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# ACCESS TO LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

## Getting in, getting it, getting out

### Summary in English

Centre for Applied Language Studies  
University of Jyväskylä

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In this report, which was commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), we examine the accessibility of language education and related equality-enhancing policies at an international level. The report maps the accessibility of language learning in basic (compulsory) education at the level of the European Union as well as in five Nordic or EU member countries that participated in our case study (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, and Slovenia). The situation in Finland is examined in relation to the other contexts. Our key objective is to promote the accessibility of language education in order to reinforce equal opportunities for learning.

Language and language skills are essential tools for social participation, interaction, knowledge construction and formation, and self-expression; in other words, a central part of humanity and human interaction. Language skills hence refer to the various resources we use for our actions, not (merely) to the knowledge of different languages. On the other hand, research also shows that individual languages and the ways they are learned have political, societal and individual significance. From this perspective, equal access to language skills is a key enabler of equality and participation for both the individual and society.

The role of languages in society becomes visible when we examine the provision and accessibility of language studies in general education: to whom is language education offered, what kind of training and which languages are offered, and who really has access to this education? Despite Finland's formal educational equality, research has demonstrated a decline related to equity in our language education. An unequal development can be seen in pupils' language choices and the languages offered, which vary according to region as well as pupils' gender and their parents' educational background and socio-economic status (see e.g. Kangasvieri, Miettinen, Kukkohovi & Härmälä 2011; Pyykkö 2017). This is bound to have broader consequences for social equality.

Thus, not everyone has equal access to language education despite the goals of the official language policy. There are major differences between countries regarding, for example, immigrants' access to language studies, as language education may still be based on the idea of the language of instruction being the official language of the nation state. So-called freedom of choice policy also influences the accessibility of language education: choices are always affected by different structural (socio-economic and cultural) factors in addition to individual determinants. In this report, we focus on the teaching of so-called foreign languages, second languages, and heritage languages (other than the school's language of instruction). We are aware that even this approach leaves many important perspectives unaddressed. In particular, minority languages and the language education of special needs pupils are not handled in this report. A separate MEC-funded survey is being conducted on the support for learning in language education.

The policy actions and practices promoting language education vary between the Nordic and EU member countries because their educational systems and language policy guidelines vary. The differences are related to the organisation and offerings of education, as well as to who is entitled to education and whether language teaching is even part of general education. However, educational and language policies are only one component of a complex whole. In addition to national multisectoral and multilevel steering, different international organisations can be involved in guiding language education policies (see e.g. Pöyhönen, Nuolijärvi, Saarinen & Kangasvieri 2019). The objectives and guidelines set by the EU on language education streamline, to some extent, practices in the member

countries, but they are not binding for the countries.

## 2 DATA AND METHODS

In our international survey, we compared policy actions and practices that concern the accessibility and offerings of language education and enhance equity and equality. The survey is a meta-analysis principally based on research literature and existing statistics, which we supplemented by analysing policy documents and expert interviews. The focus is on second, foreign and heritage language teaching.

Our key question was how the accessibility of language education has been supported in the Nordic countries and in Europe. After the first literature search, accessibility was specified through the following subquestions (see also section 3 in this report):

- What measures are used to support pupils' access to language education?
- How is learning enabled in language education?
- What methods could be used to increase the significance or value of language education for pupils?

### 2.1 THE DATA USED FOR THE REPORT

This report is based on the key policy documents affecting language education in the Nordic countries and the EU member states, as well as on statistics and research on the topic, taking into account each country's structures and ways of organising education. We also mapped recommendations, reports, surveys and other materials on equity and equality in language education produced by relevant international organisations.

The first part of our survey consisted of a systematic review of research literature, statistics and policies. They were used to examine the general recommendations for the accessibility, provision and equity perspectives of language education in the Nordics and the EU, including related international policies. We mainly used research on European language education published after 2010. This time limit was dictated by necessity and by the topic: our research questions focused on European contexts, and the time available to us restricted the research review.

Traditionally, research on the accessibility of and access to language education focuses on themes of immigrant language learning and bilingual teaching, the impact of educational policy actions, and in recent years on starting children's language education earlier. Overall, the accessibility of language education has not been studied much, and there would be demand for more extensive research on the topic, utilising statistical as well as different quantitative and qualitative data. Accessibility has often been studied from the perspective of optional or free-choice languages. Therefore, the role of research on immigrants and bilingual teaching is clearly emphasised in our literature review. On the other hand, the research concerning immigrants (or any other group) often highlights themes that actually concern other groups as well (see also Salö, Ganuza, Hedman & Karrebæk 2018). We want to emphasise that the access to education does not make it accessible for everyone. Therefore, this report also considers accessibility as enabling learning and as the value of the education for the learner after the education.

In addition to European research literature, the meta-analysis is based on existing

country-specific and international statistical data, as well as on the language education and policy documents of the case study countries, the Council of Europe, and the EU.

## 22 CASE STUDY COUNTRIES AND THEIR SELECTION

The meta-analysis at the beginning of the survey concerns the Nordic countries and EU member countries in general. Based on this meta-analysis, we were able to select five case study countries for a closer examination. The second part of the survey thus comprises a case study of five Nordic or EU member countries. Based on the overview of research and statistics, we selected countries that have recently carried out reforms related to the accessibility of language education, or which are significant for Finland from the perspective of organising language education.

The selection criteria for the case study countries were

- the regulation of languages of education (monolingualism/bilingualism/multilingualism/plurilingualism)
- the organisation of education (a differentiated/uniform system)
- the funding of education (public/private)
- the steering of educational policy (centralised/local)
- language education offered during general education (languages in curricula or other corresponding documents; the ways of organising language teaching)

Based on these criteria, the following countries were selected for a closer analysis:

- Sweden
- Norway
- Denmark
- Austria
- Slovenia

We originally intended to include the Netherlands as well, but it was excluded due to the limited data available.

The aim was to select the countries in a way that would geographically cover the European Union and Scandinavia. Furthermore, the selection was affected by the availability of (language education) policy documents in the languages understood by the research group members. For example, Slovenia was selected to represent Southern Europe because it seemed to provide more information in English than other countries in the region.

Among the Scandinavian countries, we chose Sweden, Norway and Denmark because their education systems and educational policy solutions resemble those of Finland. Austria was included in the study because it has carried out language education reforms relevant to our topic over the past few years. Only a few years ago, Slovenia also implemented a significant reform of foreign language teaching in basic education. Furthermore, according to a ministry website, Slovenia is carrying out large development projects on the teaching of Slovene as a second language and immigrants' heritage languages. It turned out that most of the electronic material was unfortunately in Slovene and no detailed information on the projects was available. We did not manage to engage any interviewees from Slovenia either. Appendix 1 provides more information on the participant countries.

By mapping the case study countries, we were able to create a more precise picture of the policy actions and practices promoting the accessibility and equality of

language teaching. Our country-specific material included documents on legislation, policy actions and, in particular, documentary material relevant to the steering of language education, as well as studies on the accessibility and equality of language education. Statistical data on each country's language education was also utilised.

## **23 INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS**

The situation reports of the case study countries were complemented by interviewing experts. The aim was to elaborate the picture provided by the research and statistical materials as well as to include topical information not available online. The interviewees were experts of different fields, such as foreign/second/heritage language teaching, immigrant education, and language education policy. They worked as language education researchers or officials.

The interviewees were selected from the case study countries with the snowball method by asking researchers whom they would interview. From the contacts created in this way, we selected one to three interviewees from each country so that their expertise covered different areas of language education (first languages, second languages, foreign languages, heritage languages, etc.). We contacted the interviewees by email in early spring 2019 and received interviews from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, and the European Commission. We did not manage to engage interviewees from the Netherlands and Slovenia. However, Slovenia remained among the participants because other material was available on it.

The interview material was collected in February and March 2019. Skype (Skype for Business) was used to conduct and save the interviews. We conducted nine interviews, in which there were ten participants because one of the interviews was a pair interview. The interviews were conducted in English, German and Finnish. Each interview lasted an hour, on average, and the interview material totalled slightly over ten hours. The interview framework included some common questions for all the experts and some country-specific questions only for some of them.

## **24 ANALYSIS**

We first divided the data and interviews among our group of five researchers. During the project, we had several meetings where we handled the collected data and the central themes. After various discussion rounds, we noticed that we always returned to a few key questions. This inspired us to specify our original assignment – the accessibility of language education – as follows: besides access to language education, the concept also includes as accessible learning as possible and the benefit or value of the education for the pupil. We found it necessary to “decode” the concept like this. The data thus highlighted a few themes around which we built the observations and experiences collected from the participant countries, as well as our main recommendations. These themes are:

- actions aiming to abolish hierarchies between languages
- actions supporting education providers
- actions related to teacher education and the development of teachers' work
- actions aiming to develop curricula, assessment and certificates
- proposals related to the follow-up of the renewals
- actions aiming to develop language awareness and multilingual pedagogy

After collecting the interview material, we produced a semi-rough transcription of the parts essential for our analysis, focusing on the content of the interviews, not so much on the way things are said (see Ruusuvuori 2010: 425). Due to limited time, we thus did not transcribe all of the material. However, we made precise notes of the parts that were not transcribed.

We used thematic content analysis in analysing the data. Content analysis means organising the material into a distinct whole based on content, and it is used to find meanings in the text (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 103, 106, 110). Content analysis can be carried out in different ways; in this study, the data were divided into themes, in other words, it was thematised in the way described above (see Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 95). The structure of our analysis is based on this collaboratively created thematisation.

## 25 RESEARCH ETHICS

The experts participated in the interviews voluntarily. Before the data collection, they received a privacy notice and a consent form created in compliance with the guidelines of the University of Jyväskylä (JYU), and an interview framework.

The participants were explained when and in which situations we collect the research data. We researchers have processed the data ethically and responsibly during the survey, and no other people have had access to the data. For example, we use the following codes for the interviewees: “Expert R1”, where the code after the name denotes the country (R = Sweden, N = Norway, T = Denmark, I = Austria, EU = the European Commission) and the number refers to a specific expert. However, the interviewees were asked on the consent form whether they wish to be identified in the report as experts and whether their names may be listed at the end of the report. A list of the interviewees can be found at the end of this report.

The interviewed experts were asked to provide consent for storing the data at JYU’s Centre for Applied Language Studies for potential follow-up research after this survey. The interviewees have had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any stage without stating the reason.

## 3 THE CONCEPT OF ACCESSIBILITY

In this survey, the term *accessibility* is understood more broadly than the traditional *access to education*. At an early stage of the project, we ended up developing the framework described in this section (see also section 2.4) because we noticed that access to education (e.g. to study a compulsory language in compulsory education) alone does not ensure the enabling of equal learning for diverse learners, or that the education would be equally valuable for everyone.

Accessibility in the context of education usually refers to such practices and actions that are aimed at ensuring all learners equal opportunities for access to education, irrespective of their gender, abilities, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, linguistic and cultural background, or other social factors. Fundamentally, the accessibility of education is connected to the human right of receiving education (Article 26, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948), which has been confirmed in numerous documents and agreements (European Convention on Human



Rights 1950; UNESCO 1960).

The right to language education cannot be directly led from this universal right. Everyone must yet be entitled to equal opportunities and the abolishment of obstacles and discrimination concerning certain student groups in all areas of education, and this also applies to language education. However, in recent European language education policies (see e.g. Council of Europe 2014; European Commission 2018), language skills and multiliteracy are increasingly regarded as integral parts of all education and learning, and thus as parts of the right to learning.

In this report, we define the accessibility described above as **equity**. The access to language education is thus perceived as different sociopolitically determined factors or grounds, based on which access to education is guaranteed – either consciously or unconsciously and either completely or partly. At the same time, access can appear to be difficult or even forbidden when we examine different learner groups in different educational contexts. When access is complemented by the enabling of learning and the value of education, we end up analysing accessibility as an **educational and linguistic (human) right**, which is either realised or remains to a varying degree unrealised in action models and practices (for more on socially equitable language teaching, see e.g. Hawkins 2011).

Accessibility can also be understood as *enabling*. Analysing *access to education* alone would not provide sufficiently detailed information on accessibility, which means more than attending classes. Nevertheless, it is not enough to examine the dimension of enabling because the *value of education* is also significant, that is, the material or experiential consequences of the education for pupils.

We can talk about accessibility in various contexts, using various concepts. All of them emphasise different aspects of accessibility. Accessibility is often viewed as, for instance, a question of **participation**: Who participates in training and who does not? What kinds of participation opportunities or obstacles does a pupil have? Which participation practices are valued and which not? Do pupils feel they are part of the community? If we only consider participation, the idea of accessibility is narrowed to physical presence, registration for studies, or the feeling of belonging to a community. Sociocultural approaches in research, instead, view accessibility as a broader phenomenon. For example, accessibility is examined by critically surveying when, how and why learners are entitled or do not actively participate in language education (see e.g. Canagarajah 1993; on investment in education, see e.g. Norton 2013), what kinds of challenges participation can involve, and even how learners decide not to participate (see Norton 2001 on non-participation; Ennser-Kananen 2018 on *uninvestment*; Ahn & Lee 2017 on *disinvestment*).

Accessibility can also be examined from the perspective of **inclusive teaching/education** or **inclusion**. This most commonly refers to the joint teaching and learning of a diverse group of students, including learners with special needs (Pinola 2008; see also European Commission 2014). An inclusive classroom is thus a learning environment for simultaneously teaching learners who have or do not have diagnosed physical/cognitive/social/emotional challenges or disabilities. The questions are similar to the participation perspective: What else does inclusion mean in addition to the physical being together of the diverse student group? Who has a legal right to be included and who has not, and on what grounds? What is needed to create and maintain genuinely inclusive learning environments? When examining accessibility more broadly, it would be essential to take into account the perspectives of research on inclusive education. They can be used to highlight the benefits of inclusion for all kinds of learners, to challenge the lines between learner categories (*able vs. disabled*), and to describe the



need for high-quality education as well as its value and implementation in highly heterogeneous contexts. It is important to reflect on these issues also when talking about the diverse group of language learners.

The aforementioned perspectives led us to build our report on the idea of accessibility as **access to education** (*getting in*), **the enabling of education and learning** (*getting it*), and **the value of education** (*getting out*). These perspectives on accessibility are linked to each other, and the accessibility of language education can therefore not be considered only from the perspective of access to education. Access, enabling and value are also in a cyclic relationship to each other: the experienced value of education may also increase the significance of access, and the enabling of education and learning may increase the value of education, whereas preventing them may reduce this value.

This made it possible to operationalise the concept of accessibility for exploring policies and practices in different national contexts. Table 1 presents these three perspectives, questions clarifying them, and materials that can be used to explore these different dimensions of accessibility. The materials used in this survey (see also section 2.1) are in italics:

TABLE 1. The accessibility of education as access, enabling and value.

	<b>Thematic questions</b>	<b>Potential materials</b> (the materials used in this survey are in italics)
<b>Access to education</b> (Getting in)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is expected or allowed to participate in the education?</li> <li>• Who decides on participation?</li> <li>• What basic prerequisites, advance skills requirements or reasons for exclusion/access are there?</li> <li>• What structural or logistic (e.g. time, place) obstacles to participation can there be?</li> <li>• What is the role of language skills compared with other skills?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Educational policy documents</i></li> <li>• <i>Statistics on participation</i></li> <li>• <i>Interviews with experts on language education policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Research</i></li> <li>• Guidelines given by decision-makers (e.g. principals)</li> </ul>
<b>Enabling education and learning</b> (Getting it)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who teaches on the course?</li> <li>• What qualifications or experience do teachers have?</li> <li>• How are teachers employed and supervised?</li> <li>• How do teachers utilise learning materials and support systems (materials, research, unions and professional organisations, collegial support)?</li> <li>• What kinds of pedagogical and/or linguistic background assumptions does the curriculum include?</li> <li>• Have teachers received in-service training?</li> <li>• What are teachers' opportunities to participate in in-service training?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Curricula</i></li> <li>• <i>Interviews with experts on language education policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Learning outcomes</i></li> <li>• <i>Research</i></li> <li>• The practices and policies of teacher education and recruitment</li> <li>• In-service training models from other Nordics</li> <li>• Learning materials</li> </ul>
<b>Value of education</b> (Getting out)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many learners complete the education successfully?</li> <li>• What is assessment based on, and who assesses?</li> <li>• What is assessed?</li> <li>• What is the target of assessment?</li> <li>• Is there equivalence between awarded grades?</li> <li>• What grading system is used (numerical grading in certificates vs. a separate statement)?</li> <li>• What opportunities does the education provide for a successful learner?</li> <li>• What vocational or academic paths become closed if the learner fails or performs poorly in the education?</li> <li>• What kind of assessment competence do teachers have?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Research</i></li> <li>• Statistics on performance</li> <li>• Exam and assessment policies and results</li> <li>• Policies on admission to the next educational level</li> </ul>

Viewing the accessibility of language education more broadly than just as access can also be justified with language and learning theories (see Saarinen, Kauppinen & Kangasvieri 2019). The accessibility of language education as access to training narrows down the understanding of language education, making it a technical issue according to which languages are principally learned as individual subjects with clear boundaries, and the

hours available for them are calculated as separate blocks. This approach directs one to count the number of languages instead of considering pupils' communicative and sociocultural (see e.g. Lantolf & Poehner 2008) contacts to language(s). Consequently, the extensive language skills pupils have actually acquired in different settings might remain unnoticed, just like the broader benefit of language education. In that case, it can also be tempting to think that pupils are required to learn "too many languages". In the discourses of language ideology and language education policy, this means that pupils might not be able to learn a new foreign language if they simultaneously have to study the school's language of instruction as a second language and possibly also maintain their heritage language skills. In the same way, people may think that it is not advisable to study "too many languages" if a pupil has language or learning difficulties, or if a student's learning outcomes have not been good in the first language studies, such as English or mother tongue and literature.

The problem with these arguments from the perspective of the accessibility of language education is that their use limits the accessibility of language education to specific people and specific languages; in other words, pedagogy becomes political and ideological (Saarinen et al. 2019). At the same time, languages become subject to value judgements: for example, a "foreign language" studied at school appears as more valuable than a pupil's own heritage language. However, the question could be posed in a different way instead. Maybe it is not a question of the number of languages but of the way languages are taught, and of where and how they are learned. How could we improve, for instance, the support offered to multilingual pupils if they want or need to maintain and develop their language skills? What kinds of pedagogies could be applied to promote language-aware language learning, in which languages and content are integrated and translanguaging is utilised?

## **4 CONCLUSIONS: DEVELOPING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN BASIC EDUCATION**

In this report, we have explored the accessibility of language education based on earlier research and examples from a few European countries. The original idea of accessibility as mere access to language studies quickly appeared as insufficient, and we created a framework consisting of the access to (*getting in*), enabling of (*getting it*) and value of (*getting out*) language education. Because of the resources and materials available to us, our examination focused on access to language education, but viewing accessibility more broadly makes it easier to perceive the necessary policy actions from a broader perspective as well.

In analysing the data, accessibility was divided into five central themes. These themes are related to

1. the steering and organisation of language education
2. teacher education and the development of teachers' work
3. the dissolution of hierarchies between languages
4. the development of language awareness and multilingual pedagogy

## 5. the development of assessment and certificate practices

Our development proposals related to the **steering and organisation of language education** primarily focus on enhancing access to (*getting in*) education. It is important to support and encourage education providers – but also to commit them to reducing the impact of regional and individual background factors on access to education in order to make language learning more accessible to everyone.

In Finland, the distribution of language studies and language subject offerings is regionally and socially unequal from the perspective of access. Depending on their location or different linguistic, social or other backgrounds, pupils are not in an equal position when making language selections. According to earlier research and our expert interviewees, the provision of language education relying on individual choices or freedom of choice will result in fewer choices and increasingly unequal language education. The same applies to municipal decision-making: decentralised decision-making leads to increasingly unequal municipal practices that cause inequality.

From the perspective of *getting in*, teachers play a key role in promoting accessibility. The graduates from **teacher education** reach pupils throughout Finland regionally and socially, and resourcing teacher education and increasing the support for teachers is indispensable for improving the accessibility of education. For example, with their own activities teachers can either promote multilingualism or restrict pupils' language choices by referring to the heavy workload of language studies, a pupil's Finnish/Swedish skills, or earlier school performance. Teacher education and teachers' competences must be developed in order to enable pupils' paths to language learning as well as optimal ways of implementing teaching and learning.

In the same way, from the perspective of enabling learning (*getting it*), pre-service and in-service teacher education are highly important because teachers can promote pupils' prerequisites for learning with suitable high-quality pedagogy.

The linguistic diversity of school and society should be considered more explicitly in every aspect of class teacher and subject teacher education. Both pre- and in-service teacher training should include plenty of theory and practice related to modern multilingual education. However, both the offerings and access to teachers' in-service training are currently fragmented and based on project funding.

In order to promote the comprehensive accessibility of language education, **the hierarchies between languages need to be made visible and dissolved**. Language hierarchies are presently visible in the access to education (*getting in*), the enabling of learning (*getting it*) and the value of learning (*getting out*). Today, languages are taught as separate entities, even though pupils could benefit more from teaching that generally advances their language learning skills and crosses the boundaries of different languages. Language teaching focusing on individual languages promotes multilingualism neither in the individual nor in society. Language hierarchies are also visible in the way teaching is organised, in which languages it is organised, and how much of teaching is available. Moreover, the hierarchies determine how much proficiency in a specific language is appreciated. Today, part of pupils' language proficiency remains tacit in education and society (e.g. heritage languages, learning acquired outside of school settings). However, pupils' entire language repertoire should be valued and made visible, and their heritage language skills should be supported. This would promote both learning in general and social equality, as well as all pupils' multilingualism and belongingness.

As regards access to education, the dissolution of language hierarchies, at its best, makes more languages available to pupils and the school community as well as enables

learning for learners with different language backgrounds. In the long run and more indirectly, the removal of language hierarchies will also result in functional multilingual practices in working life and society. This does not mean that the boundaries between languages would fade out. Instead, it refers to different structural and pedagogical solutions that support the simultaneous use of languages (*translanguaging*) in teaching, the conscious removal of hierarchies between languages, and increasing appreciation for multilingualism focusing on other than the traditionally taught foreign languages (a school's languages of instruction, languages taught, heritage languages, other languages).

**The development of language-aware and multilingual pedagogies** promotes the accessibility of language education, especially from the point of view of *getting it* and *getting out*. Finland's National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Agency for Education / Opetushallitus 2014) already emphasises language-aware teaching and multiliteracy as parts of transversal competence. However, support is needed in both pre-service and in-service teacher education to enable a more efficient realisation of these curricular emphases.

**The development of assessment and certificate practices** is particularly associated with the enabling of learning (*getting it*) and the value of learning (*getting out*). To some extent, the aforementioned counterproductive language hierarchies are linked to the different positions of different languages in the national core curriculum and to the apparent benefit of language skills in further studies. The certificates and assessments given in language studies should be evaluated critically: What do they reveal on the appreciation of individual languages and their mutual hierarchies? How will pupils' language choices at the primary and lower secondary level be influenced by direct, certificate-based admission to higher education after the upper secondary level, which is currently being developed in Finland?

Over the past 30 years, several language education policy reforms have been implemented in Finland, but no **systematic monitoring** is available on their effects. The evaluations of learning outcomes by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) provide valuable information on how the goals of the curriculum have been achieved. In addition, systematic research would still be needed on the multilingualism situation in teachers' work, teacher education and schools, including its effects on teaching as a whole.

In the following section, we give recommendations regarding these themes.

## 5 MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations and proposals for developing the accessibility of language education in a broader sense. The proposals are based on the idea of accessibility consisting of access to education (*getting in*), enabling education and learning (*getting it*), and the value of education (*getting out*). These dimensions of accessibility are linked to each other, and the accessibility of language education therefore cannot be considered only from the perspective of access to education. Our proposals are thus also targeted at the quality of language education and at improving all basic education pupils' prerequisites for learning, so that all of them would get what they need from teaching, both during their education and thereafter.

### 5.1 STEERING OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND SUPPORTING EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- Municipalities must be encouraged and obliged to organise A1 language (the first compulsory foreign language starting at primary school) teaching also in languages other than English. They are also supported and obliged to offer teaching in at least one A2 language (an optional foreign language starting at primary school).
- The support for less studied languages is increased and education providers are encouraged to offer diverse languages. Disadvantaged (e.g. economically or due to low population numbers) municipalities are supported in order to reinforce regional equality.
- Municipalities are obliged to organise heritage language teaching for all their residents who need it, and to inform on its organisation. The provision of teaching must not depend on the initiative of NGOs or active parents/carers, because this would put pupils in different municipalities or with different language backgrounds in an unequal position.
- Municipalities and schools are encouraged to lower the boundaries between the teaching of heritage languages and foreign languages. The teaching and teacher education of heritage languages is gradually extended so that pupils can choose to study their heritage language as a compulsory or optional language and receive a grade on it as one of the studied languages.
- The teaching of heritage languages should be developed so that these languages can gradually be offered to all pupils as optional languages. This experiment could begin by teaching the languages with the most speakers after Finnish and Swedish (often Russian, Estonian, Arabic or Somali) in the municipality, after which the language selection could be extended to encompass other languages spoken in Finland as well. This would provide a larger selection of languages and simultaneously strengthen the status of each immigrant student's heritage language as one of the languages of the pupil, the school, and ultimately of



society. This requires that teacher education (both pre-service and in-service training) is developed and resourced. Regional inequality in the provision of heritage language teaching is reduced by supporting education providers. More information is distributed in municipalities on the teaching of heritage languages.

- The education departments of municipalities hire division managers in charge of coordinating, developing and monitoring heritage language teaching, as well as of supervising its realisation. In areas with a minor need for heritage language teaching, a division manager can be in charge of more than one municipality.
- Bilingual education integrating language and content is developed so that it can be offered in several languages and in an increasing number of municipalities; all parents/carers as well as children are informed on it.
- The efforts to begin B1 language (the second national language which is compulsory, starting at primary school) learning at an earlier stage are developed in a way that ensures a continuum of language learning with no breaks at transition points, as well as regional equality with similar amounts of teaching hours in different municipalities.

## 5.2 TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS' WORK

- All class teacher, subject teacher and special education teacher training programmes are to include modules providing in-depth knowledge of multilingualism, language awareness, multiliteracy, bilingual education, second-language learning, and the assessment of language skills.
- Working teachers' readiness for co-teaching is developed in order to abolish language and subject hierarchies and increase teachers' multilingual and language awareness skills. This is done by allocating more time for in-service training, co-planning, and for developing and ensuring language-aware teaching.
- The flexibility and resources of teacher training are increased so that more students can earn a double qualification as both class teacher and subject teacher, even if they had originally been pursuing only one of these qualifications. In addition, new kinds of teacher education programmes should be developed: one could apply for them in the joint admission process, and they would provide both a class teacher qualification and a subject teacher qualification in languages (see e.g. Language Aware Multilingual Pedagogy LAMP at JYU, language immersion teacher training).
- In-service teacher training materials on language awareness and multilingualism are produced and coordinated nationally. Part of the project funding now used for in-service teacher training should be allocated for creating more permanent, for example, web-based continuing education materials, as well as for collecting existing materials into an open material bank.
- We support the recommendation of The Many Languages and Religions in

Schools project (see Tainio & Kallioniemi 2019), according to which teacher education departments should hire an expert focusing on multilingual pedagogy, especially on multilingual teaching and heritage languages.

- Cooperation between the syllabus of *Finnish as a second language and literature* and other *mother tongue and literature* syllabi should be supported more strongly, also so that the planning of teacher collaboration would be included in teachers' working hours.
- We support the proposal presented in various reports (Pöyhönen et al. 2010; Pyykkö 2017; see Tainio & Kallioniemi 2019) regarding the qualification of heritage language teachers: *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).
- We support the proposal presented in the recommendations of The Many Languages and Religions in Schools project (see Tainio & Kallioniemi 2019) regarding a municipal or regional language expert, who should be regarded as an investment in developing multilingualism and supporting regional equality and development: *The education provider must ensure that the municipality has an education or teaching expert familiar with reports and the latest research on heritage language teaching. This expert cooperates with heritage language teachers and principals as well as develops the teaching of heritage languages in the municipality. In heritage language teaching, cooperation between municipalities must also be developed further.* We propose that the job description of this expert would also include the coordination and planning of language-aware and multilingual education.
- The research-based development of teachers' assessment competence is developed further. An assessment tool must be created to facilitate the assessment of Finnish as a second language.

### 5.3 ABOLISHING HIERARCHIES BETWEEN LANGUAGES

- During the first two years of primary school, instead of starting to teach individual languages earlier, plurilingual teaching is offered (incl. interaction studies, language awareness, language learning skills) as well as familiarisation with various languages integrated into other subjects.
- The role and appreciation of heritage languages in teacher education, curricula and teaching must be enhanced by creating qualification requirements for heritage language teachers and removing obstacles from their qualification. Furthermore, the status of heritage language education must be changed: instead of supplementing basic education, it should be part of the actual curriculum. Heritage languages should also be included in the distribution of lesson hours, their role in certificate assessment should be developed, and the opportunities for cooperation between heritage language teachers and other teachers should be promoted.

- Pupils' possibilities to demonstrate proficiency in languages not taught at their school are improved by developing demonstration-based assessment for basic education.
- The assessment of L2 education is developed.
- The relevance of heritage language and Finnish/Swedish as a second language after basic education is developed. Potential bottlenecks in the utilisation of these subjects are removed by developing curricula, assessment and certificate practices from the perspective of, for instance, further education paths and certificate-based admission.
- The teaching of *Finnish/Swedish as a second language* and *Finnish/Swedish as a mother tongue and literature* are brought closer to each other by increasing co-teaching and other types of teacher cooperation in F1/S1 and F2/S2. The aim here is that F2/S2 pupils can relatively soon move to study together with other pupils so that integrated F2/S2 teaching continues after the transfer. For this purpose, extensive in-service teacher training is needed, as well as development of pre-service teacher education, team teaching and co-teaching, and the contents of F1/S1 and F2/S2.

## 5.4 DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY

- Pupils' equal opportunities to participate in bilingual education are increased by training enough teachers specialised in bilingual and multilingual teaching and by providing municipalities with permanent resources for organising a broader selection of bilingual education.
- Schools are encouraged to increase phenomenon-based learning in modules that integrate languages (so-called foreign languages as well as heritage languages and other languages spoken at the school) and subject contents. Schools are required to offer multidisciplinary learning modules that are partly taught in one or more foreign languages / heritage languages.
- The instruction preparing recently arrived immigrants for basic education should be better integrated with other instruction through teacher cooperation, team teaching or in another corresponding way. A research-based evaluation must be carried out to determine how long recently arrived immigrants learning Finnish as a second language need to be placed in a preparatory class. The integration into basic education classes should take place earlier, if possible, and national-level guidance should be developed.
- Development of pedagogies suitable for language learning starting at an earlier stage.
- The role of English is reconsidered so that in the future it could possibly be taught relatively briefly as a separate subject and thereafter be used as the

language of instruction, to a varying degree, in different subjects; hereby it would be integrated with the content in line with phenomenon-based learning.

## **5.5 DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATES OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

- Monitoring and evaluation of the effects of certificate-based admission to higher education on language choices in basic education.
- Development of the possibilities to receive a certificate grade by demonstrating proficiency in a language not taught at one's school.
- Development of certificate practices for heritage languages so that – instead of a certificate of attendance – pupils receive a grade on them in their certificate.

## **5.6 FOLLOW-UP**

- Longitudinal studies and systematic follow-up on the realisation and impact of the renewals (see also Huhta & Leontjev 2019, a corresponding recommendation on the effects of starting language learning at an earlier age).
- Systematic follow-up of the progress of learning outcomes and multilingualism.

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