

NPLD Youth Project 08: Priorities for promoting language diversity among young people

NPLDIYP8 – NPLD Local Youth Report: Sweden Finnish Jarmo Lainio & Markus Lyyra

1. Introduction

The Sweden Finns constitute one of five national minority groups in Sweden, since 1999-2000. It has the characteristics of a recent migrant group, since migration from Finland to Sweden has been extensive during the period after WW II. But it also has the historical roots and a long-term presence in Sweden, in various areas: since the 11th century in the North, the 13th century in the capital area of Stockholm, and since the 16th century in some central Swedish forestial regions. The number of Sweden Finns today is estimated to be around 450,000 according to statistics on the first and second generation, and around 675,000 according to recent unpublished statistics, when the grandparents' generation is included. The number of speakers, however, is regularly estimated to be round 200,000-250,000. Language shift has been dramatic during the last three decades, and likewise as among many linguistic minority groups in Europe and elsewhere the demographic profile is a familiar one: there are few, if any monolingual speakers left, older speakers are more competent in Finnish, and younger ones are dominant in Swedish, even if they have retained a certain degree of bilingual competence. One of the main research and contact problems regarding the national minorities and other ethnic groups based on language, is the lack of public statistics on language. The national censuses do not include language, and the collection of language data is furthermore seen as counter to the Constitution, which prohibits the gathering of data on ethnicity. This also includes language, according to the normative interpretation of this regulation. Contacts with speakers of specific languages therefore have to be created via other channels, for example youth organisations, NGO's, cultural associations, and as a main channel, the bilingual independent schools¹. Also, municipal schools do have information on

¹ Independent schools have existed since 1991. They are funded by the municipalities, but are privately or cooperatively run, usually with some profile of content or pedagogical method. They are supervised



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pupils who are qualified to receive so-called mother-tongue instruction, and pupils may indirectly be contacted via the mother-tongue teachers of the language group in question. This is, however, a time-consuming method, and requires the consent of the parents, if the children are under the age of 18. Contact with parents are more direct and, to some extent, based more on trust and confidentiality, in the independent schools, even if the same rules of research ethics apply also for these.

The interviewees were thus contacted via personal contacts and the headmaster of one primary school, in the municipalities of Järfälla, NW of Stockholm, Upplands Väsby, North of Stockholm, and Botkyrka, South of Stockholm. These cover three of the eight Sweden Finnish bilingual primary schools existing today.

The interview situations took place in the primary schools of the adolescents, and the situations were similar in all three of them. First the interviewer presented the topics to the interviewees and they started the discussion about different language use issues and situations. The interviewer did not have to take the lead in the discussions, since the interviewees discussed about the topics naturally. The interviewer recorded the discussions.

2. Socio-linguistic context

Brief historical account of socio-linguistic context of Sweden Finnish speakers

During more than 600 years, until 1809, Sweden and Finland formed a kingdom, in which the centre was situated in the Mälardalen and Stockholm area, and where the centre in Finland was the city of Turku/Åbo. Migration took place in both directions, but the most widespread pattern was that of people from the Finnish side repeatedly leaving for the Swedish mainland, due to famine and warfare. The hopefully last such migration wave took place during World War II, when about 80,000 refugees left Northern Finland at the end of the war, and close to 70,000 so-called war-children were shipped and sent by train to Swedish families, in order for the children to escape from a possible invasion by the Soviet army. In both cases a large majority of the refugees returned to Finland. About 5,000 of the children are estimated to have stayed in their Swedish host families. Many of these children stayed in Sweden, or moved as adults. In peace times the direction was largely the same, meaning that Finns (both Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking) have left Finland to find work in Sweden, or were even ordered to do so, due to needs at the court in Stockholm or in the duchies in various parts of Sweden. During most of the common Sweden-Finland period until 1809, Finns were also forced to join the armed forces of the Swedish army and navy.

This led to a continuous migration to the coastal towns in Sweden, inter alia resulting in that Finnish has been used in Stockholm from the 13th century and onwards. Stable and long-term populations of Finnish-speakers developed in the Northern Tornedal area, no later than the 11th century, and in the large forestial areas of Central Sweden from the 16th century. The last speakers lived in the Northwestern parts of the county of Värmland. The former later developed into a regional community with a language of its own, Meänkieli, and the latter eventually

by the public educational authorities, and only receive funding as long as they comply with the regulations and basic ideas of the curriculum of the public school system.



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faced language shift in the late 1960s, even if anecdotal evidence of Värmland Finnish-competent speakers has been presented also after the 1960s. Elsewhere, Finnish-speaking populations have also developed but, in general, these become assimilated within a few generations.

From 1809, when Sweden lost Finland to Russia, a slow disintegration from Finland started, even if this took place less in the north, where the habit of marriages and contacts across the Torne river have continued as before. Still, during the mid-19th century, it was nevertheless stated in the Swedish Riksdag, that Finnish is a domestic language of Sweden. From about 1888 a Swedification period set in, which targeted in the first place the Tornedalians, who were long seen as a military and political threat by the Swedish establishment: the kings, the Riksdag, the church and last but not least, by the teachers in the region. In 1930, when the last Swedish census including language issues took place, it was stated that the people of "Finnish tribes" were numerous in Norrbotten County, and small amounts of Finns still lived in more or less isolated areas in the Värmland County, as well as in Stockholm. Migration to Stockholm never fully ceased, but the dispersed population of the capital and the main urban centre of Sweden never achieved the position of a coherent community. However, the Finnish club of Stockholm was founded in 1894, and still is active. Also the Finnish parish and the church have outlived the assimilations pressures for centuries, and it celebrated its 450 year anniversary in 1983.

A major change in the modern migration patterns was introduced by the abolition of practical borders between Sweden and Finland. In 1954 both the Nordic, open labour market was announced, and the visa requirement was abolished. The booming Swedish industry presented its needs for Finnish workers, who willingly moved to Sweden, in waves of mass-migration. In 1969-1970 alone, about 80,000 Finns moved to Sweden (out of which one third returned to Finland within a few years). Much of this migration can be characterised as follows: young people with a low degree of education, with their roots in the rural, mostly northern parts of Finland, and who moved to the urban industrial areas of Sweden.

When Sweden joined the European Union (in 1995), the political pressure to adapt to the European standards of protection and promotion of regional and historical minorities and their languages, took a new direction. In 1994 Finnish was, once again after 150 years, declared a domestic and historical language of Sweden. At the same time, the final steps and political moves were taken to separate the route of Meänkieli, which formerly had been seen as a dialect of Finnish, to become an independent language. This corroborates the principle of what makes a dialect differ from a language is - in the end - a political decision followed by an attitudinal change among both speakers of the language and the surrounding majority population.

In 1999, the Swedish Riksdag approved a law accepting Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli as minority languages in a handful of municipalities in the Norrbotten County. These administrative areas facilitate the use of the minority languages in pre-school, for the care of elderly, and in contacts with administrative authorities, as well as in some courts. In 2000, Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, as well as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, for Sweden Finns, Jews, Roma, Sami and Tornedalians, and their languages Finnish, Yiddish, Romani chib, Sami and Meänkieli. This was then stated to be a first step in the new Swedish minority policy. After some years of initial, hesitant development, the political situation and the willingness to implement the new policy have changed to become fairly decisive during the last few years. In March



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2009, the Swedish government presented a bill that will extend the administrative area for Finnish and Sami dramatically (this still has to be approved by the *Riksdag*). In the case of Finnish, 18 municipalities will be included in the Mälardalen region, including the cities of Stockholm, Uppsala and Eskilstuna. Whereas earlier only 5 % of the Finnish-speakers were covered by the administrative area in the north, now about 40 % are covered. The positive development for the Swedish minority support has largely been the result of both internal pressure from the minorities themselves, but most of all, due to the international criticism presented by the convention work of the Council of Europe.

Because Sweden, since the second World War does not collect data on languages, due to the potential interference with data on ethnicity, there are no reliable census data on languages. Also, the public statistics on migrants and their integration were changed in 2003, which makes it possible to follow migrants in the first and, to some extent, the second generation. In official statistics, therefore, the number of Sweden Finns was reduced by almost 50 % overnight. Estimates on the figures of the national minorities hover between, roughly 300,000 and 630,000 (Table 1).

The minorities of Sweden and their languages

Finnish/ Suomi	Meän- kieli	Romani Chib	Sami	Yiddish
470,000 (200,000- 250,000)	50,000- 70,000	20,000 - 50,000	15,000 - 20,000 (70,000, Sabme: ca. 6000 speakers) Sum, 1, minimum: 320,000	2,000 -6,000 Sum, 2, maximum: 630,000



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About one third of all Sweden Finns live in the Stockholm area, and half in the larger Mälardalen region, west of Stockholm and south and north of Lake Mälaren².

During the period after World War II, about 700,000 people have left Finland for Sweden, and about 2/ 3 have stayed. Since language shift has been extensive, the demographic picture is that of a threatened language community, even more so since the late 1980's, when return migration to Finland started outnumbering migration from Finland to Sweden.

In the language political domain, the question of language of instruction has been intense from the mid-1960's till at least the early 1990's. Due to the low degree of acceptance of the requirements of the Sweden Finnish population, several NGO's independent of the authorities decided to declare the Sweden Finns a national minority in 1992. In the same period, it became legally possible to establish so-called independent schools, which are publicly funded, but may have an educational profile of its own. Since the municipal schools, which until 1991 had received ear-marked funding for mother-tongue instruction no longer supported the teaching of the mother tongues of neither migrants nor minorities to the same extent as thitherto, this was seen as a major bilingual alternative for Sweden Finnish children. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the educational policies and the choices that Sweden Finnish parents have made during the era of assimilation (until the 1970's), over

-a period of *integration* (until the early 1980s),

-an era of *resistance by and indifference among the authorities* (about 1983 to the early 1990s), and last,

- an era of *neglect* (1990s to the early 2000s),

it is obvious that less than half of all Sweden Finnish children have received instruction in Finnish in any form. Of those who have, a large majority have received so-called home-language (from 1997 mother-tongue) instruction about the language (1-2 hours/week).

Despite the fact that cultural strivings were extensive during the 1960s-1980s, the transmission of language and culture to growing generations has proven to be weak. There is some own public service TV-broadcasting in Finnish, and the provision of radio broadcasting is well developed, but other cultural institutions, such as a daily newspaper in Finnish, is not provided for. Theatre activities have come and gone, and at the moment there is a professional Finnish (bilingual) theatre, *Uusi Teatteri* (The New Theatre), which also presents plays to children specifically.

Since the mid-1980s intermarriage between Finns and people with other backgrounds is extensive, and multilingualism in the families is in many cities an every-day phenomenon.

Major NGO's, like *Ruotsinsuomalaisten Keskusliitto* (The National Organization of Sweden Finnish Clubs), which represents various types of local and regional cultural clubs of Sweden Finns, as well as the *Ruotsinsuomalaisten Nuorten Liitto* (The Youth Organization of Sweden Finns, FYS), try in cooperation with other organizations and institutions to promote the language and culture of Sweden Finns, but the speed and spread of language shift is severely threatening the success of these strivings. The politically neutral *Ruotsinsuomalaisten Valtuuskunta* (The

² According to informal information from *Sisuradio*, the Sweden Finnish radio channel, these figures will be complemented at the end of April by new ones, based on data collected for the channel by Statistics Sweden.



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Sweden Finnish Delegation) is since the late 1990s the official representative of Sweden Finns and their various interest organizations.

A general impression both among minority and majority is that Sweden Finns today are well integrated, even to the extent that they are not seen or heard at all. In addition to sports/athletes and local politicians, some individual actors, TV-celebrities and writers, make up role models for younger Sweden Finns. During the last few years, there is also both at local and national level an increasing amount of musicians, pop and rock stars, who have a Sweden Finnish background. They make up prestigious role models for children and youth, but seldom appear in Finnish. In addition, what takes place in Finland, both regarding its international success in business, politics, sports, music and how it competes with Sweden in these areas, plays a significant, symbolic role for the Sweden Finns. Thus, the enormous growth and success of Nokia, as well as the World Championship in ice hockey in 1994, and the victory in the European Song Contest festival by the heavy-metal rock band *Lordi*, have been crucial promoters of the self-esteem and identity of Sweden Finns, young and old.

To predict what the future fate of Finnish in Sweden is, is impossible, but some main areas are crucial: education issues, public visibility including the media, the minority policy development, and, since a decade or so, the question of Finnish-language services for elderly. Even if the future may seem dark at times, there is a spreading positive attitude towards the Sweden Finnish and culture, and many signs of a more active revitalization and emancipation of the language can be seen. Whether this also is transformed to positive language political activities and improved language use, quantitatively and qualitatively, remains to be seen.

Brief profile of youth

Since there are no official statistics based on language, in addition to that presenting the mother-tongue instruction, it is difficult to estimate the amount of Sweden Finnish youth. According to the latest statistics from the National Board of Education (Skolverket, 2009), there were about 8,000 pupils in primary school receiving mother-tongue instruction in Finnish, representing slightly less than 40 % of those who are entitled to receive instruction in Finnish. This would mean that the over-all figure of those more or less competent in Finnish (since this is a requirement, in order to be eligible), is around 18,000 between the ages of 7 and 16. The consequence of the habitation patterns of Sweden Finns would imply that these children live in at least these areas: in the greater Stockholm area and in the Mälardalen regions, in and around the city of Göteborg, including some cities in the neighbouring counties, such as Borås and Trollhättan, in some of the coastal cities on the East coast, North of Stockholm: Gävle, Umeå, Luleå and the municipalities of the administrative area of Finnish in Norrbotten County. In addition, several other cities in the central and southern parts of Sweden are known to be areas in which Sweden Finns live.

Whereas there were many spare time activities and clubs etc. for children and youth, based on the use of Finnish, such organized activities have become rare. In the 1960s to 1980s the “problem” of Sweden Finnish youth was often expressed as a far of lack of integration, and today, the opposite applies: the Sweden Finnish children and youth are integrated to the extent that they are fully anonymous. Even if there



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are attempts to maintain some cultural and sports activities in Finnish by the National Organization of Sweden Finnish Clubs (*Ruotsinsuomalaisten Keskusliitto*) and the National Sweden Finnish Youth Organization, as well as at the local levels, the specific interests, for example sports, or computers, are language-independent. Also the summer camps have become rare and are only able to receive a small amount of children and youth. There nevertheless are attempts both to create bilateral (with Finland) and national activities for Sweden Finnish youth, in Finnish and bilingually.

As mentioned above, Sweden Finnish children and youth are quite anonymous due to the high level of integration, and a large number of youth use Swedish in their everyday communication. Their bilingual development is best supported by the families and the eight bilingual primary schools. Today, there exists only one secondary school-class, which functions in connection with one of the bilingual primary schools in central Stockholm. The National Sweden Finnish Youth Organization (FYS) is another institution, the goal of which is to encourage Sweden Finnish youth to value their languages and give them the possibility to use Finnish in their spare time.

The activities of the organization vary considerably. The local clubs organize various activities, among others sports, theatre, music events/concerts and movie nights. Among its members FYS also counts Finnish University clubs for students at Swedish universities, and which organize activities for the students in Finnish. Many of the students are from Finland and they have mainly arrived in Sweden in order to study there.

This year's national events are the Unihoc Cup 2009 and three different cultural events. FYS as a national organization is less involved in nation-wide events because the main action is supposed to be arranged by the local clubs. With its nation-wide events FYS aims at offering the kind of experiences to Sweden Finnish youth which are difficult to carry out in the smaller local clubs. Using both Swedish and Finnish FYS can reach both those young people who speak Swedish as well as those who are bilingual and who want to use or improve their minority language (Finnish). The organization also reaches Swedish youth, without a minority background.

3. Research Findings

3.1 Use of Finnish when socialising with friends

All participants stressed that the choice of language between Finnish and Swedish depends on which friends are present. If there are Finnish-speaking friends present, they always speak Finnish. If a non-Finnish -speaker arrives, they switch to Swedish:

"Mulla on niitä suomenkielisiä kamuja, niin mä puhun vähän väliä suomea ja vähän väliä ruotsia."[Fi., I have those Finnish-speaking buddies, so I speak Finnish at times, Swedish at times, JL.]



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The amount of Finnish- and Swedish-speaking friends shifted in the interview conversations. In general, however, one can say that the informants had more Swedish-speaking friends than Finnish-speaking ones. Close friends tended to be Finns. There is a wish to tell secrets and use other "sensitive" words "*känsliga ord*" (Swe.) (quoted from the informants) in Finnish, in that company, where there are non-Finnish -speakers. The informants say, that sometimes they want to tease Swedish-speaking friends, and so they speak Finnish. Swedish words are also used when a Finnish corresponding word does not come to mind:

"mä ostin eilen uudet brallat" [Fi. *yesterday I bought new trousers*, Swe.]. According to the informants, Finnish words are not used while speaking Swedish. Code-switching thus functions unidirectionally.

It often turns out that the informants switch codes unconsciously from Finnish to Swedish, or the other way round, in conversation. The informants frequently do not notice the switches, but they are noticed by someone who is a non-speaker of Finnish, and this person comments on this.

The younger informants write their sms (text messages) mainly in Finnish, if they are accustomed to using Finnish with the recipient. Face-book -comments often take place in Finnish, but depending on the friend, also in Swedish.

The older informants, or the 15-17 -year olds, on their part tell that writing is easier in Swedish, and text messages, facebook-comments are written in Swedish, irrespective of whether one speaks Finnish with the recipient

The informants do not feel embarrassed to use Finnish among friends or in public spaces: *"Miksi omaa kotikieltä pitäisi hävetä?"* [Fi., *Why should one be ashamed of your own language?*] one of the informants asks.

The informants are proud of their knowledge in the Finnish language. According to them, it *"on kiva osata jotain kieltä, mitä ruotsalaiset eivät osaa."* [Fi., *...is nice to know a language that Swedes don't know*] Finnish is according to them, "cool".

Ideas of the young, that best could support the use of Finnish among friends

12-13 years

"Olisi helpompaa, jos voisi olla enemmän suomea osaavien kanssa, esim. tavata eri kouluissa olevia suomea osaavia." [Fi., *It would be easier, if one could be more with Finnish-speakers, for example meet Finnish-speakers in different schools*]

15-16 years

"Helpottaisi, jos tapaisi enemmän suomea osaavia nuoria jossain, yhteistyö vaikka eri luokkien kanssa, jotta tapasi lisää suomenkielisiä." [Fi., *It would be easier, if one met more with young Finnish-speakers, for example having cooperation between different classes, so that one would meet more Finnish-speakers.*]

17 years:



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"Olisi kivaa tavata enemmän suomenkielisiä nuoria jossain." [It would be nice to meet more young Finnish-speakers.]

3.2 Use of Finnish with family members

The families of the younger informants are actively bilingual. Both parents are not Finnish-speakers, but one of the parents of the informants is Swedish-speaking. In all families, still, Finnish is spoken, also with siblings who also respond in Finnish. For one informant

"siskot eivät halua puhua suomea. Ne vastaavat aina ruotsiksi, silloin mäkin alan puhua ruotsia". [Fi, his/her sisters do not want to speak Finnish. They always respond in Swedish, so I also start speaking it.] The sisters nevertheless understand Finnish.

Passive language use: Swedish-speaking parents understand Finnish, but do not speak it. They understand from single words, what the child is speaking about with the other parent. The youngest brother of one of the informants does not speak Finnish, but understands it. He will answer in Swedish.

All informants state that it is natural to speak Finnish with a parent, if you are used to it. It is equally natural to use Swedish with the Swedish-speaking parent.

The informants also told that they seldom go to church, if at all, but if they do, they go to a Finnish-speaking church. That the informants say that they go to Finnish-speaking church, use Finnish in the family and that the closest friends are Finnish-speakers, shows that Finnish has a special status compared to Swedish. Finnish is being more used in private and emotional matters. Swedish on the other hand, is the language of education and public and other functions.

The parents of the informants in the two older focus groups are fully Finnish-speaking and in the families only Finnish is used. The informants note, that they do not see what could improve the use of Finnish in the families, since there is no need for it. According to the informants it is easy and natural. The only aspect about which it is difficult to talk about in Finnish in the family context concerns so-called "new words", which are unknown also to the parents in Finnish, for example, vocabulary that connects to the internet, like *broadband*, Swe. *bredband* = Fi. *laajakaista*; *dongle*, Swe. *dongle, adapter* = Fi. *mokkula (laite, moduuli, komponentti)*.

3.3 Use of Finnish in sport activities

Regarding sport activities, according to the interviews, one can claim that only Swedish is used, since most friends participating are Swedish-speakers. During tournaments/cups it is fun to know Finnish, since you can function as an interpreter between the coaches and the players. In Sweden many of the sports concepts are borrowed directly from English, for example, *off-side* and *icing*, which has as one consequence that the informants do not know the word in Finnish.



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According to the informants most sports terms are translated into Finnish, whereas they remain largely in their English versions in Swedish. Therefore Finnish sports terms are difficult. The use of Finnish in the sports domain is complicated by the fact that few of the friends are Finnish-speakers, and the poor knowledge of the vocabulary in Finnish. Nevertheless, Finnish is always used, if there is a Finnish-speaking friend participating, for example during sports tournaments/cups.

"Kun katson urheilua Suomessa sukulaisten kanssa, mun pitää kysyä aina kun tulee vaikka utvisning (jäähy), poikittainen maila (cross-checkning), et mikä toi poikittainen maila on." [Fi., When I watch sports games in Finland with my relatives, I always have to ask for example what jäähy [penalty is], poikittainen maila [cross-checking], what it is this poikittainen maila].

Two of the informants played soccer in the same team and the coach often complained to them, when they spoke Finnish between themselves:

"mitä te oikein puhutte? Ketä te haukutte? Täällä puhutaan ruotsia"[what are you saying? Whom are you complaining about?]; *"Jos valmentaja kannustaisi puhumaan keskenään suomea, kyllä me puhuttaisiin"* [if the coach would support us using Finnish between ourselves, we would use Finnish]; *Jos olisi suomenkielinen pelikaveri puhuisin suomea jos valmentaja hyväksyisi"* [if there were a Finnish-speaking friend I would speak Finnish if the coach approved of it].

Ideas put forward by the youth, how to best support the use of Finnish in sports

12-13 years

They would be inclined to use Finnish during sports training, if there were Finnish-speaking team mates and the coach supported that and did not make slurs about the use of Finnish.

17 years

If all sports terms were not in Finnish, it would be easier to follow sports in Finnish.

Swedish is the dominant language and many sport terms in Swedish come from English, for example *cross-checking* in ice-hockey. Finnish sports terms are usually translated to Finnish so that there is a specific word in Finnish. Therefore, Sweden Finns have problems understanding sport terms in Finnish, used by Finland Finns.

3.4 Use of Finnish with music

According to the informants Finnish music is not doing well. A majority of the informants say that they only listen to English-language music, and a few of them say that they sometimes listen to music in Swedish. Only one of the informants said that he/she is listening equally much to music in Finnish and Swedish. Always when he/she has returned from Finland he/she listens to music in Finnish in the radio and buys some hit-collection in Finnish.



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Even if Finnish-language music is not popular among the young informants, this does not mean that they would not listen to Finnish musicians. HIM and the Rasmus are mentioned in all of the interviews, several times and in a positive mode. They are of this opinion about Finnish music:

"Se on sellaista laivamusiikkia, kauheaa." [it is that kind of ferry-boat dance music, terrible]; *"Meidän äiti kuuntelee aina suomalaista musiikkia kotona, se on ihan kauheaa"* [our mother always listens to Finnish music at home, it is terrible]; *"En mä mitään tangoa halua kuunnella."* [I don't want to listen to any tango music.]

In order to receive a clearer picture, the discussion was taken in the direction of the Idol-competitions. All informants had some experience of watching both the Finnish and Swedish Idol competitions. In particular for the older informants, watching the Finnish Idol competition is complicated by the vocabulary used by the judges when evaluating the artists/participants. There is no such problem when watching the Swedish Idol. Then they understand the comments regarding the singers' performance abilities.

The listening of Finnish music is made more difficult by the fact that they can listen to the latest music in Sweden. The informants are not able to follow the development of Finnish music or new artists/pop/rock stars.

Ideas put forward by the youth, how to best support the use of Finnish in the music domain

15-16 years

"Yksinkertaisesti tehdä parempaa musiikkia suomenkielellä. Mahdollisuus kuulla suomenkielistä musiikkia myös Ruotsissa." [simply by making better music in Finnish. Possibility to listen to Finnish music in Sweden] [Here, Markus has mentioned MOKOMA, a recent project by young people attempting to arrange music events with Finnish rock music, in part also including Sweden Finnish rock/pop music]

3.5 Use of Finnish for technology and the internet

The results of the interviews show, that language that covers the Internet and other new technology is difficult in Finnish. New words are introduced and born all the time, and not even the parents are able to follow the development of this new Finnish terminology. Examples of words that the informants did not know in Finnish; *bredband, dongle, textmeddelande = SMS* [broadband, dongle, text message]:

"Kaikissa tv-mainoksissa käytetään uusia sanoja uusista apparaateista, ne sanat on helppo oppii siitä" [New words are used in all tv commercials, about new technical equipment, those words are easy to learn that way]

Even when hanging out with friends, and with whom they otherwise would use Finnish, they switch almost completely to Swedish when talking about the internet or new technology. The youngest informants write their text messages in Finnish, if the recipient is Finnish-speaking, but the older they get, the more frequently are the



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messages in general written in Swedish to Finnish-speaking friends. Interestingly, some of the informants mention that they often add at the end, some type of Finnish word or sentence, for example:

"Vi ses imorrn, glöm inte gympakläderna, kram. Hyvää yötä"[See you tomorrow, don't forget your athletics clothes, hug. Good night]

The older informants mention that they use a lot of abbreviations in facebook, while chatting and writing text messages, for example: LOL (lots of laugh), if it concerns something funny. Abbreviations in Swedish and English are simple and these are used frequently, but the Finnish abbreviations are not understood among the older informants.

The older informants also write their emails in Swedish in general, since Finnish words are so long and many words are homonymous. One informant says that he/she looks for information for school assignments in both Finnish and Swedish, but then writes the summary in Swedish.

Ideas put forward by the youth, how to best support the use of Finnish while dealing with the Internet and new media

17 years

If the parents used the Finnish words, it would be easier to learn them.

3.6 Use of Finnish in the labour market

According to the views of all informants there is much use of Finnish at the labour market. Finnish is not a disadvantage at the labour market. They would like to work in Finnish in the future, and one of the informants told, for example, that in one of the hospitals in the Stockholm area, one gets a wage bonus for knowledge in Finnish. One of the informants, however, said that poor knowledge of Finnish words may cause difficulties, but does not consider this to be a problem, since it is possible to infer from the context, what it is all about.

Also according to the views of the younger informants it is an advantage to know Finnish:

"Fl., Aina tarvitaan suomenkielistä telefonsäljare, Swe." [there is always a need for Finnish-speaking call-service and telephone selling persons]

Even though they see the positive side of knowing Finnish for the labour market, only one of the informants could imagine working in Finland. The other ones would not like to move to Finland to work.

In addition, the common Nordic labour market/Nordic cooperation was also a point made by the informants, when considering the advantages of knowing Finnish and Swedish.



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Ideas put forward by the youth, how to best support the use of Finnish in the labour market

Since all of them understood it to be positive to know Finnish in the labour market, it was difficult for them to suggest improvements, how to better make use of this knowledge.

3.7 Use of Finnish in education and studies

Views on the use of Finnish in secondary school and in higher education was almost equally divided into two halves. Two of the informants want to have Finnish lessons in secondary school, the other do not. The younger informants want to study French, Spanish or *"isoja kieliä"* [big languages].

To study the language in secondary school, however, does not seem to attract them, since only one of the informants considers choosing a language at that level, the other ones do not intend to take additional languages.

One of the informants wants to continue studying the Finnish language also at the tertiary level, another one is considering studying Finnish. The informants nevertheless state that in many higher education institutions it is not possible to study Finnish, and this is the most probable hindrance to the study of Finnish. One of the informants notes that it would be possible to take distant courses via Internet in another institution/place, even if this is not the same thing, as when being able to speak to a teacher directly.

According to one informant Finnish is not a "cool" language, since it consists of strange words and *"suomen kieli kuulostaa kylmältä."* [Finnish sounds cold]. Swedish is according to this person easier to learn. Many of the young consider Finnish to be "cool" as a language.

4. Priorities for future action

Conclusion

There are several starting points for future maintenance and revitalization efforts regarding Sweden Finnish. Some of these belong to the educational field, like that of improving, on the one hand, the possibility to receive bilingual education with teaching in both languages, also in the municipal schools. On the other hand, one needs to increase the amount of pupils who are eligible for mother-tongue instruction to take those courses. The result today of the educational system is that quite a few Sweden Finnish adolescents do have a good or even very good oral competence in Finnish, but a majority of them seems to have a poor or almost non-existent capacity, especially to write, but also read in Finnish.

The use of Finnish in public life is still restricted, despite both legal and attitudinal changes to the better during the last ten years. Improvements are furthermore



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proposed by a new language law (2009) and the extension of the administrative area of Finnish, to cover some major municipalities in the Mälardalen region, including the capital of Stockholm. One of the issues at stake is that the merit of knowing Finnish – in particular in its written form – has thus far been very limited. This needs to be changed, but also in accordance with this, the willingness among young Sweden Finns to learn more about the formal requirements of the language needs to be enhanced.

Also in the private and spare time spheres crucial issues need to be approached. One is how to make the minority language a “cool” or prestigious language, to be used voluntarily also among the youth themselves. One crucial aspect of this is how to make available and attractive the use of Finnish in for example new technology and communication through new media. Another matter would be to make it acceptable to use it for example as a communicative means of other cultural expressions, such as music, as a language of media consumption and within sports. Some of this could be achieved both through increasing contact possibilities between Sweden Finnish youth nationally, in Sweden, but also as a target for bilateral activities between Finnish youth from Finland and Sweden Finns. As regards the media, TV and radio broadcasters are constantly striving for an improved service to the youth and to children. Some of these efforts will be presented during a conference arranged at the end of the year by the Centre for Finnish Studies (see following section).

Several new projects exist. Suffice it here to mention the Mokoma music project, the attempts to gather youth for different sports activities (for example Unihoc games; by the Sweden Finnish Youth Organization), and various school projects, arranged by the eight independent bilingual schools. In addition, for example, the Centre for Finnish Studies will arrange a national and international conference/event 2-4 December 2009, with the aim of both discussing and presenting the challenges and possibilities offered by the new media, in addition to TV and radio broadcasting in minority languages. This conference, *Erkänd !? 3* ('Recognized !? 3'), will invite representatives not only of Sweden Finns, but all five national minorities in Sweden, and two of those in Finland, Finland Swedes and the Sami. Also media experts will be invited to join the conference, as will youth organizations and local youth.

Sports activities and music events have been typical Sweden Finnish youth activities in the 1970s and 1980s, for example those arranged by FYS, such as *track and field* and *music events*. The annual music event was named *Nuorisokumaus* ('Youth hits') in the 1980s. Today, 30 years later, the organization's most popular sports activities are the unihoc games (an indoor sport which hardly existed in the 1980s) and among the music events, the MOKOMA project, which creates a bridge between Sweden Finnish and Swedish youth and modern Finnish – to a minor extent also Sweden Finnish – youth/rock music. To summarize, the events directed to the Swedish Finnish youth have had similar profiles also in the long-term perspective.

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