her grammar and vocabulary-related questions and asking her husband to explain language nuances if something was unclear. It was also helpful for Irina to talk to people if there was an opportunity and her vocabulary was enough to have a short conversation. She thinks that there is no point in waiting until one's language skills get perfect to start speaking it. Irina may be called an advocate for mistakes - she is convinced that people should be rewarded for making mistakes, as they bring extra efficiency to learning.

Irina participated in different language courses in Helsinki and found some of them helpful. However, she notes that language courses are a viable option as a part of a bigger strategy but should not become the entire strategy. The explanation for this is that language courses are not a default positive environment, for example, there can be participants who avoid speaking Finnish with their classmates or do not want to be involved at all.

From Irina's experience, language learning can become overwhelming when it shifts from hobby to a necessity, for example, when one moves to a new country and learns a language already living there. It is not possible to put the language on a pause being surrounded by it everywhere. That is why it is crucial for one's well-being to learn Finnish when one has the time and is in the mood, not pushing oneself too hard. Irina wishes she could have been kinder to herself when she was learning Finnish and would have been able to appreciate how much she had already done.

For those who learn Finnish together with their Finnish-speaking partner, it is important to acknowledge that both sides put an effort in the learning and remember that as long as both keep going, it is already great. Irina remembers that it took her about 3 years to convince her husband to speak more Finnish to her because he would usually ask her to talk in English if she could not find the right Finnish words straight away. He believed that it would be easier for her to speak English. However, she explained to him that in the long run, it would slow down her learning process and she needed to start speaking already then. Luckily, Irina's husband understood her and things shifted for the couple. Now he has gotten used to mixing languages and the couple switches between English and Finnish throughout the day, depending on circumstances and energy levels.

*Irina's tip № 3: Do not wait until your Finnish skills become perfect to start speaking the language. Remember that making mistakes is one of the most effective tools for language learning.*