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Navigating Two Languages - Immigrant Integration Policies in Bilingual Finland

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Abstract

Immigration into states with historical linguistic minorities creates the dilemma of which language newly arrived immigrants should learn in the state-provided integration programmes. Research has shown how territorially concentrated historical minorities have used immigrants to favour their own nation-building projects. While these minorities to some extent operate like a majority within their federal state or province, this paper explores how constitutionally bilingual Finland, having a Swedish-speaking non-territorial minority with the same linguistic rights as the majority, governs immigrant integration. It investigates the implications of the strong legal and weak societal status of Swedish for immigrant integration by connecting scholarship on liberal multiculturalism and integration in multilingual states to laws, reports and interviews on integration in Swedish-speaking Finland. It shows tensions between Finland-Swedish integration aspirations and state level policies promoting a majority-monolingual integration. Unlike minorities with federal protection, the non-territorial Swedish-speaking minority largely relies on the voluntary choice of immigrants to choose Swedish as their language of integration. Structural obstacles, however, hinder this choice in bilingual regions, having resulted in political debates and actions. This article bridges research on Finnish multiculturalism and research on integration policy in contexts where historical minorities are present by introducing a non-territorial, formerly dominant minority to the research field.

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With growing immigration to Western Europe, integration policy is increasingly debated. A command of the national language is often presented as a key for successful integration. However, the existence of so-called historical minorities (non-dominant, historically present linguistic groups with some form of recognition, such as autonomy or self-determination) challenges the idea of one national language. Immigration to states where such historical minorities exist means that some immigrants are confronted with the choice to learn either the language of the minority, that of the majority, or possibly both, and politicians are confronted with the issue of how to govern multilingualism in integration policy. This governance is crucial for minorities for whom language is a central concern. Immigration can influence the demographic balance between the minority and majority as well as the linguistic composition of the state, including territories where the historical minority is in majority: if the linguistic balance shifts to the detriment of speakers of the minority language, the claims to linguistic accommodation towards the central state could be weakened (Barker, 2015: 25). This dilemma has attracted surprisingly marginal attention in previous research on immigrant integration and minority research, given that the increasing plurality in the wake of immigration to Western Europe also affects pre-existing minorities.

Political reactions to the language choice of immigrants in multilingual states have varied from leaving the choice and responsibility of language learning to immigrants in Italian trilingual South Tyrol (Zuber, 2014: 6) to pushing immigrants to choose French over English in Canadian Quebec (Kymlicka, 2001b: 278) and Catalan in Spanish Catalonia (Jeram, 2014: 232). These cases of linguistic nationalism (Jeram, *et al.*, 2016) can be contrasted to Finland where the constitutional status of the non-territorial minority language Swedish is equal to that of the majority language, also in the legislation regulating the state-provided integration courses. This provides an intriguing case to investigate: could the Finnish case provide a model for integration where language choice is based on immigrants' wishes, even though language education is regulated by the state? Unlike most minorities analysed in previous research on this topic, the Swedish-speaking Finns are a non-territorial, formerly dominant minority (Kaufman, 2004: 2) that largely held the political and administrative power in Finland until the

late nineteenth century (Meinander, 2016: 9). Today they still have a strong legal position yet experience a weakening societal position. Could the strong legal position possibly provide a path towards a multilingual integration policy? What implications does the relatively weak societal position of Swedish have for immigrant integration? What differences and similarities of integration governance can be identified between multilingual states having territorially concentrated minority languages with federal protection and Finland with a non-territorial, constitutionally official de facto minority language? This paper also discusses the recent political attention to the question of Swedish as the language of immigrant integration courses and services, having been followed by a boom of policy initiatives to promote the Swedish language “path”, namely the option for immigrants to go through the integration process in Swedish rather than Finnish. By investigating how integration is governed in a state where the linguistic minority enjoys identical legal rights to the majority, the paper contributes to the understanding of how the rights of historical minorities influence newly arrived immigrants and vice versa.

Finland in scholarship on minorities and immigration

Even though research has been carried out on Finland-Swedes and multiculturalism theories (see e.g. Lepola, 2000; Wahlbeck, 2013; Saukkonen 2014), the question of the Swedish language integration “path” in Finland has been virtually absent in the scholarship on integration and historical minorities. However, two reports financed by Finnish-Swedish actors have been written on the topic, one on individual immigrants’ perspectives on Swedish as a language of integration (Creutz and Helander, 2012), and another on the more organizational aspects of the Swedish language in Finnish integration policy (Helander, 2015). Furthermore, master theses have been written on the subject (see Kuitunen, 2011; Moilanen, 2014; Teikari, 2015; Saatsi, 2016). The present paper combines a number of sources on the Finnish case with liberal multiculturalist theorizing on integration and historical minorities. In addition to the reports on Swedish language integration, relevant laws, political statements and media sources are analysed. Also, findings from an expert interview conducted in Helsinki on October 29, 2016, and from informal interviews with persons working with integration in Swedish participating at the Finland-Swedish integration days in Helsinki on November 28-29, 2016, are included. The paper aims to bridge the scholarly gap in the research on Finnish multiculturalism and the research on integration in contexts with historical minority presence, and by doing this introduces a non-territorial, formerly dominant minority to the research field

dominated by empirical research on territorially dominant minorities with past oppression experiences.

In the following I first provide a discussion on the group-differentiated rights between “old” and “new” minorities with a focus on Will Kymlicka’s scholarship, followed by an overview and discussion of previous research on political reactions to immigration into contexts where historical minorities are present. I will then introduce the Finnish case (however excluding the autonomous monolingual Åland islands) and analyse aspects relating to integration in the Swedish language, such as the non-territorial, municipal demographics-based organization of the minority language infrastructure, the political aspect of Swedish in Finnish integration policy, and factors regulating the immigrants’ language choice. The paper will end with a concluding discussion summarizing the implications for research on integration in historical minority contexts.

1. Minorities and liberal multiculturalism

Western multiculturalism policies and scholarship are largely dominated by the idea of liberal multiculturalism. Will Kymlicka, a leading scholar in this field, sees liberal multiculturalism as a reaction to the homogeneous nation-building projects that have historically tried to eradicate minorities, and calls for group-specific protection toward minorities, enabling minority groups to persist within the larger nation-state (Kymlicka, 2007: 64-66). Rather than rejecting nationalism, liberal multiculturalism involves multiple nation-building projects where historical minorities and indigenous groups create their own nations (Kymlicka, 2007: 84). Minority rights are, in the liberal multiculturalist logic, divided into three separately governed “tracks”, namely indigenous peoples, national minorities, and immigrants. This divide is based on factors such as, for example, how long the groups have been in the country. There is a hierarchical difference in the rights status of indigenous groups and national minorities (so-called “old” minorities) compared with the more modest rights of immigrants (“new” minorities) who are left without the possibility to build a “robust nation”. Bhikhu Parekh (2002: 102 and 109) criticizes Kymlicka for the vagueness of his motivation for the “different moral weights” of their claims and rights. Indeed, it is unclear when a group has been in a country long enough to merit an advancement from “integratable” to protectable. Hence, while the majority and the recognized minorities have a moral right to pursue their respective nation-building projects, immigrants are expected to integrate into the national context of the host society, and only enjoy modest forms of cultural recognition (Kymlicka, 1995: 78-79).

Since immigrants are to integrate into another nation, they are confronted with a nation-building project that tends to be exclusionary towards the “outgroup”, no matter whether they are a minority or majority. Kymlicka, however, sees no risk that national minorities would use their self-governing power for tyranny or theocracy. He acknowledges that there are “illiberal” elements within minority nationalist movements, such as Basque anti-immigrant wings or Flemish nationalism, but believes that the liberal values will take root in both minority and majority groups through the “liberal expectancy” (Kymlicka, 2007: 94-95). However, “illiberalism” is a component of all liberal, Western societies in the form of (among others) religious groups or conservatives (Parekh, 2002: 112). An example of “illiberalism” can be the sometimes assimilationist civic integration policies (Banting and Kymlicka 2012: 16) practised also among some minorities, such as the aforementioned Flemish. Relying on the liberal expectancy may then be simplistic; “illiberal” thoughts and policies can be and are found among majorities and minorities alike. It may thus not be that much of a difference for immigrants whether the new host nation is in majority or minority: the immigrants will be required to adapt to the new host nation’s requirements, and a minority is not necessarily more inclusive or exclusive than a majority would be. A question to be asked, however, is what happens when Kymlicka's minority “tracks” overlap in the case of immigration of a “new” minority into a context where a historical minority is present.

1.1 Integrating into a historical minority

The relation between minority nationalism and immigration need not be incompatible. We would, nevertheless, expect tensions and vulnerabilities due to the already existing power imbalance between the dominant majority and the historical minority, an asymmetry that can be seen to culminate in the question of immigrant integration. According to Kymlicka (2001a: 75-76), a minority should have the right to exercise control over first, the volume of immigration in order to ensure that the immigrants can be integrated, and second, the terms of integration, in particular policies that encourage or pressure immigrants to choose the minority culture over the majority. This claim could be criticized for being “illiberal”, especially when exercised by a majority state. In Kymlicka’s reasoning, it can, however, be legitimized for minorities when acknowledging past state settlement policies that aimed to weaken and disempower minorities on their own territory, having been imposed in particular on North American indigenous populations (Kymlicka, 2001b: 73).

The settler-colonial context is, however, not necessarily generalizable to a European non-indigenous context, especially in cases such as the Finnish where the former “colonial” ruling elite now constitutes the historical minority. The minority has in these cases hardly any experience of past assimilation. The right to exercise control of immigration would in this case be legitimized by the *future* survival of the group rather than past oppression, something also Taylor (1992: 58-59) sees as the base for Québécois language policy. Research on minorities with past assimilatory experiences, or experiences of state settlement policies with the aim of undermining the minorities, such as Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland, shows they are rather favourable of immigration (Kymlicka, 2011: 295). Jeram and Adam also note that the narrative of past cultural oppression in Flanders and the Basque country contributed to a pro-diversity position toward immigrant integration among minority elites, making the parallel between their own struggle against assimilation and the diversity of the newcomers (Jeram and Adam, 2015: 243). In South Tyrol, however, past settler experiences can be seen to influence some of the negative minority party discourses on immigration (Wisthaler, 2015). While the question of past oppression indeed needs further attention in the scholarship on historical minorities and integration (Jeram and Adam, 2015: 245), one could argue it is the concern for a future survival that binds these minorities together.

A perceived “demographic crisis” (Barker, 2010: 20) was indeed what spurred Quebec’s integration policy. Following fears that English would become dominant since immigrants tended to live in English rather than in French, Quebec defined French as the public language in the province (Banting and Soroka, 2012: 159-160). The Quebec government has passed several laws regulating the use of English in order to ensure *la survivance*: immigrants or Francophones are not allowed to send their children to English-language schools, bigger businesses should be run in French, and commercial signage should be primarily in French (Taylor, 1992: 52-53). Bilingualism, or choosing English, is thus not a choice: the minority language is “imposed” instead of the majority language, a policy highly successful in increasing the number of immigrants becoming French speakers (Kymlicka, 2001a: 76). Furthermore, Quebec has used its policy power to deliberately encourage Francophone immigration to Quebec (Barker, 2010: 24). This relates to what Kymlicka notes: ‘a successful form of multicultural integration may be more complicated, and in some ways less liberal, than those which the majority can adopt’ (Kymlicka, 2001a: 79). This “less liberal” integration has as its aim to assure the future of the French language in Quebec: ‘Policies aimed at survival actively seek to *create* members of the community, for instance, in their assuring that future generations

continue to identify as French-speakers. There is no way that these policies could be seen as just providing a facility to already existing people' (Taylor, 1992: 58-59).

Catalonia has a similar model, where the integration policies have historically aimed at assimilating the Castillian immigrants in Catalan, a model now used also for non-Spanish migrants. The Catalan law expects the implementation of integration policies to take place in the Catalan language. They define the target culture of immigrant integration 'in minority-monist terms, i.e. into the Catalan language and culture' (Zuber, 2014: 12-13). This model simply follows the logic of a nation-state, in line with the Catalan aspiration for independence.

Bilingual Belgium employs a divided model for integration where integration policy is separated between Flemish (Dutch) and Walloon (French). The Flemish (civic) integration is interventionist, assimilationist, and multiculturalist, while the Walloon is *laissez-faire* assimilationist (Adam, 2013: 557). The threat of disappearance of Dutch in Brussels, and the perceived ease of integrating into the French language community possibly explain the higher emphasis of assimilation in the Flemish policies. Indeed, Flanders has invested more in integration policies than the Francophone parts (Adam, 2013: 560). Rather than bilingualism or multinationalism, the Belgian integration supports separated nation-building where especially the Flemish have felt the need to ensure that more immigrants assimilate as Flemish by regulating integration.

The focus in the research on these linguistic nationalisms discussed has mainly been on how the minorities handle the implications immigration may have for them. The technique employed by these minorities to ensure that immigration strengthens their nation seems particularly to be making sure that immigrants gain proficiency in the minority language while leaving majority language acquisition outside of the integration policies. Indeed, this is an understandable reaction to the fear of linguistic shifts: learning the minority language would possibly be done by a rather marginal group of immigrants without these policies, while majority language acquisition often occurs even in the absence of policies supporting it. Another way to view the issue, however, could be to claim that immigrants should have the right to acquire the tools to navigate the multilingual system according to their own preferences, rather than being part of minority nation-building projects. While immigrants should integrate to the "societal culture" of their new host country, their integration should also be enabled, and mainstream society should also adapt to immigrants (Kymlicka, 1995: 96). Can it not be claimed, then, that a bilingual country should provide access to both its languages and nations in its integration policies? Or should the immigrant even have the responsibility to learn both

majority and minority languages, as possibly the native population has during compulsory schooling?

With a more multinational model of integration, immigrants would not need to be excluded from one of the nations, while more people would possibly take the opportunity to learn a minority language. Rather than pushing immigrants to one model, such as in the cases discussed in this paper, Kymlicka (2011) calls for multinational models of citizenship. This could possibly also be more advantageous for an immigrant, getting access to both “nations”, while in the meantime strengthening the multilingual nature of the state. The current, mono-national integration policies may result in a gap between the different citizenship narratives taught within a multination state, be it the minority or majority narrative: “Receiving mixed messages about the nature of the state is one of the things that citizens in multination states need to be able to work through. A more serious problem arises when the messages people receive in different parts of the country increasingly diverge” (Kymlicka, 2011: 297). As a solution to these discrepancies in the citizenship narratives, Kymlicka suggests not to develop consensus on one narrative but rather to educate citizens on all the different citizenship approaches (Kymlicka, 2011: 299). Miller (2011: 306), however, finds that immigrants should be encouraged to adopt a “nested” identity, for example if settled in Scotland adopting both a Scottish and British identity just like most native-born Scots do. However, in Scotland and other countries of the United Kingdom language could be claimed to play a lesser role to the question of identity than to minorities characterized by linguistic nationalism, perhaps since the British minority languages are rather competing for survival under English domination than being used in wider society. How is a less discrepant citizenship model, or a “nested” identity, possible in a multination state with language as the main dividing boundary if immigrants are proficient only in the minority or majority language and not both?

Kymlicka calls for research on how new models of multicultural citizenship can build upon older models (Kymlicka, 2011: 299). The Finnish case provides an interesting possibility to explore this question: the citizenship agendas of Finnish and Swedish speakers do not have major differences, apart from the language question: Finland can be seen as one nation with two languages. Could this apply to the Finnish immigrant integration policy and citizenship model offered to immigrants as well—a truly bilingual model, that unlike models with differing and discrepant citizenship narratives, fits two languages into one nation?

2. Swedish-speaking Finland and immigration

Swedish is one of the oldest languages spoken in the territory that today comprises Finland. The Kingdom of Sweden ruled Finland for centuries, until it lost Finland to Russia after the Swedish-Russian war in 1809. The societal elite of Finland operated mainly in Swedish until 1870, and Finnish gained status as an equal administrative language to Swedish only in the mid-1880s, leading to the Finnish language gradually taking over in various societal sectors (Meinander, 2016: 9). The concept *finlandssvensk* (Swedish-speaking Finn) was coined in 1906 (Meinander, 2016: 14), the same year as the Swedish People's Party, aiming to ensure the rights of the Swedish-speaking population, was founded.

In 1900, the proportion of Swedish speakers of Finland's population was 12.9%, which can be compared with 5.3% in 2015 (Statistics Finland, 2016b). In addition to the decreasing demographic trend, the situation of the Swedish minority is an eternal subject of contestation, and can be claimed to suffer from an overall "negative trend" (Söderlund, 2013). The status of the Swedish language is questioned by the second biggest governing party, the right-wing populist *Finns*, and since 2015 the Swedish People's party is not part of the national government for the first time since 1979 (Suominen, 2015). There is also an increasing number of Swedish-speaking Finns emigrating mostly to Sweden (Sundholm, 2015), and a decreasing number of Swedish speakers in the Helsinki region (Meinander, 2016: 164).

Despite the weakening situation of the Swedish language in Finland, the Finnish legislation does not differentiate between the Finnish and Swedish languages, yet implementation is lacking across many parts of the country with a Finnish majority. A large number of the Swedish speakers in Finland are bilingual (Meinander, 2016: 163), which means Swedish speakers using Finnish rather than Swedish in public space is common. However, this is not reflected in the language laws and policies that operate with monolingual dichotomies: schools are either in Finnish or Swedish, and one can be registered as either a Finnish or Swedish speaker, not both.

2.1 Immigration into Finland

Finland has in the past decades switched from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. In 2015, 6.2% of the around 5.5 million large Finnish population consisted of persons with foreign origin, i.e. of persons whose parents or only known parent was born outside of Finland (Statistics Finland, 2016b).

The number of persons registered as having a mother tongue other than Swedish (290,161 persons) or Finnish (4,865,628 persons) in 2015 were Russian (72,436 persons), Estonian (48,087 persons), as well as Somali, English, Arabic, Kurdish and Chinese, each having between 11,000 and 17,000 speakers. In 2015 there were 32,476 asylum applications, which can be contrasted to the previous years with around 3,000 applications per year. Finland receives 1,050 so-called quota refugees annually through resettlement, and around 1,000 persons through family reunification (Statistics Finland, 2016b).

One-fourth of the persons with foreign origins live in the Helsinki region, where almost all municipalities (including the largest towns of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa) are bilingual Finnish-majority and Swedish-minority municipalities by their administrative structure. Municipalities having among the largest proportions of foreign residents are the Swedish-majority Korsnäs (9%) and Närpes (10.6%) (Statistics Finland, 2016c). The allocation of immigrants to bilingual municipalities has significant implications for the implementation of Swedish language integration policies due to the territorial organization of Finland.

2.2 Territorial organization and the language legislation

The territorial organization of language rights is crucial to take into account while discussing the role of the Swedish language in integration policy. Since Finland is a unitary state with two official languages, the language infrastructure differs from that of many other countries with strong protection of linguistic minorities. Instead of having a federal state ruled by minority representatives, or an autonomous province providing infrastructure in the minority language, the Swedish speakers' language rights depend on the number or proportion of Swedish speakers in the Finnish municipalities. Integration policy is implemented in Swedish only in bilingual or monolingual Swedish municipalities (Helander, 2015: 14). A Finnish municipality is classified as bilingual if there are Finnish- and Swedish-speaking residents of which the minority makes up at least 8% or at least 3,000 residents (Language Act, 2003: Section 5(2)). The linguistic boundaries in Finland are thus reviewed every ten years (Language Act, 2003: Section 5(1)), resulting in a shift from monolingual Swedish municipalities to bilingual due to a proportional decrease of Swedish speakers to Finnish speakers and speakers of other languages (McRae, 2007: 17). In 2015 Finland was divided into 317 municipalities, of which 301 were in continental Finland and 16 in the monolingual Swedish Åland islands. Out of the 301 continental municipalities, 33 are counted as bilingual. Eighteen of these are majority Finnish and 15 majority Swedish. This classification is valid until 2022 (Government Decree

13.12.2012/53), unless a municipality applies for a changed status between the censuses (Vattulainen, 2016). In continental Finland there are no longer any monolingual Swedish municipalities. The last monolingual Swedish-speaking municipality, Närpes, became bilingual in 2016, having applied for bilingual status for financial reasons, since only bilingual municipalities get language-based financial support as of 2015. The loss of the monolingual Swedish status, however, awakened resistance among some residents who sued the municipality to Vaasa Administrative Court (22.12.2014/0514). Yet the case was rejected, as was also the appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court (04.05.2015/1149), resulting in Närpes becoming bilingual.

The Finnish unitary state, where municipal demography is decisive for language rights, can be contrasted to Quebec, where “the federal government plays a leading role, setting the parameters governing immigration and settlement programmes” (Banting and Soroka, 2012: 160). Finnish-Swedish politicians cannot, unlike the Quebec government, by law regulate the language choice of immigrants in bilingual areas. In some Swedish-majority municipalities the integration policies are mostly implemented in Swedish, as also the surrounding society operates in Swedish. This is, however, rather the exception: Swedish speakers are in a political minority position in most municipalities, in addition to a weak position in national level politics. On the other hand, the constitutional status of the language enables an implementation of Swedish-language infrastructure even in areas where the language is a weak minority, something that is hardly possible in most federal, multinational states. The Swedish-speaking politicians, public officials and non-governmental workers in bilingual Finland, then, have different measures available than many federal states in order to ensure an integration policy in the Swedish language, focusing on implementing the existing language laws.

The strong legal status of the Swedish language in Finland means little in practice if not effectively implemented. Since most Swedish speakers reside in Finnish-dominant environments (41% live in bilingual majority-Swedish, 53% live in bilingual majority-Finnish, and 5.8% in Finnish monolingual municipalities (author’s calculation based on Statistics Finland, 2016a)), the language law is often implemented only after the Swedish service is demanded by Swedish speakers. This is why having a certain proportion of Swedish speakers in a municipality may be significant for the situation of Swedish in public spaces, such as the provision of Swedish language schools or health care.

As Kymlicka states (2011: 292), immigrants do not necessarily identify with the minority-nation-building project, yet their choice of language affects these projects. This can be applied

to Swedish-speaking Finland, where immigrants who have learned Swedish but not Finnish contribute to the position of the language by using Swedish in public life. Being conscious of the strong legal situation, yet with weak skills in Finnish, these persons demand services in Swedish from the often-reluctant Finnish authorities then needing to comply with the law. Unlike these immigrants, many Finland-born bilingual Swedish speakers choose to speak Finnish in the public space, or choose to navigate in the Swedish-speaking places with which they already are familiar. Immigrants, on the other hand, may be more persistent in demanding the legal right of getting service in Swedish since they have not since childhood been socialized to the often-gloomy reality of lacking implementation in contacts with the administration (Creutz and Helander, 2012: 53).

This is of interest while considering Kymlicka's statement of immigrants and minority nationalism: "So even if immigrants do learn the minority's language and integrate into the minority's society, they are still unlikely to support nationalist mobilizations. They may join the minority nation, but they are unlikely to become minority nationalists" (Kymlicka, 2001: 67). A Swedish-speaking immigrant not proficient in Finnish in bilingual Finland may become a supporter of Swedish language rights, albeit not consciously or voluntarily. According to the informants there is a consciousness of the challenging practical reality of being a Swedish speaker in bilingual areas among many integration actors, acknowledging that the question of integration in the Swedish language should not be a "Swedish nationalist" political question. Furthermore, the informants pointed out that pushing for implementation of the language law cannot be put to be the task of Swedish-speaking immigrants, but that choosing Swedish over Finnish should rather be an option for all immigrants who find it more beneficial to their individual needs and situation.

2.3 The Swedish language in Finnish integration policy

Although in a minority position today, Swedish used to be the dominant language of politics and culture in Finland, and therefore it was also the language many newcomers to Finland opted to learn in the past centuries. One example of a person living a life in Swedish in Finland was the composer of the Finnish national anthem, the German Fredrik Pacius (1809-1891), but also several other prominent persons within various industries and the cultural sector (Laakkonen, cited in Creutz and Helander, 2012). Yet this trend has shifted: Finnish is now the language of power, and Swedish has become marginalized as a societal language and therefore also as a language immigrants choose to learn. An exception to this is Swedish-majority Ostrobothnia,

where newcomers have integrated by learning Swedish over Finnish since the 1980s (Ivars, 2016), and where a considerable proportion of Finnish quota refugees are welcomed (Sundbäck, 2017). In 2015-2016, 1662 immigrants in total attended Swedish language courses or integration courses in Finland, many of whom resided in Ostrobothnia. In the bilingual Helsinki region, on the other hand, only nine persons were queuing for a Swedish integration education in May 2017, compared to 600 for the Finnish (Sundbäck, 2017). Finnish-majority municipalities and the central state have perhaps not been that open to accommodating Swedish, an illustrative example being that until 2000 all immigrants were registered as Finnish speakers, thus receiving the official letters from the state in Finnish even though some *de facto* learned Swedish upon immigration instead of Finnish (Nordman, 2002).

Integration policies in Finland are mainly regulated through the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration ((1386/2010), hereafter “Integration Act”), whose implementation is managed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment’s ELY centres (Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment). Integration policy is implemented together with municipalities, Employment and Economic Development Offices (hereafter “employment offices”) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (ELY-Keskus, 2017). The major goal of Finnish integration policies is facilitating that immigrants get employed. Employment offices have a significant role in the integration of adult immigrants, since they pay unemployment benefits during the integration courses to those unemployed. The immigrants can choose between taking a course organized by the employment office or conducting independent studies elsewhere with financial support from the employment office. Opting for independent studies is possible if the employment office agrees to it and sees it as enhancing the chance of employment of the immigrant. The majority (ca. 80%) of the integration courses taking place in Swedish are not organized by the employment office but by various third sector actors. The independent way for integration has, according to informants, been found to be more holistic, taking into account also the social aspect of integration, and involving local NGOs. However, privately organized courses are often, unlike the state courses, subject to fees (Sundbäck, 2017).

In the Integration Act (1386/2010 Section 2(11)), the two state languages are treated separately yet equally: the immigrant needs to learn Swedish *or* Finnish, leaving bilingual solutions out of the state’s responsibility and out of the legislative integration agenda. On the other hand, the authorities should, according to the law regulating bilingualism in Finland (Language Act 423/2003), foster the linguistic heritage of the country and promote the use of

both national languages. This indicates an incompatibility between the two laws. While the Integration Act requires one language to be used, the Language Act calls for the vitality of both languages. The Language Act does not mention immigrants and integration policy at all. This can be seen as a paradox between the laws, pointing to the governance challenges in the case of overlapping historical minority language policies and immigrant integration policies.

Despite the “blindness” to bilingualism in the Integration Act, there is no hierarchical bias between the languages in the Act, or in other legislation. This means, for example, that Finnish and Swedish are equal when it comes to language requirements related to citizenship acquisition. In order to become a Finnish citizen, one needs to prove sufficient skills in Finnish *or* Swedish. This is turned to an advantage by some. Since choosing Swedish rather than Finnish is no impediment for naturalization, some immigrants opt to learn Swedish because it is perceived as easier to learn than Finnish, as it belongs to the Indo-European language family (like e.g. English), and therefore enables a quicker way for acquiring Finnish citizenship (Teikari, 2015: 30).

Does the Finnish model then enable a bilingual integration? If a person wishes to attend a Swedish course, but already has attended a Finnish course financed by the employment office, it is usually not allowed, due to cost reasons (Saatsi, 2016: 45). This applies even if, for different reasons, an individual has not yet been able to acquire satisfactory Finnish skills, for example due to immediate unemployment after the Finnish course, and would be keener to learn Swedish for various reasons. The issue of costs has consequences also in some majority-Swedish bilingual municipalities. Quota refugees settled in majority-Swedish Pargas and Kimito Island attend Finnish-language integration courses, yet the option of future internet-based distance education in Swedish, which would require less resources than organizing physical courses, is left open (Kaski, 2016). The local society, however, operates in Swedish, which is why a bilingual model could be suitable for these persons in order to enable a local inclusion. The rigidity of the monolingualism in integration policy simply clashes with the social reality within which some immigrants live. The issue of the challenging accessibility of Swedish language integration structures and the lack of bilingual perspectives in bilingual areas has indeed gained the attention of political actors.

2.4 Political reactions on implementing integration policy in Swedish

The political actions to increase the use of Swedish in the integration process outside of Swedish-majority areas took force in 2011. The integration law of 2010 included the project *Osallisena Suomessa/Delaktig i Finland/Participative Integration in Finland*, that was implemented between 2011 and 2013, aiming to make integration of immigrants more efficient in Finland. The project was sparked by the Ministry of the Interior's concerns of "social cohesion" related to immigration, and carried out by several ministries and other actors, such as the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland. One part of the project focused on the Swedish language. As part of the project, a Swedish-language integration "path" was built in the Helsinki region, meaning the employment of a Swedish-speaking integration coordinator at the Swedish adult education centre Arbis in Helsinki, the planning and starting of a Swedish integration course and bringing forward the needs of the target groups (Tarnanen, *et al.* 2013: 25). This project was decisive for providing the infrastructure for an integration process in the Swedish language in the Helsinki region.

Another contribution of the aforementioned project was a report ordered from the Finnish-Swedish think tank Magma investigating the challenges of integration in Swedish in the Helsinki region. The report, published in 2012, provoked political attention from the Swedish People's Party. In a press release, the party pointed out the responsibility of municipalities and the state to provide the possibility for immigrants to choose the language of integration courses themselves. Furthermore, they stated how "fatal" it is if this option is not provided, especially since Swedish is easier to learn for persons who know English, and since it is always valuable to learn "several languages" (Press Release by the Swedish People's Party, 2012).

A subsequent key political event was the 2014 written question in parliament by Christina Gestrin of the Swedish People's Party and seven other Members of Parliament (MPs) to the Minister of Labour of that time, Lauri Ihalainen. They noted that the employment offices in the Helsinki region were reluctant to provide integration support for immigrants participating in Swedish-language integration education. While the employment offices motivate this by suggesting that job prospects may be lacking after a finished integration education in Swedish, the MPs emphasized that there is also a need for Swedish-speaking employees. Furthermore, they wrote that immigrants in bilingual municipalities received no information on the possibility to attend the integration course in Swedish, and that those attempting to do so are often encouraged to seek integration education in Finnish instead (Gestrin, *et al.*, 2014). The minister reacted by admitting that the independent language courses have sometimes not been

supported if the effect on employability has been deemed as insufficient. He also acknowledged that the courses organized by the employment office have been in Finnish, apart from Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, agreeing that the need for integration courses in Swedish is increasing, particularly in the Helsinki region where immigration and diversity increase quickly. He also mentioned some ongoing actions, such as improving the access to and quality of integration courses in Swedish, as well as the creation of an internet platform for learning Finnish and Swedish (Gestrin, *et al.*, 2014). This indicates that the legal position of Swedish in integration policy was respected and acknowledged at least in discourse by the Minister.

Since the written question, several initiatives have indeed been initiated, however mainly by Finnish-Swedish actors. An integration course in Swedish started for the first time in the Uusimaa/Nyland region and in Helsinki in the fall of 2016, which can be seen as remarkable since Swedish speakers are in clear minority in these areas, and most Swedish speakers living there are functionally bilingual. While the Helsinki region has seen initiatives opening up for immigrants, other bilingual regions such as Southwest Finland have not taken the same path, even though the prospect of Swedish language courses in Pargas is under investigation (Karlberg, 2016).

The Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland has financed several initiatives supporting the Swedish-language education of immigrants. A full-time one year position as integration coordinator working for the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities was employed with the task of coordinating the work on Swedish language integration policies and informing immigration actors on integration in the Swedish language. The Swedish Cultural Foundation has also made finances available for local level Swedish language cultural projects for refugees and NGOs, and financed education for teachers in Swedish for foreigners (Svenska Kulturfonden, 2015). It is thus minority organizations rather than the central state taking action to promote the implementation of integration policy in the Swedish language.

The question of possibilities to go through the integration education in Swedish was originally sparked by a demand from immigrants, according to the informants. Several Finnish-Swedish organizations and politicians have however fully embraced this demand, surely partly for the possibility of strengthening the status of Swedish in society. It can thus be said that immigration is seen as something positive by these actors, following Barker's (2015: 39) reasoning: "If immigration is perceived as impacting neither positively nor negatively on prevailing core substate goals, then leaders are unlikely to politicize it as part of the politics of multinationalism and are consequently less likely actively to intervene in the policy area".

Finnish-Swedish actors have intervened, and according to the informants there is, following the recent policy initiatives, a greater understanding for Swedish-language integration policies among Finnish officials, even though structural challenges remain to make the language choice based on the “free wish” of the immigrant.

2.5 Determining the language path

Since bilingualism is absent in the integration policy, who then determines which one of the two languages a newly immigrated person is to learn? There is no actor responsible for informing on the “language choice” or ensuring that immigrants have understood the implications of learning one language over the other. One could then claim it is challenging for many newly immigrated persons to make an informed choice, weighing the pros and cons of each selection, when selecting the integration language.

While the law grants an equal position to the languages, the immigrants, if even aware of the possibility to choose the language, make the choice under the influence of both nation-wide and municipal structures.

The main national level impediment to Swedish language integration policies is that Finnish is the majority language in 281 out of 301 municipalities (excluding the Åland islands), therefore also the most beneficial language choice for most immigrants, employment being the main goal formulated in the Integration Act. Immigrants in non-Swedish-majority municipalities are routinely offered instruction in Finnish rather than Swedish in order to, among others, have better prospects on the labour market and in society. Even if a person would manage to get along professionally, for instance in English and Swedish, the employment office would need to be convinced about this in order to support the Swedish language integration education, which may be challenging. The employment office can then be seen as an influential gatekeeper when it comes to the language choice (Sundbäck, 2016).

In some bilingual municipalities, the language path is sometimes determined in a top-down fashion. Bilingual, Swedish-majority Jakobstad has developed a system where quota refugees, who arrive through resettlement with asylum already granted, attend Swedish schools, and asylum-seekers, who still are in the asylum process, attend Finnish schools. This system aiming to divide the newcomers equally between all schools does allow for flexibility if the families so wish (Helander, 2015: 97). This division can also be explained by quota refugees already having a residence permit and settled housing in a municipality, which enables the

integration process to immediately start, while asylum-seekers have a more precarious status where adults are not covered by the integration policies before they gain asylum. Their children may then later move to a Finnish-speaking area. Twenty years ago, Iraqi refugees in Pargas attended the integration course in Swedish, but currently only attend the course in Finnish (Helander, 2015: 14) in order to make mobility within the country easier.

If a person is to move to a Finnish-majority municipality later, it may indeed be more beneficial to learn Finnish than Swedish. On the other hand, this may hinder local integration to the Swedish-dominated social context. This tension between the language of the local community, the nationally dominant majority language, and the potential needs and wishes for mobility, due to employment or other reasons, is subject to constant negotiation in the governance of language instruction for newly arrived immigrants in bilingual Finland.

Despite the nation-wide structures and the often-predetermined language “paths” on the municipal level pushing towards the choice of Finnish, there are several factors explaining why certain persons decide to choose Swedish over Finnish. In addition to possible personal reasons, such as having a Swedish-speaking partner, Swedish is often seen as an easier language to learn, especially for speakers of Indo-European languages such as English. Opting for Swedish in the beginning may result in a quicker way to societal integration, while still leaving open the possibility of learning Finnish over time by living in a Finnish-speaking environment. Learning Swedish can also be seen as enabling better contact with the rest of the Nordic countries (Creutz and Helander, 2012: 41), since Swedish is widely understood in Nordic contexts.

Catalonia and Quebec can, like Swedish-speaking Finland, be seen as “civic”, linguistically salient minority “nations” welcoming immigrants. However, several factors related to language make the Finnish case special. Quebec is situated within a predominantly English-speaking state. Finnish is, however, a rare and for many persons complex language to learn, while within Finland Swedish is a small non-territorial language rather than the dominant language of a populous federal state. Unlike in Quebec and Catalonia, the linguistic difference between the minority and majority language is large. Having the *lingua franca* English as a majority language in Canada as a whole cannot be compared with Finnish in its accessibility. The choice of learning Swedish over Finnish is in comparison highly consequential, putting an unusually sharp boundary between persons who learned Swedish and lack skills in Finnish, and Finnish speakers. Also, Catalonia and Quebec have active independence movements, while the status of Swedish in Finland can rather be seen as weakening and clinging on to the increasingly contested constitutional status.

Bilingual perspectives are largely absent in Finnish integration policy. While the same applies to Catalan policy, in reality most inhabitants of Catalonia understand Catalan (Vergés Gifra, 2014: 206), and vice versa Spanish is widely used there regardless of the skills in Catalan, which is seen rather as a local level prestige language necessary to master (Alarcón and Parella Rubio, 2013: 102). Bilingualism in Quebec is rising. In 1961 25.5% of the Québécois population was proficient in French and English, a number that had risen to 42.6% in 2011 (Lepage and Corbeil, 2013). Even though many Swedish speakers are bilingual, it is challenging for adult immigrants to achieve that status. The Swedish language in Finland is, apart from some small municipalities, in a marginal position, often absent from public spaces unless actively seeking Swedish-speaking places. This is why language education can be seen as crucial for persons wishing to learn Swedish in Finland. All pupils in Finland, indeed, have compulsory teaching of the “second domestic language”. Many state jobs require knowledge of both Finnish and Swedish, something adult immigrants are excluded from learning in the integration courses separated between languages. The separateness, on one hand, follows how the Swedish and Finnish language institutions, such as schools, are organized. On the other hand, while monolingualism in Finnish can be seen as problematic in a bilingual nation, also monolingualism in Swedish can have highly negative consequences for the individual who later decides to move to a Finnish-speaking area. There is thus a demand for bilingual integration opportunities, which have until now been rejected for cost reasons (Helander, 2015: 115), as discussed before.

According to Kymlicka (2001a: 76), ‘Immigrants will only integrate into a minority language group if they see that the minority language is the language of business, politics, law, and high culture’. While Swedish can be seen as a high-status language, and Swedish-speaking families can be said to be overrepresented among the “elite” (Meinander, 2016: 175-177), it cannot be counted as the main language of the society anymore. Despite this high “status”, learning Finnish could provide an easier entrance to the labour market, and a possibly simpler majority life. As McRae notes: ‘Opting to live in Swedish may involve higher social costs and fewer benefits than accepting the more convenient alternative of living in Finnish’ (McRae, 2007: 23). Also, Kymlicka writes that ‘Integrating into a sub-state national identity typically involves absorbing its ambivalent feelings and contested commitments to the larger state’ (Kymlicka, 2011: 295). For a person integrating into the Finnish-Swedish society this would, in the Finnish-majority bilingual areas, typically mean adopting a bilingual life. However, this may be challenging to manage for an adult immigrant since the state does not provide support

for it. The state policies, of course, need not be decisive for the language an individual learns and lives in. However, the provision or non-provision of an integration course in a certain language can be highly significant for the individual. Despite the possibilities enabled by legislation, the Finnish model promotes a monolingual majority citizenship, sometimes clashing with the individual aspirations of the immigrant, as well as their social reality.

Conclusion

This paper has contributed to the research on immigrant integration in countries with historical minorities by investigating integration in Finland with a non-territorial formerly dominant Swedish-speaking minority, a new case to the research topic dominated by groups in territorial majority with former oppression experiences. This paper has in particular investigated the potential of the Finnish case to provide a linguistic integration policy based to a larger extent on the immigrants' preferences than the cases previously researched, the implications of the non-territoriality, co-constitutional status and declining societal position of Swedish as compared with other minorities previously researched, and how Swedish as an integration language has been politically discussed in Finland.

Integration policy in federal regions where the nationally non-dominant linguistic group constitutes the majority, such as Quebec, Catalonia, and Flanders, is mononational and monolingual, "forcing" the immigrants to learn the minority language. Similarly to these regions, a multinational integration agenda is absent in Finnish integration policies, meaning that mainly the majority language is present in the integration policies. A major difference to the federal cases is the national level legislation in unitary Finland: increasing the use of Swedish in integration policy can be done by implementing the language legislation already in place. However, unlike the federal states, the Swedish-speaking minority does not have political control over integration policy (apart from partly in Swedish-majority municipalities). This means that the popularity of Swedish as integration language largely relies on the voluntary choice of immigrants to choose Swedish over Finnish, a choice that is indeed there in theory, since Swedish and Finnish have the same status in legislation. The "illiberal" integration policies, according to Kymlicka's logic, which are present in Quebec and Catalonia do not exist in Swedish-speaking Finland (apart from possibly some aforementioned majority Swedish municipalities). It is rather various structural reasons that lead most immigrants to learn Finnish rather than the present legislation, even in cases where immigrants are aware of the bilingualism and would wish to opt for Swedish.

The choice of integration language is thus to a large extent not up to the immigrant in Finland. While the structures hindering integration in Swedish are many, there is demand for Swedish language integration opportunities by the immigrants, as well as possibly an interest of the minority to strengthen the position of Swedish through integrating immigrants. Finnish-Swedish actors have mobilized in order to increase the opportunities of immigrants to learn Swedish and get services in Swedish. Finnish-Swedish-funded reports have led to political debates and finally concrete action, with projects launched aiming to enable a Swedish-language integration outside of the majority Swedish Ostrobothnia.

Apart from the possible underlying minority interests, one could claim that a possibility for Swedish integration should be a constitutional right whose non-implementation excludes adult immigrants from the bilingual education provided for persons schooled in Finland. On the other hand, on top of other challenges many immigrants face, a person knowing only Swedish risks living a marginalized life in most Finnish municipalities.

This paper aimed to introduce the Finnish case to the research on immigration into countries with historical minorities. By contrasting the Finnish case to minorities in territorial dominance in Flanders, Catalonia, Quebec and South Tyrol, the paper shows that like the groups with former oppression experiences, Swedish-speaking Finland is favourable for immigrants integrating “into the minority”—possibly due to demographic reasons. Unlike the more territorially concentrated minorities, Swedish-speaking Finns can claim rights based on municipal demographics. While federal states with the nationally non-dominant group in a majority position can provide more nation-state-like structures, Swedish speakers in Finland can claim language rights also outside of the majority areas, which is also where most of the Swedish speakers live.

Although limited in its scope, the paper opens up opportunities for future research on the Finnish case and research on historical minorities and immigration. The questions discussed in this article could be explored with a broader empirical material. Future research on Finland could develop the beginning theorization on a multinational integration agenda by, for example, comparing the citizenship narratives between Swedish and Finnish integration courses. Another question to investigate could be that of state responses to the increasing Swedish-speaking actor-led integration initiatives in Swedish, but also underlying motivations behind the requests for implementing and the practices of not implementing integration policy in Swedish. This paper has also been suggestive of future research on the role of non-territorial minorities in the

state level integration policies, as well as research on formerly dominant minorities and immigration.

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