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Tensions on Finnish Constitutional Bilingualism in neo-nationalist times: Constructions of Swedish in monolingual and bilingual contexts

Abstract

This chapter analyses the tensions on the status of Finnish constitutional bilingualism from the perspective of higher education; more precisely from the position of Swedish in one monolingually Swedish university (Åbo Akademi University), and one bilingual university (University of Helsinki). It contributes to an understanding of the position of minority languages in universities in times when the use of English has increased on one hand and neo-nationalist tendencies stressing the importance of national language(s) are on the rise on the other. It seems that the new bilingual programmes at the University of Helsinki challenge the tradition of keeping the national languages formally separate. At ÅAU, in turn, Finnish higher education policies (rather than language policies) seem to provide a major source of tensions on the position of Swedish.

Tensions on Finnish Constitutional Bilingualism in neo-nationalist times: Constructions of Swedish in monolingual and bilingual contexts

1. Introduction

Finnish language ideological tensions have historically been made visible at universities in language debates of the emerging nation in the mid-19th century, or in the 1930s' language conflicts at the University of Helsinki (Saarinen, 2014, 2018). The earlier debates revolved around the delicate balance between the national languages, Finnish and Swedish (Engman, 2016; Meinander, 2016). However, the language ideological debates in Finnish higher education have since 2010 been triggered by an increasing use of English, which had gained

ground as a relatively unproblematized lingua franca in the 1990s and early 2000s (Leppänen et al., 2008). The increasing use of English has caused concern for national languages, particularly Finnish, which has linked Finland, somewhat belatedly, to the neo-nationalist developments that have emerged not just in Western countries but also elsewhere (Lee, 2016 and 2017 on South Korea and South Africa). Events like the Brexit referendum and the surrounding political developments are not the cause but the visible indication of the neo-nationalist interests that surface in language education (Kelly, 2018) or higher education (Mathies & Weimer, 2018). As a response to global mobility, during the early 2000s universities drafted language policies that explicate the uses and roles of local and global languages in the meeting point of national and global pressures (Airey et al., 2017). Language policies and interests are under construction and subject to debates not only in globalising Western societies (Doiz et al., 2013) but also in the expanding Asian (Lau & Lim, 2017 for Taiwan), African (Chimbutane, 2011), and Central American contexts (Torres-Olave, 2012).

In contrast to many other Nordic countries, language legislation is exceptionally binding in Finland (Saarinen & Taalas 2017), with constitutionally defined societal bilingualism of two equal national languages, Finnish and Swedish (Suomen perustuslaki 731/1999). While Swedish is not a *de jure* minority language but a national language, with equal position to that of Finnish (see Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015; Saarinen & Ihalainen 2018 for a discussion of the 2009 and 1919 parliamentary debates on constitutional bilingualism), it is still a *de facto* minority language, spoken by approximately 5.5 per cent of the Finnish population.

Higher education language policies reflect this constitutional biligualism. Finnish higher education institutions (14 universities and 23 universities of applied sciences) are by legislation either monolingual (Finnish or Swedish) or bilingual (Finnish and Swedish). With the 2004 and 2009 reforms in higher education legislation, however, language steering at Finnish institutions has gradually decreased (Saarinen and Taalas, 2017) so that universities and universities of applied sciences can now independently decide on the language of teaching and degrees. This trend is the opposite of the other Nordic countries where language regulation has become tighter. (Pyykkö, 2005; Saarinen & Taalas, 2017)

This article analyses the tensions around the status of Finnish constitutional bilingualism from the perspective of the position of Swedish in one monolingually Swedish university

(Åbo Akademi University, ÅAU) and one bilingual university (University of Helsinki, UH). ÅAU is the only Swedish language multidisciplinary university in Finland. UH, in turn, is the biggest multidisciplinary university in Finland and is bilingual by law. This article focuses particularly on the new bilingual Bachelor's programmes at UH, where students can study the 180 ECTS by doing 60 ECTS in Finnish, 60 ECTS in Swedish, and the remaining 60 ECTS in a language of their choice. This is an exceptional system in Finnish higher education, where higher education degrees had until recently been distinguished as either Finnish- or Swedish-language degrees.

The language situation in higher education across Nordic contexts has been scrutinized increasingly in recent years, particularly from the point of view of the dynamic that English has brought to the language setting (e.g. the thematic issue "Language and the international university", in *International Journal of Sociolinguistics* (Haberland and Mortensen, 2012), *English in Nordic Universities: Ideologies and Practices* (Hultgren et al., 2014), and *English-Medium Instruction in European Higher Education* (Dimova et al., 2015). The position of minority languages in higher education in the context of increasing English-medium instruction (EMI) has, however, been underexamined (for a review, see Holmen, 2014).

As universities have historically been significant sites for the construction of Finnish constitutional bilingualism (Engman, 2016; Meinander, 2016), they are ideal sites for the study of emerging Finnish language policies as well as the ways in which current policies reflect Finnish higher education policies and larger historical developments. In times of increasing global interaction, universities operate in an interface of the international (in their disciplinary orientation) and national (as institutions serving a national task) (see Scott, 2011), which makes them ideal contexts for the research on the role of language in twenty-first century societies.

In this chapter, I will be focussing particularly on emerging tensions and challenges. This does not mean that the tensions are overwhelmingly overtaking the current policy, or that there would not be equally strong forces that aim at stabilizing the status quo. However, I also recognize the peculiarity of the Finnish language policy in needing to make this disclaimer in the first place, as the discussion on the relationship of the national languages and the position of Swedish easily turns into a defensive or offensive ideological debate (see Ihalainen, Saarinen, Nikula & Pöyhönen 2011; Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015).

2. Method and analysis

In order to understand the nature of language policy, we need to examine several layers of activities on the societal level, from formal policies and historical discourses to current societal trends and policy developments (Johnson, 2013; articles in Hult & Johnson, 2015). The position of Swedish in Finnish higher education will here be discussed in the context of higher education policies, language policies and larger societal developments in Finland in the 2000s.

Both UH and ÅAU have their particular national tasks in upholding the position of Swedish and educating Swedish-speaking academic work force for the Finnish society. While UH does this from a bilingual position, with regulations on the number of Swedish professors and the right for students to use Finnish or Swedish in their exams, ÅAU has been unequivocally Swedish-speaking since its foundation in 1918.

The primary data for this study were collected through interviews between October 2017 - January 2018 at the two universities as part of a pilot for a larger project on the position of Swedish in Finnish higher education. UH interviewees (N=13) represent two bilingual programmes, academic (3) and administrative (1) staff and students (3), from the programmes, language centre staff (3) and university central administrators (3). ÅAU interviewees (N=6) represent academic staff (2) and administrators (1) from one faculty as well as from central administration (3).

The interview data have been analysed by employing Critical discourse analytical (e.g. Fairclough, 2003) approaches to track the historical language policy trajectories and discursive cycles by focussing on instances of Swedish in ÅAU and UH. To provide the historical higher education policy and language policy trajectories, the author's recent work will be first reviewed to discuss the position of Swedish in Finnish higher education and the potential implications that this has to Finnish constitutional bilingualism.

3. Societal and higher education policy backdrop

As the article analyses the position of Swedish in two higher education institutions against a larger societal backdrop of Finnish language policy, it is necessary to first take a look at developments in Finnish society in general and in higher education policy in particular,

especially from the angle of internationalization and globalization. I will then briefly discuss the implications of these developments for the language policies in Finnish higher education.

3.1. Internationalization: Discourses of national competitiveness

Finnish society and, consequently, its educational system have changed in fundamental ways since the 1980s. Formal centralized educational steering has decreased since the 1980s, as regulation took the form of ex-post-accountability instead of earlier ex-ante-regulation (Simola et al., 2017). After the economic boom of the 1980s, Finland entered a severe recession in the early 1990s, as a consequence of several factors, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the consequent decline in Soviet trade, fiscal politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the following overheating of the economy and problems with international trade. (Kiander, 2001). Following these developments, interest towards Western integration increased and Finland eventually joined the European Union in 1995.

The prevalence of economic factors in political developments was mirrored in higher education policies. Already during the economic boom of the 1980s, the first internationalization strategy of higher education from 1987 (Nokkala, 2007) linked internationalization to economic and cultural prosperity, mirroring the traditional national *Bildung* function of the university institution (Jalava, 2012). The operationalization of international mobility as teacher and student mobility was seen as a practical tool for combining economic and educational needs. The 1987 strategy linked language(s) as an instrument for the development of national economy and education; because of these policies, universities started to develop EMI degree programmes (Saarinen, 2012).

Around the turn of the millennium, attitudes towards English in Finland were generally positive (Leppänen et al., 2008). Here, Finland differs from other Nordic countries; for example, in Sweden, the increase in English-language education has been seen as a threat to social participation and the status of the Swedish language (e.g. Airey et al., 2017). As a result of the steady and continuing growth of EMI programmes since the mid-1990s, Finland has been the number one provider of EMI programmes in non-English speaking European countries, measured by institutions providing EMI programmes, both in Wächter and Maiworm's 2008 and 2014 studies. Initially, the programmes run through the medium of foreign languages also included German- and French-language programmes, but eventually only the English-language programmes remained.

The 2001 internationalization strategy introduced the concept of competitiveness in internationalization. Again, a powerful national (economic) basis was seen as indispensable for international competition. The 2001 internationalization strategy underlined the importance of national legislation protecting the universities, apparently reacting to the ongoing Bologna Process. The 2001 strategy thus contrasted the national and international, assuring that the national system was being protected (Saarinen, 2018.) However, the 2001 internationalization strategy also explicitly referred to the competitive advantage offered by English, thus linking national interests to the use of a lingua franca. Although the strategy referred euphemistically to "foreign-language" programmes, in practice, these were predominantly in English (see Lehtikoinen, 2004, p. 44), making other languages invisible.

The 2009 internationalization strategy continued the economic discourse by naming higher education as a nationally significant export product. Since Finnish universities generally did not collect tuition fees, it seems that this export argument was linked to Finnish higher education as a brand rather than as a commodity. The framing was one of Finnish higher education as a product that Finland can offer to the rest of the world (see Mission for Finland, 2010). Similarly to the 2001 strategy, the 2009 document also systematically talked about "foreign-language" teaching when referring to EMI. Thus, "foreign" continued to be a proxy for English, covering the whole spectrum of internationalization and making "English" somewhat synonymous with "international". This on one hand recognized the traditional Finnish cultural multilingualism objective of supporting other languages (Saarinen, 2012), but on the other hand, the goal was possibly to avoid imposing English above other languages (see Hakulinen et al., 2009 for criticism of English and Leppänen et al., 2008 on a generally positive attitude to English in Finland). However, the fact that English and "foreign language" are linked in this way blurs the dynamics of internationalization and language, as languages are not named but rather assumed (Saarinen, 2012).

In the first years of the 2010s, formal complaints filed by students about the use of English in their studies and parliamentary questions about the position of Finnish in higher education provided by the populist Finns party representative (Saarinen, 2014) acted as indications of a turn in the attitude towards English and an increasing interest in national languages, particularly Finnish. This turn sheds light on the emerging neo-nationalist tendencies in Finnish society and higher education that had already emerged elsewhere, with more attention being given to national interests in challenging global political contexts (Lee, 2017,

p. 870), thus contrasting with the post-national hegemonic order where nation states were de-stabilized in the global economic system (e.g. Heller, 2013).

The increasing attention to national needs was also apparent in the latest internationalization guidelines (Minedu, 2017). The 2017 document still refers to both "foreign" and "foreign languages" programmes. However, in these guidelines, exceptionally, other languages (including Arabic, Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese) are explicitly named in addition to English (Minedu, 2017, p. 19). At the same time, the strategy highlights the importance of Finnish national languages for international students and staff. It is possible that this is a reaction to the overwhelming emphasis on English, while at the same time, the need for domestic languages has been emphasized in the labour market (Shumilova et al., 2012).

To summarize, it seems that the strategic documents from 1987, 2001 and 2009 reinforce a protectionist discourse of national economic interests. This protection of national interests, however, seems to be taking place in English rather than national languages. This seems to somehow contradict the assumed link between nation and language, linking Finnish higher education developments from the 1980s to the 2000s to a post-nationalist discourse, where supranational dynamics gain prominence as nation states were de-stabilized in the global economic system (e.g. Heller, 2011).

Around 2014, however, a step towards a (neo-)nationalist direction was taken, as the political atmosphere turned more right populist in Finland and elsewhere. In particular, concern for the position of Finnish had already been emerging after the 2010 new University Act and the ensuing concerns about the emergence of EMI in higher education. However, only in 2018 did the statement by the Finnish Language Board (Suomen kielen lautakunta 2018), an expert authority issuing recommendations and policy suggestions on Finnish usage, make the *threat to Finnish* a media and political question on the national level.

3.2. Language policies of Finnish universities and its implications to higher education policy

Languages were relatively invisible in Finnish higher education since the 1930s language feuds at UH (Meinander, 2016, p. 53-58). Since World War II, the major language debates in Finland have dealt with comprehensive education and the compulsory Swedish, particularly

in the comprehensive school (Geber, 2010). Paradoxically, while systematic internationalization has increased, different languages have begun to be used less as languages of teaching and other activities at universities. Fewer languages are taught in schools, while more languages are becoming visible within education as the number of students with a migrant background increases. (Saarinen & Taalas, 2017; Kuteeva, this volume on “(wishful) academic multilingualism” and “deficient multilingualism”.)

4. Swedish in higher education settings

In the following, I will be discussing the position of Swedish in Finnish higher education, based on the interviews in the two selected universities, and discussing these two cases against the above-outlined higher education policy and language policy developments. I will focus particularly on the dynamics of Finnish constitutional bilingualism from the point of view of Swedish and its role as the other or second (*toinen*) national language in Finland.

Taxell's paradox is often presented as the recommended way to support the weaker language in Finland. Taxell's paradox is an example of an ideological construct, aiming at protecting monolingual spaces to preserve the minority language. (Liebkind & Sandlund, 2006; Boyd & Palviainen, 2015.) In Finland, the main argument in Taxell's paradox is that monolingual solutions (e.g. institutions, facilities and organizations where one language is used) lead to bilingualism (i.e. the maintenance of societal bilingualism) while bilingual solutions, where the same facilities and institutions serve both language groups, tend to lead to a monolingual use of Finnish (Boyd & Palviainen, 2015). Therefore, institutions need to be as much as possible separate for both languages. A similar argument has been prevalent in francophone Canada (Heller, 1999). This kind of situation where institutions rather than individuals are represented as bilingual has been termed *parallel monolingualism* (Heller, 2006).

From & Sahlström (2019) discuss Taxell's paradox from the point of view of the parallel use of languages (i.e. parallellingualism; Davidsen-Nielsen, 2008; Introduction, this volume) and the overlapping use of several languages (i.e. translanguaging; e.g. Garcia & Wei, 2014). For them, Taxell's paradox is a hegemonic way of conceptualising current Finnish language policy and the parallel use of the national languages. Parallellingualism is seen to ensure that domain loss does not take place and national language(s) continue to keep their “society

bearing” function (Hultgren, 2014; 2015; 2016). Taxell’s paradox reflects a view of parallellingualism where “parallel monolingualisms” reflect a sustainable form of bilingualism, whereas overlapping forms of language use lead to the demise of the minority language, and thus of bilingualism (From & Sahlström, 2019).

The initial analysis of the data started with the transcription (with help of a research assistant) and first rough readings of the interviews, conducted by the author. The language of interviews was negotiated in the beginning of the interviews; most interviews were conducted in Finnish, but at both university, one interviewee preferred to speak (mostly) Swedish, while the interviewer spoke (mostly) Finnish. The first reading of the data lead to an identification of the main themes that emerged in the interviews. This was based first on a rough content analysis, where the interviews were thematised. Following that, a more detailed analysis of major themes was conducted, where the analysis of the inductively collected themes (based on the content analysis) was followed by a deductive analysis, based on the content analysis, combined with literature on the major language policy and higher education policy trends in Finland.

In the analysis, the following topics emerged, and in the following section, I will discuss their implications for the language policies of the two universities in more detail in the following sub sections. Subsection 4.1 discusses uses of Finnish, Swedish and English; subsection 4.2 staff and student recruitment, and subsection 4.3 higher education policies.

4.1. *“Everyone speaks their own language”*. Monolingual and bilingual with English on top

The ways in which uses of Finnish and Swedish were described by the interviewees provided insights on the ways in which bilingualism was conceptualized in monolingual and bilingual universities.

The use of Finnish and Swedish in bilingual situations was often described in terms of “getting to speak your own language”. The following excerpt (1) illustrates this view as the interviewee suggests that “everyone” speaks “their own language”, thus mirroring the wording of the Finnish Constitution “The right of everyone to use his or her own language,

either Finnish or Swedish...”, Suomen perustuslaki 731/1999, § 17). The interviewee thus implies that the languages are Finnish and Swedish (all excerpts translated into English by the author):

1. *It works like this. Everyone speaks their own language, and everyone understands everything. [ÅAU 11])*

Bilingualism as parallel monolingualism is a usage reported also in working life situations (Malkamäki & Herberts, 2014), and of course implies that Finnish and Swedish are the only languages available and usable in the situation, emphasising everyone’s need to understand these languages. *Bilingualism* thus refers to the constitutional bilingualism of two national languages, whereas for instance in Denmark, *bilingual* implies migrant background or being a “foreigner” (Holmen, 2014).

Often, however, speakers of Swedish change to Finnish (e.g. Malkamäki & Herberts, 2014). Several interviewees both at ÅAU and UH described this as typical meeting behaviour of bilingual speakers who felt equally comfortable with either Finnish or Swedish and ended up switching to the majority language Finnish. They usually described themselves as using the language most suited for the situation, often describing themselves as bilingual or being used to the practice (excerpt 2):

2. *[...] yes, if you’re bilingual, and most of the [Finland Swedes] people from southern Finland are, then they really easily change the language because they, they have the same, they are accustomed to both languages being equally strong, so they basically decide situationally, so if there are Finnish speakers, then the language will be changed immediately. And it is not even questioned. [ÅAU12]*

For those identifying as bilingual (such as the interviewee in excerpt 3), changing language was easy, but also controversial, having repercussions to representing the minority group:

3. *I am maybe a bad representative, cause I easily change, myself always take Finnish [ÅAU 16])*

The interviewee in excerpt 3 refers to the societal pressure on Swedish speakers and bilinguals to use Swedish. This resonates with the calls for the responsibility of also individuals and not just public officials to upkeep the use of Swedish in Finland (Tandefelt, 2003, p. 190).

When (parallel) uses of Finnish and Swedish in teaching were discussed, the differences between UH and ÅAU became more apparent. At UH, the examining right in Swedish is understood as fulfilling the requirement for Swedish language higher education, whereas at ÅAU both teaching and examining were ideally in Swedish. The ÅAU interviewees (excerpt 4) commented on their practice of both teaching and examining in Swedish as somewhat more adequate than the practices of the bilingual University of Helsinki (excerpt 5):

4. *That it's the teaching, that the teacher should also act in Swedish, for it to be Swedish. [ÅAU11]*
5. *[...] that we are really particular about them [students] getting to answer exams both in Finnish and Swedish... (UH29)*

The above excerpts 4 and 5 illustrate the ideological debates about what is “proper” bilingual education. From the position of a Swedish-speaking institution, both teaching and exams needed to be Swedish; at UH, on the other hand, the bilingual status means that students minimally get to take their exams in either language. This means that “Swedish language teaching” is understood in different ways in the Swedish and bilingual context.

The interviewees at the University of Helsinki presented their practice of bilingual teaching as flexible, and also some interviewees at ÅAU suggested that teaching bilingually was already taking place in some situations (considering the needs of Finnish language students, for instance). Interviewees at both ÅAU and UH discussed ways in which the teaching situations could be made more multilingual, allowing for (at least) Finnish and Swedish to be used simultaneously. The following interviewee (excerpt 6) hopes that while ÅAU would remain monolingually Swedish, the use of Finnish and Swedish would become more flexible:

6. *And I hope that it could, that even if Åbo Akademi unquestionably retains its Swedish language status, and it is our task to give Swedish language teaching. But*

it would be more natural somehow the crossing borders of languages and use and otherwise so. And of course on the Finnish language side, that it would be no wonder if someone lectured in Swedish, that it would be seen as a natural part of it.

While this kind of use of languages was not formally acceptable in the Swedish-speaking university (and hedged heavily also by the above interviewee), it seemed to mirror both the formal language principles of UH, as well as the language practice in the bilingual programmes, and as such can be interpreted as a natural extension of the use of “their own language, either Finnish or Swedish”. However, this simultaneously challenged Taxell’s paradox and its ideal of parallel monolingual institutions, as the interviewee implied that merging languages and using Finnish and Swedish somewhat simultaneously (rather than keeping Swedish language spaces intact) would be beneficial.

However, with the introduction of the bilingual programmes and their credit practice of 60 ECTS in Finnish, 60 ECTS in Swedish, 60 ECTS in any language, the language of courses needed to be managed in a more detailed manner and the situation became more complex. Paradoxically, this seemed to create more inflexibility in a system that was simultaneously described also as flexible:

7. *[...] there are Finnish speakers who then do their exams in Finnish, but they do not get the credits which can then be used towards a bilingual degree. So this is a very flexible system. So as long as the exam is done in Swedish, if we speak of a Finnish speaking student, and vice versa. And it is always determined in such a way that only one language can be marked for each credit. That is to say one of the 3 credits, it cannot be split so that two points would be in Finnish and one point in Swedish. (UH 27)*

8. *We had I think 10 people thinking about when we are getting this new study register system Sisu. [...] it took a year, the preparation. That’s how the language of the examination gets defined. Well now we think it would be good to have information and statistics about the language of teaching. So we are now having another discussion about the definition of language of teaching. So it’s not easy” [UH 22]*

It seems that at UH, the bilingual bachelor's programmes stretch the boundaries of language of teaching vs. language of examination. The first interviewee in the extracts 7 and 8 describes the pains in trying to develop a flexible system (bilingual programmes) that would allow for an explicit use of both Finnish and Swedish instead of either or, paradoxically ending up describing something that seems quite inflexible. The second interviewee (excerpt 8), in turn, describes the pains of creating a study register that could acknowledge the requirements of recognizing the different ways in which the role of different languages could be recognized in crediting students.

As discussed above (see excerpt 2 on multilingual meetings), the flexibility discussion of Finnish and Swedish gained another dimension when more languages were added to the situation. The next interviewee (excerpt 9) is discussing the problems in a monolingual teaching context where first Finnish and Swedish and then on top of that English are used in what attempts to follow the parallel language use principles:

9. *There have been those [situations] too I hear, that people have been or have wondered a bit that it can be really confusing for some that there are two languages and then you read something in English and other stuff and then there are three languages simultaneously [ÅAU16]*

In other words, *flexibility* seemed to imply Finnish or Swedish being used in a parallel “either or” manner, while any other combination of Finnish, Swedish and/or English seemed to cause discussions of inflexibility. Bilingual or trilingual teaching made visible the challenges facing the operationalizations of constitutional bilingualism. A bilingual policy of institutional monolingualism would, in other words, seem to make translanguaging practices difficult; however, this would need to be analysed in more detail.

4.2. “We need to use English”. Role of staff and student recruitment

Internationalization policies since the 1990s led to measures that encouraged universities to increase their staff and student recruitment from outside Finland. The role of Swedish language higher education is to provide enough educated professionals for the societal needs

of the minority. In order to fulfil those needs, higher education has to be able to attract enough students and staff; if the recruitment pool in Finland is not adequate, recruitment is directed to other (often Nordic) countries.

Based on the interviews, this had a particular unexpected effect at ÅAU, where internationalization policies coincided with the Nordic orientation and the particular language policy responsibility of the University. UH interviewees from the bilingual programmes referred mostly to the effects of domestic student recruitment and the need to complement the Swedish language recruitment with Finnish speaking students. I will next analyze staff and student recruitment and language with the help of a few key interview excerpts, discussing the different aspects of this development.

Firstly, Swedish language programmes both at the ÅAU and UH seemed to depend on their ability to complement the Swedish language recruitment with Finnish speakers (excerpts 10 and 11):

10. [...] get more Finnish-speaking [students] in, and then we would like more from Sweden and Norway. [ÅAU11]

11. But I think these are eager because they want to save the Swedish language teaching. [UH30]

However, it also appears that particularly for the Swedish language university, domestic recruitment of Finnish-speaking students is not practical for many reasons. One interviewee in a leading academic position (excerpt 12) described the recruitment difficulties at the Swedish language University, explaining them with the declining Swedish skills in Finland, which he in turn explained with Finnish language policy:

12. [...] On the staff side, let's say at the postdoc researcher level, it is easier for us to recruit from Sweden than from Helsinki. And that is the consequences of Finnish language policy. [ÅAU 14]

The practice of recruiting both staff and students from Sweden and other Nordic countries has a long tradition at ÅAU, for several reasons. The Swedish-language teaching has long made it

possible for Nordic students to enter regular degree programmes without resorting to EMI; Nordic and particularly Swedish-speaking staff will also have had a language edge in international recruitment in comparison to recruits from outside the Nordic circle. ÅAU, in turn, has for some time now turned increasingly to Nordic countries for recruitment, since Finland has not provided enough Swedish-speaking students and staff. Additionally, the Stockholm metropolitan area with more than 2.2 million inhabitants is less than one hour flight or an overnight ferry away from Turku, where ÅAU is located (excerpt 13).

13. [...] We also have this determined recruitment from Sweden and we have a lot of employees living in Sweden, for example, in Stockholm, who come here every week. And that, of course, they get along in English, but then the Finnish language part is quite difficult. (ÅAU 14)

For Nordic recruits, especially from Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Swedish has usually been relatively unproblematic; Finnish, however, might take longer to learn. This had unexpected consequences for language use: since the Swedish-language ÅAU also cooperates with the neighbouring Finnish-language University of Turku, the balance of language use in this cooperation appears to have been affected. Ideally, ÅAU staff would use Swedish and University of Turku staff would use Finnish in this cooperation (see excerpt 1 on “everyone speaking their own language”), which would work well with Nordic recruits. However, this practice has not been possible with international recruits from outside the Nordic countries, who tend to cause switch the language to English (e.g. Malkamäki & Herbets, 2014 on workplaces).

As higher education policies of internationalization, profiling (see sub section 4.3), and other such policies increase the amount of "international" recruits (i.e. staff and students outside the Nordic countries; the interviewees actually make this differentiation relatively systematically), the language balance in local contexts such as meetings and teaching changes. However, it appears that not just "internationals" (i.e. those outside Nordic countries) but also Nordic recruits cause the language to be switched to English, as learning Finnish is not self-evident for them either (excerpt 14):

14. It's exactly Finnish. It's Finnish, Finnish is the problem in the equation. That's what brings English in. [ÅAU 16]

While international staff are somewhat expected to cause a language switch to English, there is still an expectation that Nordic recruits are needed to strengthen the position of Swedish specifically. However, this does not always seem to be the case. As neither the “internationals” nor the “Nordic” recruits are likely to know Finnish, the language is changed to English. In other words, it is not Swedish language skills but Finnish skills that are required from ÅAU staff and students in order to maintain Swedish. Paradoxically, because the Nordic recruits manage speaking Swedish but not Finnish, the Swedish language is also at risk of disappearing. While I do not claim that this had major consequences on language policies, it nonetheless challenges the language practices of using Swedish and Finnish in particular contexts at ÅAU and UH, and came up systematically in several interviews.

4.3 Profiling of higher education institutions: higher education policy or language policy as motivation?

Higher education policies and their impact on language policies have begun to receive some attention in Nordic contexts. Hultgren (2014) found a correlation between the rankings of European non-English language universities and English-language teaching: the higher the rankings on the Shanghai list, the more English-language teaching was available. As Hultgren states in Macaro, Hultgren, Kirkpatrick and Lasagabaster (2019), this by no means reflects a causal relationship, but a multifaceted correlation in which English-language programmes are linked to a typical neoliberal policies such as internationalization and pursuit of excellence. In Nordic contexts, the (parallel) use of local and international languages has been discussed (see for instance Hultgren, 2014; Hult & Källqvist, 2016); however, the bilingual Finnish landscape has some additional implications also from the point of view of higher education policies. Fabricius et al. (2017) discuss the paradoxes of the celebratory and practical aspects of internationalization, quality policies and mobility in Denmark. They conclude that the concept of parallel language policy potentially undermines the ideals of internationalization as it potentially homogenizes the language landscape in higher education into monolingual spaces, where internationalization takes place in English and “non-international” education is conducted in local or domestic languages. Fabricius & al. call for a more nuanced understanding of the role of languages in internationalization policies (2017, p. 592).

This section discusses the phenomenon of higher education policies, particularly disciplinary and regional profiling from a language perspective. The implications of internationalization and staff and student recruitment on language policies were discussed in 4.2; this section focuses on the so called profiling activities of higher education, as Finnish institutions are required with financial incentives from the Ministry of Education and Academy of Finland to strategically profile their activities into distinct strength areas.

While there are bilingual (Finnish – Swedish language) universities, and one monolingually Swedish language economy and business school, the ÅAU is the only monolingually Swedish language university with a multidisciplinary faculty structure in Finland. By university law, it is responsible for satisfying the research and education needs of the Swedish language population (Yliopistolaki 558/2009, 76 §). Thus, this language policy role is at the core of the ÅA, and as the interviewee in excerpt 15 states, ultimately justifies the existence of ÅA:

15. *What justifies the existence of Åbo Akademi University is the language, and it's important from the point of view of identity, and whether we can offer also in the future Swedish language tuition. (ÅAU 16)*

In recent years, this national language policy task has been complemented with an explicitly Nordic orientation in the results negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Culture. While this seems to be a natural orientation for a Swedish-language university, this can have unexpected consequences for language use and position of Swedish, as shown in the previous subsection 4.2.

Particularly in the ÅAU interviews, the tensions between the language policy and what was often called "content profiling" (as opposed to language profiling) became visible (excerpt 16):

16. *[...] But it is a bit exciting now with this cultural responsibility. Responsibility for bilingualism. And then this international issue. So we always have to think about this balance. [ÅAU14]*

UH was conceptualised as a “subject matter first, language second” context by both ÅAU and UH interviewees. In other words, it seems that the national language task rarely emerged as a primary goal or motivation of UH, but that they were rather more concerned with the university’s activities and content profile (excerpts 17 and 18):

17. The University of Helsinki does not have to take a stand on whether it is a bilingual university or not because they were basically a bilingual university. [...] but their starting point is that they protect their activities. [ÅAU13]

18. Well, if you think like that, it's definitely the content matter. That the language is not - [UH 25]

However, negotiations about whether language or subject matter was primary seemed to be emerging in ÅAU as well:

19. [...] that the board of Åbo Akademi University, there would have been somebody who suggested that we change the language of teaching completely to English. And that's just an absurd idea, that's it, that's a blow under the belt. [ÅAU16]

20. It is this particular task, question of brand, and the minority language, and it must be maintained and maintained at a high level. It's probably a minority language protection rite. (ÅAU 13)

It would seem that particularly for ÅAU, higher education policies would clash with the language policies more than at UH, as the question of whether language or profile (either content profiling or particularly important subject matters) would be primary seemed to emerge as a challenge to the position of Swedish, causing debates. At UH, in turn, the content profile issues, rather than formal language policies, appeared to determine the language policy choices .

5. From being contested to being invisible: Swedish in Finnish higher education

Bilingualism in Finnish language policy has been internalized as a particular kind of discursive practice; i.e. the constitutional formulation of everyone “using their own language, Finnish or Swedish”. More specifically, the understanding of the integrity of the Swedish language space, *svenska rum*, as an instantiation of Taxell’s paradox has been relatively unchallenged in Finnish education policy and language policy (From & Sahlström, 2019).

It seems, however, that a combination of societal, higher education, and language policy developments have now challenged the language policy implications of Taxell’s paradox. At first, in the developments of the 1990s and 2000s, English merely seemed to add a third language to the combination in the spirit of parallel language use (Hult & Källkvist, 2016). However, in recent years, higher education policy and language policy developments at ÅAU and UH appear to place pressures on Swedish that seem to render Swedish somewhat invisible in the developments (see also Lindström & Sylvén, 2014; Saarinen & Rontu, 2018; Saarinen, 2018). The following three points synthesize the findings presented in this chapter.

First of all, it seems that the policies of internationalization and profiling higher education institutions based on their disciplinary specialization or other orientation stretch the boundaries of the university language policies. Particularly, and somewhat unexpectedly, at ÅAU not only international but also Nordic recruitment causes some pressures on the position of Swedish as the Nordic staff, while able to use Swedish, lacks an adequate knowledge of Finnish to operate in particular teaching and cooperation situations. At UH, in turn, student recruitment from the Finnish-speaking student population into the bilingual programmes, combined with an increasing use of English, makes visible the tensions in teaching language practices as a third language is added to the combination.

Second, the interviews and previous research suggest that contradicting views exist also in higher education about the applicability of the so-called Taxell’s paradox; i.e. the notion that monolingual institutions support societal bilingualism. Using Finnish and Swedish in a particular way (“each their own language”) appears as an internalized individual version of promoting constitutional bilingualism as parallel monolingualism. National language policy discourses thus manifest themselves in individual understandings of bilingualism as a particular kind of use and dynamic of Finnish and Swedish in the Finnish society. Changing the language from Swedish to Finnish in meetings and other interaction was, in turn, framed in some contexts as “bad bilingualism” and not supportive of the minority language. While

there was a lot of support for this practice, adding English into the combination sometimes appeared to throw this balance off, either by switching previously Finnish – Swedish bilingual meetings into English (in meeting contexts) or “becoming too much” (in teaching contexts). Both developments appear to render Swedish invisible, as traditional uses of Swedish as “each using their own language” are challenged by bilingual and multilingual practices as well as pressures from English.

Third, and again somewhat paradoxically, neo-nationalist discourses that are becoming more apparent in the Finnish society (Saarinen, 2014; Saarinen, 2018) tend to tilt the discussion towards a concern for the position of Finnish rather than Swedish, thus making Swedish invisible in language political debates where it had previously been a contested entity (Ihalainen & Saarinen, 2015). Neo-nationalism is often overtly linked to right-wing, populist, anti-immigrant policies (Eger & Valdez, 2015), and the increase in support of populist parties and movements in Finland has also created growing tensions particularly on the position of Swedish. The recent backlash against English, in turn, appears largely motivated by the ideological protection of Finnish rather than of the constitutional bilingualism as such (Saarinen, 2014; Saarinen, 2018). Thus, the increasing use of English paradoxically plays into the hands of new-nationalist arguments, bringing attention to Finnish and making Swedish at least in some contexts invisible rather than contested. This may posit a new kind of challenge for the Swedish language in Finland and to Finnish constitutional bilingualism.

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