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LANGUAGE RESERVE. NOW!

Follow-up on Pyykkö's Report *Multilingualism into a strength* (2017)

Summary in English

Original name in Finnish:

Kielivaranto. Nyt! Monikielisyys vahvuudeksi -selvityksen (2017) seuranta

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1 Introduction

The diverse language skills of all people living in Finland constitute the national language reserve. This national language reserve as a whole includes all the languages used in Finland – the competence and teaching of these languages as well as related planning (Pyykkö 2017a). Concern has been expressed for years, if not for decades, about the Finnish language reserve becoming narrower (Pöyhönen & Luukka 2007). In formal education, English and Swedish are primarily studied and other languages chosen much more seldom. Students' language choices have become more one-sided at all the educational levels. Language education is in many ways unequal (Kyckling, Vaarala, Ennser-Kananen, Saarinen & Suur-Askola 2019a, see the English abstract 2019b), and language choices depend on such factors as socioeconomic background, place of residence and gender (Kangasvieri, Miettinen, Kukkohovi & Härmälä 2011). In addition, the learning differences between pupils have grown in language studies; for instance, immigrant pupils achieve clearly lower results in learning outcome assessments than the native-born population (Harju-Luukkainen, Nissinen, Sulkunen, Suni & Vettenranta 2014).

The increasing inequality of education has also been observed in political decision-making. The programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government (Finnish Government / Valtioneuvosto 2019) includes the key goals of raising the level of education and competence, promoting equality in education, reducing learning differences, promoting the wellbeing of children and adolescents, and reinforcing Finland's internationality. Language, language proficiency and language education are closely connected to all these goals. The aim is to ensure the long-term development of education with an Education Policy Report, the draft of which was sent to a consultation round in December 2020 (see Ministry of Education and Culture MEC / OKM 2020). Quite a long time has actually passed from the previous Education Policy Report, which was issued in 2006.

The language reserve has been mapped extensively and various actions have been taken to improve it. Professor Riitta Pyykkö's (2017a, 2017b) *Multilingualism into a strength* report can be regarded as one of the most significant recent accounts of the issue. The report was assigned by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and highlighted a wide variety of procedural recommendations, ranging from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to higher education (HE) and the language situation in society. Now, a few years later, the Finnish Network for Language Education Policies (Kieliverkosto) wanted to examine which of the recommendations have been advanced and how language education has been developed since the report was published. The primary aim of this LANGUAGE RESERVE. NOW! report is to provide a comprehensive situation analysis of Finnish language education and related policy in 2020.

2 Data and methods

This LANGUAGE RESERVE. NOW! follow-up report focuses on the procedural recommendations of the *Multilingualism into a strength* report (Pyykkö 2017a) and their potential promotion over the past three years. We have analysed 29 of the original 37 recommendations. The original procedural recommendations are available in an English summary *(Multilingualism as a strength. Procedural recommendations for developing Finland's national language reserve*)

on the MEC website (see Pyykkö 2017b). The report examines the development of language education and training from ECEC and pre-primary education to higher education, teacher training and teachers' continuing education.

Due to limited time and resources, in this report we have not been able to focus on all the issues addressed by Professor Pyykkö in her report (Pyykkö 2017a). We thus limited our report to concern only Finnish-medium education. A comprehensive account of Swedish-medium education is the theme of another report from 2020 (see OKM 2019), which is why it is not addressed in this report. Furthermore, our report focuses on clarifying the procedural recommendations concerning state administration and language education policy as well as language education in ECEC and the various levels of (general) education. Language training in working life, at the vocational upper secondary level and in liberal adult education received less attention in our inquiry.

In creating this report, we have utilised data from various surveys and focus group interviews as well as recent Finnish research literature.

The following is a list of the surveys we conducted and the number of respondents in each survey:

- language teachers (322)
- ECEC personnel (96)
- principals/rectors (15)
- municipal educational administration (32)
- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) (1)
- Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) (0)
- Matriculation Examination Board (MEB) (0)
- universities and universities of applied sciences:
    - units responsible for language and communication studies ("language centres") (39)
    - units responsible for continuing education (3)
- universities:
    - ECEC teacher training (2)
    - subject teacher training (2)
    - departments of language and communication studies (3)

Brief descriptions of the respondents to each survey:

MEC – no respondents **EDUFI** – the questionnaire for EDUFI's experts provided one answer

The Matriculation Examination Board (MEB) is bound by a statute according to which information on the matriculation examination is provided by the Office of the Matriculation Examination Board. Therefore, we received no answers from MEB, but they gave us three documents that we could utilise for this report: a matriculation examination development and action plan for 2019–2022 drawn up by MEB and MEC (YTL 2019), a bulletin related to a

technical field test of the oral test implemented at the turn of 2017 and 2018 (YTL 2017), and a brief situation report regarding the prerequisites for measuring oral language skills in the matriculation examination (YTL 2020).

For the municipal survey, we decided to limit the number of respondents due to the available resources. We selected the municipalities and towns mentioned in the report by Pyykkö (2017a) for our survey and carried out a random selection among other municipalities. The random selection was conducted so that both small and large municipalities were included. Surveys were sent to about a third of Finland's municipalities, that is, to 109 municipalities. To the survey for municipal educational administration, we received answers from 29% of the municipalities where the survey was sent (i.e. 32/109 answers). The answers came relatively evenly from various parts of Finland, though no answers were received from Ostrobothnia, North Karelia, North Savo, and Päijät-Häme. Most answers came from Uusimaa.

Principals/rectors submitted 15 answers, which came from Kanta-Häme, Central Finland, Kymenlaakso, North Ostrobothnia, Satakunta, and Southwest Finland. No answers were submitted from the rest of the Finnish regions. Most of the respondents (9) were from Kanta-Häme, and the rest were distributed evenly among the regions.

Language teachers submitted 322 answers to the survey, evenly from various parts of mainland Finland. This survey was targeted at language teachers working in comprehensive schools and at the upper secondary level. The teachers were asked to specify the educational level (primary school, lower secondary school, general upper secondary school, vocational upper secondary level) where they work. Many language teachers work at several educational levels, for example, in primary and lower secondary schools, in lower secondary and general upper secondary schools, or in general upper secondary and vocational upper secondary schools. Most of the respondents (about 82%, N = 265) worked in medium-sized or large schools with 200 to 500 or more pupils.

From ECEC personnel (people working in ECEC and pre-primary education) we received 96 answers. The answers were submitted from nearly all Finnish regions, and 66% (N = 63) of the respondents came from municipalities or cities with over 50,000 inhabitants. About half of the respondents worked in ECEC and the other half in pre-primary education.

Higher education institutions (HEIs), that is, **universities** and **universities of applied sciences,** were sent various surveys. A survey was sent to the language centres or corresponding units of HEIs responsible for communication and language studies included in the degrees. This survey yielded 39 answers (33 from universities of applied sciences and 6 from universities). Moreover, the HEIs were sent a survey regarding the continuing professional education they provide, which yielded 3 answers.

Several surveys were additionally sent to **universities only**. The survey for the departments of language and communication studies produced 3 answers. From units responsible for subject teacher training and those responsible for ECEC teacher training we received 2 answers.

The surveys for language teachers and ECEC personnel were sent openly to the entire field and shared via mailing lists and teachers' Facebook groups. Some of the surveys were also sent to the field through the Chairs of teachers' associations (the survey for principals/rectors and language

teachers). The rest of the surveys were emailed to chosen expert respondents. Some challenges emerged in implementing the surveys. Directing specific surveys at suitable experts proved to be difficult. For example, language teaching at the universities of applied sciences is decentralised in different units, so it was impossible to find one respondent that would be familiar with all the issues we were asking about. In some of the surveys, the number of respondents remained so low that we could not make exhaustive conclusions based on the answers. This could partly result from the current coronavirus situation.

The survey questionnaire data were supplemented by five focus group interviews. The interviewees are called "experts" in this report. The interviewees comprised employees of educational administration, a teacher educator, an expert in evaluation, and a leader responsible for education in a municipality. The focus group interviews were carried out via Zoom or Microsoft Teams and saved. Each interview lasted for about 45 to 60 minutes.

The inquiry included a systematic research literature review and a statistical review. They were used to explore themes related to language education that currently are and have been topical in Finland in recent years (2017–2020).

The questionnaire and interview data were analysed using qualitative methods, such as content analysis and thematic analysis. Research literature and statistics were utilised to support the analysis and fill the gaps left by the questionnaire and interview data.

A research notification and privacy notice were prepared for the study according to the guidelines of the University of Jyväskylä. The research notification and privacy notice were submitted to the respondents and interviewees before their participation in the study, and they had a chance to ask the research team for further information. Participation was voluntary for the participants, and they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. As a whole, the collected data have been utilised in this report so that individual respondents cannot be identified. The collected questionnaire and interview data will be destroyed after publishing this report, by the end of 2021.

3 Perspectives on developing language education from ECEC to HE

Based on the survey, we can say that a lot is done for language education at various different levels: in state administration, municipalities, and in the classroom. With their example and attitudes, each individual and community can also have an impact on the language reserve – on attitudes towards multilingualism in society and on the future of Finland's language reserve. The report *Multilingualism into a strength* (Pyykkö 2017a) states the following:

> Traditionally, different languages – especially one's mother tongue and other languages – have been kept apart from each other in both teaching and public discussion. However, as the world is becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural, we are living in a different reality. We use languages side by side and overlapping with each other, which also offers

> great opportunities to utilise them to support the learning of further languages, as a channel to new languages. (Pyykkö 2017a, 13)

Indeed, everyday multilingualism often implies *translanguaging*: languages are not used separately but they overlap and are mixed. In this report, languages are approached in a traditional way, addressing each language and educational level separately – "foreign" languages, heritage languages and Finnish as a second language have been kept apart. We have maintained this division because it is based on the way the teaching of different languages is still perceived in Finnish language education on an everyday level. Furthermore, there are different challenges in the teaching of different languages as regards, for example, accessibility (see Kyckling et al. 2019a, 2019b). On the other hand, the objective of the report by Pyykkö (2017a) and its recommendations (see Pyykkö 2017b) is for Finland's language reserve to be regarded as complete and diverse in the future as well. Therefore, multilingualism and language awareness are also the key ideas and the common thread in this report.

The concept of language awareness has served in this study as a lens through which we have examined the most recent changes in Finnish language education and language education policy. In line with the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (POPS 2014, 28), we define language awareness as knowledge related to languages as well as understanding and willingness to interact responsibly. This applies to the national languages and cultural heritage, language minorities and the linguistic, cultural and ideological diversity introduced by immigrants. A language-aware approach in education and teaching benefits all, not only multilingual pupils. Moreover, we can say that in a multilingual society, language awareness concerns everyone – it promotes everyone's possibilities to utilise different linguistic resources. With a language-aware mind-set, we make all languages visible and equal in our society. This is an important goal also from the viewpoint of the national language reserve.

Implementing language awareness on all educational levels means a lot of work also in the years to come. Spurred by the national core curricula, the work has already started in basic education and general upper secondary education, but language-aware thinking still needs to be given more weight in ECEC, at the vocational upper secondary level, and in higher education. At each educational level, teachers additionally need support to better identify, recognise and utilise multilingualism, so that all the languages spoken in schools can be seen as targets and tools of learning. Honko and Skinnari (2020) highlight the importance of sharing a common understanding and effective solutions in school communities and training related to language awareness, because common goals and activities can be achieved only through a shared understanding. Both research and education are thus needed.

According to our survey, support for children's multilingualism and language development, as well as language-aware activities, remain scattered in ECEC and pre-primary education. In our multilingual society, it is increasingly important to introduce a language perspective in ECEC and pre-primary education. At this level, the personnel need clear support structures so that the promotion of language perspectives would not remain occasional or become the responsibility of

a few individual staff members only. The personnel can be supported by, for instance, increasing the number of peripatetic language and culture teachers as well as special needs teachers in ECEC, and by offering continuing education in languages for ECEC and pre-primary education personnel. In addition, language awareness should be integrated better into studies in the field of education and teaching at HEIs (Honko & Mustonen 2020).

At the beginning of 2020, a change came into effect making learning in the first foreign language or the second national language (A1 language) begin earlier than it used to. Since then, their instruction has started in the spring of year one of comprehensive school at the latest. This earlier start for the A1 language learning has been one of the most extensive national-level language education reforms in Finland after the Pyykkö report (2017a) was published. Based on our data, we still cannot say that the recommendations concerning early language learning would have been implemented. Pyykkö recommended that a majority of pupils would choose an A1 language other than English, but this has not been realised in most municipalities – English is nearly always started first, and it is possible to choose something else only as an A2 language (see e.g. Turun kaupunki: Kielten opiskelu). We can thus say that early A1 language learning was a welcome decision that increased educational equality at the national level but, in practice, it did not change the dynamic between languages – now English only starts a little earlier.

Overall, it is interesting to analyse English from the perspective of Finland's language reserve because its role in Finnish language education policy has for long been very special. It is actually no longer regarded as a foreign language but as a citizenship skill. English caused contradictory feelings among the language educators who responded to our survey. It is increasingly important to know English in our society, and we should invest in teaching it, but many found that children learn English by themselves through various media, which is why some other language could be recommended as the A1 language. This may lead to the distorted idea that there is no need to study English in the same way as other languages, or that you need not make an effort to learn it. Some of the English teachers were actually concerned about the level of pupils' English skills. The language teachers who answered the survey were also worried about the common attitude that "English is enough".

Our survey shows that particularly language teachers had concerns about the future of language learning. It has been a dominant trend for a long time that only few optional languages are learned from primary school to the upper secondary level. For example, learning B2 languages has become less popular over the past years, which has resulted in smaller group sizes or no groups at all. In addition, the choice of languages has become narrower. Many reasons were specified for the reduced role of B2 languages, such as decreased optionality in the distribution of lesson hours at comprehensive school, the requirement of large group sizes, and a decrease in the popularity of languages. Some language teachers find that the financial situation of municipalities and schools has worsened the situation: for example, the group sizes of optional languages have grown, or language teaching has been developed only for compulsory English. Municipalities could be supported, or maybe even obliged nationally, to diversify their provision of optional languages

(see also Kyckling et al. 2019a, 62–63), and the group size requirements, among others, should additionally be reviewed.

Current trends in both basic and upper secondary language education include digital learning materials and applications, action-based language teaching, and international cooperation. In their answers, the language teachers describe the wide variety of methods they have for motivating students to choose and learn languages. The methods can be divided into two categories: occasional advertising when language choices are at hand, and longer-term practices built into the school culture, so that languages are continuously a visible part of schoolwork. However, the advertising of language choices and motivation for language learning often depend on the enthusiasm and energy of individual teachers. In other words, the activity is highly personified with no structures or strategy to support language learning. The language teachers also highlighted that no time or financial resources are available for organising language choice events. Teachers find the required group sizes for optional languages too large, so that groups cannot necessarily be formed. It is also challenging to place optional languages into the timetables. When optional subjects are chosen, in some schools languages compete with subjects where pupils receive no homework (e.g. PE, home economics, arts), which some respondents mentioned as a factor that reduces the choice of languages. The teachers of optional languages, especially at the lower secondary level, feel they should make language learning fun, inspiring and experiential to maintain pupils' motivation. However, learning a new language calls for time and practice, as does any other skill (Mäntylä, Toomar & Pollari 2020).

One solution that can diversify language teaching is the development of regional cooperation and distance teaching, which enables the forming of groups from different areas. This should be considered for teaching in both "foreign" languages and immigrants' heritage languages. It remains to be seen how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the provision of distance teaching. Because the pandemic forced teachers to move classes online in 2020, maybe the threshold to teach languages online and in different digital learning environments will be lower in the future. In developing regional cooperation and e-learning, we could probably learn from other education providers. National networks supporting language teaching can be utilised for this purpose in order to share good practices. According to the interviewed municipal education expert, however, digitalisation and the e-learning solutions it enables must be primarily considered from a pedagogical viewpoint, not from the viewpoint of cost reduction.

In the same way as for other languages, a lot of national-level improvement is needed in the implementation of teaching in Swedish, Finland's second national language. The situation with B1 Swedish has been worsening for a long time. The extent of the syllabus has been reduced to about half of what it was in the 1970s. In addition, the obligatory status of the second national language in the matriculation examination was abolished in 2004 (OKM 2012b, 56). Changing the distribution of lesson hours in 2012 so that the B1 language starts earlier, in year six, is thus only the latest renewal aiming to strengthen living bilingualism (see OKM 2012a) and maybe also to improve attitudes towards learning Swedish. Language teachers still do not find the consequences of the decision satisfactory in today's language teaching. They are worried about the situation of

Swedish. Since 2016, B1 Swedish has started a year earlier, in year six of comprehensive school, but no hours were added to the syllabus in 2012 (see OKM 2012a), unlike for the A1 language. This treats pupils unequally: municipalities make different decisions on how the even previously few Swedish lessons are divided between the four years. According to the language teachers, making B1 Swedish start earlier has resulted in an unequal situation from the perspective of pupils: some municipalities offer additional hours in Swedish at the lower secondary level, while some schools have even a whole year's break in the learning of Swedish. In order to ensure the continuing sufficiency of Swedish speakers in Finland, it would be important to invest in B1 Swedish teaching by thoroughly investigating the consequences of language policy decisions as well as the situation and solutions in municipalities. Moreover, we need information on the language proficiency levels of pupils leaving comprehensive school. Do they know enough Swedish to succeed at the upper secondary level, not to mention higher education and working life? What can we do for the situation at the national level?

As regards the general upper secondary school, language teachers are worried about the situation of optional languages and the fact that language learning has been in decline for a long time. The most recent renewal that further reduces language learning is the certificate-based admission of higher education institutions (HEI). The points tables emphasise the advanced syllabus of mathematics as well as subjects in the field of humanities and natural sciences that include numerous courses, while languages give fewer points when students apply for admission to HEIs (see OKM: Usein kysyttyjä kysymyksiä...). This state of affairs has for long forced general upper secondary schools to merge teaching and courses in the syllabi of languages, or to compress language teaching into half courses because of too few students. Group sizes have been increased and cooperation has begun between general upper secondary schools in the region or with the online upper secondary school (*nettilukio*) in order to form at least one group in an optional language. It can still be challenging to form groups, and teachers try to motivate even the small number of students to continue on the courses.

The decrease in language teaching has a direct impact on the employment situation and wages of language teachers. According to the survey answers of language teachers, many of those teaching languages in general upper secondary schools have had to give up teaching other, "smaller" languages and have started to teach English to have enough work. Because languages are studied less, the situation is reflected in the number of applicants for language studies at universities. In the future, it can also reflect on the availability of language teachers. The possibilities of languages to survive in general upper secondary education should be improved at least by adapting certificate-based HE admission to adequately favour language studies. It is essential to ensure the future sufficiency of those who speak different languages in Finland – as well as of those who study to become language teachers. In the future, if language studies interest only adults and increasingly start only in HE or in liberal adult education, how can we guarantee that our future teachers manage to develop sufficiently profound language skills?

In order to renew general upper secondary education, a new national core curriculum has been created for it (National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools / LOPS 2019),

which comes into force in autumn 2021. This core curriculum introduces new action models that may considerably shape language teaching. They include crossing the boundaries of individual subjects, the integration of languages with transversal competence themes, and a broader utilisation of language profiles to demonstrate language skills. It is challenging to combine languages with subjects in sciences and humanities, and it requires a lot of planning and time from teachers.

The language profile is a document where students record all the languages they speak. It is expected to demonstrate all of a student's language skills, including those learned outside of educational institutions. For the student, the language profile concretely visualises the reason for studying languages, and it will later demonstrate the person's language skills upon applying for further studies or for work. It would be possible to create a national development project around the language profile, which would gradually make the language profile a certified tool for demonstrating language skills as a nationally accepted practice.

The report by Pyykkö (Pyykkö 2017a, 42; Pyykkö 2017b) recommends that the matriculation examination should include an oral test as part of exams in foreign languages and the second national language, and that advanced technology should be utilised in the test. The lack of an oral test has long been justified based on the heavy workload and costs of assessment, and it would actually seem to create the need to hire dozens, if not hundreds, of readers (Huhta & Hildén 2016). However, oral language skills are regarded as highly important throughout the answers to our survey and interviews. It is to some extent contradictory that even if the new core curriculum strongly highlights oral language skills, they cannot be demonstrated in the matriculation examination and are not considered in the grade of the language tests. According to the Matriculation Examination Board (2019), this new area of assessment will still need resources for assessment carried out by readers, the drafting of assignments, the development of practical implementation, and communication about the renewal. It is possible that the effects of the language profile model together with research data on oral language skills assessment will finally result in some sort of a compromise about the assessment of oral skills in the matriculation examination. The experts of assessment and educational administration as well as teachers and students seem to be aiming in the same direction as regards the development of this issue – only the resources are missing.

At the vocational upper secondary level, the challenges of language education development differ from those in general education. Language teachers in vocational education regularly reported in the survey that students have hardly any choice in languages: in the common vocational modules, there is room for compulsory studies in English, Swedish and mother tongue or Finnish as a second language, and even these hours have been reduced to a minimum, citing the financial situation. The constantly decreasing contact teaching resources also complicate work. For example, only 15 hours of Swedish may be taught on a face-to-face course. According to the teachers, the number of immigrant students has grown at the vocational upper secondary level over the past years, which increases elementary language instruction and instruction in Finnish as a second language. Overall, the teachers feel that languages are not valued at this educational level: no optional languages are offered, the number of lesson hours is small even in the compulsory languages, and sufficiently

targeted continuing education is not offered for vocational education. The teachers feel that the vocational upper secondary level is ignored in subject teachers' basic as well as continuing professional education.

If the language and communication skills of students in vocational upper secondary education remain narrow, we may face the risk that it exacerbates the inequality development between general and vocational upper secondary education. It could also make it challenging for students coming via the vocational channel to succeed in higher education. As working life and society become increasingly multilingual, it would be important to ensure that vocational school graduates working in different multilingual working and business environments develop adequate language and communication skills in their studies.

Based on the survey answers, language education at the universities of applied sciences (UAS) also seemed rather limited, even though there were exceptions as well. When the UAS respondents had a chance to explain their opinions in their own words, it gave quite a poor impression of language teaching at their institutions. The choice of languages was regarded as narrow, poor in some cases. The appreciation of languages also seems to have decreased further, and English is believed to be enough. In teaching compulsory languages, the groups are by far too large for effective learning, comprising even 80 students. The teachers of languages and communication have no common administration, and some UAS do not even have common meetings for language teachers. This means that no development and education projects are organised.

There will thus be a need to critically analyse language and communication studies at the vocational upper secondary level and the higher vocational level (i.e. UAS): does vocational education offer a sufficient readiness for field-specific language skills? Do vocational subject teachers have the competences needed to integrate content and language learning into a language-aware whole? Are they offered enough training possibilities to support the development of language-aware teaching and guidance? Will we have multilingual professionals in the various fields also in the years to come, and where will these language skills be developed?

Making the various heritage languages visible makes Finland's language reserve appear completely different from the situation where we only talk about national languages and official languages. The importance of one's heritage language for learning is already partly recognised. For example, the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018 (VASU 2018) highlights the significance of the heritage language for the learning of other languages. Even though the importance is recognised, families are given the main responsibility for the development of the heritage language. According to the statistics of the National Agency for Education (2019), instruction in heritage languages has been provided in the autumn term in 57 languages by 89 education providers. Participants in this instruction in all the languages totalled 21,215, of whom 210 studied at the general upper secondary level. In the 2019 autumn term, Finland's most commonly studied heritage language was Russian (5,745 learners), the second most common Arabic (3,095 learners), and the third Somali (2,261 learners) (OPH: Omana äidinkielenä opetetut....). The southern parts of Finland had the most heritage language learners and the largest

selection of languages, and the northern parts of the country the least of them (Tainio & Kallioniemi 2019). Municipalities may, if they so wish, organise teaching in a heritage language. They receive a grant for it from the National Agency for Education if there are at least four learners (OPH: Valtionavustus vieraskielisten...).

The situation of instruction in heritage languages and the position of heritage language teachers clearly need improvement in order to make education more accessible and equal. The organisation of qualification training for heritage language teachers must be ensured at the national level, and the qualification of teachers who have completed their pedagogical training outside of Finland must be ensured quickly and flexibly (Tainio & Kallioniemi 2019, 9). Municipalities have estimated that the number of pupils studying Finnish as a second language and heritage languages will grow in the future (Tainio & Kallioniemi, 2019). There is demand particularly for teachers of Arabic, Chinese, Albanian, Kurdish, Thai and Somali (Tainio & Kallioniemi, 2019).

As a whole, the survey answers of the language teachers demonstrate that the development of language teaching and motivation of language learning are often the responsibility of individual teachers. It is good that teachers as the best experts of teaching have the freedom and responsibility to develop their own teaching, but the answers also reveal that development work is often heavy and remains on the shoulders of just one teacher. Teachers are constantly busy with their work, which leaves no time or energy for development work. Some of the teachers wished to have the opportunity to work in peace instead of continuously engaging in development work. Project-based development may be experienced as extra work, and development is then not seen as part of the continuous development of one's own work. If development is often based on project funding, it can be regarded as problematic for longer-term development and the achievement of permanent results.

Based on the results described above, it is clear that extensive structural changes will be needed at the national level. The activities of language teachers alone are not enough to influence language choices or the future of language learning, or to promote a diverse language reserve. Teachers additionally need attitudinal, financial and structural support from school management and the educational administration of municipalities and the state in order to organise language teaching with sufficient resources and without a constant concern about the lesson hours of languages, their own employment situation, and the future of language teaching as a whole. Many of the survey respondents felt that languages and language teaching are not valued enough and that the municipality's attitudes towards languages are reflected on the use of resources. Language teachers are worried about the attitude that "English is enough, and one can get along with English". Finland seems to be missing an overall idea of language teaching development and language education policy that would cover languages, the language reserve and language education starting from ECEC through the school path to working life. The national language reserve should indeed be viewed as a whole also from the perspective of future language competences. What are the language skills and the national language reserve that we need in Finland and in the global world?

In the *Multilingualism into a strength* report (Pyykkö 2017a), various improvements were recommended for language teaching in HEIs. For example, attention was paid to the provision of courses in Finnish/Swedish as a second language for learners who already have advanced language skills, and to increasing the teaching of Asian languages (especially Chinese, Japanese and Korean) in higher education. Developing language teaching and learning is slow, but there has already been some progress. The SIMHE projects implemented at various HEIs clearly support the language learning of immigrant students and simultaneously increase the equality and accessibility of higher education. Many of the projects are still going on, but they are already reaching for the funding model of the Education Policy Report for 2021–2040 (see OKM 2020).

As regards the teaching of Asian languages, Pyykkö's report (2017a) promoted the launching of the KiVAKO project at several HEIs. This project has brought together language teachers from various HEIs to plan independently completed online courses for the less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean. KiVAKO is a cooperation project between 25 HEIs, aiming to develop online learning paths in foreign languages from level A1 to level C1 for HEIs. The project is establishing a nationwide network that develops pedagogy and enhances the language reserve. It also creates a provision of online studies in less commonly studied foreign languages for use throughout Finland. In addition, degree studies are possible in Chinese, Japanese and Korean at the University of Helsinki. Instruction in Chinese as a minor language has also begun at the University of Turku in autumn 2020, and the first major subject students can start their studies in autumn 2021. An evident bottleneck and motivational challenge for a more goal-oriented and profound learning of the Asian languages is yet the fact that even though one can study Chinese and Japanese at the general upper secondary school, they are not included in the matriculation examination, and studying in higher education starts from the basics again.

Continuing education and continuous/lifelong learning are topical themes frequently addressed in public discussions. HEIs have been criticised because not all of them have a specific unit to coordinate continuing education. This makes their educational provision seem fragmented. The training programmes are also criticised for their one-off nature: there is not enough time to learn important themes properly during a single programme. The same people often seem to participate in continuing education programmes, and those in the school community who would especially need training are not so willing to participate. If the training programmes were implemented in schools and work communities, it could encourage more people to participate in them (e.g. Savolainen 2019).

Our report clearly highlights the challenges of continuing education for ECEC personnel and language teachers. Over the past few years, a lot has been done particularly for early language learning in the A1 language and for the development of language teaching at the general upper secondary level. Millions of euros have been spent on various projects, which has given teachers possibilities to prepare for the reforms. When we look at the numerous language teaching development projects launched by the Teacher Education Forum and compare them with the survey data from ECEC personnel and language teachers, we notice a mismatch problem. Continuing education seems to be offered, and principals/rectors and representatives of

municipalities find that language teachers have great opportunities for training, but both the ECEC personnel and language teachers feel otherwise. Especially language teachers find that continuing education is fragmented and regionally unequal and that they are insufficiently informed about it. Language teachers are expected to be enthusiastic and actively search for information, but also to sacrifice their personal free time and money. Nevertheless, ECEC personnel and language teachers need continuous learning and a language-aware attitude to be able to secure the language learning paths of children and adolescents. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure their opportunities for training. In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has forced continuing education to take a digital leap as well. Well-designed and interactive digital continuing education increases the accessibility of training, so the leap has been quite useful.

From the perspective of continuous learning, it is also particularly important to bring out the situation of ECEC personnel. They are often ignored in the context of continuing education related to language education and languages. This may be partly because people think that language education officially begins at primary school, even though it is clear that languages and multilingualism are present already in ECEC and pre-primary education. The sensitive periods for language acquisition, support for language development, and multilingualism concern every child in ECEC and pre-primary education. Many ECEC employees would actually expect continuing education to include such basic issues as concrete methods and materials, basic knowledge for supporting language awareness in daily work, and digital skills and guidance on the use of applications. A popular theme on the wish list was also related to supporting multilingual children in learning Finnish.

We are especially happy that so many language teachers (N = 322) and ECEC employees (N = 96) responded to the survey. The answers of these groups have many things in common. Their survey answers indicate that language education and teaching need attitudinal, structural and financial support from the state, municipalities and principals/rectors. Language awareness, motivating learners to study languages, advertising language choices, participation in continuing education, and more extensive development of activities easily depend on the enthusiasm and energy of individual teachers. Consequently, the development of language education or teaching can be occasional, even though it would be more important to create a long-term strategy and vision in the municipality regarding the direction of language education and its funding. The attitudes of municipalities and school leaders towards language education largely determine how language education is developed and supported locally – which, in turn, causes regional differences at the national level.

4. Conclusions

Language education and training are developed in various ways and on various levels: through national-level curriculum work and (language) education policy decisions, in projects and networks, in everyday teaching and education, by providing continuing education and developing teacher training. Development requires strong knowledge of the field in close cooperation with continuously accruing research data, which is why development is naturally slow and the direction

of language education cannot changed quickly. Some of the issues presented in this report also seem to be eternal questions for which no satisfactory solutions are found.

One continuing challenge is how to develop the field of language education mainly based on project funding. The funding of projects has been active over the past years, which as such is good. However, monitoring must be improved to see how far the impact of projects ranges and whether the development of language education and training depends on projects alone. Furthermore, the distribution of project funding equally throughout Finland is important. Besides project funding, long-term horizontal and nationwide development work in, for example, different networks, is important, so that good practices do not remain exclusively local.

The work on language issues continues, for example, based on the draft of an Education Policy Report prepared by the Government. The draft was sent to a consultation round in December 2020, when the Finnish version of this report was being completed. The Education Policy Report presents an education and research vision for the 2040s as well as means for pursuing the vision. The report highlights the situation, goals and actions related to Swedish-medium education in a section of its own. However, its aim is also to promote immigrants' learning and learning paths from ECEC to higher education. According to the draft, a development programme for instruction in Finnish/Swedish as a second language (F2/S2) will be launched for 2021–2023. Based on the programme, a high-quality study path for F2/S2 will be established on all educational levels. The language awareness and cultural awareness of teaching staff will be enhanced (Luonnos valtioneuvoston koulutuspoliittiseksi selonteoksi). A lot of attention is thus paid to Swedish and Finnish in the draft, while "foreign" languages receive less attention. This is an issue that language teachers' associations, other actors in the field of languages, and trade and industry should address.

Development work in the field of language education is continuously active. This report also has its limitations: there are many subareas of language education and related policy that this report naturally could not cover. For example, teaching the national languages Finnish and Swedish as mother tongues, the situation of Swedish-medium education, bilingual activities and teaching, language immersion, and the teaching of minority languages are not addressed in this report. Nevertheless, a lot has happened also in these areas of education in recent years. There will be a separate report on the situation of Swedish-medium education (see OKM 2019). A couple of years ago, two reports were published on the situation of bilingual activities and teaching as well as language immersion (Peltoniemi, Skinnari, Mård-Miettinen & Sjöberg 2018; Sjöberg, Mård-Miettinen, Peltoniemi & Skinnari 2018). More research will be needed on the situation of the Saami languages, the Finnish and Finland-Swedish Sign Languages, and the Romany language (see Vuolasranta & Schwartz 2020) to highlight the teaching of these minority languages more clearly as part of the development of our national language reserve.

Besides the minority languages, the teaching and learning of the national languages sometimes seem to be left aside when discussing the language reserve. Competence and teaching in Finnish and Swedish as mother tongues may be regarded as guaranteed and accessible for all because these subjects have been prescribed as compulsory (Kyckling et al. 2019a, 23). The Finnish Education

Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) has recently published an evaluation of the learning outcomes of pupils leaving comprehensive school (see Kauppinen & Marjanen 2020; Hellgren & Marjanen 2020). In recent years, it has been observed in Finland that children and adolescents' literacy and interest in reading have weakened and become more unequal (see e.g. Lukukeskus 2020). However, a lot has already been done to improve this situation. The efforts promoting literacy carried out by the National Literacy Forum, the Literacy Movement, the Finnish Reading Center, as well as by various projects, is priceless for children and adolescents and their ability to communicate, influence, feel enthusiastic, and explore the world critically in the future also in their mother tongue.

This may be partly a question of viewing the subject of mother tongue and literature as if it were clearly distinct from the instruction of a second language, a second national language and foreign languages, even though the teachers of these subjects could certainly learn a lot from each other. We hope to soon see more cooperation initiatives that integrate the competences of teachers of Finnish/Swedish as a mother tongue and as a second language, the second national language, foreign languages, and heritage languages. This would abolish some of the boundaries and hierarchies between different languages (see also Kyckling et al. 2019a, 23, 64–65; Kyckling et al. 2019b).

The knowledge of mother tongue is a fundamental part of the national language reserve. However, concerned comments have become more and more common regarding the position of our national languages, particularly in relation to the global lingua franca, English. For example, the Finnish Language Board of the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotus) published a statement in 2018, in which it highlighted the narrowing scope of the national languages and required that a national language policy programme should be created (Kotus 2018). The Ministry of Justice is indeed currently preparing a revised Strategy for the National Languages of Finland, which is included in the programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government (Finnish Government / Valtioneuvosto 2019). Its aim is to ensure everyone's right to receive services in the national languages and to improve the language climate. This strategy responds to the concern of Kotus regarding the changing role of the national languages in an increasingly multilingual society (Ministry of Justice: Strategy for the National Languages of Finland / OM: Kansalliskielistrategia). At the same time, the Ministry of Justice is clarifying the marking of multiple languages in the population information system (see Tammenmaa 2020). The ministry will process the statements received on the issue in 2021, and a change in the way mother tongues are specified is possible so that it would correspond to the actual role of different languages in an individual's language repertoire.

This report provides a relatively comprehensive overall picture of the present state of Finnish language education. Nevertheless, the actions recommended in the *Multilingualism into a strength* report (Pyykkö 2017a, 2017b) are so multifaceted and extensive, as well as call for many years of development work at various levels, that it is impossible to exhaustively map in just one report which of them have been implemented and how. Some of the recommendations have clearly been advanced, some practically not at all, and some may have been advanced but the work remains

invisible. It is also possible that the results of the work are not yet visible three years after the report. Education policy decisions are needed to implement some of the recommendations, while some of them involve grassroots work on the daily level as well as changing attitudes. It can also be that no efforts are made – or actually wanted – in order to advance some of the procedural recommendations: language policy changes and our shared understanding continuously grows based on research.

Language education does not concern language education experts alone but everyone living in Finland. Our report shows that development related to language education policy is above all qualitative work where diverse actors, processes and interaction are needed: politics, education policy steering by state administration, municipal decision-makers and officials, the work and continuing education of ECEC personnel and all teachers, as well as pupils, students, and development of teacher training. Language education policy is a multilocational circle in a process of constant change, in which all the actors influence each other (see Saarinen, Nuolijärvi, Pöyhönen & Kangasvieri 2019).

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The complete bibliography of the report can be found at:
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