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## **Multi-sited and Historically Layered Language Policy Construction: Parliamentary debate on the Finnish constitutional bilingualism in 1919**

### 1. Introduction: Language, people and nation in the post-World War I Finland

Language policies interact dialogically with other policy sectors and are affected by political arguments derived from interpretations of past and contemporary discourses (see for instance Ricento 2008). In this article, a language policy researcher and an historian of political discourse apply transdisciplinary methods to analyse Finnish language policy debates in the late 1910s. We motivate our approach with recent applications of multi-layered approaches to language policy (Scollon & Scollon 2004; Johnson 2013a; Halonen & al. 2015) and linguistic constructivism within historical research (Skinner 2002; Koselleck 2006; Pocock 2009; Steinmetz et al. 2013; Whatmore 2016; Steinmetz et al. 2017). We thus aim at promoting both fields by increasing awareness of the implications of language as political action in history on the one hand, and of time, political uses of history and complex and multi-sited political contexts in language policy research on the other.

We have elsewhere discussed methodological insights from current language policy studies that are applicable for the empirical study of political history from a discourse-oriented perspective (Ihalainen & Saarinen submitted). In this article, we address the implications of historical analyses of multi-sited and historically informed political discourse for the analysis of historical language policy processes and their implications for present-day language ideological debates.

Our empirical context is the constitutional debates in the Finnish parliament in May and June 1919, and particularly the sections concerning construction of formal language policies for the newly independent republic. This was a period of the collapse of several European powers and the rise of new independent states during and in the aftermath of the First World War. This was also a decisive era for the formation of future language policies, and, consequently, national identities (see for instance Blommaert 2006) not only in Finland, but also in the newly independent Baltic and Eastern or Central European countries in general.

In Finland, still a grand duchy in the Russian Empire, the revolutionary year of 1917 saw the clash of radical leftist political discourses adopted from Revolutionary Russia with Swedish and German inspired appeals to legality. Finnish radicalism built on a tradition of class antagonism in social democratic political discourse (with potential language policy implications), the fact that the socialists had won the first overall parliamentary majority in the Finnish elections of 1916, and close transnational links between Finnish socialists and Russian Bolshevik revolutionaries (Ihalainen 2017: 510). Finland possessed a unicameral national parliament elected with the most democratic suffrage in the world at the time, while lacking democratic suffrage in local elections and parliamentary responsibility of government at the

national level. The outbreak of the Russian Revolution in March 1917 led, however, to a deterioration of the legitimacy of the political system. Increasing unemployment, food shortages, and public disorder were accelerated by competing crisis discourses in parliament, while the party press recycled ideologically motivated interpretations of the past, present and future. Cycles of confrontational political discourse followed and contributed to a civil war that broke out in January 1918 and lasted until May the same year.

During 1918, once the Red rebellion had been crushed by the White army with German military help, plans for a Prussian-style monarchy emerged, which collapsed in 1919, as Germany had lost the war and as the Western powers insisted on Finland distancing itself from Germany as a condition for the recognition of its independence (Ihalainen 2017). As the formulation of the republican constitution was at hand, old language policy confrontations emerged and were linked to other political discourses.

In this article, we are particularly interested in the constitutional debate of May-June 1919 from the point of view of constructions of *people* (Finnish *kansa*, Swedish *folk*), *nationality* (Finnish *kansallisuus*, Swedish *nationalitet*) and *nation* (Finnish *kansakunta*, Swedish *nation*). Competing conceptualisations of democracy or “rule by the people” played a part also in the language ideological debate of the new constitution. We analyse the language policy discourse as connected to the general constitutional discourse by paying attention to the discursive cycles of “people, objects and discourses in and through moments of sociocultural importance” (Scollon & Scollon 2004: x) in the nexus point of the parliamentary debate on the language paragraphs of the new constitution.

## 2. Historical development of Finnish bilingualism

Finland as a constitutionally bilingual country tends to be presented as something of a model country with well-established bilingual administrative practices and legislation (for discussion of this, see Latomaa & Nuolijärvi 2002; Hult & Pietikäinen 2014). While formal status of both Finnish and Swedish as equal national languages (*kansalliskieli*) is, indeed, exceptionally strongly legislated in the Finnish Constitution and other legislation, the position of Swedish (and, consequently, formal bilingualism) has been debated heatedly both historically and contemporarily. This has brought to attention different and even conflicting interpretations of the official language policy and its legitimacy over the period of hundred years of Finnish independence since 1917 (Hult & Pietikäinen 2014; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015; Pöyhönen & Saarinen 2015).

The constitutional decision about language policy was an essential part of the debate for a constitution of the newly independent state, and a bulk of that debate was conducted around the question of whether Finland was a state consisting of either one or two nationalities, or one nation consisting of speakers of two languages. The historical debate on the role of language in constructing the Finnish nation in the 19th century has been popularized into three maxims,

representing the different political viewpoints and their spokespersons. The pro-Finnish *Fennomans* position, proposed in the mid-19th century by the philosopher and journalist J.V. Snellman and promoted by the politician and historian Yrjö Sakari Yrjö-Koskinen, took off from the *one language, one people* principle, promoting the use of Finnish as the national language of the emerging new cultured nation. It was one of the basic premises of the *Fennomans* to oppose Swedish speakers as the upper class. The *Svecomans*, in turn, concerned about the traditionally privileged position of Swedish in a time when both the formal position of Finnish as well as its everyday use was improved in the late 19th century, promoted the idea of *two languages, two nations*, personified in professor of Swedish language A. O. Freudenthal. The author and historian Z. Topelius presented a liberal middle ground with the *two languages, one nation* idea; where the main goal was to improve the position of Finnish while keeping and developing Swedish. It is depictive of the 19th-century Finnish political and cultural sphere that all these men were originally Swedish speakers.

While Swedish speakers amounted to a total of little under 15 per cent of the population in the late 19th century (and approximately 5.3 per cent in 2017), they represented a political, economic and cultural elite whose influence exceeded their share in the population. (See also Hult & Pietikäinen 2014; Engman 2016: 131; Meinander 2016: 20.) Swedish had for centuries been the language of higher education and administration, constituting a hindrance to social mobility among the Finnish speaking majority, which had given rise to class-based prejudices towards Swedish. In Finnish language political discourse, such language policy attitudes may have been reinforced by strong support for radicalised social democracy and anti-elitist agrarian radicalism, which again was rejected in Swedish language public discourse in a period of universal suffrage and a majority rule, which was experienced as threatening. As the status of Finnish had been improving in education and administration since the 1860s, language policy confrontations had become commonplace on all political forums. In the meantime, much of education, administration, business life, landowning and cultural institutions continued to be in the hands of Swedish speakers.

The 19th-century debate on the positions of Finnish and Swedish in the construction of a Finnish nation and state makes visible the constructions of a “statist” vs. a “nationalist” project (Blommaert 2006). The role proposed to the two languages shaped the construction of Finland first as a nation in the 19th-century debates and then as an independent state in the 20th-century ones. We will be looking into the constitutional debate and the historical cycles in that debate to see, why Finland appeared formally to reject the “monoglot ideology” (Silverstein 1996) in devising a formal state bilingualism, simultaneously rejecting the idea of individual bilingualism (see Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015; Pöyhönen & Saarinen 2015). We argue that the Finnish solution and related debates took place in the intersection of various policy scales (see Hult 2015): firstly, 19th-century nationalistic discourses that had idealized the connection between a natural language and a political unit; secondly, class discourses that had recently escalated into a civil war; and, thirdly, the transnational reformists discourses of the late 1910s. Hence, these should not be retrospectively viewed as constituting a model language policy

ahead of its time, but rather a result of multi-layered and conflicting language policy arguments that emerged from the intersection of various political, social and ideological discourses.

### 3. Language policy and nation construction

Language policy takes place in dialogue with multi-layered policy action – international relations, economy, class structures, cultural trends, political ideologies – while its course can also have major long-term impact on other policy fields. As Ricento (2014) indicates, *language* (or, as he points out, a named Language) has been idealized to stand as proxy for different kinds of normative categories of states or cultures. Our context is a typical post-World War I setting, where a newly independent state uses various means at its disposal to identify as a nation and make the relevant statements concerning that identification. Construing and regulating the connections between language, national essence, and territory, as summarized by Gal, rephrasing views attributed to Herder but dating back to Enlightenment thinkers (Gal 2006: 164) has been one of the main ways in which this identity work has been conducted (see also Blommaert 2006). What makes the Finnish case special is that the debate mainly revolved around *two* languages, not one, within the state. Consequently, the relationship of *two languages* to notions of *people*, *nationality* and *nation* were under construction in various conflicting ways.

Language policy has been conceptualised both as a research field and as an approach to understanding the functions of language in society (for an overview, see Johnson & Ricento 2015). Earlier conceptualizations saw language policy as a (more or less authoritative) collection of ideas, regulations and practices that steer the change of language conditions in societies (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997: xi), or as a combination of language practices, language beliefs (ideologies) and language management of a community (Spolsky 2004: 5). Since then, we have witnessed a move towards ethnographic (McCarty 2011) and layered (Ricento & Hornberger 1996; Johnson 2013a; Hult 2015) views. This development has helped us recognize the complexities of language policies beyond conceptualisations of micro instantiations and macro structures (see Mortimer & Wortham 2015), towards the understanding of the interconnected, rhizomatic and fluid nature of policy (see Halonen & al. 2015) and of the various actors positioned (or not positioned) to produce hegemonic discourses and construe language policy (Johnson 2013b; Mortimer & Wortham 2015; Savski 2016).

More recent openings into conceptualisation of language policy as scalar (see for instance Hult 2010; Canagarajah & De Costa 2016; Hult 2015) are particularly helpful, as they acknowledge the complex relations between language and other semiotic resources, and the multi-layered relationships between language and context. Pennycook (2006) has analysed the complex relationship between language practices and policies in discussing how decisions on languages are made across a range of institutions and instruments that regulate the language use in communities and societies. While examples of historical analysis of language policies are relatively rare, Wiley (2006) has reviewed the field. We have elsewhere used examples from

Finnish and Swedish constitutional debates of the late 1910s to illustrate the applicability of several text analytical research strategies of present-day language studies to source-based historical research on past political discourse (Ihalainen & Saarinen submitted), inspired by versions of linguistic contextualism and historical semantics for at least half a century (summarised in Steinmetz et al. 2017). In this article, however, we rather want to discuss the implications of multidimensional historical contexts and related continuities for language policy studies, and to illustrate the fruitfulness of historians and language researchers analyzing past use of language in politics together.

While language policy as an independent research field is relatively young, the 1950s and 1960s debates on language planning of the newly independent nations in post-colonial Africa and Asia after the Second World War have their predecessors in the 19th-century language ideological debates on the links between language and nation (Ricento 2000). In several countries, the political ferment of the late 1910s constituted a nexus point for major long-term language policy trajectories (Ihalainen 2015: 86; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015; Pöyhönen & Saarinen 2015), which brings our fields together also in terms of substance, not only methodology. The collaborative approach deepens the understanding of the significance of complex and contingent historical and political contexts in language policy analysis. We thus wish to strengthen in language policy studies a historically sensitive view of time and an awareness of larger and longer-term social contexts of official and practised language policy. This has previously been done by Schiffman (1996: 1-2) with focus on multilingualism in pre-modern and modern France, India and the United States. Wiley (2006: 136-137), in turn, has pointed at the (ab)use of supposedly ‘true’ constructions of the past as justification for language policies. Such an emphasis on political and social trajectories from past discourses challenges presentist approaches to current debates focussing on textual trajectories. It also challenges those areas of historical research that bypass the centrality of language itself and its political implications in the past. Language policy is, in fact, often history politics where the selective remembrance of past experiences by communities and individuals play a fundamental role (Ihalainen & al. 2011; Halonen & al. 2015; 16).

#### 4. Discourse cycles and historical bodies: language policy in the making

We shall move on to an analysis of the Finnish bilingual language policy construction and the short and long-term discourses from multiple political and social scales (Hult 2015) that intersect in the constitutional debate in May-June 1919. To illustrate the fundamental role the collective remembrances of past experiences and interconnected historical trajectories (of discourses, people, material objects etc.), we will analyse the parliamentary debates on the language paragraphs of the republican constitution in the Finnish parliament in June 1919. We take into account the particular situation (*site of engagement*) of a parliament session where this debate takes place and the particular social actors (*historical bodies*) that take part in this debate with all their internalized life experiences. We also relate these to broader constitutional debates on the concepts of the people and democracy. With this example, we want to illustrate

the analytical value of the concept of *discourse cycles*, where discourses are transformed into material objects and historical bodies in action, and, reciprocally, the historical bodies and action are transformed into discourse. (Scollon 2005: 112) In the following analysis, we will follow in particular the discourses of *language, people* or *nation* in relation to languages in the said debates on a new republican constitution and demonstrate how the discourses are cycled into historical bodies and political action and back. The understandings of *language, people* and *nation* are construed as parts of long and short-term discourse cycles, which reconstruct and recycle sedimented language ideological debates (Hult & Pietikäinen 2014) and produce new cycles that are still visible in today's parliamentary and media discourses in Finland (see Ihalainen & al. 2011; Pöyhönen & Saarinen 2015; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015).

A special feature that affects the dynamics of this discourse cycle is that the Finnish *kansa* includes notions of both *people* and *nation* – and in some contexts and derivatives even *common people* and *citizenship* – so that distinctions between these political and social key concepts are far less clear than in most Western European languages (Stenius 2003). It is also noteworthy that the Finnish *kansa* (in the meaning of *people*) has varied meanings in comparison with Indo-European languages, as it may also have connotations of not only ethnic but also political, social, and “contrary to the elite” – and even refer to proletariat only in a Marxist sense (see Hyvärinen 2003).

Our analysis not only construes a detailed discussion and an understanding of language policy discourse in the late 1910s, but also leads us to make suggestions about the methodological implications of such interdisciplinary cooperation for language studies and historical research in the future. By interdisciplinarity, we refer not only to the transferring methodological insights between disciplines to develop tools that are applicable in both fields – though such transfers have certainly been useful especially for history as the most empirical and least theoretical of human sciences and as an applier of methodologies borrowed from neighbouring sciences. We also mean analytical and dialogical collaboration between researchers from different disciplines, aimed at constructing a scholarly understanding together – here between an historian interested in understanding the dynamics of past political discourses and a language policy researcher interested in time and space as factors in language policies. We argue that the combination of empirical, source-oriented historical research on parliamentary discourse and recent theoretical insights from language policy research helps us to understand the dynamics of past and present-day discursive processes in any political context.

## 5. Parliamentary debate of May-June 1919 on the constitution and Finnish language policy

Next, we move on to the analysis of the parliamentary debate on the new constitution in May-June 1919. We analyse the debate as a nexus point (Scollon & Scollon 2004) where the particular social rules and practices of the parliament enable a negotiation and renegotiation of the language ideologies of one or two languages and one or two nations in one country. The

setting is regulated by the physical environment of the parliament and its rules on appropriate action; the verbal encounters between the MPs; and the memories, histories and reputations of individual actors. While the actual topic are the few paragraphs of the draft constitution, the debate circulates language ideological discourses that have their roots in late 19th and early 20th century political and social structures and ideologies.

### 5.1. Developments leading to the new constitution and the emergence of language as constitutional issue

The new constitution that was finally drafted in the summer of 1919 was preceded by rapid and dramatic developments in the Finnish parliament and the whole society since the summer of 1917. The parliamentary election of 1916 had resulted in social democrats winning the majority, but losing it in the October 1917 election. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) tended to monopolise *the people* and *democracy*, regarding only their party as voicing the wishes of *kansa* or the lower classes, and creating a division between the people proper and the educated classes, resembling the use of the concept of the oppressed people, *narod*, in Russian revolutionary discourse. The bourgeois coalition of late 1917, in turn, set *democracy* as its constitutional goal, defining itself as an opponent of socialist policies of terror and envisioning a bourgeois democracy in which parliamentary power would remain regulated. The Swedish People's Party (SPP) was at this stage part of the bourgeois coalition (Ihalainen 2017: 199, 203).

Finding a common discourse on *people* and *democracy* turned out to be impossible, and a civil war followed. During the war, most Swedish speakers appeared as stout supporters of the White cause. As Hämäläinen (1978: 102-104) has shown, social and linguistic confrontations between the local administration, in the hands of the Swedish speaking bourgeoisie, and radicalised Finnish speaking workers were strongest in the Helsinki region where the rebellion broke out. This confrontation was reinforced by conflicting interests between Swedish speaking farmers and starving Finnish speaking labourers, but equally by the recycled historical constructions of the of the two language groups, including the widespread understanding of Swedish speakers as 'better people' (*bättre folk*) (see also Hult & Pietikäinen 2014). During the Civil War, the Red propaganda motivated class fight and tried to split the Whites by appealing to the linguistic nationalism of the Finns, whereas the Whites avoided the potentially divisive language issue.

After the Civil War, especially clerical MPs of the Finnish Party and many members of the Swedish People's Party questioned the political maturity of the Finnish people, linking their arguments to an ideological construction of Finns as less educated and more inclined to be tempted by political agitation. The Agrarian League and some liberals, in turn, emphasised their trust in the Finnish people. Consequently, different understandings of democracy came into the open. The conservatives and some liberals presented monarchy as reconcilable with democracy, while the agrarians and some liberals called for democracy based on national character and international trends of democratisation (Ihalainen 2017: 319, 327, 329), and saw



monarchy as reinforcing the powers of the Swedish speakers. Once the uniting Red scare was over, old language disputes between the right and centre hence re-emerged (Hämäläinen 1978: 106), but with an added layer brought by the above described language drifts during and after the Civil War.

A bilingual solution to the Finnish language situation had first been proposed in December 1917 as the first draft for a republican constitution had been debated; however, the Civil War put the constitutional debate on hiatus (Engman 2016: 367). The question of bilingualism in the constitutional debates was linked to major political questions of the post-independence and post-Civil War period (as has been customary for language policy debates also historically; see Ricento 2000), and especially to competing conceptualisations of people, democracy and national self-determination in this period.

The next round of debates took place after a monarchical post-Civil War reaction during which several attempts to retain monarchy were made, with similar statutes on the rights of citizens to use their mother tongue (i.e. Finnish or Swedish) when dealing with authorities that were presented in the first republican proposal of 1917. Some agrarians felt that the privileged status of the Swedish language was an upper class claim and should be discontinued; that Swedish needed no special constitutional protection; and that bureaucracy and universities should use Finnish. In addition, the Coalition and Progressive Parties voted in February 1919 against extensions of separate Swedish administration. The spokesman of the former, E.N. Setälä, rejected the demands of Swedish speakers as nationalistic isolationism, and also opposed the claims that language and nationality were intertwined as well as the claim of two nationalities existing in Finland. It is depictive of the political atmosphere that Finnish language newspapers accused the Swedish speakers of separatism and what they saw as conspiracies with foreign powers (Engman 2016: 106, 368-369, 373, 375-377), conceptualising the minority language as a problem for national unity (see Hult & Hornberger 2016 for a discussion of Ruiz's language as problem, language as right and language as resource orientations).

The Swedish People's Party, by contrast, was deeply disappointed with the constitutional proposal, took it as a dismissal of the sacrifices of the Swedish speakers in the Civil War, and emphasised the existence of Swedish speakers as a separate nationality or at least as "the Swedish element of the people" (*folkelement*). For the SPP, this was a way to defend the status of the minority language in an era that paid particular attention to minority rights, echoing a language as right conceptualisation of the status of Swedish in Finland (Hult & Hornberger 2016). This led to increasingly radical demands for self-government for the nationality (possibly as separate 'cantons') and minority protection, starting with the insistence on bilingualism with Finnish and Swedish as national languages. Some groups sought for union with Sweden by appealing to the Paris peace conference and to Scandinavian public opinion to save the 'East Swedish' nation (Engman 2016: 369-375; Meinander 2016: 27, 30), bringing scales of international diplomacy into the debate.

The spokesmen of SPP remained sceptical about the involvement of the Finnish speaking masses in politics. Both the notion of two separate nations and the challenging of the national parliament are visible in the creation of *Folktinget*, an elected representative assembly for the Swedish nation (Ihalainen 2017: 289, 500-501). The assembly had been proposed by Ernst Estlander in February 1919 as soon as the Finnish language parties had rejected special paragraphs for the protection of Swedish. Its agenda emphasised the need to settle “nationality circumstances” constitutionally; to guarantee “language legislation”; and to advance self-administration (Engman 2016: 377, 382-383; Meinander 2016: 17). An opposition by the Swedish People’s Party to the republican constitution – rising from ideological principles and language policy issues – reinforced further existing contrasts between language groups.

## 5.2. Parliamentary debates on bilingualism in summer 1919

A new, republican parliament that finally decided on the new constitution was elected in March 1919. A topical question in the debate from May 1919 onwards concerned the presidential prerogatives. The debate took place between those having previously favoured monarchy, and those favouring a republican constitution and possessing a majority in the parliament. The language debate was intimately linked to this question, especially as nearly the entire Swedish speaking old elite and most Finnish speaking conservatives had been in favour of a monarchy in 1918, seeing it as a stabilising force against universal suffrage, a potential socialist parliamentary majority, parliamentary sovereignty, and a potentially renewed civil war.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP), which had returned to parliament in new elections after the Civil War, had become more cooperative with the advocates of ‘bourgeois democracy’. The Agrarians envisioned progress towards a more advanced democracy and challenged the rightist anti-democratic attitudes as outdated elitism – including what they framed as language political nationalism of the Swedish People’s Party. The Finnish speaking conservatives mainly managed to regain their trust in the people, though they wanted to confine parliamentary democracy with a strong presidency. The Swedish People’s Party remained relentlessly anti-democratic in its rhetoric, wishing to see separate institutions for Swedish speakers and voted as the only party against the final proposal for a republican constitution, quitting the government (Ihalainen 2017: 481, 487-488, 522). The Finnish language policy confrontation also had an international aspect in that Swedish public discourse expressed concerns about the rights of Swedish speakers in Finland, an example of “language as right” as an emic concept (Hult & Hornberger 2016) in the debate.

During the plenary debates on the republican constitution in May-June 1919, the spokesmen of the Swedish speakers essentially wanted to guarantee the rights of the linguistic minority and would not support any republican constitution without concessions over language policy. The representatives of the Swedish People’s Party (with an electoral support of approximately 12 per cent) wished to preserve elements of the eighteenth-century Swedish constitution of 1772, which had remained in force in Finland under Russian rule. The history-political disputes of

the Finnish constitutional debates became particularly heated when Swedish and Finnish speaking nationalists (Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015) debated the articles of the constitution regarding Swedish and Finnish as “national languages”. The concept that had been used with reference to Finnish already in the mid-nineteenth century was introduced to the constitution at this time, probably in order to facilitate a favourable international solution on the possession of the Åland Islands (Engman 2016: 111, 389; Meinander 2016: 17).

We analysed the whole passages pertaining to the language paragraphs in the May-June 1919 debate. The bulk of the language debate focussed on the paragraphs dealing with the constitutional bilingualism of Finland (paragraph 14 in the final version), regional administration (paragraph 50) and universities (paragraph 77). It is particularly interesting to focus on the discursive constructions of belonging to a particular group (i.e. speakers of a language, people, or nation) and the distinctions between these. The meanings of *Swedish* and *Finnish* were ambiguous in the debate, and became clear only after the speakers started to take explicit stand in whether the labels referred to language, nation, people, or a political party. Expressing belonging to one of these groups became a clear divider in the debate as it unfolded.

The proposal for constitution was given to parliament on May 13, 1919. During the following month, it was debated in three readings, after it was turned down and moved to the next parliament (pending election in 1922) in the final vote on June 14. However, after that, a new process was initiated, and the new constitution was accepted on June 21, 1919, with the language paragraphs remaining similar to the ones analysed by us in the version overturned a week earlier. The language ideologies in the debate not only reflected earlier historical constructions on the status of the two languages, but can be traced all the way to their 21st century instantiations (see for instance Hult & Pietikäinen 2014; Pöyhönen & Saarinen 2015). What characterizes this particular debate as a nexus point was the social and political context of the post-Civil War Finnish society.

In our initial analysis of the debate, some actors stood out, and we focused our more detailed analysis particularly on the turns by them or presented as reactions to theirs. These actors represent the Finnish-speaking conservatives, the anti-elitist agrarians and the Swedish speaking academics.

*Emil Nestor Setälä* (National Coalition Party, NCP) was, in addition to being a politician and a legislator, a professor of Finnish language and literature at the University of Helsinki. His stand on the language issue was that nationality or nation should not be based on one language (Karlsson 2014). Having rejected a separate Swedish administration during the previous parliament, he was in favour of the *one nation, two languages* principle (Autio 1998). Setälä had proposed in April 1919 laws on the use of language in courts and on language knowledge demanded from civil servants (Engman 2016: 389).

*Antti Juutilainen* (Agrarian League, AgL) was a farmer, a journalist and editor of *Maakansa*, the organ of the AgL. Juutilainen represented the nationalist Finnish views to language policy and was willing to put the privileged status of the Swedish language as an elitist relic to an end.

*Hjalmar Procopé* was a representative of the Swedish People's Party (SPP), with a background as lawyer and diplomat, representing a moderate language ideology (Lemberg 1999) as Setälä's SPP counterpart.

*Ernst Estlander*, also from the SPP, was professor of history of law at the University of Helsinki. This well-known legalist represented a more extremist view of *two peoples, two languages*. He had earlier in 1919 proposed the establishment of the Swedish Assembly Folktinget, and put forward a proposal on a separate fundamental law on domestic languages (Vares 1999; Engman 2016: 389).

Next, we will move on to analyzing conceptualisations of language vs. people in the debate.

### 5.3. Finnish vs. Swedish as languages or nationalities?

The debate initially included turns where *Finnish* (people) and *Swedish* (people) were used interchangeably with *Finnish speaking* and *Swedish speaking*, reflecting an awareness of linguistic, political and ethnic layers in the discourse. The NCP representative Mikko Erich uses in the following excerpt both *ruotsalainen* (*Swede*, implying individual people) and *ruotsinkielinen* (*Swedish language*). However, linking the use of *ruotsinkielinen* with *kansanaines* (Swedish language element of population) implies that he was, while discussing speakers of two languages, indicating one people, and thus recycling the *two languages, one nation* discourse from the 19th century.

*"Minun ymmärtääkseni tämä ns. kielipykälä on saanut sellaisen muodon, että sen luulisi tyydyttävän kaikkia niitä ruotsalaisten vaatimuksia, joilla on hiukankin pohjaa ja perustusta oikeudessa ja kohtuudessa [...] teen sen siinä nimenomaisessa toivossa, että ruotsinkielinen kansanaines tulevalla toiminnallaan..."* (M. Erich, NCP. 3 June, 1919)<sup>1</sup>

[As I understand it, this so called language paragraph has in the report of the Grand Committee received a form which should satisfy all the **Swedes'** demands that have any justified foundation [...] I do it ([i.e. vote for the acceptance of the paragraph] in the specific hope that the **Swedish language element** of the population with its future actions...) [all translations and emphases are ours]

During the debate, however, the speakers started to explicate the terms they used about particular language group or belonging to a people, thus making visible the different language ideological layers in the debate. In that sense, various 19th century debates on the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Debate turns are referred to by first initial and last name of speaker, party abbreviation, and date.

between language, people, nation and national identity (see Blommaert 2006) collapsed in that particular discursive event.

Particularly Antti Juutilainen, the nationalist AgL member, seemed systematically to refer to the Swedish speakers as *Swedes* (people) and suggests that the question of two nationalities includes fanaticism particularly from the Swedish (speaking) side of the language divide:

*“Olen aikaisemmin mielipiteenäni esittänyt sen, että nyt vallalla oleva kiihkoilu, jota ruotsalaisten taholla tapahtuu, lyö leimansa hallitusmuodon ns. kielipykäliin ja erittäin juuri tämän kiihkoilun tuloksena on suuren valiokunnan mietinnön 14 §:ssä 1 momentti...”* (A. Juutilainen, AgL, 3 June, 1919)

[I have earlier stated as my opinion that the fanaticism from the part of the Swedes brands the so called language paragraphs of the constitution and that precisely because of this fanaticism the 14 § of the Grand Committee report has the subsection 1 [on two national languages]

Juutilainen appears during the debate systematically to refer to *Swedes* as people rather than Swedish speakers. His views and he as a person were, in turn, regularly mentioned in replies by members of SPP, and he thus appeared as one of their main antagonists.

Another explanation for the apparently interchangeable use of *Swedish* and *Finnish* denoting language or the speakers of the language is that the major parties in the debate have their background in the *Fennoman* and *Svecoman* movements of the 19th century. The parties that preceded the ones in the parliament of 1919 were labelled after language divides. *The Finnish Party* (*Suomalainen puolue*) was the predecessor of the conservative (but social reformist, as far as the advancement of the status of the Finnish language was concerned) and at the time mainly monarchist NCP. *The Young Finnish Party* (*Nuorsuomalainen puolue*) preceded the liberal, republican National Progressive Party. *The Swedish Party* (*Svenska partiet*) was the predecessor of the then conservative, mostly monarchist SPP.

However, as the debate proceeded, the participants began to explicate on the language/people divide, thus not just construing understandings of what constituted *people*, but also linking discourses of ethnicity with nineteenth and twentieth-century political action and the actors in those debates. In previous decades, particularly E.N. Setälä (NCP) and E. Estlander (SPP) had been active in the construction of those ideologies with their writings and political activity, and were now main actors in the 1919 parliamentary debate.

In the following, Hjalmar Procopé uses the term *finländare* (Finnish), which was used since the 1910s to denote all those living within the Finnish territory, without reference to language (Meinander 2016: 28). Estlander, in turn, refers explicitly to two nationalities, i.e. Finns and Swedes, taking a statist *citizen* rather than nationalist *people* as the common ground between Finns and Swedes in Finland:

*“[...] vi svenskar i Finland äro lika goda finländska medborgare som de finska finnarna”* (Hj. Procopé, SPP, 3 June 1919).

[us Swedes in Finland are equally good Finlandish citizens as the Finnish Finns]

*“[...] förhållandet mellan de två nationaliteterna [...]”* (E. Estlander, SPP, 3 June 1919)  
[... relations between the two nationalities ..]

It seems that particularly the representatives of the SPP used the words *Swedish* and *Finnish* to denote *people* (at some points even *nation*) in construing their argument for the two equal national languages. The Finnish language members, in turn, could use both *ruotsalainen* [Swedish] and *ruotsinkielinen* [Swedish speaking] interchangeably. It seems, however, that the nationalistic rhetoric of representatives such as Juutilainen (AgL) was more based on the construction of *ruotsalainen*, either in the meaning of individual Swedish speakers or Swedes as people, whereas those representing Setälä's *one people, two languages* principle tended gradually to refer explicitly to speakers of a language (*ruotsinkielinen/suomenkielinen*, i.e. Swedish language, Finnish language).

Particularly the SPP representatives (though with some exceptions) made references such as Estlander does in the following excerpt to the link between language and people in line with 19th-century nationalist on one hand and contemporary Wilsonian discourses on the right of national self-determination on the other. The Western great powers were simultaneously attempting to solve border disputes on the basis of linguistically defined ethnicity, one case including the Swedish speaking Åland Islands, and Estlander's turn recycles the “minority at risk” discourse. Juutilainen, in turn, refers to the elitist position of Swedish speakers and then implies that the Swedish speakers are, in fact, using their politically elitist position to take advantage of international law and diplomacy:

*”De kunna vara byggd och bägge nationaliteterna däri få enhanda bekräftelse på sin rätt [...] Det är därför vi svenskar icke kunna vara tillräckligt försiktiga”* (E. Estlander, SPP, 3 June, 1919) [...they could be built so that both nationalities could then have confirmation of their right [...] it is precisely why us Swedes cannot be careful enough.]

*”Pienenä vähemmistönä hallitsevat ja vallitsevat nämä maan valtavinta suomalaista kansainesta ja maan taloudellisia arvoja. Ja sitä valta-asemaa [...] he koittavat nyt liikellepanemallaan kiihotuksella kaikin puolin tukea pukemalla sen mahdollisimman kauniihin muotoihin, muotoihin, jolle he yrittävät saada yksinpä kansojen itsemääräämisoikeuden periaatteiden tukea ja tunnustusta [...]”* (A. Juutilainen, AgL, 3, June, 1919)

[As a small minority they now govern and reign over the most enormous Finnish popular element and the county's economic values. And that power position they now attempt to support in all possible ways with the instigation they have initiated, to turn

it into some beautiful configurations, configurations that they even try to win the support and recognition from the principles of self-determination of nations to ...]

The intertextual references to *Finns* and *Swedes* rather than *Finnish speakers* and *Swedish speakers* date back to the nineteenth century and the national romantic debates that linked language and nation essentially and interchangeably (Blommaert 2006). This kind of usage of a word that denotes *people* rather than *speakers of a language* seems to imply the existence of two different peoples in one country. This debate had culminated in different understandings of the relationship between language and nation in Finland; i.e. discourses of one language, one nation; two languages, one nation; and two languages, two nations. Each of these understandings recycled and reinforced their own physical understanding of the standing of peoples and languages in nineteenth and twentieth-century Finland. Usage of the semiotic resources of ethnicity rather than speakers of a particular language reinforces and recycles the national romantic notions of nationality through the speakers in the 1919 debate, linking the debate physically with ideologies of the previous century.

#### 5.4. Finns vs. Swedes as people

The ethnic reference to *Finns* and *Swedes* as people, introduced above, was reacted to in particular by E.N. Setälä; a member of parliament from the NCP and a former minister of education, but also a professor of Finnish who had written normative grammars of the Finnish language as well as contributed to the drafting of the first republican constitutional proposal. He was generally known as a language expert, and his position in this field not only worked for him but was also used against him in the debate. This mixing of the academic and political discourse cycles is visible for example in an exchange, where Setälä first criticized the usage of *Finnish* and *Swedish* as denoting separate peoples or nations, and promoted his view of the Finnish people and nation as one, even if the people might speak two languages:

*“Meidän valtiopäiväjärjestyksemme ei tunne mitään muuta kuin yhden Suomen kansan, det finska folket...”* (E. Setälä, NCP, 3 June 1919).

[Our Parliament Act does not recognize anything but one Finnish people]

Setälä not only defined Finnish people as bilingually Finnish and Swedish speaking, but also implied that the members (of the SPP) who defined Swedes and Finns as two separate peoples were not following the Parliamentary Act and thus were breaking parliamentary procedure. It seems that discourses of ethnicity and assumptions of appropriate behaviour in the Parliament intersect here, as Setälä appropriates his known expertise on both language (as a professor) and legislation (as a senior legislator and author of language legislation). The representatives of the SPP nevertheless continued to refer to the two groups as two nationalities or two peoples, as in Estlander's reference to organising the relationship between the two nationalities (*[...] förhållandet mellan de två nationaliteterna [...]*, Estlander 3 June 1919). A contributing factor

in this were the experiences of the Civil War, which reinforced among many SPP parliamentarians a willingness to distinguish themselves from that part of the Finnish language people who had contributed to the Red rising, disregarding the fact that many Swedish speakers had also been active in the Red side.

Hjalmar Procopé drew one of Setälä's multiple roles into the debate, explicitly mixing Setälä's academic and political roles. He drew a Finnish language example from Setälä's Finnish Grammar ("Ruotsalaista kansaa asuu Suomessa"; Swedish people live in Finland) that seemed to contradict Setälä's own reflection on the bilingual Finnish people and reinforce the construction of the Swedish speakers as a separate people as done by the SPP. It is notable and exceptional (a point also made explicitly by Procopé himself) that he made this statement in Finnish:

*"Muistaakseni löytyy muuten ed. Setälän kieliopissa seuraava termi: Ruotsalaista kansaa asuu Suomessa. [...] me tiedämme ja olemme selvillä siitä, että tämän maan kansa on valtiollisesti yksi, mutta että täällä on samalla kaksi kansallisuutta, jotka ovat yhdenvertaisia ja ja joiden oikeuksia on yhdenvertaisuuden pohjalla järjestettävä."* (Hj. Procopé, SPP 3 June 1919)

[As I recall, rep. Setälä's Grammar includes the following term: "Swedish people live in Finland" [...] We know and are aware that the people in this country are state-wise one, but that at the same time there are two nationalities that are equal and whose rights have to be guaranteed on an equal basis]

Procopé here brought Setälä as an academic into the discussion, undermining Setälä as a political authority by implying unreliability and instability of his political argument (see Ihalainen 2015 for a similar position of history professors, as constitutional arguments were promoted on the basis of competing interpretations on the past). Procopé thus based his political argument on an interpretation of Setälä's unreliability, bringing his historical body in the debate, while exceptionally using Finnish in the statement in order to emphasize his own flexibility and willingness to compromise. Setälä promptly denied remembering such an example, having thus to (presumably unwillingly) react to his own grammarian's role. He responded by saying that if such an example did exist, he had referred to another meaning of the word *kansa*; i.e. *allmoge* (common people):

*"Ed. Procopélle tahtoisin sanoa, etten todellakaan muista, onko tämäntapainen esimerkki jossain minun oppikirjassani, mutta jos niin, on, jota en tällä kertaa voi todentaa, niin siinä ilmeisesti sana "kansa" on käytetty eräässä toisessa merkityksessä, mikä tällä sanalla myöskin on, nimittäinen merkityksessä "yhteisen kansan" eli "allmoge".* (E. Setälä, NCP, 3 June, 1919)

[To rep. Procopé I would like to say that I really do not remember, if such an example exists in one of my textbooks, but if it is so, which I cannot verify at the moment, then



the word *people* has been used in another meaning that the word also has, namely the meaning of *common people* or *allmoge*]

In this key exchange on the exact and explicated meaning of *people* and *nation*, we see how past and contemporary political discourse cycles, the historical bodies, and interaction rules of the parliament intersect. While the meanings of *people* can be either political or ethnic in most Western European languages, the Finnish homonymy of the *people* and *nation* made the different interpretations possible but also forced the debaters to explicate on their stands on the issue. As Procopé refers to Setälä's academic role in a political context, he implies that Setälä is unreliable as a political debater. Procopé, in other words, implies that Setälä uses purposefully different arguments in political and academic sites, which consequently would render him an unreliable politician in this context. However, the reference to academic world is also understandable as professors participated actively in daily politics during the first decades of the twentieth century.

### 5.5. Construing "victimhood nationalisms"

After the debate had made explicit the potential pitholes in the concepts of *Finnish/ Swedish*, it started to turn towards what is referred to as *nationalism* and *nationalistic tendencies* of the participants, as shown in the following examples by SPPs Colliander and NCP's Arajärvi:

*"Egendomligt är det att vid denna lantdag de nationalistiska strävandena skola taga sig så många olika former, då de söka skyla det enda verkliga, som ligger under dem [...] Det blir nu Finlands socialdemokraters sak att giva herrar nationalister i Finland en lektion i rätta sättet att uppträda i nationalitetsfrågor."* (R. Colliander, SPP, 3 June, 1919)

[It is strange that at this parliamentary session the nationalistic aspirations should take so many different forms as they try to cover the only real one under them. [...] It is now up to Finland's social democrats to give the gentlemen nationalists in Finland a lesson in the right way to perform in questions of nationality (*nationalitet*).]

*Mitä suomalaisten natsionalismiin tulee, niin se tietää minun nähdäkseni sitä, että se nyt tahtoo suistaa sen natsionalismin, jota ruotsalainen yläluokka sen keskuudessa on harjoittanut ja yhä edelleen tahtoo harjoittaa [...]* (J. Arajärvi, NCP, 3 June, 1919)

[When it comes to Finnish nationalism, then as to my understanding this means that it tries to derail the nationalism that the Swedish upper class has practiced and continuously wants to practice among it [...]

The successors of the former Swedish and Finnish parties were here accusing each other of nationalism in highly pejorative terms. Some Swedish language members felt that Swedish was under threat by the Finnish language bourgeois parties. The social democrats, in turn, in their willingness to value bilingualism, became allies to the SPP in spite of the SPPs previous views of the unreliability of the socialists. On the Finnish language side, accusations of nationalism

of Swedish speakers was linked with discourses of the traditionally privileged, elitist status of the Swedes (disregarding the role of the Swedish speaking common people), thereby linking the social class discourses to those of language and ethnicity. Particularly Juutilainen (AgL) profited in attacking the Swedes based on disproportionate property ownership and social elitism. Representatives of the SPP, in turn, labelled him as a fanatic Finnish nationalist all during the debate. On one occasion, SPP's Colliander notably called Juutilainen "Purischkewitsch" in a reference to a well-known pro-Russian nationalist famous for his exclamation *Finis Finlandiae* (End to Finland); such a grave breach of parliamentary procedure that the Speaker formally reprimanded Colliander for offending a fellow member.

In these exchanges, two competing "victimhood nationalisms" (Lim 2010) intersect. The Finnish speakers recycled historical discourses of repression by Swedish speakers, thus legitimizing Finnish nationalism in opposing Swedish socio-ethnic and economic repression. The Swedish speakers, in turn, played on the minority language at risk discourse, appealing to the post-World War I diplomatic discourse on national self-determination; an argument criticized particularly by Juutilainen (see above).

Setälä closed the debate by presenting his view on nationalism and the relationship between language and people that he had already earlier presented in writing (see Setälä 1915 as cited by Karlsson 2014). He combined conservative values with social reformism typical of the nineteenth-century Fennoman movement:

*"Natsionalisteiksi katson minä puolestani ne, jotka eivät tyydy kielten todelliseen tasa-arvoon, vaan vaativat jotakin enempää taikka vaativat aitauksia rakennettavaksi maan eri kieliainesten välillä, jotta keinotekoisella erotettaisiin maan kieliainekset toisistaan [...] ei Suomessa ole muita natsionalisteja kuin ruotsinkieliset ja erittäinkin ruotsinkielisten yläluokka. Tämäntapaista suomenkielistä natsionalismia ei tällä hetkellä ole olemassa."* (E. Setälä, NCP. 3 June, 1919)

[As nationalist will I understand those who do not satisfy themselves with the real equality of languages, but demand something more or demand fences to be built between different language elements in the country, in order to artificially separate the different language elements from each other [...] there are no other nationalists in Finland but the Swedish speakers and in particular the Swedish speaking upper class. A similar kind of Finnish language nationalism does not exist at the moment.]

As a member of the Finnish speaking majority, Setälä denies the existence of nationalistic tendencies among the Finnish speakers, thus implying that nationalism is something negative. The debaters did not explicitly link the Finnish language policy conflict with the wave of democratisation and liberal internationalism that followed the First World War, but the implication might be that the inclusion of the people in politics implied complete equality in language policy as well (more on this in Ihalainen 2017).

## 6. Conclusions: intersections of people, nations and languages

This analysis of the constitutional debate demonstrates the interconnectedness of scales (Scollon & Scollon 2004; Hult 2015) of parliamentary procedure; historical views on language and ethnicity; political crises; discourses of economic and social distinction; and individual actors' roles in the construction of Finnish bilingual language policy. The language policy discourses that emerge in this nexus point during the post-Civil War parliamentary session are historically and spatially multi-layered and highly complex, and increase our understanding of power struggles concerning various political scales. The Finnish constitutional crisis had been deepened by a confrontational political debate that confused ideological, social and language policy aspects already during 1917 and increasingly so as the political situation accelerated – discursively and in transnational interaction with revolutionary and reactionary forces – to the level of a violent conflict in the form of a civil war in 1918.

The Civil War provided many Swedish speakers with evidence supporting their previous fears about the consequences of the democracy of universal suffrage, majority parliamentarism, and social mobility not only for private property and social order but also for minority rights and potentially to the future of the Swedish cultural inheritance in Finland. Their discursive conceptualisations of this crisis explains their reactionary constitutional policies and language policy aiming at the establishment of two national languages that some Finnish speakers conceptualised pejoratively as nationalism. Both sides of the debate carried on a set of nationalistic discourses, derived and recycled from the 19th century and reactivated by post-war political developments. These discourses reinforced the ideas of national self-determination on one hand and the opening of the politics to the people at large on the other. Indeed, the final language paragraphs of the Finnish republican constitution of 1919 can be seen as a further set of minority provisions needed in search for reconstruction of normalcy after a crisis.

The parliamentary debates on language policy construction make visible strong ideological links between people and language, and belonging to various ethnic, social and ideological groups. A particular trait of the Finnish debate was the necessity to discuss language and nation from the point of view of not one but two (national) languages, which breaks the tradition of construing national identity by construing a link between (one) language and (one) nation within one territory. (See Blommaert 2006.) At the opening of the parliamentary debate, words referring to (Finnish or Swedish) language and people were often used interchangeably even within a single intervention but a more explicit debate later on made visible their interconnectedness.

Arguments based on nationalism revealed older confrontations connected to class tensions and competing ideologies rising from diverse economic and social backgrounds among Swedish and Finnish speakers, reinforced by the experiences of the Civil War and seen as an aspect of the choice between a monarchical and republican constitution. Debates on *language, the*

*people/nation* and *nationality* recycled trajectories from nineteenth-century and post-war international and national discourses on language and ethnicity. Particularly Estlander and Juutilainen participated in the *two people* construction, with Juutilainen additionally taking strong sides in the debate of the (Swedish speaking) elite vs (Finnish speaking common) people; a familiar dynamic still in the present day Finnish language debates (see Ihalainen & al. 2011; Hult & Pietikäinen 2014). Political and academic layers, in turn, intersect particularly in the exchanges between Procopé and Setälä, and the extra-parliamentary activities of university professors were happily politicised by opponents in the debate. Overall, language policy appears closely interconnected with long-term social, economic, political and ideological tensions, recent national experiences, and ongoing diplomatic developments. The formulation of the new constitution opened these discourses to the public view. Our analyses of more recent debates, such as government programmes between 1917-2015 (Pöyhönen & Saarinen 2015), or the revision of the Finnish constitution and Language Act in the turn of the Millennium (Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015), show that discourses of one versus two peoples and nations are still being recycled in a surprisingly similar manner almost a hundred years after the first constitutional language debates took place in Finland.

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