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Local majority and minority languages and English in the university

The University of Helsinki in a Nordic comparison

Jan K. Lindström and Jenny Sylvin

This study explores the usage and demand for local languages and English in a range of universities in Nordic countries. The University of Helsinki is in focus because of its bilingual status with two national languages, which have an official but not an equal position in practice. This research site was compared with five other universities working on a unilingual or multilingual basis. The study reveals tensions between official language policies and grassroots practices; language choice also creates tensions between national and global sciences. While official language policies may be soft steering instruments, they safeguard the presence of a non-default language. However, the increasing presence of English challenges traditional university language policies, calling for a reevaluation of them.

1. Introduction

This study concentrates on the interaction between university language policies and their outcomes in practical application in the academic community. The central question to be addressed is how the existing policies lead to the creation of opportunities to use the languages promoted in the policies and, more specifically, what the role of English is in these policies and practices. Ultimately, we want to identify what contributes to a good policy-practice fit and encourages the use of different languages, not only English, in a Nordic university context.

The University of Helsinki [UHE], a North-European multilingual institution, lies at the center of our study. As regulated by the Finnish law, the university is officially bilingual in Finnish and Swedish (see Saarinen, this volume). It is the oldest and largest university in Finland, established in 1640 (as the Royal Academy of Åbo). Today it has approximately 36,000 degree students and 8,600 members of staff. UHE has been regarded as a national symbol, one that mirrors a bilingual society: about six percent of the population of Finland as well as the city of Helsinki are registered as native speakers of Swedish, while the great majority

speaks Finnish (see Liebkind et al., 2007). The same proportions hold within the university, where about seven percent of the students are registered as speakers of Swedish. The number of international degree students is under 2,000.

In the process of increasing internationalization, the English language has gained an important position at different levels and, for all practical purposes, has become the “third language” of the university. In this study we address the relations and possible tensions between the local languages on the one hand, and the international language of English on the other, as well as the tensions between ideologies (as expressed in documented policies) and actual practices regarding these languages in the activities of the university. The fact that one of the local languages is a (quantitative) minority language adds a further complicating dimension to the situation. From this perspective it is relevant to ask to what extent language policies succeed in establishing the minority language within university education.

Our study builds on the data and results of the project *Language Dynamics and Management of Diversity* (DYLAN) funded by the EU in 2007–2011.¹ The objective of the project’s Helsinki team was to examine university language policies at different levels (EU-wide, nationally, and university-wide), their outputs as policy actions, and finally their experienced outcomes at the grassroots level (Moring et al., 2013). The goal was to provide a model for the assessment of policy implementation, i.e., to evaluate the success of overt policies and determine the role of parallel covert policies that affect the implementation. The results of the project show that (overt) language policies are essential from the perspective of local minority languages in the context of Nordic higher education where English is used more and more.

While the University of Helsinki is the focus of our discussion, we also include a condensed Nordic comparison in order to broaden the analytical perspective. For this, we draw on the data collected in the DYLAN project from a number of universities in Finland, Sweden, and Norway (see below). These reference universities were chosen for closer study because, at least at some level, they had formulated strategies for both a national majority and a minority language in higher education and showed a desire to create international competencies. However, the local circumstances under which these universities operate vary from case to case, and it is our objective to account for how these local contingencies have resulted in certain variations in the chosen policies as well as in practice.

We will begin our analysis with an overview of the general linguistic policy and the conditions at the University of Helsinki. We will then report findings from a few practice-oriented case studies that address the role of English and the

1. See http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/index.php.

local languages in two different faculties within the university. Finally, we extend the scope of the analysis by making a general “typological” comparison of Nordic university language policies and practices based on the data we have had at hand (see *Data and analytical framework*).

2. Tensions between *de jure* and *de facto* language policies of the university

University language policies are not created by chance but are affected by a number of decisions and regulations on international, national and institutional levels (Purser, 2000, p. 452). In a study carried out by Moring et al. (2013), it is documented that the key language policy documents that affect the University of Helsinki include 24 EU-level, 14 national-level and 13 university-level documents, and each of these contains several (suggested) policy actions.

The EU-level documents range from Council of the European Union conclusions to Joint Interim Reports of the Council and the European Commission, and they deal mostly with the promotion of multilingualism in institutions of higher education. These documents do not, however, make direct requirements of universities or provide incentives; rather they formulate strong suggestions. Indeed, policy documentation is at its most explicit at the national level. Generally, the most important document is the Language Act, which states that the national languages of Finland, Finnish or Swedish or both, shall be used in courts of law and by other state authorities, as well as by authorities in bilingual municipalities. A reflection of this act is manifest in the Finnish Universities Act, which establishes that UHE is bilingual, with Finnish and Swedish being the languages of instruction and examination. The implication is that UHE is given the responsibility to educate a sufficient number of people with skills in Swedish for the needs of the country, for example, for those in positions of state authority.

The relation between policy documentation and policy actions is obviously more balanced and detailed at the university level. Thus, the UHE administrative regulations state that the general working (administrative) language of the university is Finnish, which is also the main language of instruction. Thus, one could say that Finnish is the default or unmarked language of the institution (cf. Cots, Lasagabaster & Garrett, 2012). However, in accordance with the ideology of the Language Act and the Finnish Universities Act, the UHE administrative regulations establish a few strategic points to ensure bilingualism and the status of the Swedish language: there are 28 professorships (of some 600) whose holders are responsible for teaching in Swedish in their respective fields; one of the university’s vice rectors must hold such a “Swedish” professorship and the university deans have the responsibility of supporting and promoting bilingualism in their

respective faculties. There is also an active committee responsible for the planning and coordination of teaching in Swedish. Additionally, members of administrative bodies are entitled to use either Finnish or Swedish in meetings, and students have the right to take examinations in either language.

Furthermore, the university has published a language policy document of its own, the *University of Helsinki Language Policy* [UHELP] (2007), currently under revision. The main objective of this rather generally formulated text is to stress not only the importance of the university's "omnipresent" Finnish-Swedish bilingualism (UHELP, 2007, p. 44), but also the need to invest in teaching and services in English and in certain other foreign languages as well. In fact, the policy clearly promotes a trilingual functional environment: Finnish, Swedish, and English are to be used in the university's basic information publications and brochures, in names of faculties and departments, in guides and signage, in client services and on websites.

The language policy document can be regarded as one type of manifestation (output) of the university's general language policy and ideology. However, it is a soft instrument with no explicit steering ambitions; for example, it does not formulate monetary incentives or competence requirements (Moring et al., 2013). Instead, its level of steering is indirect and disconnected from monetary aspects (cf. O'Hare, 1989): the goal is to increase language awareness at the university, apparently with the intention of influencing positions taken on language matters in the practical planning of everyday academic functions. Indeed, UHELP stands out as a compact compilation of existing good practices and other practices identified as valuable to implement. Not unlike many texts making recommendations, the tone of the document is hampered by hedging or non-specific expressions, such as "the university will seek to / should be able to / encourages / believes in x":

The University's Language Policy should be observed in the performance of day to day activities and in the implementations of policy programmes as well as in preparing the next University strategic plan. (UHELP, 2007, p. 52)

There has been some criticism of the general and non-committal nature of UHELP: for example, there is no clearly defined practice or instrument for following up its implementation (Moring et al., 2013).

Another source of criticism may be the tensions experienced between the university's official, *de jure*, language policy and the informal, *de facto*, policy, which is observable in grassroots practices (cf. Schiffman, 1996). For example, the language policy document declares that bilingualism (meaning the use of Finnish and Swedish) within the university community should be omnipresent and functional. On the other hand, it is "common knowledge", as suggested by our focus group discussions, that Swedish – not English – is in the position of the third

language; internationalization in combination with limited resources is mentioned as the reason that faculties and departments do not offer Swedish versions of all information. According to our focus groups, the international faculty members and students scarcely notice the presence of Swedish at UHE (Lindström, 2012).

Moreover, English has taken a dominant role in many fields and functions, not least within research and researcher training, at the cost of both Finnish and Swedish. This mirrors the prominence given to English in the language policy document, which expressly encourages the active use of English in teaching and scientific publication. But while this is largely the state of affairs in the natural and physical sciences, there is a much narrower range of courses offered in English in other fields, such as the humanities. Further, the quality of the teaching in English has been criticized by the Finnish students (Lindström, 2012), even though the Language Policy points out – again with a modal “should” – the need for a high quality in language usage:

The University should focus on the quality of the Finnish, Swedish and foreign languages used in written academic work and teaching. (UHELP, 2007, p. 51)

These tensions between the official language policy and grassroots practices and realities are further mirrored in a certain ambivalence and ambiguity in the relationship between English and the local languages at the university, a topic to be discussed further in Section 4.

3. Data and analytical framework

While the current study does not cover the whole “Policy-to-Outcome-Path” from strategic planning to everyday linguistic practices (cf. Easton, 1965), we nonetheless base the analysis on our earlier, more comprehensive explorations of this topic (Moring et al., 2013). Accordingly, we assume that policy planning processes begin with *inputs* through which demands and support – governmental or non-governmental – are converted into policy measures. These produce *outputs* in the form of policy actions, such as legislation, policy documents, and action plans. Finally, the outputs result in practical *outcomes* in the activities of the institution or the community (Grin & Moring, 2002; Moring et al., 2013).

Above, we outlined some of the outputs concerning the language policy created for the University of Helsinki. In the remaining part of this study, it is our objective to focus on the outcomes that are generated by policy actions and to assess their impact on the manifest linguistic practices in the university community. In order to do this, we draw on data from interviews and focus group discussions, which were conducted at the University of Helsinki between 2007 and 2010.

The interviews were semi-structured and involved 12 actors responsible for the formulation and/or implementation of language policy at the university at central administrative, campus, faculty, and departmental levels. The focus group data consist of 10 video-recorded, semi-structured group discussions with students and faculty staff with different linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds. The intention of the focus groups was to study how language practices are actually experienced at the grassroots level. Because the UHE is an extensive and complex organization, we have chosen to concentrate on the more detailed data gathering and analysis in two faculties, the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Social Sciences, with special focus on two departments within each faculty.

The data on our Nordic comparative site studies were collected as part of the DYLAN project by our collaborators at the universities in Åbo (Turku) in Finland, Mälardalen and Södertörn in Sweden, and Kautokeino and Tromsø in Norway.² It must be pointed out that the comparative data were collected in 2008 and thus do not portray the current state of affairs at these universities. Therefore, instead of describing and even naming the particular institutions, we have made a generalized policy-practice model, which illustrates how the sociolinguistic reality at a university affects the policy creation (for example, whether a university is unilingual or multilingual and whether the institution is committed to a majority or a minority language or both). As we will see (Section 5), such an abstract comparison shows that, generally speaking, universities with similar sociolinguistic realities tend to formulate similar policies.

In assessing the outcomes of language policies, we draw on a model introduced by Grin (2003) in which actualized language use is seen as contingent on the desire, capacity, and opportunity to use a certain language. These contingencies can be individually determined or, as we will suggest, may be fostered and created by the institution where a group of individuals act together (Lindström, 2012).

As regards this volume, there is a difference in focus between our contribution and Saarinen's; Saarinen presents the Finnish academic context at the input and output levels of the Policy-to-Outcome-Path, whereas our focus is on outcomes and the resulting practices. Moreover, Saarinen considers the topic from the Finnish national perspective, whereas our approach includes a specific local as well as a more generic Nordic perspective.

2. We want to thank following persons for the Nordic case studies: Sarah Kvarnström, MA, and Professor Saara Haapamäki (Åbo Akademi University), Ms. Annaliina Gynne (Mälardalen University), Dr. Lia Markelin (Sámi University College), Docent Mats Landqvist, Ms. Jenny Rosenquist, and Docent Åsa Brumark (Södertörn University), and Ms. Gunhild Bøkestad (Tromsø University).

4. The local languages and English at the university

According to the language policy document of the University of Helsinki, the linguistic objective “is to combine internationalisation with the University’s responsibility for Finland’s two national languages” (UHELP, 2007, p. 41). As we noted above, exactly how this objective is to be interpreted in practice and to what degree internationalization is aligned with responsibility for the national languages are problem issues. In the following subsection we will present how the faculties in our case studies balance the preservation of the national (local) languages on the one hand with internationalization (which emphasizes English) on the other.

4.1 A few case studies: Different responsibilities, different practices

Let us consider the two faculties we have chosen for our case studies. One is the Faculty of Science, with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and the Department of Geosciences and Geography serving as case study departments for this paper. The other is the Faculty of Social Sciences with the Department of Political and Economic Studies and the Department of Social Research as case departments. The faculties differ from each other in that the Faculty of Science includes teacher education: among the students are those who will become teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and geography in Finnish- and Swedish-language schools. The presence of teacher education provides an obvious reason for the necessity of teaching and developing terminology in the national languages in the faculty’s relevant fields. There is no teacher education in the Faculty of Social Sciences and thus no immediate need to focus on terminology in Finnish and Swedish.

According to the dean of the Faculty of Science (interviewed in February, 2010), the national languages are used in the faculty and their significance is preserved, albeit not further developed, e.g., in quantitative terms. Finnish is the main working language and some courses taught in Swedish are arranged in accordance with departmental resources and student interest, the students being included in the course planning process (interviews with the heads of the departments of Mathematics and Statistics and Geosciences and Geography). With respect to English, however, the question of increasing and developing education in this language is sensitive, and the roles of the different languages are much discussed. At present, it is possible for students to write their master’s theses in English if they have taken part in an international project, but it is not encouraged. Quite the opposite: the faculty is developing a system whereby students write an exam on the subject of their master’s thesis to demonstrate that they can write a correct academic text in their first language. Furthermore, the text should be evaluated by a language teacher

who is a native speaker of that language. This system is routine procedure in some faculties at UHE, but in the Faculty of Sciences it is a matter of resources.

Interestingly, the increasing internationalization among the faculty members causes a new kind of problem between policy and practice. As the head of the Department of Geosciences and Geography put it in our interview: if students are encouraged to write in their own language instead of in English, then they should have linguistic role models among at least a few of their local professors and teachers. Indeed, the need of such role models is stressed in the University of Helsinki Language Policy (UHELP, 2007, p. 46). But who is to judge the quality of essays and theses if most of the supervising professors are “non-locals” and not proficient in the language of the texts in question, that is, Finnish or Swedish?

In our interviews, the head of the Department of Geosciences and Geography expressed his concern about the position of the national languages. Because of regional similarities in geology, climate and demography, for example, geography can be seen as a regional science rather than an international one: geographers thus tend to end up serving a national or local society where good communication skills in the local languages are essential. He also reminded us that the university has three tasks – education, research, and societal interaction – but there are tensions in the status of these tasks: research and publications in English earn a lot of performance credits for universities, whereas societal interaction does not. This is a problem for those scientific fields that have a tradition of publishing in the national languages in order to cater to society’s needs, yet the governmental evaluation system for higher education unfortunately does not reward this activity (cf. Gazzola, 2012, on academic performance indicators).

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, language issues are not a top priority, according to the dean. The actual bilingualism in the faculty consists of Finnish and English, and Swedish has become the third language. Other regional languages, such as German and Spanish, are mentioned as important and sought after – the exception being in the Department of Social Research, where Swedish is still mentioned as a language of importance. This seems to have both practical and theoretical reasons: first, social work is a service occupation involving customer contact, and the municipalities in the Helsinki area are bilingual in Finnish and Swedish. Second, Finland is a welfare state based on values similar to the other Nordic countries, making social research, which deals with these matters nationally, a regional science.

In sum, what seems to lie behind the biggest differences between our case departments/faculties is their degree of orientation to the needs of local society, most notably in educational matters and the audience addressed in research information. These orientational differences are reflected in the grading of the importance of specific languages, which is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The relevance of languages as related to fields of science and educational tasks.

Faculty	Science	Social sciences		
Department	Math & Statistics	Geosciences	Political & Economic	Social Research
Person interviewed	Head of dept	Head of dept	Head of dept	Head of dept
Native language	Swedish	Swedish	Finnish	Finnish
Teacher education	X	X		
Regional science		X		X
International science	X		X	
Languages mentioned as relevant				
Finnish	X	X	X	X
Swedish	X	X		X
English	X	X	X	X
Other			X	

What is said and thought about the status of languages at different functional levels seems to be mirrored in practice. When the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences claims that students do not have the proficiency to read books or attend courses taught in Swedish, the result is that the course literature is offered in Finnish and English only, and courses that are taught in Swedish are not marketed to Finnish-speaking students. Thus, the need to develop and use the Swedish language decreases, and the possible audience for a course taught in Swedish is also reduced. In contrast, the head of the Department of Geosciences and Geography states that Finnish-speaking students are, in fact, better at understanding Swedish than is generally believed; accordingly, their language skills are trusted in the department. In an advanced course held in Swedish, for example, the majority of the students attending may be Finnish-speaking, which indicates that the positive language attitudes that prevail in the faculty or at the departmental level are reflected in student behavior. Furthermore, the department offers a bilingual Finnish–Swedish course during the first year, giving the students an opportunity to experience and expand their passive/receptive proficiency in the other national language; this seems to give them confidence in their linguistic abilities. Sweden is also a popular country for student exchange among geographers, which may positively affect the motivation to attend courses in Swedish.

Language proficiency is not generally tested in employment interviews at UHE, but English is the language most in demand. There is a discrepancy between the requirements for proficiency in different languages in the university's administrative regulations. If an applicant is Finnish, then he or she should be proficient in Finnish, Swedish, and English; if the applicant is not a Finnish citizen, then proficiency in English is enough. Other languages are seen as a bonus, or, as the dean of the Faculty of Science puts it, as a sign of intelligence and a general interest in

matters of the world. The lack of competencies in extra languages is not, however, an impediment to appointment. In the case of foreign applicants, English may be tested to ensure that the applicant is proficient enough to teach in that language. Finnish teachers are generally not tested – if they are proficient enough to teach in English, it is good; otherwise, they will teach in the local languages, Finnish and/or Swedish.

Foreign employees' lack of proficiency in Finnish, and in some cases Swedish, is not entirely unproblematic: since the default language of administration and internal communication is Finnish, foreigners are excluded from administrative tasks. This exclusion leads to two problems: on the one hand, they are excluded from information (meetings, e-mail, impromptu notes, etc.) and cannot participate in the administrative work; on the other hand, the workload of administration rests on the faculty staff who are proficient in the local languages (Lindström, 2012). There is a general opinion that the international faculty members should be encouraged to learn Finnish or Swedish within three years, but whether three years is long enough to acquire enough proficiency to be able to teach and write and supervise in Finnish or Swedish depends entirely on personal interest and ambition, as well as investment on the employer's side. Intensive courses and ample opportunity to practice are prerequisites for effective language learning. Courses are provided, but when it comes to opportunities to practice, foreigners report that the language of conversation easily switches from Finnish (or Swedish) to English when they enter the conversation. Many international members of the university community may find that they can manage their daily lives without a deeper knowledge of Finnish or Swedish. Furthermore, if the period of employment or studies lasts only a few years or is an indefinite appointment, then the motivation to learn a local language ranks low among the priorities of international faculty members (Lindström, 2012; cf. Caudery, Petersen & Shaw, 2008).

4.2 Ambivalence and tensions in the practices

Generally, as regards the University of Helsinki, the status of English as the language of science and internationalization is unquestioned, and other foreign languages play only a marginal role in practice. The number of courses taught in English has increased, largely owing to investments in English master's programs, which have been introduced in order to recruit foreign students. The downside of this, however, is that there is not much interaction between national and international students because the latter tend to be isolated in their international

programs; such a situation does not give international students many natural opportunities to learn Finnish or Swedish. And *vice versa*; the segregation does not contribute to a “home-based internationalization” of the Finnish students. There are also segregating practices at the faculty staff level. Finnish (and in some cases Swedish) is the language of internal administration, which blocks non-Finnish speakers from decision-making and university career development, especially since learning the local languages is not a prerequisite for appointment. This actualizes the question of the distributional fairness of actual policies, i.e. which parties do have access to communication and central processes involved with it in the institution (see Grin & Gazzola, 2013). Meanwhile, international staff and students are increasing in numbers and universities are pressured into increasing the use of English, since internationalization is becoming an important factor in the governmental evaluation of Finnish universities’ qualitative performance (cf. Gazzola, 2012). In fact, lately there have surfaced some suggestions, as yet preliminary and unofficial, that English should be given more prominence as the language of administration at Finnish universities (see Aikalainen, 2010).

In our focus group discussions, the students expressed a clear interest in English and the need to learn more in the language. Obviously, English facilitates understanding the international scientific field, and it is also an important means of academic dissemination. Studying in English does, however, require a lot of effort for local students, compared to studying in Finnish or Swedish: many informants claim to have had to work hard at the beginning of their studies to decipher scientific literature in English. Student exchange is an effective way to practice English and is encouraged, but there is also a demand for more courses in academic English – one informant even suggests an increase in the mandatory courses in English, since students feel insecure about expressing themselves in the language, especially in writing. Finnish students are motivated to learn the language, but tend to take the easy way out and write papers in the national languages if given the opportunity. When related to the policy assessment model by Grin (2003), there are complicated and conflicting relations between the *desire* to use a language and the individual’s *actual conduct*: the students may want to learn and use more English in order to develop their competence. Thus, the university increases the opportunities for the use of English in the form of more courses; yet this may not lead to more substantial use of English if an option to use the local first languages is preserved. In other words, opportunity creation as a response to customer demand does not result in an actual desired conduct if there are no formally encouraging factors, such as obligatory examinations in English, connected to the opportunities.

Another kind of tension exists with signals both “from above” and at the grassroots level: the governmental crediting system may encourage universities to increase the use of English in academic work and education, but departmental practices, which are more closely connected to the “end users” at the university and in society, may favor the use of the local languages. Moreover, this seems to create tensions between the “global sciences” and the “regional” or “national” sciences. The latter feel the responsibility to maintain the ability to communicate research results in the national languages to national audiences and to create opportunities for academic education in these languages. However, it remains to be seen how long “regional sciences” are willing to do this, if dissemination of knowledge in the local languages is not credited by the state or the university, especially if the “regional sciences” have to compete internally with the “global sciences” for credits and thereby for allocation of economic resources.

The non-dominant local language, i.e., Swedish in our case, is often seen as a potential loser when the use of English spreads in a multilingual academic community and therefore among the agents in the home university (cf. Section 5). But as our case study above shows, it seems that a positive trend can be created by an open-minded trust in the competence of majority language speakers to learn (in) the minority language. Opportunities to use the minority language increase the competencies in that language and thereby the motivation to use it further, which is seen in the popularity of courses taught in Swedish in the Department of Geosciences and Geography. We can thus conclude that opportunity creation may crucially affect the desire to use a (non-default) language. But in addition, the transformation of desire to actual conduct, i.e. a realized language use, may also demand incentives, as the case of taking (or not taking) examinations in English shows.

5. Outlining a Nordic typology of university language policies

In our Nordic comparison we examined the types of language policies and their implementation and outcomes at six different universities, two in Sweden, two in Norway, and two in Finland (UHE included). Based on their commitment to working languages, the universities fell into one of three categories:

1. Universities that are officially *bilingual* in a national majority and minority language: BU/Mm³

3. A legend to the abbreviations: BU = bilingual university, UU = unilingual university, M = majority language, m = minority language, Mm = majority and minority language.

2. Universities that are officially *unilingual* in a national *majority* language, but may have an interest in fostering higher education in a minority or other language(s): UU/M
3. Universities that are officially *unilingual* in a (national) *minority* language: UU/m

The formulation of language policies and the degree of the universities' commitment to them varied according to the above categorization (Haapamäki & Lindström, 2011; Moring et al., 2013). This variation is summarized in Table 2, which compares the three types of universities with respect to the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of their language policies and also how the universities are oriented to the English language, which is acknowledged as an important asset by all of the universities studied here. In our analysis, the basic policy input is realized by an official, explicitly-stated language policy document for the university; as we see, these may or may not exist. We count as outputs any form of officially authorized action plans designed to implement the language policy. The policies and their implementation plans result in practices that create opportunities to use a local majority language (LM), a minority language (Lm) and, English (as the default international language). In all cases, the use of English is steadily increasing, albeit not in an all-encompassing manner, while the opportunities to use a local minority language may vary considerably within a single institution.

Table 2. The “policy–action plan–opportunity for language use” match at bilingual and unilingual universities.

	Language policy	Language action plans	Opportunity to use LM	Opportunity to use Lm	Opportunity to use Eng.
BU/Mm	+	+	+	(+)	(+)↑
UU/M	–	–	+	–	(+)↑
UU/m	+	+	–	+	(+)↑

As Table 2 shows, the bilingual universities (UHE included) had designed explicit language policy documents. This may be fully expected, because an acknowledged bilingual situation naturally calls for consideration and regulation of the status of the languages involved. These universities had also designed other kinds of policy actions intended to promote or protect whichever local language was in a minority position; for example, there can be language quotas for speakers of a minority language in certain educational programs and competence requirements for the employees in the minority language at least in certain academic positions. However, the majority language generally has a hegemonic position, which creates problems for a consistent realization of bilingual policies. The availability of opportunities to

use a minority language at bilingual universities varies considerably because the competencies in providing services in these languages are unevenly distributed within the institution. The situation is further complicated by the steady advance of English as an academic language. Thus, the bilingual universities find themselves struggling in an explicitly stated or practically accepted trilingual situation, even though such a situation is not regulated by legal means. This bias may risk the position of the minority language, which is already at a disadvantage in the local linguistic competition (cf. Cots et al., 2012). As participants in our focus groups put it, the “second” language (i.e. the local minority language) may end up as the “third” and least-used language in such a development (Lindström, 2012).

The data which we have available suggest that universities that are unilingual in a national majority language state their policies in a more implicit manner. In the two sites we examined, the universities did not have clearly formulated language policy documents at the time of data gathering. The result was that the universities followed an unofficial strategy (i.e., a practice): the dominant national language was the main language, but English was also given prominence as the academic lingua franca and as a language of instruction. The position of other languages seemed to be weak, although the two universities in this category had expressed a general interest (according to website information) in developing a multilingual, academic context based on local or immigrant languages. Our conclusion is thus that the absence of clearly-stated language policies correlates with the absence of overt policy actions to create opportunities or demand to use languages other than the default languages, i.e., the dominant local language and English.

The universities that were unilingual in a local or national minority language had designed explicit language policy documents, apparently because the minority language gives these universities a compelling existential motivation. The original goal of these universities was to create a higher education path in a minority language for the local linguistic minority. These universities also tend to have restrictive language policies *vis-à-vis* the majority language, which is dominant in most other societal spheres (and in most other universities) in the state. However, as in all of our other cases, English is also rapidly advancing in these institutions, although there may be a higher level of linguistic awareness of the special linguistic mission of these institutions (cf. Bull, 2012). It appears, nonetheless, that the increasing use of English in research and education has been regarded not as a problem, but as a necessity in the process of scientific internationalization and in the national competition for performance credits. In the long run, a continuing increase of educational areas using English will create problems for the “unilingual” minority language universities because their fundamental purpose is to provide education in a minority language and to communicate research results to a linguistic minority. What happens if the opportunities, and thereby the

competencies, to use the local language in higher education are narrowed down? A compromise with which one can live at present seems to be to secure the position of the minority language as a vehicle of education at the BA level, while English may take over at the MA level.

The above comparison has been short and somewhat superficial, but we find it useful for pointing out certain typological aspects of university language policies and their outcomes. These have direct connections to the local/national sociolinguistic situations that have dictated the universities' basic commitment to a unilingual, bilingual, or multilingual orientation (cf. Cots et al., 2012). Evidently, without an officially formulated language policy there will be no significant policy actions or practices to promote the use of languages other than the default language of the institution and surrounding society. As our bilingual universities show, however, an official policy may not lead to practices that in all cases promote the use of a non-default language. The competencies in a minority language are typically unevenly distributed in the institutions, and the policies may lack follow-up measures to control the implementation of the official policy (Lindström, 2012). The increase of functions in English is also a potential risk for investments in parallel functions in the minority or non-default language. Indeed, our interviews with academic decision-makers contained some indications of a viewpoint in which English is seen as a "natural" and indispensable area for resource allocation, whereas a local minority language is experienced as simply a plain economic cost factor (Godenhjelm & Östman, 2011; Moring et al., 2013). On the other hand, the case of our unilingual minority language universities shows that a clearly formulated policy at a national linguistic level may be toothless in the management of international trends, such as the advance of English. This advance may first have been regarded as a neutral outside factor, while the national majority language has been the traditional threat to be contained; yet we see in English a potential risk that may gradually undermine the essential existential linguistic idea of these institutions.

6. Conclusion and outlook

In this study we have concentrated on the outcomes (practices) that reflect, and result from, language policies and action plans in a Nordic university context with a special focus on the University of Helsinki. The basic linguistic choices and commitments a university makes depend on the local sociolinguistic reality outside the university. For example, the bilingual Finnish–Swedish status of the University of Helsinki derives from the Swedish academic history of Finland and the bilingual population in the Helsinki area (cf. Saarinen, this volume). Because Finnish

legislation defines the university as bilingual, one could say that the university has no choice; nevertheless, by formulating a language policy document of its own, the university has clearly shown its commitment to the intention of the legal paragraphs. Our case studies at faculty and departmental levels show, however, that a generally formulated and soft language policy may result in very different language practices at the grassroots level. The delicate situation in Helsinki is to maintain a balance between the diverse and partly conflicting demands of investments in the two local languages for the practical needs of Finnish society, on the one hand, and English, which is increasingly important for international interaction and competition, on the other. Some of our informants expressed concern about the dominant role of English, not only internationally, but also in the national competition among and within the universities, since activities in English produce important performance credits according to current governmental indicators (cf. Gazzola, 2012). Thus, there is clearly a linguistically-related strategic conflict between the “global” and the “national” sciences, which certainly calls for a remedy in the future.

The most compelling result of our case studies in Helsinki and the Nordic “typological” comparison is the realization that policy formulation and opportunity creation are key factors in the promotion of living academic languages at all levels. It appears that an officially formulated and accepted language policy document is a prerequisite for any promotional actions which will eventually radiate to the level of grassroots practice. But without action programs that are specifically devoted to the implementation, a language policy remains largely symbolic or results mostly in random effects. Clearly, what an action program should focus on is the creation of opportunities for language use, preferably accompanied by appropriate incentives. Opportunities to use, then, contribute to linguistic attitude improvement and competence development, which in turn increases the demand for further opportunities for language use. In all of our cases, it is the use of English that is rapidly spreading, but we have documented examples whereby a non-default, minority language also may enter into a positive spiral if the linguistic competencies of the local academic community are trusted and used.

The increasing presence of English creates tensions between traditional national university language policies in the Nordic universities. The demand of English forces bilingual universities into resource-craving trilingual practices, whereas unilingual minority-language universities must decide by which measures they can safeguard their original mission, which is rooted in the promotion of the minority language and serving the needs of the local society (cf. Bull, 2012). Nevertheless, universities and academic communities are evolving in more and more culturally and linguistically diversified directions. It has also been shown that diversity increases creativity in a community and thereby potentially improves the

quality of learning (Hemlin et al., 2008; Veronesi et al., 2013). But herein lies a curious paradox: the more international and multilingual an environment becomes, the more monolingual it tends to be, because linguistic diversity is often bridged by resorting to English as a lingua franca. Are there alternatives then to such a practice? Instead of switching to English in local solutions, one could demand that the internationally recruited faculty learn one local language within a specified and reasonable time limit. Similarly, students could be accustomed to multilingual practices, for example, by relying on receptive competence instead of resorting to English which may be no one's first language in an international classroom.

To conclude, while we cannot deny the relevance of English as an indispensable academic lingua franca and a vehicle of internationalization, there are national, regional, and local interests in research and higher education that cannot be fulfilled without the local languages. The identification of this linguistic and functional trade-off – the market logic with best fit in a given case – is thus the cornerstone in the formulation of language policies, which take the promotion of local languages into account – they must be actively used in the heart of the academic community in order to keep them up to date as scientific languages. By creating opportunities to use strategically important languages, the universities may foster positive attitudes to multilingualism and develop competencies in multiple languages. Therefore, opportunity creation should be recognized as a key strategy at the policy level and be implemented in an unprejudiced manner at the level of practice.

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