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University language policies: How does Finnish constitutional bilingualism meet the needs for internationalization in English?

### **Abstract**

In this article, we discuss the position of Finnish constitutional bilingualism in higher education in the context of internationalization in English, by focusing on two universities: one dominantly monolingual (Finnish), one dominantly bilingual (Finnish–Swedish); in addition, both teach in English. This article investigates how discourses around language choices (language policy documents, selected staff and student interviews) construe these universities as monolingual, bilingual or trilingual, and what these discourses say about the universities as organizations themselves. Results suggest that, although lack of clarity remains regarding language choices in many practical situations, Finnish and English are seen as self-evident primary languages of the universities; Swedish, as the third language, occupies a more contested place.

### **Keywords:**

language policy in higher education, Finnish, Swedish, English, higher education policy

## 1. Introduction: Internationalization, English and local languages

Internationalization has become one of the key targets in the strategies of Western European universities, but there seems to be a discrepancy between internationalization as a strategic goal, and the ways in which it is operationalized into activities at the institutional level (cf. De Wit, 2011; Saarinen & Taalas, 2017). Particularly in Nordic countries, higher education internationalization policies have resulted in setting up English-medium degree programmes, mostly for the purposes of encouraging international student mobility (see Airey et al. 2017; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014); indeed, it seems that, at least in Nordic contexts, internationalization is often operationalized as English-medium study (see Lauridsen, 2013; Saarinen & Taalas, 2017). Motivations for such programmes have often been linked to concepts and practices of enhancement of multilingualism, multiculturalism and intercultural competence (Saarinen & Nikula, 2013). Politically, however, internationalization is often linked to questions of *quality*: internationalization is seen to both enhance quality and require it. This rationale may be presented as self-evident and unproblematic, but has recently been questioned: for instance, the relationship between the amount of English-medium teaching and universities' world ranking do not support this rationale (Hultgren, 2014), and discourses of quality, transnationalisation and linguistic diversity in Higher Education often throw up conflicting interests (Fabricius et al., 2017).

This article focuses on the position of local languages in the context of increasing English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education. The relationship between English and the local language has been scrutinized increasingly in recent years in Nordic settings. For instance, "Language and the international university", in *International Journal of Sociolinguistics* (edited by Haberland & Mortensen, 2012), *English in Nordic Universities: Ideologies and practices* (edited by Hultgren, Gregersen & Thøgersen, 2014), and "Language" Indexing Higher Education Policy in *Higher Education* (edited by Saarinen, 2017) systematically review English at Nordic universities.

Bi- and multilingual higher education with English as an additional language has been studied less, which calls for greater awareness of language policies and practices in bi- and multilingual settings (for one of the few studies on this in Finland, see Lindström & Sylvén,

2014; for the Basque case, see Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra 2013). In this article, we analyse how different stakeholders at two Finnish universities construe themselves as monolingual, bilingual or trilingual organizations. We analyse these two universities as monolingual or bilingual organizations as they dialogically construe their organizational identities through language policy. Following Smith (2001), we thus analyse how language policies (both as texts and as their reconceptualization by the actors) “mediate, regulate and authorize” (Smith, 2001, 160) the actors’ activities in the universities, thus objectifying the organizations and making them exist in the context of internationalization in English.

## **2. Purpose and data**

In this article, we analyse and discuss the position of Finnish constitutional bilingualism in higher education in the context of internationalization in English, by focusing on two case universities: one monolingual Finnish university (University of Jyväskylä) and one officially bilingual Finnish–Swedish university (Aalto University). We are particularly interested in how the organizations are construed as monolingual, bilingual or trilingual in language policy documents and in selected interviews (from administrators, teaching staff and students), and consequently, what this tells us about the organizations.

The two case universities have different backgrounds and histories. *Aalto University* is the result of a recent (2010) amalgamation of two bilingual Finnish–Swedish universities, Helsinki University of Technology and the University of Art and Design, and one monolingual Finnish university, Helsinki School of Economics. While the amalgamation is recent, the three institutions trace their histories to the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. University of Jyväskylä, in turn, is a monolingual Finnish university that traces its origins to a former teacher training seminary in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Both universities have recently drafted (Aalto, 2010) or revised (Jyväskylä, 2015a) their official language policies. Both also have action plans (Aalto 2012; Jyväskylä 2015b) designed to operationalize the strategic documents into action. In addition to analyzing

these documents, we conducted interviews with staff and students.

Our research questions are:

1. How are national languages and English construed in the language policies of two universities: Jyväskylä and Aalto?
2. How do students and staff construe their needs for the national languages and English?
3. How do formal language policies and staff and student responses to these policies interrelate, at both Universities?

Our data includes

- National language legislation and higher education legislation
- Language policy documents and action plans from both universities (N=4)
- Interviews with administrative and academic staff and students (Aalto N= 20, Jyväskylä N = 11)

The focus of all interviews was internationalization and role of the national languages Finnish and Swedish in relation to English. The interviews did not follow identical patterns at both universities; given the greater language complexity at Aalto university, the authors decided to gather more data from this institution. Treatment of Aalto thus required that the combination of Finnish – Swedish – English had to be dealt with, while in Jyväskylä the combination of languages included mainly Finnish – English. Consequently, the number of interviewees in Aalto is bigger, and the treatment in analysis also slightly more extensive.

The duration of the interviews was 30-75 minutes, making a total of 25 hours and 50 minutes of data (Jyväskylä interview data 7 hours 20 minutes and Aalto interview data 18 h 30 minutes). All staff interviews in Jyväskylä were conducted in Finnish, whereas two of the student interviews took place in Finnish and two in English. At Aalto University, the

interviews were mostly conducted in Finnish, with the exception of two Swedish interviews (one student, one academic staff member) and two English interviews (one student, one management interviewee). The language policy documents were obtained from university websites (Jyväskylä 2015a; Aalto 2010), as were the language policy action plans (Jyväskylä 2015b; Aalto 2012).

<b>Category</b>	<b>Aalto University</b>	<b>University of Jyväskylä</b>
Academic staff	8	4
Administrative / managerial staff	7 - 4 managerial - 3 administrative	3 - 2 managerial - 1 administrative
Students	5 - 4 domestic - 1 international	4 - 2 domestic - 2 international
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 1. Distribution of interviews by university and staff category.

We applied discourse analysis as a research method, focusing particularly on the discursive operationalisations (Saarinen, 2008) of a desired language policy in the two universities. By discursive operationalisations we mean the textual ways in which a particular action is construed as a desired policy, i.e. the ways in which a particular policy is persuasively construed and presented as desirable (Sbisá, 1999). We are particularly interested in ways in which national languages are discursively construed as a kind of social action (van Leeuwen, 1995; Wodak & van Leeuwen, 2002), leading into ideological constructs that shape our understanding of the society. Following Mayring (2000), we deductively looked for selected keywords or categories relevant to our focus. We tagged mentions of particular languages, thus creating categories with references to particular languages. These were

Finland's national languages *Finnish* and *Swedish*, as well as *English*, as a language specifically named as the language of internationalization in the language policy documents. We then continued to analyse the discursive operationalisations of these languages by focusing on the activities and actions construed around the mentions of these languages (van Leeuwen, 1995). By doing so, we were able to focus on a set of languages, while allowing us simultaneously to observe the relevant organizational activities as discussed by our interviewees and mentioned in the document data.

We approach language policy as multi-sited, meaning that we acknowledge the different actors and levels in the language policy making as having their own interests and effects in the policies (Halonen & al., 2015). This implies that, for us, language policy is not top-down or bidirectional, but in fact “rhizomatic” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987): the discursive operationalisations or “activities” are seen as simultaneous, multi-sited and interconnected, i.e. formed in a non-linear, rhizomatic way. This enables us to take a non-hierarchical approach to our data and enter the analysis from any direction or entry-point. Our data reflects this multi-sitedness in its representation of the different levels (national, institutional, individual) of higher education language policy. Our aim is thus not to analyse the linear formation of a language policy (either top-down or bottom-up), but to investigate how institutional language policies and their individual stakeholders' stances towards them, together construe these universities as places of multilingual practice.

### **3. Internationalization and language policy in Finnish higher education**

Finnish language policy and the constitutional bilingualism of the country is built on relatively extreme forms of legalism and constitutionalism. The strict observance of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Swedish constitution was seen as protection against Russification in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, even under Russian rule (1809 – 1917), the official languages of the Grand Duchy of Finland were defined first as Swedish and then, after 1863, as Finnish, as opposed to Russian (Ihalainen & Saarinen, 2015; Lähteenmäki & Pöyhönen, 2015).

In the Finnish Constitution of 1919 and the revision of 2000, Finnish and Swedish are defined as *the national languages*. The Language Act of 2004 (originally 1922) further stipulates how the national languages and other languages shall be used in particular situations. Language legislation, as realized in the Language Act of 2004, ensures “the constitutional right of every person to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts and other authorities.” The implication thus is that the individuals are monolingually Finnish or Swedish, and that there are no other “languages of one’s own” (implying mother tongues) in Finland. Minority language speakers (Sámi, Romani, and sign language) are given particular rights in the Constitution without, however, explicitly naming these as minority languages, but rather on the speakers’ position as indigenous (Sámi) or cultural (Romani) minorities, or based on disability (sign language). It is important to understand the background of Finnish language legislation as guaranteeing societal, rather than individual bilingualism (see Ihalainen & Saarinen, 2015; Pöyhönen & Saarinen, 2015.)

Language policies in Finnish higher education reflect the language legislation of the country. Higher education institutions are by legislation either monolingually Finnish, monolingually Swedish or bilingually Finnish–Swedish. With the recent legislative reforms, higher education institutions in Finland have moved towards more relaxed form of language steering, compared to countries such as Iceland and Norway, which have introduced more protectionist regulation of the national language at the universities (Saarinen & Taalas, 2017). At the university level, Nordic countries appear to share a similar need to design language policies and other guidelines for language use, usually motivated by the increased use of English in internationalization. In most cases, it seems that the relationship between using national languages and English has been resolved in a pragmatic manner, by focusing on some form of parallel use of the national language(s) and English, although often without explicitly using the term *parallel languages* (Hultgren, 2016; Saarinen & Taalas, 2017). It is noteworthy that language regulation of Finnish higher education has, since the 1990s, become laxer over time, a gradual development since 1995, Finnish higher education legislation has increased institutional decision making powers



regarding the use of languages other than Finnish or Swedish. This is relatively exceptional in the Nordic context, where the legislation – where it exists – has generally led to tighter protection of the local or national language and control of the use of English (Saarinen & Taalas, 2017). Recent developments, however, suggest a U-turn in Finland, in that the Government is turning towards more neo-national forms of higher education language policies, paying more attention to national languages, in reaction to the increased use of English (Saarinen, accepted).

#### **4. From policy text to desired action: Analysis of university-level language policy documents**

In this section, we analyse the policy documentation from Aalto and Jyväskylä, looking especially at the discursive construction of the national language(s) and the language(s) of internationalization in a formally monolingual (Finnish, at Jyväskylä) and formally bilingual (Finnish–Swedish, at Aalto) environment. We analyse the uses of the terms *Finnish*, *Swedish*, and *English*, and see how these are contextualized against *national* and *international* in the language policy documents and action plans of the two universities.

**Aalto University** has an official language policy (*Language Guidelines*) as of 2010 and a plan of implementation as of 2013 for a five-year period (2013–2017), currently under revision for a new five-year period (2018–2022).

The Aalto language policy applies to the domains of *Research*, *Studying*, *Teaching*, *Services and internal communication*, and *Communication*. In the policy, Finnish, Swedish and English are defined as the working languages of the university. These are also the only specific languages mentioned in both the language policy and the action plan; no other languages are mentioned. Below, we discuss the position of Finnish, Swedish and English to the different domains of language use in Aalto's policy documents.

The national languages Finnish and Swedish are operationalized in all the five main

contexts of language use as defined in the policy and the action plan: research, studying, teaching, services and internal communication, and communication. English, on the other hand, is not operationalized as systematically in all the contexts of language use. The terms that are used are *international*, *multilingual* and *multicultural*, but without an explicit reference to English in particular. This is typical of Finnish language education policy, where English is indexed with words such as *international* or *foreign* (Saarinen, 2012).

Interestingly, *studying* and *teaching* seem to be construed differently in the language policy. All three working languages are mentioned in the domain of *studying*, whereas in *teaching*, the focus and concern is on English Medium Instruction and the competence of English. The national languages, in turn, are brought up only with reference to the study opportunities of international staff members. In the section on studying, on the other hand, the focus is more on the student's possibilities and options in language use. Thus, this discourse appears to place more responsibility on the student, as the clearly weaker emphasis on languages in teaching makes the responsibility of the university somewhat vaguer.

Similarly, in the context of research, only the national languages are mentioned; English is not referred to in any way. This is interesting insofar as the dominant language of research at Aalto University is, in practice, English. The finding may imply that English is a self-evident language of research, and thus there is no need to define its use. A related explanation for the explicit mention of the national languages in the context of research is that they are felt to be in need of protection against the increased use of English.

Table 2 summarizes the domains of Finnish, Swedish and English in the Aalto University language policy.

Table 2. Summary of language domains in Aalto University language policy.

Context of use in language policy	<b>Finnish</b>	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>

<i>Research</i>	<p>Accessibility for national students and general audiences</p> <p>Terminology development</p>	<p>Accessibility for national students and general audiences</p> <p>Terminology development</p>	(Not explicitly mentioned)
<i>Studying</i>	<p>Bachelor's degrees in Finnish</p> <p>International students given the opportunity to study Finnish</p>	<p>Bachelor's degrees in Swedish (excluding the field of business)</p> <p>Opportunity to use Swedish in exams, coursework and thesis during bachelor's degree studies</p> <p>Designated person responsible for studies in Swedish</p> <p>International students given the opportunity to study Swedish</p>	<p>Majority of master's degrees in English</p> <p>Part of bachelor's degree can be in English (depending on the teaching staff)</p> <p>Designated person responsible for studies in English</p>
<i>Teaching</i>	<p>International staff members given the opportunity to study Finnish</p>	<p>International staff members give the opportunity to study Swedish</p>	<p>Pedagogical support for teaching in English</p>
<i>Services and internal</i>	<p>Services and internal</p>	<p>Services and internal</p>	<p>Services and internal</p>

<i>communication</i>	communication for students and staff	communication for students	communication for students and staff
<i>Communication</i>	The language of external national communication	The language of external national communication with the specified target group of the Swedish-speaking minority	The language of external international communication  Can also be used in external national communication

We move next to discuss the formal language policy of the University of Jyväskylä. University of Jyväskylä was one of the first, if not the first European university to have an explicitly drafted and documented local language policy in 2004. Since then, the policy has been updated (in 2012 and 2015) with an action plan linked to it in order to promote and monitor its implementation. The follow-up procedures for 2015–2016 had just been completed as this article was being written.

The University of Jyväskylä language policy is divided into three parts: the university as a working environment, as a study environment, and as a societal agent. While the Jyväskylä policy has in its background the growing demands for internationalization, as is typical of language policies in the Nordic universities (Lauridsen, 2013; Saarinen & Taalas, 2017), it takes as its starting point the role of the university as “traditionally Finnish but multilingual and multicultural” (in 2012, in place of *multicultural* there was *international*). The reference to “traditionally Finnish” refers to the original role of the University of Jyväskylä as the first Finnish-language teacher seminary, founded in 1863 in a smallish Central Finnish town that also hosted the first Finnish-language secondary schools. Thus, *national* appears to have an exceptionally topical role in the Jyväskylä policy.

While the Finnish language tradition of the university is emphasized in the beginning sections of the Jyväskylä language policy (2015), the document continues with a more practical view of the languages. The working languages of the university are explicated as Finnish and English, and the special role of English is highlighted as it is presented separately from “other languages”, as in: [...] *This includes fostering knowledge of the Finnish language and Finnish culture, diversifying communication skills in the second national language, English and other languages, as well as promoting cultural awareness and competence* (Jyväskylä Language Policy 2015: 4). The special role of Finnish is, however, visible in that international employees are required to acquire at least “developing basic skills” (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR) level A2.2) within three years of the beginning of employment. Although the use of languages other than English and Finnish are encouraged in the policy, operationalizations in “other” languages are not mentioned, with the exception of an entry in the Action plan (2015): *Faculties and units are encouraged to recognise the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students and teachers and to use these in teaching*. Even here, languages are not explicitly named.

In administrative contexts, English is named (with one exception), but only together with Finnish, as in *All internal communication concerning the staff is available in Finnish and English so that at least a summary of Finnish material is available in English* (Jyväskylä Action Plan 2015: 3). The only exception is the explicitly stated language requirement of administrative staff: *Employees in administration and support services are required to have English proficiency suitable for their duties* (Jyväskylä Action Plan 2015, 1).

In teaching contexts, English is specifically mentioned when international study is discussed, e.g. when the English proficiency goals of students participating in English becomes an issue. Other languages are implied in mentions to *Multifaceted work-related language and cultural studies*, but not named.

Swedish is only explicitly mentioned once, in an administrative context, referring to the legislative right of individuals to use Finnish or Swedish in administrative matters.

However, languages other than Finnish and English are not operationalized in the language

policy document. The mention of Swedish as a “second national language” takes place in the context of the university as a learning environment, “*fostering knowledge of Finnish language and culture, diversifying communication skills in second national language, English and other languages*”. The phrase “second national language”<sup>1</sup> is interesting in+ this context, as it refers to the language as an educational and legislative obligation rather than as a named and needed language (see Pöyhönen & Saarinen, 2015, for a discussion on Finnish constitutional bilingualism).

When the language of publications and research is discussed, Finnish is the only language mentioned explicitly, and other languages only in the context of publishing: *[The] University’s publications meet high scientific and linguistic standards in Finnish as well as in other languages. The University promotes the development of Finnish as a language of science.* This is reminiscent of the Aalto policy (see above) and implies that the policies express concern over the position of Finnish in research.

Table 3 summarizes the University of Jyväskylä language policy and action plan according to the three-part structure of the policy in relation to Finnish, Swedish and English in the language policy documents.

Table 3. Summary of language domains in University of Jyväskylä language policy.

Context of use in language policy	<b>Finnish</b>	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>University as a working environment</i>	<p><b>Policy:</b> Finnish skills of international staff are developed</p> <p><b>Action plan:</b> International employees required to have at least CEFR A2.2 within three</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> Swedish not mentioned explicitly</p>	<p><b>Action plan:</b> administrative and support personnel required to have English proficiency suitable for their duties. University pedagogical studies in Finnish and</p>

	<p>years</p> <p>University pedagogical studies in Finnish and English</p> <p>Key documents, forms etc. required for work available in Finnish and English</p> <p>University terminology updated in both Finnish and English in an online dictionary</p>		<p>English</p> <p>Key documents, forms etc. required for work available in Finnish and English</p> <p>University terminology updated in both Finnish and English in an online dictionary</p>
<p><i>University as a learning environment</i></p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> Fostering knowledge of Finnish language and culture; diversifying communication skills in second national language, English and other languages</p> <p>Finnish-medium teaching fosters high standards in the language and promotes the development of multifaceted interactive skills in students</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> Fostering knowledge of Finnish language and culture, diversifying communication skills in second national language, English and other languages</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> Fostering knowledge of Finnish language and culture; diversifying communication skills in second national language, English and other languages</p> <p>The university offers high-level, internationally competitive English-medium education.</p> <p><b>Action plan:</b></p> <p>Students selected for English-medium degree programmes required to demonstrate good English proficiency</p>

<i>University as societal agent</i>	<p><b>Policy:</b> The university's publications meet high scientific and linguistic standards in Finnish as well as in other languages. The University promotes the development of Finnish as a language of science</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> Swedish not mentioned explicitly</p>	<p><b>Policy:</b> English not mentioned explicitly</p>
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To sum up, both universities stress the national language(s), particularly in research. We observe that in both cases, research and research publication is increasingly conducted in English, and that national languages (Finnish in the case of Jyväskylä, Finnish and Swedish in the case of Aalto) seem to be mentioned specifically in order to protect the national languages in increasingly English language environments. In the case of Aalto, Swedish appears to receive additional attention as the de facto minority language.

## 5. Staff and student interviews

We shall next move to the analysis of staff and student interviews from the point of view of how the use of different languages is operationalized in them.

### 5.1 Aalto University staff and student interviews

The most common shared observation among the interviewees at this university is the rapid



increase in the use of English. Many see this as a natural result of the recruitment of international faculty, and partly also because of the increasing amount of international students. The staff members have witnessed a change from a predominantly monolingual Finnish working environment into a more Finnish-English bilingual environment. The students, on the other hand, have more and more studies in English, and decreasing opportunities to study in Finnish or Swedish.

The staff members need good working proficiency in English. Managers consider it also important to raise the profile of the international faculty, and to include all stakeholders in discussions by using a common language - this common language is English, unless stated otherwise. In meetings and discussions, many staff members apply an English-only procedure, or Finnish-English bilingual mode. In the bilingual mode, written materials are often in English, and people can use either language when speaking. Currently, service staff do not necessarily have a sufficient proficiency level in English, and according to management interviews, some members of service staff had reported on their concern about working in English. The proficiency in English among the service staff is, however, likely to improve, mostly due to retirement and new recruitments. Many staff members consider the bilingual mode in services heavy and expensive, e.g. translation services for official documentation. As an answer to this problem, managers suggest prioritization of translation, while making sure that all/most documents and process descriptions are available in English, so that international staff know how the Finnish academic administrative and decision-making system works, and can participate better in these processes. The integration of the international faculty is considered essential for equal administrative workload distribution.

Students observe a clear increase in the use of English, both in the master's and bachelor's degree studies. The use of English in bachelor programmes is described as varied, depending on discipline: business and technology have adopted English more rapidly, whereas the fields of art, design and architecture still use predominantly Finnish, with students reporting to have little control over this development. The asystemic increase of English is subscribed to priorities of faculties, and members of staff within them. In some

teaching situations, the use of English is described as unnecessary or artificial, e.g. both staff and students share Finnish as first language. Students also report that staff's proficiency of English varies greatly, and creating difficulties learning and communication problems. Students also point out that one of the arguments often used to justify the increase of English at bachelor level is to improve students' proficiency in English in preparation for further studies, but they point out that, to achieve this goal, they would need further pedagogical guidance alongside English medium instruction: Language 'immersion' alone, without such pedagogical support, would not automatically deliver the desired outcome results. Thus, students describe the risk of under-developing their academic and professional English skills (cf. Söderlundh, 2010: 172-177). In addition, students emphasize the importance of multilingualism: English is seen as a core skill, but it is not enough on its own. The students conceptualize their future working life as global rather than local, and consider skills in several languages necessary to achieve this.

Staff express similar challenges when using English as the language of instruction. Although English has long been the main language of research, there is no direct link from research in English to teaching in English. Like students, the Finnish staff point out that it is not easy to switch the language of teaching from Finnish to English, and teachers need support for teaching through English (see also a similar point in the Jyväskylä interviews).

The rapid increase of English is at least in part due to unclear practices regarding the use of the national languages Finnish and Swedish. Managers in particular pointed out that, if Aalto University is to become a truly international university, English should be the main working language. The current trilingual (Finnish, Swedish and English) and bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) systems are seen as expensive, and potentially confusing. All staff pointed out the need for more detailed guidelines as to when to work trilingually, when bilingually in Finnish and English, and when only in English (see Lindström & Sylvén, 2014). At no point do staff cite examples of actual bi- or trilingual practices, but many point out that it is unclear whether the use of the national languages in teaching advantages their career paths; in contrast, the use of English was perceived to be a clear merit to their career.

International staff and international students are encouraged to gain (at least) a basic proficiency in one of the national languages. Finnish is the preferred language as it is the majority language both in the university and in the surrounding society. Studying a national language is considered important mainly for cultural and social reasons. For studies and work, English is sufficient. However, international staff and students have very limited opportunity to use Finnish at work due to proficiency, and thus revert to English.

The role of the Swedish -de jure a national language but de facto a minority language- is perceived as confusing, and difficult to describe. One reason mentioned is the increasing Swedish/Finnish bilingualism among Swedish-first language students: they tend to prefer Finnish or English, especially with staff. In student service situations, Swedish is still considered important. Here, managers and other staff members refer to legislation and the official bilingual status of the university. De facto, however, Swedish-speaking students seem to mostly switch to Finnish, even in service encounters. There is an interest among particularly service staff to use Swedish. For a Finnish-first language person to switch to Swedish is perceived to be very hard, and/or unusual, and some Swedish-first language person conversing with a Finnish-first language person might choose English rather than Finnish in such situations, especially if their Finnish proficiency is not fluent. In such situations, the staff should refrain from judging the student's Finnish, or choice of English, and respect the student's choice. In student service, there are no reports of parallel use of Finnish and Swedish.

Awareness of the needs of Swedish-speaking students among staff is generally reported as poor. It is thought that Swedish-speaking students may use a bilingual mode, or Swedish only, to enhance their Finnish proficiency, but evidence regarding reasons for code choice (whether Finnish or Swedish) is rather sketchy, and often relies on individual qualitative accounts rather than systematic analyses. For example, when registering for an exam, students may choose the preferred language for the exam questions, and may ask any questions in their language of school education (often their first language of the student). However, feedback from Swedish-speaking students is that the exam questions in Swedish

can be of poor quality and difficult to understand, i.e. “Google-translated” questions (see Moring et al., 2013 for a similar student experience at the University of Helsinki). A further example reported in our interviews is a supervision situation where the student’s preferred language is Swedish, the thesis is in Swedish, and supervisions are carried out in Swedish-Finnish bilingual mode, on the initiative of the student. However, such a student may be perceived as difficult or demanding. Participants also said that insisting on Swedish may also create communication breakdown, affect assessment, or the student’s access to supervision. In sum, the interview data suggests that initiatives for using Swedish needs to come primarily from students with a preference for Swedish- these, in turn, quickly learn which (few) faculty members may be and/or willing and able to use Swedish.

In conclusion, both staff and students share the following three issues, perceived as central in the university’s language situation: the increase of English, the unclear practices in the use of the national languages, and the vulnerable situation of Swedish. Almost all stakeholders emphasize the trilingual status of Aalto University, but at the same time express concerns for the national languages.

## **5.2 University of Jyväskylä staff and student interviews**

The University of Jyväskylä interviews include stakeholders in administration, teaching and research, and students. The main topics rise from the specific role of Finnish and the seemingly unproblematic nature of English.

Interviewees discuss the particular position of Finnish in the University of Jyväskylä language policy against backdrop of the university’s history. The university was founded as a teacher training seminary in 1863. When the university celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2013, its language policy was revised. One interviewee (teaching and research staff, in a management position during the interview) points out that language policy should be more than a vehicle for internationalization, and suggests that the importance of Finnish in the policy can be traced back to the role of Finnish in the teacher seminary, i.e. the institutions’

history. S/he does, however, comment on the nationalistic, national romantic aspect of the language policy, and suggests that the weight given to Finnish in the policy is might be too strong.

Other staff, and students, also comment on the weight given to Finnish in the policy, and mention the potential risk of Finnish to the university's internationalization. Their suggestion is that in some domains, Finnish might be in actual danger of being lost as the language of academia. One interviewee, however, states that s/he is in no way concerned about the future of Finnish in general. One (administrator) suggests that Finnish is, in essence, glued on the policy as a form of image building or branding: it is seen as necessary for historic reasons, but no real incentives to use it.

One student interviewee, when asked about the position of Finnish, immediately links use of Finnish to staff rather than students. This echoes the text of the language policy, where international staff is set a goal of learning Finnish within three years of recruitment. Many staff stress the importance of international students learning Finnish, but do not see it as a binding rule. One member of staff supports the policy by stating that not all international students *need* to learn Finnish; instead, learning Finnish should be based on the students' needs. International students, in turn, state that learning Finnish is a self-evident goal because they are studying in Finland and should learn the local language. Interestingly, the policy documents themselves have no such goals for international students; the policy sets goals for Finnish proficiency in relation to general language skills of all students, and Finnish-medium teaching. In contrast, the goals for English proficiency specifically focus on English skills among international students.

While Swedish is not an official language at the University of Jyväskylä, unlike at Aalto University, it does come up in some interviews. One administrator, who had participated in the drafting of the policy, suggests that Swedish is mentioned in the policy mainly because of the students' demands. Interestingly, a student interviewee in turn criticizes the very strict Finnish legislation on national languages. A teacher interviewee reminds that the Language Centre also provides short courses in Swedish, with the motivation of giving

international students a taste of the second national language as well. It appears that similarly to the policy document, the interviewees mention Swedish in the role of a constitutional obligation rather than a language in its own right.

English does not provoke strong feelings in the interviewees. One teacher interviewee points out that when English-medium instruction is developed, simply using English as the language of instruction is not enough to teach students English; pedagogical skills are also needed to improve language proficiency. An administrator who worked with international students observes that intercultural communication needs come up more frequently than skills in specific languages. An international student mentions that s/he has always been able to manage the daily activities at the University in English. The other side of this coin, as observed by a (Finnish) student, is the diminishing position of Finnish in the everyday activities of both students and staff; a sentiment echoing the concern of some interviewees about domain loss of Finnish. Both Finnish and international students testify that in the student body, there are cliques based on language, as Finnish (language) students and international students keep different company and have even their separate leisure organizations, with some exceptions.

### 5.3 Summary of language perceptions in interviews

In this section, we summarize the main results of the interview analysis. Table 4 presents a comparison of Aalto and Jyväskylä interviews in relation to Finnish, Swedish and English. It seems that while both staff and particularly students express their concerns in Aalto about the decreasing role of Swedish, there does not seem to be a similar concern for Finnish, even if they comment on the unclear practices regarding Finnish as well. Regarding English at Aalto, staff appears more comfortable with the increased use and strengthened position of English than students.

In Jyväskylä, no big differences appeared between staff and students regarding opinions on the use of Finnish, Swedish or English. There is concern about the position of Finnish, but simultaneously a feeling that the traditional position of Finnish may be overstressed.

English is mostly treated as self-evidently important. Swedish is referred to through its constitutional position.

Several factors might explain the differences between Aalto and Jyväskylä. Firstly, Aalto University is a result of a 2010 merger of three universities, two of which were bilingual and one monolingually Finnish, whereas Jyväskylä has a history as a Finnish language organization. Second, Jyväskylä is relatively small in comparison to Aalto, which may have a homogenizing effect on the language situation as well. Third, Aalto is currently working a combination of three languages, which may complicate the situation there.

Table 4. Summary of interview analysis at U. of Jyväskylä and Aalto U.

<b>Aalto U.</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Students</b>
	Finnish	Unclear practices	Unclear practices
	Swedish	Unclear practices, decreasing	Unclear practices, decreasing Role and position unclear
	English	Increasing (rapidly) Position emphasised	Increasing (rapidly) Position emphasised, Role and need (partly) unclear
<b>U. of Jyväskylä</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Students</b>
	Finnish	Both strong and contested (contradictory view of tradition)	Both strong and contested (contradictory view of tradition)
	Swedish	Linked to the legislative position mainly	Linked to the legislative position mainly

	English	Increasing, (mostly) presented as unproblematic	Increasing, (mostly) presented as unproblematic
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## 6. Discussion of language policies in Aalto and Jyväskylä: Two is company, three's a crowd?

Our analyses confirm the previous basic observations (Lauridsen, 2013, Saarinen & Taalas, 2017) that language policies are motivated and driven by the need for internationalization in English, which, in turn, is mostly operationalized as student and staff recruitment and mobility. This makes English the self-evident, if not always explicitly mentioned, language of internationalization. Our discussion of the cases of Aalto and Jyväskylä universities will focus on the less discussed phenomena of one or two national languages in relation to English.

In the use (or non-use) of Swedish with Swedish-speaking students, there are indications of an interplay of both different power positions such as teacher–student, majority language–minority language, Finnish–English bilingualism vs. Finnish–Swedish bilingualism. While Aalto is officially trilingual, using Finnish, Swedish and English, plurilingual everyday practices are mainly Finnish-English bilingual.

Interviews both at Aalto and Jyväskylä indicate that Finnish (and, in the case of Aalto, Swedish) appears to be in need of explicitly stated protection, particularly in the area of research. Both universities have explicitly stated in their policies that the national languages need to be promoted in research, specifically mentioning “terminology” (Aalto). English, in turn, was not explicitly mentioned in either university’s policy, possibly implying that the national languages need specific protection, whereas the position of English in the domain of research appears to be strong enough without explicit policy



statements.

The position of Swedish, formally an official language in Aalto, in turn, seems more problematic, as its minority position, growing bilingualism among Swedish-speaking students, and international students' interest in enhancing their proficiency in Finnish (rather than Swedish) jeopardize the position of Swedish at Aalto. From Aalto, we can also deduce that, responsibility for initiating bilingual or multilingual practices rests on mainly with individual students, which, in turn, has implications for the status of Finnish. This finding suggests that formal bilingualism in Higher Education Finland is challenged from many directions (Pöyhönen & Saarinen, 2015).

In sum, while policy goals appear explicit, practices appear to be in a state of flux. We recall Lindström & Sylvén's observation that in order foster multilingualism and develop competences in languages (2014: 163), opportunities to use strategically important languages need to be provided. While Finnish and English are assumed to exist unproblematically in a parallel fashion, it seems that their relationship has not been explicated, and the position of Swedish is more or less invisible. In 2013, the Finnish Chancellor of Justice ruled on students' complaints on the extensive use of English in the Master's programs of the Aalto University School of Business. His/Her?? decision was that the practice violated the individual's constitutional right to education and use of one's own language (Finnish or Swedish). The judgement also stated that Aalto should clarify the use of Finnish in exams, written assignments and lectures. In its response to the decision, Aalto University stated that while they decided to use more Finnish in their degrees and tuition, they felt that regardless of the language of the degree, most graduates will benefit from participating in international, high-quality teaching (implying English), because the possibilities of the graduates for international job recruitment need to be guaranteed. (See also Saarinen, 2014.) Thus, the response of Aalto University suggests that they intend to continue the practice because they deem it beneficial to their students. It remains to be seen whether the decision of the Chancellor of Justice creates more pressure to explicate language practices at other universities in Finland, and how the position of Swedish continues to develop in Finnish higher education.

## **7. Conclusion: Constructing monolingual, bilingual and trilingual universities**

As Smith (2001: 192) points out, *texts don't stand by themselves; they are embedded in courses of action the institutional or organizational character of which is, however, accomplished textually*. The texts we have analysed above receive their meaning in everyday dialogues, and can, following Smith, be located and present in multiple sites and across times.

The management, both at Aalto and Jyväskylä emphasized the need for English in everyday work on the one hand and the need for Finnish as a cultural mediator on the other. In comparison, among personnel, there was a greater uncertainty of which language to use, when and why. At Aalto, the role of the management seems central in giving a model for working in and with different languages. Among the personnel, there seems to be an interest and a willingness to use several languages. Yet, there is also uncertainty and a lack of examples and concrete guidance resulting in not daring or knowing how to function in an increasingly multilingual manner (for similar observations on the Finnish–Swedish bilingual University of Helsinki, see Lindström & Sylvén 2014). If the everyday linguistic practices are not stated and managed clearly and systematically, multilinguistic efforts easily remain sporadic, individual performances. Language policy documents succeed in framing the big linguistic picture and guiding on the implementation of the policy in the different functions of the university. However, these documents are normally written in the passive voice; they do not mention who should enact them. Thus, policies may not make language choice any easier. The stated trilingualism of the policy document and the practical Finnish–English bilingualism have no clear boundaries. In terms of language, the organizations under our scrutiny take different shapes, depending on time and place. Members of the university community, both personnel and students, would benefit from clearly defined and articulated ways of working with different languages e.g. in a particular course, in student guidance situations or, in internal communication at units.

The University of Jyväskylä language policy, in turn, construes the university as essentially and traditionally Finnish, an interesting (and somewhat exceptional) construction in a

university language policy in an era of increasing internationalization. On the other hand, this construct seems to be running contrary both to the interviewees' perceptions of the importance of English and to Finnish university legislation that has given the universities more freedom to choose the language of instruction and degrees, resulting in an increase in EMI programmes. This construct, in its monolingual ethos, also stands out against the formal constitutional bilingualism of Finland.

On the other hand, the language policy and the action plan only mention Finnish explicitly in the context of the Finnish language programmes in general; supporting Finnish as a language of science, and, more exceptionally, in the explicitly stated CEFR 2.2 goal of Finnish for international staff. Very often, Finnish appears together with English, which is encouraged as the second working language. When national languages are considered, Finnish and English are assumed to exist unproblematically in a parallel fashion. They are often mentioned together in coinages like: "*All internal communication concerning the staff is available in Finnish and English*" (University of Jyväskylä), enforcing an understanding of a "parallel language" policy, either explicitly (as in the case of Aalto) or implicitly (as in the case of Jyväskylä). The construction of Finnish and English as parallel languages in the two universities links our analysis to the Nordic discussion of parallel language policies (see Hultgren, 2014).

Hultgren (2014) discusses parallellingualism as a phenomenon that, in Denmark, implies "more Danish" on the national level, and "more English" on the institutional level. At Aalto, parallel use of languages is implemented in practice at meetings and information sessions for the personnel, particularly if there are international faculty and staff members present. Yet, it is more common to use primarily or only English at meetings. Parallel use of different languages in more informal and social communicative situations was not mentioned. Parallel use of Finnish and Swedish in service situations between students and staff was mentioned as a theoretical option at Aalto, but one which is not applied in practice. Thus, based on our two cases, the situation in Finland is slightly different from that in Denmark, as particularly the institutional policy documents in the areas of research and teaching appear to promote Finnish, while the practical situations, at least as witnessed

at Aalto, tend to promote the use of English. The prominence of English may be a reaction to the increasing laxness of the language regulation in Finnish higher education in the last 20 years (Saarinen & Taalas, 2017). It is noteworthy that this increase of English has already prompted a backlash of regulation protecting the national languages at universities (see Saarinen, accepted), which may indicate that a look at language policies can change our understanding of universities as national and international organizations.

### ***Endnote***

- <sup>1</sup> While the constitution treats Finnish and Swedish as equal national languages, educational steering refers to both languages as “the second national language” (*toinen* in Finnish; *andra* in Swedish). Both *toinen* and *andra* are ambiguous in the sense that they can be translated either as *second* or *other*. We use in this article *second*, as that is the term used in the language policies of the universities as well as by educational authorities such as the National Board of Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The use of “second” implies that the language is the speaker’s second language rather than a hierarchical order between the national languages. However, “*toinen kotimainen*” (*second official*) is often used in everyday speech to refer to the teaching of Swedish.

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