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# **Linguistic rights of the Finland-Swedes: Good on paper, but not in practice?**

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## Declaration

I, Tara Bamberg, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a bibliography has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature:.....

Date: June 1st, 2021

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## **Abstract**

The Swedish language is one of two national languages in Finland and is spoken by 5,2 percent of the population. Despite having the status of a national language, the Finland-Swedes are sometimes referred to as a linguistic minority. By looking into what the Constitution of Finland and the Language Act prescribe for the national languages, it becomes clear that Swedish speaker's linguistic rights are not always fulfilled, and sometimes threatened. The Strategy for the National Languages of Finland from 2012 reflected a concern for the fulfilment of linguistic rights in Finland, and for the language climate. This concern was still pressing in 2019 when the Government called for a renewed strategy. The fulfilment of Swedish speakers' linguistic rights depends on geographical location, education, language use, recruitment, integration, the political debate and attitudes. The renewed Strategy can give concrete tools on how to address these issues. Although complete fulfilment of Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in Finland seems unlikely, the renewed Strategy is a step in the right direction to improve linguistic rights and the language climate in Finland in 2021.

Keywords: *Finland-Swedes, Swedish, language rights, minority language rights, national minority, linguistic minority, language policy, Kymlicka, liberalism, communitarianism.*

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ECRML – The European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (CETS 148)

SFP – The Swedish People’s Party

SDP – The Social Democratic Party of Finland

MLR – Minority Language Rights

LP – Language Policy

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



## **1. Introduction to Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in Finland**

The Swedish-speaking population of Finland has sometimes been referred to as “one of the world’s most fortunate minorities” (Ritamäki, 1999), and make up 5,2 percent of the Finnish population (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). As two languages of equal national language status enshrined in the Constitution of Finland, Swedish and Finnish speakers have the right to receive service from authorities in their mother tongue. This is one of several linguistic rights guaranteed in the Constitution of Finland and the Language Act. Section 17 in the Constitution states that “The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis”. The revised Language Act from 2003 elaborates in detail on the linguistic rights of the Constitution. Since 1998, the treaty The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (CETS 148) by the Council of Europe, has been incorporated into the Constitution, and is applicable to Swedish in Finland, as it applies to an “official language which is less widely used on the whole or part of its territory” (Council of Europe. CETS 148, art. 3, para.1).

The language debate has been present in domestic politics in Finland since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Engman, 2016). Finland was a part of the Kingdom of Sweden for around 600 years, until 1812, when Finland became a Grand Duchy of Russia. It was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the so called language strife initially took off, although some argue that it is difficult to assess whether it was around already when Finland was a part of Sweden (Engman, 2016). Nevertheless, it was during the romantic nationalist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe that the language strife intensified, and became a prominent feature of domestic politics in Finland (Engman, 2016). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the debate has mostly concerned communication in Swedish with authorities, and Swedish in education.

In 2012, the Strategy for the National Languages of Finland was drawn up by the Government as a government resolution. The goals were to ensure service in both languages and to improve the “language climate” (Ministry of Justice, 2012). The Government Programme from 2019 called for a new strategy for the national languages. Since 2020, the strategy is being revised and will be completed during 2021, in response to the Institute for the Languages of Finland, among others, that have expressed concerns about the status of the national languages in the changing language environment (Ministry of Justice, 25.05.20). The goal is to secure communication with public authorities in the national languages, and to find solutions to challenges related to the fulfilment of linguistic rights (Ministry of Justice, Prime Minister’s Office, 06.04.2021). In Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s Government Programme

from 2019, equality of the languages is prominent in technology, immigrant integration, healthcare, education and public administration. These initiatives reflect concerns for the national languages of Finland in terms of implementation of rights.

## **1.1. The Finland-Swedes**

### **1.1.1 Who are the Finland-Swedes?**

It is difficult to know how many people in Finland define themselves as Swedish speakers in 2021. The 288.000 registered Swedish speakers constitute 5,2 percent of the Finnish population, in contrast to the Finnish speakers that constitute around 87 percent of it (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). As it is not possible to register as bilingual in Finland, there might be more people that define themselves as Swedish-speaking. Finnish citizens with Swedish as their first language are usually referred to as Finland-Swedes (“finlandssvenskar”). The majority lives on the west and the south coast of Finland, where most of the bilingual Swedish and Finnish-speaking municipalities are situated, as well as the monolingual Swedish-speaking municipalities. This area is commonly referred to as Swedish-Finland (“Svenskfinland”). The Finland-Swedes are concentrated to the regions of Nyland, Ostrobothnia, and the Åland Islands, of which the last one is the only monolingual Swedish-speaking region in Finland through its special autonomy arrangement. There are around 17.000 Finland-Swedes that live in monolingual Finnish-speaking municipalities (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021).

### **1.1.2 Is Swedish a minority language in Finland?**

Pedley and Viaut (2019) note that the usage of terms to describe less used languages within the European context range from minority language to “lesser used language”, “community language”, “regional language”, “local language” and “heritage language”. They draw on Tabouret-Keller’s argument (1997) that the meaning of each definition is always dependent on the *donneur de nom*, the name giver (Pedley & Viaut, 2019). The definitions are given different meanings according to the speaker’s own social representations, which can depend on perceptions of the linguistic environment, such as power relations between majorities and minorities, the own relationship to a language as a speaker or non-speaker, “and the way we view this language in relation to territory, identity, nationhood and history... among many parameters that influence our representations of the linguistic world” (ibid, p.134). The authors further question whether the term minority language is not specific enough to cover the different realities of minority languages. At the bottom of the definition lies power structures,

as the term minority language always puts the language in question in relation to a more widely used, majority language (ibid).

Swedish, and the minority languages Inari Sami, Karelian, North Sami, Romani, Russian, Skolt Sami, Tatar, and Yiddish, are protected through the Charter (ECRML) in Finland. In 1994, before the Charter came into force in 1998, Finland declared to undertake to apply the principles listed in Article 7, paragraph 5, to the Romani language “and to the other non-territorial languages in Finland”. At the same time, Finland declared to commit to several other articles for Swedish and Sami (see subchapter 2.2.3. The European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages). In 2009, the Finnish Government modified its Instrument of Acceptance of the Charter by adding the Karelian language to it.

The Charter has two common definitions that are applicable to regional and minority languages (Council of Europe. CETS 148):

1. “...traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population”
2. “...different from the official language(s) of that State; it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants”.

The first definition corresponds to some extent with the case of the Finland-Swedes, as Swedish is used by nationals of the Finnish state and form a group that is numerically smaller than the rest of the population. What is not applicable is that the Finland-Swedes are not bound to a specific territory, as they are spread out in different regions of the country, although more concentrated in some areas. The second definition cannot be applied to Swedish, as it is an official, or national, language. Nevertheless, the added definition of a language that can be protected under the Charter (Council of Europe. CETS 148, art. 3, para.1) fully embodies why the Charter is applicable to Swedish in Finland:

“Each Contracting State shall specify in its instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval, each regional or minority language, or official language which is less widely used on the whole or part of its territory, to which the paragraphs chosen in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 2, shall apply.”

At the 20th anniversary of the Charter, the Chair of the Committee of Experts of the ECRML stated, in a publication, that “the distinction between majority and minority languages is not always based on the number of speakers, but rather, in some cases, on the degree of political power that languages enjoy” (Council of Europe, 2018, p.5). Swedish in Finland holds

political power, which might be why the Finland-Swedes have sometimes been referred to as “the world’s most pampered minority” (Chela, 2010). For this reason, and through its status in the Constitution, it could be questioned if the definition minority language is applicable to Swedish in Finland. The reason why Swedish holds political power in Finland that will be mostly explored in this thesis, is the political power through the status as a national language in the Constitution and the confirmation of the Charter. A second reason why Swedish holds political power in Finland is that the Finland-Swedes have historically been perceived as the more powerful and wealthy class in society, a notion that to some extent remains (Saarela, 2004). Limited research on the topic shows that the Finland-Swedes are more educated, wealthier and own more property than Finnish speakers (Saarela, 2004, Härtull & Saarela, 2018), although more research could be done to support this statement. A third reason why Swedish holds political power in Finland is its status as the official language in the powerful neighbour country, Sweden.

The term regional or minority language is not fully applicable to Swedish in Finland, as the status of the Swedish language is guaranteed as a national language in the national language policies of Finland. It would therefore be safer to use the term that one can be sure of: an “official language which is less widely used on the whole or part of its territory” (Council of Europe. CETS 148, art. 3, para.1). Nevertheless, as some features of minority languages can be applied to it, the definition might still be helpful, to some extent, when analysing the case. The complexity of the issue will be further discussed in the coming chapters.

## **1.2. Objective**

The topic of this thesis is the Swedish language in Finland, and its status as a national language. The focus is on Swedish speakers’ rights in Finland today. As previously observed, the status of Swedish as a national language is enshrined in the Constitution with an extensive legal framework in the Language Act to guarantee, protect and further it. Furthermore, the commitment to the Charter in 1998 gave Finland international recognition on minority rights.

The Strategy for the National Languages from 2012, and its renewal in 2021, reflects a continuous concern for the two national languages in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Strategy aims at improving the language climate in Finland, and to strengthen the position of the two national languages. The language debate seems to be a consistent feature of domestic politics in Finland that has come and gone since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whether it is the question of education, language struggles in bilingual or monolingual municipalities, or the lack of communication with authorities in Swedish, language policy and the implementation of linguistic rights seem to be

never-ending topics of debate in the life of Finns and in Finnish politics. The language situation remains problematic, despite comprehensive legal acts on citizen's linguistic rights.

The scope of this thesis is to explore the complex situation of the Swedish language in Finland, a national language that could also be referred to as a minority language. Apart from the main focus that is the implementation and fulfilment of Swedish speakers' rights, the thesis looks into the status of a national language versus a minority language, as to give an alternative to the current situation. Naturally, when assessing the linguistic rights of the Finland-Swedes, the thesis touches upon topics related to it, such as the international context of the language issue in Finland, other languages in Finland, language preservation, human rights, domestic politics, and attitudes in society. The objective of the study is to give an overview of what rights Swedish-speaking citizens of Finland are entitled to in the Constitution, and discuss how these rights are fulfilled or threatened. The goal is to shed light on the complex situation of the Finland-Swedes and their linguistic rights, to then assess how rights are fulfilled, or threatened.

### **1.3 Research question**

This thesis seeks to answer the following question:

*“How are the rights of Swedish-speaking Finns, as incorporated in the Constitution of Finland and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, fulfilled or threatened?”.*

### **1.4 Operationalisation**

The research question guides the choice of research methods. This thesis relies on two sources of data to answer the research question; primary sources in the form of interviews, and secondary sources in the form of articles and statistics. Specific knowledge on the Constitution, the Language Act, and the Charter is needed in order to answer the research question, which is why qualitative methods is the best choice for this thesis. Informants from different backgrounds were consulted through interviews to answer the research question. The broad experiences of the informants from different sectors like politics, language jurisdiction, and cultural organisations, are valuable to observe linguistic rights in different lights and to find nuances of the case. To answer the research question, two opposing theoretical approaches have been adopted to further assess the complexity of the issue. Liberalism, with its emphasis on the individual, and communitarianism, with its emphasis on the good of society, support the different arguments laid out in the thesis. Furthermore, the two theories provide a deeper understanding of minority rights, language rights and language policy, which is crucial for the case.

## **1.5 Outline**

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter 2 gives the background information by providing a brief historical overview of the language issue in Finland, as well as an overview of the legal framework adopted, and recent Government initiatives on the language issue. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework that consists of two opposing theories: liberalism and communitarianism. Through these theories, minority rights, minority language rights, and language policy is discussed. Chapter 4 presents the methodological choices, and justifies and explains them. Chapter 5 introduces the findings of the primary and the secondary sources of data, and analyses them through the theoretical framework. The chapter is grouped into five subchapters to clarify and structure the thematic findings. Chapter 6 answers the research question in a discussion, concludes the thesis with the main findings, and suggests what further research on the topic could examine.

## **2. Background**

Historical events have influenced the role of Swedish in Finland today, from a political and a constitutional point of view. The accumulation of events is a relevant tool to understand how history has shaped the language issue today. This chapter provides information about the history of the Swedish language in Finland, as well as an overview over the language legislation that provides the foundation of the thesis. The historical background and the legislation gives the relevant context for the coming chapters, especially for the ones of analysis and discussion.

### **2.1. The history of the Swedish language in Finland**

Historical events, agency and identity have influenced the history of the languages in Finland (Coleman, 2010). The language issue ("språkfrågan") has been a continuous and consistent feature of domestic politics in Finland since the 19th century when Sweden lost Finland to the Russian Empire and Finland became a Grand Duchy of Russia in 1809 (Engman, 2016). The 19th century became a period of mobilisation of the two languages in Finland. During this time, the romantic nationalist movement, initially based on Johann Gottfried Herder's thoughts about the importance of a mother tongue, spread through Europe and reached Finland, and the narrative "one nation, one people, one language" became anchored in Finnish society (Leerseen, 2018, Engman, 2016). Before this idea came about, Swedish had been the predominant language in Finland in terms of status, although the majority spoke Finnish. In 1812, 87 percent of the Finnish population spoke Finnish, although it was seldom used in writing (Engman, 2016, p.16). Swedish was the language of the elite and it was a necessity to speak Swedish to reach a higher position in society. During the Russian time, things slowly

changed for two reasons. The first one was that Russia realised that the Swedish language made Finland closely tied to Sweden, and the West, and started pushing for the rise of the Finnish language. The second reason for a change during the 19th century was the rise of the nationalist movement. As the Finnish nationalist movement intensified with leaders like Johan Vilhelm Snellman and Yrjö Koskinen, the Finland-Swedes realised that they had to fight back in order to preserve their language and status in society (Engman, 2016, p.16). Prior to this, the Finland-Swedes were hardly considered as one, united group due to geographical and economic reasons (Engman, 2016, p.16). Initiators like Axel Olof Freudenthal and Leo Mechelin fought back against the nationalists in hope to preserve the Swedish language and its status. Engman argues that the language issue in Finland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was highly dominated by the question of education as the debate mainly concerned the higher class in society (2016, p.177). It was an important issue for speakers of both languages, as the future elite was educated at university (Engman, 2016, p.177). In 1859, Johan Vilhelm Snellman argued for bilingual education, and at a meeting in 1863, the principle of reciprocity (“ömsesidighetsprincipen”) was expressed as a wish for students to learn both languages (Engman, 2016, p.184). In 1867, Yrjö Koskinen declared that an increased presence of Finnish in education was the most important issue on the agenda for the Finnish language (Engman, 2016, p.177). At the time, schools were still dominated by Swedish (Engman, 2016, p.177). In 1871, the Senate was to decide on one language of education in schools which came to vary from school to school (Engman, 2016, p.178). In 1875, the Swedish-minded (“svekoman”) paper *Vikingen* argued that the one who controlled the schools, controlled the future, and was firm on that the language of education should be the language that the majority of students spoke. Meanwhile, liberalists stated that a bilingual educated societal class was necessary to unite the state (Engman, 2016, p.177). Around 1880, Finnish schools became more common (Engman, 2016, p.181).

When the Russian presence in Finland intensified towards the end of the Russian time, Finland focused its efforts on upholding a strong, united nation which led to many Swedish speakers switching language and names from Swedish to Finnish, a process that has been referred to as fennicisation (Engman, 2016). In 1902, formal equality between the languages was attained and during the years to come, the Swedish People’s Party (SFP) was founded which mobilised voter participation among Swedish speakers. When Finland became independent in 1917, the development of the Constitution started when the Senate proposed that speakers of both languages would have the possibility to receive service from public authorities in their mother tongue. After the Civil War, the Senate added a new element to the previous proposition, that the Finnish and the Swedish populations’ cultural and economic

needs should be cared for by the state (Engman, 2016, p.367). In February 1919, the Diet of Finland (“lantdag”, later replaced by the Parliament) voted against the claims for autonomy by Swedish speakers which sparked conflicts within the Finland-Swedes that had divided opinions (Engman, 2016, p.379). In 1919, the Constitution was accepted by the new Parliament and Finnish and Swedish became national languages of equal status. The same year, three propositions for a language act came about that all had their basis in the Constitution (Engman, 2016, p.389). In 1920 the Language Act was accepted by the Parliament, and the Constitution, where municipalities could be either mono- or bilingual, took shape. It was also established that minority speakers in an area would have the right to use their language in contact with authorities (Engman, 2016, p.391). These laws were established in 1922 when signed by the President.

In the 1920s and the 1930s, the language strife (“språkstrid”) intensified and the disagreement between the two national language groups became a prominent feature of domestic politics at the time (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2010, p.169). The debate partly concerned the role of Swedish in universities. During the interwar period, there was a dispute between professors at the University of Helsinki regarding the use of languages (Universitetsadresserna, Uppslagsverket Finland). The conflict received international recognition when academics from the other Nordic countries advised that diminishing the status of Swedish at the University of Helsinki would weaken Nordic unity (Universitetsadresserna, Uppslagsverket Finland). After 1945, in the postwar period, the language conflict faded (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2010, p.169).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the share of Swedish speakers declined due to emigration to America (between 1865 and 1930) and Sweden (between 1946 and 1980), lower natality among Swedish speakers than among the majority and the fennicisation, or assimilation, of the monolingual or bilingual Swedish-dominated environments (see Appendix 1). In the 1970s, the national curriculum was drawn up while teaching of mother tongue was a topic of debate (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2010, p.120). Latomaa and Nuolijärvi argue that mother-tongue education has always been a sensitive topic in Finland (2010, p.120). Hult and Pietikäinen (2014) argue that this narrow debate focused on education sparked the wider debate about the “Finland as a bilingual nation” discourse. Since the 1980s, the number of bilingual pupils have grown due to an increased number of mixed marriages, and more attention from parents to what languages their children learn (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2010, p.120). In 2005, Swedish was removed as an examination requirement for upper secondary school completion.

Despite a decline in the share of Swedish speakers (see Appendix 1), Swedish has remained a strong language in Finland which is not only due to the legal framework, but also



because of strong Finland-Swedish institutions, and Nordic integration during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which will be further discussed in subchapter 5.2. Swedish in the International Context. As for the Finland-Swedish institutions, most of them were established during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland (1908), the Swedish Assembly of Finland (1919), the Research Institute for the languages of Finland, and the language journal *Språkbruk* (1981), to mention a few. Alongside the growing number of institutions that supported the Swedish language in Finland, Swedish media, especially newspapers, gained influence, like the largest newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*, the regional paper *Vasabladet* and several smaller papers. According to Latomaa and Nuolijärvi, “the number of daily newspapers (nine) for the Swedish minority is probably higher in Swedish-speaking Finland than that for any other language minority in the world” (2010, p.130).

## **2.2. Legislation**

### **2.2.1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**

Finland is bound by several international treaties concerning linguistic rights. These include instruments of the UN, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Recommendations on Linguistic rights of National Minorities from 1998), and Nordic agreements (for example the Nordic Language Agreement from 1972). One treaty for linguistic rights is the ECRML from 1992 by the Council of Europe, and its framework for the Protection of National Minorities from 1995. The goal of the Charter from is to ensure and further minority languages. The main point of the Charter is the cultural dimension and the use of regional and minority languages in all aspects of life (Myntti, 2015, p.35). The Charter has been incorporated in the Constitution since 1998. Apart from minority languages Inari Sami, Karelian, North Sami, Romani, Russian, Skolt Sami, Tatar, and Yiddish, the Charter also applies to less widely used official languages, like Swedish in Finland. As for the Swedish language, Finland has committed to protecting certain rights in articles regarding education (Article 8), judicial authorities (Article 9), administrative authorities and public service (Article 10), media (Article 11), cultural activities and facilities (Article 12), economic and social life (Article 13) and transfrontier exchanges (Article 14).

### **2.2.2. The Constitution of Finland**

The basis for linguistic rights in Finland is found in the Constitution of Finland. According to the Constitution, Finland is a state with two national languages. Section 17 in the Constitution, “Right to one’s language and culture”, states that all citizens are entitled to service from authorities in their mother tongue:

”The right of everyone to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts of law and other authorities, and to receive official documents in that language, shall be guaranteed by an Act. The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis”. (Constitution of Finland, 1999, sect.17)

Furthermore, there are other sections in the Constitution that emphasize the rights of speakers of the two national languages. Section 6 states that “everyone is equal before the law” and that no one should be treated differently on the grounds of their language (among others) (ibid, sect.6). Section 51 states that Finnish or Swedish can both be used in parliamentary work:

”The Government and the other authorities shall submit the documents necessary for a matter to be taken up for consideration in the Parliament both in Finnish and Swedish. Likewise, the parliamentary replies and communications, the reports and statements of the Committees, as well as the written proposals of the Speaker's Council, shall be written in Finnish and Swedish” (ibid, sect.51).

Section 79 states that “acts are enacted and published in Finnish and Swedish” (ibid, sect.79). Section 122 emphasizes the importance of speakers of the two national languages to receive service in their mother tongue in the organisation of administration: “In the organisation of administration, the objective shall be suitable territorial divisions, so that the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations have an opportunity to receive services in their own language on equal terms.”. (ibid, sect. 122).

### **2.2.3. The Language Act**

The Language Act from 2003 replaced the old one from 1922 and elaborates on the linguistic rights in the Constitution. It is a combination of laws on a national level and international codes. Its purpose is threefold and consists of:

“(1) The purpose of this Act is to ensure the constitutional right of every person to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts and other authorities.

(2) The goal is to ensure the right of everyone to a fair trial and good administration irrespective of language and to secure the linguistic rights of an individual person without him or her needing specifically to refer to these rights.

(3) An authority may provide better linguistic services than what is required in this Act.” (Language Act of Finland, 2003)

The Language Act applies to “courts and other State authorities, the authorities of one or several municipalities, independent institutions under public law, Parliamentary offices and the Office of the President of the Republic (an authority), unless otherwise provided” (ibid, sect. 3). Finland is divided into unilingual or bilingual municipalities. A municipality is considered bilingual if it has speakers of both national languages and the minority comprises at least six percent of the population or 3.000 people (ibid, sect. 5). A State authority can be unilingual if it is located in a district that only contains municipalities of the same language (ibid, sect. 6). Nevertheless, an authority should always arrange for a person to be heard in their language if a matter “has become pending on the initiative of an authority and that directly affects his or her fundamental rights, the fundamental rights of a person in his or her custody, or an obligation that he or she has been assigned by the authority” (ibid, section 10). Authorities are obliged to secure linguistic rights in practice (ibid, sect. 23).

The Language Act also applies, to some extent, to public enterprises and service-producing companies “...that attends to a function of an authority” where the State or one or more bilingual municipalities of different languages exert authority. These “...shall provide services and information in Finnish and Swedish” (ibid, sect. 24). In addition, “public enterprises and companies shall comply with what is provided separately on the linguistic services that are to be given in their activity” (ibid). If a private individual has been assigned with a public administrative task, the Act applies to this person as well (ibid).

In correspondence between State authorities, the Finnish language is used as the language of communication, “unless the recipient or sending authority is unilingually Swedish-speaking or unless for another reason it is more appropriate to use Swedish or another language” (ibid, sect. 27). When the State communicates with a municipality, the correspondence should be in the majority language of the municipality (ibid).

Acts are to be adopted and published in both national languages (ibid, sect. 30). As for legislative proposals and related reports of Ministerial and State Committees, commissions, working groups, and corresponding bodies, they should be published in Finnish with a summary in Swedish and the legislative proposal in Swedish (ibid, sect. 31). If a report is considered of significant importance to the Swedish speaking population, it should be published in Swedish (ibid). Information, as well as traffic signs, in bilingual municipalities, is to be published in both national languages (ibid, sect. 32, 33).

The promotion and follow-up of linguistic rights and states is a responsibility of the Government, that “shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and

Swedish-speaking population of the country on an equal basis” (ibid, sect. 35). The Language Act also states that:

“... authorities shall protect the linguistic cultural tradition of the nation and promote the use of both national languages. If required by the circumstances, the Government shall undertake special measures in order to secure cultural or societal needs related to the national languages” (ibid).

Each authority is responsible to supervise its own application of the Language Act, but the Ministry of Justice “monitors enforcement and application of this Act and issues recommendations in questions related to legislation on national languages. As necessary the Ministry takes initiatives and undertake other measures in order to rectify defects it has observed” (ibid, sect. 36). Each electoral period of the Government reports to the Parliament on “the application of language legislation and on the securing of linguistic rights and, as necessary, on other linguistic conditions” (ibid, sect. 37). The language of Finland’s Defence force units is Finnish, but there shall be at least one Swedish-speaking unit (ibid, sect. 39). In addition to the Language Act, there is an Act on language skills required by employees in the public sector (“språkkunskapslagen”).

## **2.3. Government initiatives**

### **2.3.1. Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s Government**

The Government of Finland initiates most legislation and consists of a coalition of political parties (Finnish Government). Coalition governments where political parties cooperate have become the norm in Finland (Finnish Government). The prime minister’s office holds responsibility “for monitoring the implementation of the Government Programme” (Finnish Government). The current government coalition majority in 2021 consists of the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the Green League, the Left Alliance and the Swedish People’s Party. In 2019, the new Government Programme was introduced by previous Prime minister Antti Rinne and was later adopted by Prime Minister Sanna Marin in December the same year. The programme, “Inclusive and competent Finland - a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society”, states that:

“Finland is an open, international country. As a western democracy, Finland promotes the rule of law and human rights. Thanks to our two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, Finland is a strong part of the Nordic countries. Finland is a constructive player that is ready to take the initiative in the

European Union and in international communities.” (Finnish Government, 2019, p.10).

Under the title Strengthening the rule of law, the first objective is “Well-functioning democracy and high-quality legislation that promotes the realisation of fundamental human rights”. Here, the revised Strategy of the National languages is mentioned, “to ensure that everyone has the right to receive services in the national languages and to improve the language climate” (ibid, p.92). It is further expressed that the Institute for the Languages of Finland has expressed concerns about “the status of the national languages in the changing language environment” (ibid). The budget for the Strategy and a language policy programme is 200.000 euros (ibid, p.218). Moreover, the Government will prepare a public administration strategy with the aim to “strengthen the presence of public administration in the daily life of the Finnish people across the country and in both national languages” (ibid, p.197).

Language rights must be ensured in large scale digitalisation projects, such as efficient transport infrastructure (ibid, p.116, 122). Another promise is improved immigrant integration in both national languages (ibid, p.148). As for wellbeing and healthcare, the aim is to improve healthcare for speakers of other languages than Finnish, to safeguard the equal basis of healthcare services for speakers of both national languages: “Linguistic rights will be secured in practice, especially for Swedish speakers, Saami speakers and sign language users. Current care guidelines will be translated into Swedish” (ibid, p.154, 165). This may include special arrangements for language reasons (ibid, p.165).

When it comes to education, the aim is to improve “the education and competence” on all levels, which will increase “educational equality” and “keep Finland’s level of education and competence at the top of the world league” (ibid, p.175, p.9). As part of this goal, a roadmap that “will examine the entire education system and its development in both national languages” will be drawn up (ibid, p.175). One example on the development of Swedish in education, is the Government’s plan to reinstate Swedish as a compulsory subject for the matriculation examination, that was removed from the mandatory curriculum in 2005.

“We will create a near-term programme to reinforce the learning of the second national language at school. The Government plans to reinstate the second national language as a compulsory subject for the Matriculation Examination” (ibid, p.182).

### **2.3.2. A New Strategy for the National Languages**

In 2012, the Government came up with a strategy for the national languages with the goals to ensure service in both languages and to improve the “language climate” (Ministry of Justice, 2012). The goals of the strategy in 2012 was for Finnish and Swedish to be seen, heard and accepted, that they are used in all sectors of society, that every individual can live a life in their own language and that each individual has the opportunity to get acquainted with Finland’s Finnish- and Swedish-speaking cultures and traditions, as well as the common history, and use them (Ministry of Justice, 2012). The language strategy is to be renewed in 2021 to find new solutions to ensure the future of a functioning, bilingual country (Ministry of Justice, 2021), as well as answering concerns voiced by the Institute of the Languages about the national languages’ position in an evolving language environment (Ministry of Justice, 2019). The project that was initiated in May 2020 by the Ministry of Justice. Since then, a digital platform has been set up to collect opinions, a bilingual seminar has been arranged, strategic dialogues have taken place and finally, a steering group has been appointed. Actors involved range from political parties to Ministries, organisations, universities and the general public.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

Minority rights and minority language rights is the main focus of this chapter, and will be explored through the ideas of Kymlicka, Patten, Spolsky, Taylor, Sandel, and a few others. The study of language rights is a relatively new field that emerged in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Paulston, 1997), and scholars call for more research on it. Turi describes the field of language legislation and policy, and its purpose, as following:

“Major language legislation in the area of language policy is evidence, within certain political contexts, of contracts, conflicts and inequalities among languages used within the same territory. Objectively or apparently, these languages co-exist uneasily in a dominant-dominated relationship, thereby leading to a situation of linguistic majorities and minorities” (Turi, 1994, p.111).

Turi further states that the goal of language legislation is to resolve conflicts and establish languages’ status (ibid), which, according to Paulston is a good description of the field of language rights (1997). When discussing minority rights and language rights, in opposition to the liberal viewpoint where the individual is at the center, the communitarians

provide an alternative approach where the common good of the community is the focus. Although these two theoretical perspectives have often been considered as opposing, in the case of minority language rights, they can complement each other: language rights and policy can give justice to minorities which can benefit society as a whole.

### **3.1. Minority rights**

The claim for minority rights, developed by liberal scholar Will Kymlicka, emphasises how history has disadvantaged minorities and that minority rights can bring justice to the minority (1995). The argument is different from classical liberal doctrine, as it brings in elements of society, and not only emphasises the individual. Although the liberal and the communitarian perspectives can be considered opponents, when it comes to minority rights, the communitarian one can complement the one of Kymlicka. The two perspectives are helpful when assessing the situation of the Finland-Swedes in Chapter 5.

#### **3.1.1. Liberal**

In 1971, John Rawls attempted to create a liberal theory of justice in society in his *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls' theory applies to different groups in society like gender, class, race, and language. The theory departs from the "veil of justice" where members of society don't know their position, that is, whether they belong to the majority or a minority, when establishing what is just and fair in society (Rawls, 1971, p.118-123). In a situation of conflict, Rawls argues that the individual rights should be prioritised over the general good (ibid). In the case of minority rights, the question is then whether these group specific rights would conflict with the individual rights.

Unlike John Rawls who aimed at creating a liberal doctrine, Will Kymlicka has rather chosen to focus on minority questions, or group rights, more specifically, and has been an important contributor to the field. While Rawls departed from a neutral point of view when developing his theory of justice in society, Kymlicka draws on how history has disadvantaged minorities. Throughout history, cultural minorities have been physically eliminated through ethnic cleansing such as genocide, or assimilation, or treated as outsiders in Western political traditions (Kymlicka, 1995). According to Kymlicka, this changed after the events of World War II, and "a different approach to minority rights was needed" (ibid, p.2). At the time, liberals hoped that a human rights approach would give minorities the status they needed. They assumed that once these basic rights had been fulfilled, no further rights would be necessary for minority groups, and there was a shift from group-specific minority rights to universal human rights, as the post-war liberals rejected group-specific rights (ibid). To Kymlicka,

“finding morally defensible and politically viable answers” to the issues that majorities and minorities clash over “... is the greatest challenge facing democracies today” (ibid, p.1).

Kymlicka criticises the lack of, and discusses a need for, a theory of minority rights, apart from human rights, as many of the issues that minorities face cannot be explained through human rights (ibid). He gives the example of how freedom of speech does not tell what an appropriate language policy is (ibid, p.5). Minority rights can be defined as “the cultural, linguistic, and wider social and political rights attributable to minority-group members, usually, but not exclusively, within the context of nation-states” (May, 2006, p.255). Kymlicka claims that a liberal theory of minority rights should not neglect universal human rights, but rather describe how minority rights can co-exist with human rights (1995). He also states that individual freedom, democracy, and social justice, can limit minority rights (ibid). A theory of justice in a multicultural state should include both universal rights and certain “group-differentiated rights” for minorities (ibid, p.6). Kymlicka’s group-differentiated rights contain self-government rights for national minorities, polyethnic rights for immigrants, and special representation rights that guarantee representation for minorities in institutions of the state (ibid). He discusses how, sometimes, the liberal goal to protect individuals can only be attained through the recognition of group minority rights, which goes against the general liberal assumption, that group-rights are considered a threat to individual rights (ibid, p.35). The understanding of groups is based on an understanding of the individual’s needs (Kymlicka, 1995). As Wellman puts it:

“What liberals have failed to appreciate, Kymlicka emphasizes, is that the good of cultural membership is often an important ingredient of one’s well-being and self-respect. Kymlicka uses the communitarian observation that humans are not isolated “atoms” who find and assess value independently of others, but instead are responsive to cultural and other groups which help limit and define the valuable life” (1999, p.29).

Kymlicka argues that there are two “major claims” why liberalism should defend minority rights (1995). These claims bring us to the core of Kymlicka’s theory and are therefore important. The first claim is that individual freedom is linked to membership in one’s national group, which touches upon communitarian ideas. Freedom, for Kymlicka, is freedom of choice, which is linked to one’s societal culture. The “societal culture” is the foundation of groups, for example national minorities, and consists of memories, values, institutions and practices. For Kymlicka, culture is important for the freedom of choice as the culture adds value the choices



made my individuals: "...our societal culture not only provides these options, but also make them meaningful to us" (ibid, p.83).

The second claim is that equality between the minority and the majority can be promoted through group-specific rights (ibid, p.52). For Kymlicka, justice for minorities can be attained through group-specific rights by "creating and sustaining a set of public institutions which enables a minority group to participate in the modern world through the use of its own language" (2001, p.159).

### **3.1.2. Communitarian**

A critique of liberal theory is the understanding of the "self" by communitarian philosophy. Communitarianism "emphasizes the importance of community in the functioning of political life, in the analysis and evaluation of political institutions, and in understanding human identity and well-being" (Etzioni, 2013). These communities (or social relations) shape the moral and political values of humans (Bell, 2020).

Communitarian philosophy is critical towards classical liberalism and contemporary liberalism. Classical liberalism aims to protect individual rights through strict limits on governmental power, while contemporary liberalism "seeks to protect and enhance personal autonomy and individual rights in part through the activity of government" (Etzioni, 2013). According to communitarians, both of these liberal branches have neglected the role that the context (in this case, society) plays when individuals make choices in life. In opposition to the liberal belief in the good for individuals, communitarians believe in the common good that shall be prioritised over individual needs (Etzioni, 2013). The role of the government, according to communitarians, is "to secure and distribute fairly the liberties and economic resources individuals need to lead freely chosen lives" (Bell, 2020, p.1). Morrice identifies four "valuable aspects" of communitarianism: communitarians emphasize that humans live in communities, they highlight the consequences of atomic individualism, they assert that one community's values do not necessarily correspond with those of the whole of humanity and they question the liberal idea of the neutral state (2000, p.240).

Communitarian thinkers like Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel argue against John Rawls by claiming that his ideas rest on an "overly individualistic conception of self" that neglects "communal attachments" (Bell, 2020). In his essay *Atomism* from 1979, Taylor defines atomism as a doctrine that emphasizes the role of the individual, where society and the state is there to fulfil the individual's rights and needs (p.190-191). He criticizes this doctrine of individualism by arguing that society plays a crucial role in the development of individual

capacities. According to communitarians, individualism is “destructive of social life, the community, social cohesion, and solidarity” (Morrice, 2000, p.237). Taylor argues that the departure point of a good society cannot be individualism, but has to be based on the common good (1979).

In *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* from 1982, Sandel is critical of classical liberal doctrine, which, according to him, emphasizes “the notion of the human subject as a sovereign agent of choice, a creature whose ends are chosen rather than given, who comes by his aims and purposes by acts of will, as opposed, say, to acts of cognition” (p.22). Sandel argues for a deeper understanding of community than liberalism allows, by stating that the common good that comes when politics goes well is a good that cannot be known alone (1982, p.183, Morrice, 2000, p.237). Sandel is a firm believer in the common good of the community. According to him, individuals are dependent on their community in terms of identity and value, and cannot function, nor develop, without it (Morrice, 2000, p.236). He criticizes Rawls’ theory of justice by claiming that it can only hold up when the individual is separated from “her ends, personal attributes, community, or history” (Baker, 1985, p.895).

When it comes to minority group rights, Sandel, like Kymlicka, criticizes human rights for being too individualistic and not taking the needs and rights of groups into consideration (1982). According to communitarians that share Sandel’s view, being organised into a group is “a vital human good, and therefore groups themselves need recognition in international law” (Oestreich, 1999, p.109). Although Sandel never mentions group rights, they seem to be underpinning many of his ideas of affirming obligations to groups when talking about community; “the notion that the group or community could justifiably prevail over individual choice or self-definition” (Baker, 1985, p.905). Sandel prioritises the group, and, possibly, group rights (Baker, 1985, p.917).

Etzioni notes that a national ethos is important “in forming state-wide policies, which require shared core values and commitment to the common good to justify inevitable sacrifices” (2011, p.340). The replacement of a national ethos with smaller communities within the nation-state can lead to secession, or civil war, according to Etzioni (2011). Nevertheless, this is not to say that communitarians neglect group rights. As Etzioni puts it “societal designs that combine the nurturing communities of both minorities and of the majority are more conducive to flourishing than those that require abolishing the national ethos and that offend the sensibilities of the majority” (2011, p.340). Wellman asserts that, when it comes to group rights, liberals do not need to fear the communitarian critique about individualism, “instead, a liberal can gain from related communitarian insights, by acknowledging the importance of

groups and emphasizing the potential for group rights, to strengthen many of the imperilled cultures that exist within today's liberal states" (1999, p.40).

### **3.2. Implications for minority language rights**

Liberals and communitarians offer two perspectives on minority language rights. Although the liberal argument is more developed and outspoken, the communitarian one connects minority language rights to society as a whole, which is helpful for the situation of the Swedish language in Finland. Moreover, the two perspectives are not polar opposites, as the liberal arguments for minority language rights are linked to society. The liberal and the communitarian perspectives can therefore complement each other, when motivating why language rights are important for the Swedish speakers in Finland.

#### **3.2.1. Liberal**

Kymlicka and Patten argue that there is a need for a normative theory of language rights that should address how identities should "be taken into account in the design of public institutions and the assignment of rights" (2003, p.9). Paz states that "language rights claims are demands for new distributions of power" (2013, p.207). According to Paz, there are two aims of language rights. The first one is to legally protect and ensure that "individuals enjoy a safe linguistic environment in which to speak their mother tongue". The second one is to give "vulnerable linguistic groups a fair chance to flourish" (ibid, p.169). Paz argues that international judicial or quasi-judicial bodies have rather favoured language assimilation than protected minority languages (ibid). The argument departs from a point of view where minority languages have been considered, by states and international policy makers, an "obstacle that individuals must overcome to participate in society", and not as a "valuable cultural asset worthy of perpetual legal protection" (ibid, p.157). Paz is critical of the gap between the promises of international jurisdiction to protect linguistic rights, and the practical implementation of it. According to Paz, what generates language conflict in everyday life is education, court proceedings, and communication with public authorities (ibid, p.170).

Kymlicka and Patten recognise that the nation-building and language-maintenance approaches have different desired outcomes for normative goals of language policy. The first one prefers one single common language, through assimilation, while the latter advocates for language preservation, which has favoured minority languages (2003, p.17). Kymlicka and Patten acknowledge that the liberal stance on language policy would be for the state not to interfere and to leave choices related to languages to individuals, but argue that it is necessary for a state to take a stance on language policy as it cannot be avoided (2003). Paz points out

that although language rights exist, they still lack certain features (2013). One example given is that language barriers can hinder the attainment of goods that are not related to language (ibid). Hence, indirectly, other rights are not protected, because they have “expression in language” which indirectly becomes a problem (ibid, p.169).

Kloss makes the distinction between promotion-oriented language rights and tolerance-oriented language rights (1971, 1977). The former is when public authorities (at any level) choose to promote a language by making use of it in their own activities (Kloss, 1971, p.259). The latter ensures the right for individuals to preserve and maintain their own language (ibid). The distinction between the two is that promotion-based language rights “could involve recognition of a minority language in all formal domains within the nation-state” (May, 2014, p.1), while in tolerance-oriented language rights, it is up to the minority itself to care for and make use of its language without interference of the state (ibid). In the case of promotion-oriented language rights, there is often a gap between official language policy and practice, which, according to May, is “a long-recognized weakness of those few language policies that address directly promotion-oriented language rights” (ibid, p.2). May notes that states, on the basis of promotion-oriented language rights, have legitimated minority languages that have a long history with a certain territory. This kind of promotion is not enough, but only a first step to institutionalise and recognise the language in society (ibid, Nelde et al., 1996).

May notes that minority language rights (MLR) arise out of concerns that, among others, consist of the decline and loss of languages (2003). Medeiros, von Schoultz and Wass define language policies (LP) as “important sociopolitical features of multilingual countries” that regulate relations with governmental authorities and impact intergroup relations (2020). In 2006, May argued for “a wider, sociohistorical, sociocultural and sociopolitical analysis of Language Policy” (p.255) According to Medeiros, von Schoultz and Wass, LP was still neglected by empirical research in 2020. Kymlicka and Patten (2003) argue that no country can avoid having a LP and that desired outcomes of this vary. Spolsky calls for a theory for LP that takes into account the choices of speakers in a speech community, with the goal to maintain languages and to “resist a tendency of speakers of the variety” to shift language (2007, p.1). Spolsky further draws on Saussure’s argument from 1931, that LP is mainly a social phenomenon which is dependent on the members of a speech community’s consensual behaviors and beliefs (ibid, p.2). LP consists of practices (behaviours and choices), beliefs (values) and language management (such as a constitution or a law) (ibid, p.3). A theory for LP would be based on these internal forces of the speech community, as well as two external

forces: how individuals adopt different roles in different social settings and policies that try to “influence home as well as public behaviour” (ibid, p.5).

### **3.2.2. Communitarian**

Communitarians have a different approach to language rights than liberals. For communitarians, as with minority rights, language is a product of a community. There are different arguments on communitarianism and group rights in relation to language. Taylor develops an argument for the intrinsic value of groups and cultures in his essay *Politics of Recognition* (1992) where he argues for survivance and mentions communal and cultural attachments as a principle and that groups have a moral obligation to maintain cultural multiplicity (ibid). According to this principle, minority groups do not only have a moral right of cultural protection, but also a moral obligation to uphold its culture for future generations (ibid). Taylor considers language, cultural and political participation as primary goods, in opposition to Rawls, who consider them as instrumental goods. Spector argue that communitarians are in favour of special treatments for minorities, which, among other, involves the recognition of language (1995, p.89). Group rights in relation to language, could then, be justified through the communitarian perspective as such that they compensate “for the differential cost of maintaining and preserving a minority cultural matrix” (Spector, 1995, p.75). Spector argues that the preservation of a minority language as a compulsory language in schools is a communitarian continuity (1995, p.74). According to Buchanan, language is an example of rights that cannot be considered as individual, to “overcome collective action problems” (1994, p.10; Spector, 1995, p.76).

## **4. Research methodology**

This chapter justifies the methodology chosen for this study, outlines the research design and data collection, and discusses research ethics and challenges. The purpose of this chapter is to be transparent and reflective about how research was carried out.

### **4.1. Methodological approach**

The choice to use qualitative methods was guided by the research question, which is the foundation of the thesis: “How are the rights of Swedish-speaking Finns, as incorporated in the Constitution of Finland and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, fulfilled or threatened?”. To answer the research question, specific knowledge and experience of linguistic rights was crucial, which is why qualitative methods was the most appropriate choice. As the Constitution, the Language Act, and the ECRML are at the centre of the research question, qualitative research proved useful , as the information that was needed would require

knowledge and insights from informants who had some professional experience with linguistic rights. The choice of qualitative methods could be motivated as such that it puts the emphasis on words, an epistemological position, and individual interpretations of the world, rather than on quantification (Bryman, 2016). Triangulation with secondary sources, such as statistics in Chapter 5, support, justify, and find nuances in the statements by the informants.

By adopting an approach that combines the primary sources of data, the interviews, with secondary sources of data, mainly statistics, the thesis presents nuances and perspectives that contribute to answer the research question.

## **4.2. Data collection**

The main method of data production is interviews. The choice of interviews was guided by an aim to speak to experts on the matter that would have new information on an issue that is constantly evolving, instead of solely consulting secondary sources that would not be as up to date. Secondary sources did however play a part in Chapter 5 where statements of informants are triangulated with statistics.

As for the interviews, the most appropriate choice of method was semi-structured interviews as they have an open approach to the informants (Bryman, 2016, p.483). A characteristic of the semi-structured interview is that questions are open and that the interview guide is flexible. The semi structured interview was based on an interview guide (see Appendix 3) with questions on different themes such as the language climate, politics and implementation of rights. Participants were informed about the semi-structured format beforehand, as some of them seemed concerned with not being able to answer the questions. This was a way of reassuring them that they could, to a high extent, steer the interview in the direction they felt most comfortable with, to talk about what they knew. The interviews started out with an informal discussion where the informants were encouraged to present themselves freely. The second question addressed their relationship with the Swedish language. This question was useful as it set the tone for the rest of the interview. Some informants chose to speak generally of the language issue and its development over time, others discussed their professional experiences with the Swedish language in Finland, yet others reflected more personally on their upbringing in relationship to the language issue. After the initial contact with the topic, it was natural to bring up issues that the informants had already mentioned in the beginning, letting them guide the interview while bringing in elements from the interview guide.

The semi-structured format allowed for alternations in the interview guide, to personalise each interview and focus on each informant's field of expertise, or what they would

prefer to talk about. The fields varied from legislation to politics, history, structures, and attitudes. To have prior information about the informants in relation to the language issue, for example articles they had written or interviews they had taken part of, generated insightful answers. Moreover, when the informants realised that some questions were based on prior information about them, for example articles they had written, it seemed to instil confidence in the overall study. It is possible that, with this confidence instilled, other questions got more genuine and honest answers. In addition to open reflections and taking the time to talk, many informants were helpful in recommending readings and other informants that could be interesting to the study.

The purpose of the semi structured interview was to provide reliable and relevant information, as participants were left to speak quite freely without being led on or limited by a strict interview guide. This prior assumption was proven correct. Most informants seemed comfortable with the open-ended questions and spoke freely. As the informants to a high degree consisted of politicians and academics, not unfamiliar with expressing themselves, the assumption that they would feel comfortable with reflecting openly proved to be correct. Nevertheless, the interview guide was still useful as a support in guiding the questions to get relevant insights to answer the research question.

The interviews were carried out in Swedish on Zoom and were recorded through Zoom with an external recorder as a backup. Contrary to the initial plan of conducting as many of the interviews as possible face to face, the digital interview format proved useful during the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. Digital interviews seemed less complicated than physical interviews would have been. It is difficult to assess whether the digital format was less useful than in person interviews would have been. The participants were focused during the and emotions and gestures were not reduced through the screen. Despite some small technical issues, digital interviews exceeded all expectations. One interview was carried out in person but did not seem more useful in its format than the digital interviews.

Although the interviews constitute the main source of data production in this thesis, the secondary sources are useful to develop a better understanding of the case. Triangulation in the form of statistics that not only back up the findings that the informants provided, but also give a nuanced picture to the findings, establishes validity and the overall credibility in the study.

### 4.3. Informants

The general criteria for the informants was relevance. Naturally, people that had actively worked closely with the Swedish language in Finland during their career, seemed the most suitable to interview. As the research question is based on the Constitution, informants with relevant professional and legal experience of the Constitution were strategically selected from different fields were selected, such as politics, academia and culture (see Appendix 2).

A vast majority of informants have Swedish as their first language and are active in political parties or organisations that look out for the interests of the Finland-Swedes. As not all of the political parties in Finland have an outspoken language policy, it was natural to approach the ones that take a stance on the language issue. Several informants were involved in the Swedish People's Party (SFP). One informant from the Social Democrat Party (SDP) was also consulted. To balance the pro-Swedish approach to the language issue, and to get a more nuanced picture of it, the initial aim was to speak to someone from the True Finns Party (Sannfinländarna/Perussuomalaiset) that is usually considered on the opposite side of the language debate. Unfortunately, none of the several attempts to contact the True Finns Party were reciprocated. The Association of Finnish Culture and Identity (Finskhetsförbundet/Suomalaisuuden liitto) has traditionally been critical of the Swedish language, especially in education, but did unfortunately turn down the request of an interview and criticised the study.

At the initial stage of the recruitment process, a few people were contacted, as it was still uncertain who would be relevant to interview. Throughout the process of recruiting informants and writing the thesis, it became more and more apparent who would be relevant to consult. The Swedish speaking community in Finland is quite small, which means that the group of people professionally involved in the language issue is even smaller. As there are a few organisations and institutions outside of the political parties and universities that are relevant to the language issue, many of the people that work with it know of each other. In addition, as the informants were consulted as experts on the language issue, it seemed only reasonable to take their recommendations on who to interview. The informants contacted were positive towards participating in interviews and recommended other candidates. This kind of sampling can be considered as convenient as the small group of people initially contacted was useful to establish other contacts (Bryman, 2016, p.188).



#### **4.4. Method of analysis**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. To get use of the transcribed interviews, coding was chosen as the method of data analysis. Coding groups and distinguishes themes in a clear way (Bryman, 2016, p.573), which was relevant for the analysis as different themes were of interest from the beginning. The method of extracting themes was also helpful to connect the interviews with the theoretical framework. The informants chose to focus more on some topics than others during the interviews, as they worked in various fields, which is another reason why coding would be the most efficient way to extract data relevant to answer the research question. The purpose of the coding process was to sort, re-combine and categorize data, which would help find themes to answer the research question (Bryman, 2016, p.573).

The coding process was carried out one interview at a time. The interviews were systematically approached, one by one. This process was consciously spread out over a period of two weeks, for two reasons; to not be overwhelmed by all information and skip some, and to not unconsciously try to find the same codes as the previous interviews. The first step in the coding process was to read through the interview to get a general overview of it, and an idea of possible themes. The second step was to read through it again, to find possible codes and note them down in Swedish, and then translate to English.

When the sixteen interviews had gotten their own codes, the focused coding began, where codes from different interviews were grouped into themes or categories. This is where the thematic analysis comes into the picture, which some argue is the same as coding (Bryman, 2016). The last step in the coding process is when the final codes are defined and named. In this final step, elements from the academic literature in the theoretical framework were added to each code, to prepare for Chapter 5 of findings and analysis. It is worth noting that the process of finding the final codes, or themes, was not a straightforward road. It took many turns to figure them out, keeping three things in mind; the information should be relevant to answer the research question, the relevant findings need to be structured in the most logical and clear way, and the theoretical framework should be incorporated in the findings. In addition, after the themes were found, quotes were extracted from each interview and translated into English.

#### **4.5. Research ethics**

In social research, it is important to be aware of ethical principles and the ethical issues that can arise when one is conducting research (Bryman, 2016, p.123). The four ethical principles by Diener and Crandall (1978) focus on harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2016, p.125). These four principles were

taken into consideration throughout the process of being in touch with informants, from the initial contact, to the information letter and the consent form, to the interviews, and to letting informants approve of their quotes as they agreed to be recognisable.

When conducting research in Norway, one submits an application to Norwegian center for research data (NSD), to ensure that research is carried out in an ethical way. A part of the application to NSD was an information letter with a consent form. Participants were initially contacted with a brief introduction of the project, a question if they wanted to be a part of the study, and if they had anyone to recommend that could be relevant to interview. When they had agreed, the information letter with the consent form to read through and sign before the interview, was sent out. It was also possible to consent orally during the recording.

At the beginning of the interviews, informants were asked if they had read through the information letter and if they agreed to being recognised in the study. If they had not had a chance to read through the information letter prior, a short explanation of the study, and how their data would be used, was given. At this stage, informants were also informed about the right to withdraw from the interview, and the overall study, at any time if they wanted to. Some informants asked to read through direct quotes before publication. Although this was not part of the consent form, the decision to let all informants read through their quotes before publication seemed the most ethical to do, as a majority had agreed to be recognisable. It was also a way to ensure that quotes had been translated well from Swedish to English. All of the informants read through their quotes, and approved them before publication of the thesis, with a few small alternations for clarification purposes. One informant chose to be anonymous after reviewing the quotes.

Research ethics is, to a large extent in qualitative research, how informants are treated. The storage of data is another important aspect of it, to do no harm to participants. The interviews were transcribed and stored on a computer, and saved in the NMBU cloud. After each transcription, the sound file was deleted, and after the coding, the transcriptions were deleted.

#### **4.5.1. Reflection**

In qualitative research, the researcher should be self-aware and reflexive in the data collection process, the analysis and interpretation of data, and in personal biases (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.123). In this thesis, the primary bias is that the researcher is a Swedish-speaking Finn, which naturally comes with ideas and assumptions of the case. As the researcher was well aware of this from the start of the process, focus was shifted from the researcher's closest

environment, the Åland Islands, to mainland Finland. This decision was purposefully made for two reasons, not only to ensure less of a bias, but also as the Åland Islands is the only monolingually Swedish-speaking region in Finland and therefore has little relevance to the case. The choice to only focus on Finland was therefore strategic for the researcher, to have less knowledge prior, and to keep an open mind. As for the data collection, the purpose of a wide range of participants from different fields was to give the research question a rich and detailed answer, as it is a “how” question that comes with nuances. Another limitation, and bias, is that the researcher does not speak Finnish. It is a limitation as data in Finnish could not be used, and a natural bias, as this thesis concerns the Swedish language in Finland. Correspondingly, interviews could not be carried out with people that only spoke Finnish, although English was suggested. Although a few of the informants had grown up in Finnish-dominated environments, all of them spoke Swedish very well. The researcher’s lack of Finnish skills could be a reason why Finnish-speaking informants did not answer, or turned down the request to be a part of the study (one person). Another reason for this could be that the Finnish speakers approached were affiliated with a political party or an organisation that have traditionally adopted a critical standpoint to the Swedish language.

#### **4.6. Aspects of trustworthiness**

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, apart from research ethics previously discussed, the four aspects of trustworthiness have played a crucial role in establishing a trustworthy study. In this subchapter, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability will be presented and discussed.

Credibility concerns the “confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.121). Two strategies to ensure credibility in qualitative research are triangulation and member check (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this thesis, the findings in the main source of data production, the interviews, were triangulated with secondary sources of data production, statistics. Moreover, informants had the opportunity to check and confirm their quotes before publication, which is also a form of triangulation. In doubt, they were given the context in which the quote would be published, to ensure credibility. As for transferability, the researcher is responsible to give a thick description of participants and the research process, which lets the reader assess if findings are transferable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.122). In this study, the chapter on research methodology describes the process of selecting participants, how they were treated, and how findings were extracted from the data provided by the informants. Moreover, a list of the informants with their title, organisation and

previous responsibilities was provided (Appendix 2). Dependability assesses if the research is consistent in the analysis process, which makes research findings reliable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Triangulation of the interviews with statistics was used to balance the findings. Conformability is the last aspect of trustworthiness, and concerns the neutral standpoint of the researcher, where interpretations in the analysis should not be based on personal ideas (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As for this study, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher is not neutral but tried to ensure a neutral standpoint throughout the process of writing the thesis, in particular when approaching informants and conducting the analysis (see subchapter 4.5.1).

## **5. Analysing language rights**

The objective of the analysis is to present the findings that support the answer to the research question: “How are the rights of Swedish-speaking Finns, as incorporated in the Constitution of Finland and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, fulfilled or threatened?”.

The findings have been condensed into five broader themes. Each theme aims at approaching the research question from different points of departure: the constitutional profile, in an international perspective, the evolving language landscape in Finland, a practical point of view and the political debate. The theoretical framework from Chapter 3 provides an understanding of the findings, and helps answer the research question.

### **5.1. The Constitutional Profile, Human Rights and the Minority Status**

The narrative of the justification of Swedish as a national language in Finland is linked to the fulfilment of linguistic rights. This narrative sometimes revolves around factors such as human rights and the historical context. When motivating the position of Swedish as a national language, it could be more relevant to observe Finland’s constitutional profile, where the status of the Swedish language has been enshrined in the Constitution since 1919.

“The languages evolved to the same level until the independence, and were then fortified by raising the regulations to a constitutional level under the principle of the national languages. We could discuss these things in terms of a constitutional contract.” (Markku Suksi, Professor and Researcher at Åbo Akademi University, Interview #11).

Section 17 in the Constitution of Finland, Right to one's language and culture, is not based on subjective and direct-acting fundamental rights. "The fundamental rights must be ensured by law. Legislation is needed to prescribe how the bilingual system should work", notes Markku Suksi. He estimates that there are around 200 laws that regulate the usage of Finnish and Swedish. "These laws and their enforcement give substance to the linguistic rights", he says. Corinna Tammenmaa, Senior Adviser for Language Affairs at the Ministry of Justice, notes that it sometimes seems difficult to consider linguistic rights as fundamental as other rights (Interview #12). "Linguistic rights are a prerequisite for the fulfilment of other rights, although they constitute an important aspect on their own", she says.

The constitutional contract can be observed in the evolution of the regulations around bilingual versus monolingual municipalities. In 1922, a municipality was considered as bilingual if 12 percent of its population spoke the other national language. This number has continuously declined to ten, eight, and six percent today, or 3.000 people. Markku Suksi notes that the decline corresponds with the decline in the share of Swedish speakers (Interview #11):

"The national share of Swedish speakers has been reflected in the percentage that prescribes when a municipality goes from bilingual to monolingual. This tells us that there is a fundamental idea about a constitutional contract, which is reflected in the municipal provision of the Language Act."

In 2003, the renewal of the Language Act, that came into force in 2004, supported the fundamental idea about a constitutional contract. Ever since, when a monolingual and a bilingual municipality are merged, the new municipality is still bilingual although the minority language might not reach the six percent limit (Kommunförbundet, 2017). Since 2014, municipalities can also change status from monolingual to bilingual during the ten year frame that used to be the frame of reference for changing the linguistic status of municipalities (Kommunförbundet, 2017). In addition, since 2015, only bilingual municipalities can be granted language based financial support (Kommunförbundet, 2017).

Another setting where the constitutional contract plays a role is in the debate of mandatory Swedish in education. The debate has, at times from the opponents' side, been about the freedom of choice, that an individual should have the ability to freely choose whether he or she wants to study and learn Swedish or not. Opponents have also argued that it is not relevant to know Swedish in some parts of the country. The question then becomes a democratic issue. Should not all citizens have the same possibility to learn the two national languages of the

country, and therefore have the same opportunities that knowledge of the two languages brings? Such knowledge could, for example, open doors to jobs in public administration where there are language requirements. “It becomes a democratic issue if Swedish is mandatory for some and not for others”, says an anonymous informant. Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Director of the Åland Islands Peace Institute, notes that mandatory Swedish in education concerns the Constitution, and not what individuals want or do not want (Interview #6): “It is not about what individual people want or wish,..., it is about the nation’s constitutional profile”

### *The irrelevance of Human Rights*

Some would argue that the right to one’s language is based on human rights, on the one hand. Kymlicka, on the other hand, argued that the focus on universal human rights after World War II disadvantaged minorities, and that there was a need for specific group-differentiated rights, apart from human rights. His liberal theory for minority rights would explain how human rights and minority rights can co-exist, without one excluding the other. When it comes to Swedish in Finland, some informants argue that human rights are not relevant.

“I look at language through article 27 in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and do not think that these linguistic human rights have any practical relevance in Finland in relation to Finnish and Swedish... human rights issues related to language usually have little relevance in Finland”, says Markku Suksi (Interview #11), while acknowledging that it might be relevant to the Sami and Romani languages.

“When talking about the languages in Finland, they are often discussed only in terms of human rights. I miss the connection to Finland’s constitutional and political history”, says Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (Interview #6).

### *Questioning a Minority Language Status*

The notion of human rights and minority rights in the Finnish context leads the discussion to the debate of Swedish as a national versus a minority language. There are two aspects to keep in mind here:

1. Swedish has the status of a national language in Finland, while the share of speakers is extensively smaller than the share of the other national language group, the Finnish speakers.

2. While being a national minority, Swedish speakers are, in some regions, the majority.

For the clarity of this discussion, Swedish-speakers will be discussed in terms of a national minority.

“It is not unique that people speak multiple languages in a country. The difference here is that the language relations are very unproportional. We have a very small Swedish-speaking minority in a specific region, and that is in Åland and in the coastal areas.”

(Sandra Bergqvist, Member of Parliament for the Swedish People’s Party and Chairperson of the Swedish Assembly of Finland, Interview #3).

While some of the informants acknowledged Swedish as a minority language, others did not agree with this definition. The first group argued that Swedish can be defined as a minority language while holding the status of a national language. “It is a tricky role... Even though we are a national language, we are also a linguistic minority. It is always about honouring one’s right and making sure that constitutional rights are fulfilled”, notes Jacob Storbjörk, Political Assistant of a member of Parliament of the Social Democratic Party (Interview #14). He notes that the key to the future of the Swedish language in Finland is to acknowledge that Swedish is a national language and a minority language at the same time. Because of this “double label”, Swedish needs positive special treatment to be maintained, something that should be reflected in reforms, Jacob Storbjörk argues. This relates to Kymlicka’s argument, where justice for the Swedish-speaking minority could be realised through group-differentiated rights, or special reforms. These rights would be a sort of external protection that would empower the group within the larger society. According to think tank Magma, 67 percent of Swedish-registered teenagers in a study from 2020, identified as belonging to a minority group mainly because of their language (Kepsu & Markelin, 2020).

The other group of informants acknowledged that Swedish can be considered a minority language, but still found the definition problematic.

“From my point of view, Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers make up the majority language in relation to the Sami and Romani languages, sign language, and other languages in Finland. The national languages are the overall majority, and the rest are minority languages proper.” (Markku Suksi, Interview #11).

Following this argument, Kymlicka's group-differentiated rights would not apply to Swedish speakers in Finland, as they are not a minority, but part of the majority, with Finnish speakers. The group rights would then be applied to minorities, like the Sami and the Romani people. Markku Suksi acknowledges that, under international law, Swedish can be considered a minority language, but points out that the Charter (ECTS 148) and Article 27 of the ICCPR are written from a perspective where there is a majority population with a majority language, and several minority languages. This makes it difficult to apply the ICCPR to Finland, as it does not reflect the linguistic context of Finland. "In Finland it does not really work with two equal national languages... these mechanisms to protect minorities cannot embrace a situation where there are two or several national or official languages", says Markku Suksi.

Although some informants acknowledged Swedish as a minority language in Finland and others did not, all of them agreed that the status of a minority language, instead of the status of a national language, would not benefit Swedish in Finland.

"When considering the survival of the Swedish language in the public room in Finland, it is crucial that we see to that the status of the national languages remains. If Swedish would be degraded to a minority language like Sami or Romani, we have an entirely different situation when convincing ourselves that it is possible to live a full life in Swedish in Finland." (Stefan Wallin, former Minister in the Parliament of Finland and former leader of the Swedish People's Party, Interview #1).

"I see no point in getting rid of the status as a national language in favour of a minority language status. From my point of view, it weakens the Swedish language legally. Although we are a minority, we are legally on the same basis as Finnish. The roles are the same." (Charlotta af Hällström-Reijonen, Director of the Swedish department at the Institute of the National languages, Interview #16).

### *Summing up*

The constitutional profile should be emphasized when motivating why Swedish speakers' linguistic rights are important in Finland. It is reflected in the definition of bilingual municipalities and in the mandatory Swedish in education, among others. If not everyone would learn Swedish in school, democracy could be questioned, as everyone would not have the possibility to learn the second national language, which could limit future opportunities of students. The debate over human rights in relation to the Swedish language seems irrelevant in



Finland, as the Swedish language is guaranteed in the Constitution. Following Kymlicka's argument, group-differentiated rights for Swedish speakers can be a tool to attain equality between the two national languages.

When assessing the Swedish language's role as a national language, one can question whether the status of a minority language would provide Swedish with specific rights to guarantee the fulfilment of linguistic rights. Nevertheless, it is clear that the status of a minority language cannot measure up to the status of a national language. Despite the Finland-Swedes being a minority in terms of share of speakers, the status of a minority language would not serve the Finland-Swedes well, as this would diminish their legal rights in many aspects of life. All of a sudden, it would not be possible to face authorities in Swedish, and while this might already be the case today with the status of a national language, it would not even be possible to claim the right to service in Swedish if it would be a minority language. The national language status, enshrined in the Constitution, is a better safeguard for Swedish in Finland, than a minority language status.

## **5.2. Swedish in the International context**

Swedish has an important role for Finland on the international arena, and especially on the Nordic one. This subchapter looks into the Nordic integration during the Cold War, Finland as a precursor in language rights, the monolingual ideology among European states, cooperation with Sweden, and the sentiments among new generations towards the Nordic region. These factors are all connected to the fulfilment of linguistic rights.

### *Finland's commitment to the Charter*

Today, Finland has a role as a precursor when it comes to language rights and has been diplomatically active in the field of minority rights, notes Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (Interview #6). An example of Finland's international integration in the 1990s is the EU membership after the Cold War in 1992. Another international commitment in the 1990s was when Finland signed the Council of Europe's ECRML to protect the less used languages in Finland. As May noted, minority language rights arise out of concerns (2003). The Charter was, when Finland committed to it, a tool to address a concern for linguistic minorities. One of the concerns defined by May is the decline and loss of languages, which corresponds with the situation of Swedish in Finland, as the share of speakers has slowly declined since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Appendix 1). The commitment of Finland to the Charter could also be, according to the ideas of May, a way to influence Finnish society in how it distinguishes between minority and majority languages. By confirming the status of the

Swedish language through the Charter, Finland aims at supporting the Swedish language on a national level, apart from the Constitution and the Language Act. Although the Charter came around already in the 1990s to protect regional or minority languages in Europe, scholars, like Kymlicka and Patten, still called for international norms for language rights in 2003. They acknowledge that the Charter “sought to develop standards for “how ‘good’ liberal democracies” should resolve issues of minorities being repressed, but questioned what the minimum standard is for the best practices on linguistic diversity (Kymlicka & Patten, 2003, p.4). Paz is critical of the promises international jurisdiction gives minorities, and assesses that there is a gap between policy and implementation (2013). In the case of the implementation of the Charter in Finland, it seems like it has been an attempt to confirm the status of the Swedish language on an international level, which consequently would give it more recognition on a national level. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to state whether Finland’s commitment to the Charter has improved the status of Swedish speakers in Finland, as the legal framework is already comprehensive on a national level. Several of the informants recognised Finland’s commitment to the Charter, but argued that it might not have been as useful as the Finnish Government would have wished for when committing to it.

#### *A political link to the Nordic region*

Apart from the commitment to the Charter to confirm the status of the Swedish language in Finland on a European level, the Swedish language has also opened doors for Finland, especially in the Nordic context. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 1990s after the Cold War, Finland made strategical and political choices towards the rest of the world. According to Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, the international recognition and integration at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “was linked to a progressive, constitutional, democratic line that built on the potential of the bilingual state” (Interview #6). She further states that “had it not been this way, Finland would probably not have received the same recognition and opening towards the international society”. During the Cold War, the Swedish language was “a political link in the Nordic cooperation (Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Interview #6). At the time, the link to the other Nordic countries was the only opportunity for bilateral relations. “After the second world war it was originally not possible for Finland, for geopolitical reasons, to join the UN, the Council of Europe, and European integration. At the time, Nordic cooperation was the only possibility”<sup>1</sup>, says Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1945, Finland was not qualified to join the UN as it had fought with the Axis powers during World War II. In 1947, Finland opted for joining again, but was declined for several years. This was due to Cold War

According to Janne Väistö, postdoctoral researcher at Åbo Akademi University, the decision in 1968 to make Swedish a compulsory subject in education was not an issue of domestic policy, but an issue of foreign policy (Interview #13). At the time, in the satellite states of the Soviet Union, Russian was a mandatory subject in education. “It was a strong will to choose Swedish, to show that Finland belongs to the Nordic region and the West”, says Janne Väistö. “To learn Swedish in school is a natural part of the educational package (“bildningspaket”) in Finland, as it concerns our orientation towards the West. It was an argument in 1968 when the Act on Basic Education was adopted, and I think it still holds up today”, notes Markku Suksi (Interview #11).

The Nordic affiliation provided a new frame of reference, after the Finlandization<sup>2</sup> of the Cold War. “Some do not want to identify themselves culturally with that (the Russian) affiliation, and, without an affiliation, you easily stand alone. Finland is a part of the Nordic affiliation and thinks that it belongs there”, says Åsa von Schoultz, Swedish Chair at the University of Helsinki (Interview #15). According to her, Finns feel more at home in the Nordic region than in the European one: “The EU is shattered. It is noticeable in the Finnish debate that there is more sympathy towards the Nordic countries as a group and affiliation, than there is towards Europe and the EU”. The Nordic cooperation, and frame of reference, is nevertheless important to Finland in the European context. “Finland has a close cooperation with Brussels. The relationship between Sweden and Finland becomes more significant when adding a European perspective”, says Olof Ehrenkrona, former Ambassador and Senior Adviser for the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs (Interview #9).

### *Countering a monolingual ideology*

Several informants note a monolingual ideology among European states today, something that Will Kymlicka observed a tradition of in Europe before World War II. This was initially why he called for a theory for minority rights, as history had disadvantaged minorities by overemphasizing the state as a monolingual construction. Some informants recognise this mindset in today’s Europe, and argue that it disadvantages Swedish speakers in Finland. “The nation state as a monolingual construction is still dominant today, which I find concerning”,

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disagreements among the great powers on the UN admission policy (Solsten & Meditz, 1988). In 1955, Finland joined the UN.

<sup>2</sup> The term Finlandization refers to the process in which a powerful state exercises its power over a smaller state. Friendly relations are kept, while the sovereignty of the smaller country is reduced. The term came about during the Cold War when it referred to the relationship between the Soviet Union and Finland (Laqueur, 1977).

says Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (Interview #6). The rise of nationalism in recent years has contributed to the return of the “one nation, one people, one language” discourse.

“Despite a nationalistic and authoritarian turn in many countries in the world, it is impossible, because of mobility and communication, to believe that we are heading towards a more monolingual world. On the contrary, the world will become more complex and multilingual.” (Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Interview #6).

Kymlicka’s theory for minority rights after World War II seems ever as important in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and in Finland. A theory for minority rights can help minorities counter the monolingual narrative, and for justice to prevail.

#### *Swedish in the Nordic cooperation today*

The affiliation with the other Nordic countries, especially Sweden, might be the most prominent aspect of the Swedish language to Finland outside its own borders. “Swedish strengthens our bonds to the other Nordic countries. The Nordic region as a frame of reference and as a partner to Finland is extremely important”, says Thomas Blomqvist, Minister for Nordic Cooperation and Equality and Member of Parliament for the Swedish Parliamentary Group (Interview #4). “We have never had such a strong Nordic platform to work from as we have today”, says Stefan Wallin (Interview #1). According to several informants, to succeed in the Nordic cooperation, it is crucial to be able to communicate in a common language that is often referred to as “Scandinavian”. “Swedish is important for the Nordic cooperation and political integration. I would say that Swedish has an existential meaning for Finland”, says Olof Ehrenkrona (Interview #9). It makes a difference whether Nordic citizens can communicate in “Scandinavian”, or not. “Scandinavian is the language we communicate with our sister parties in the other Nordic countries in. It is an advantage to know Swedish and it opens doors”, says Jacob Storbjörk (Interview #14). Without the Swedish language, Finland might become an outsider in the Nordic context. “It is important that we try to understand each other, and that we maintain these bonds between the countries. Finland easily becomes an outsider if this does not work”, says Åsa von Schoultz (Interview #15). Finnish speakers with little or no knowledge of Swedish miss out on business opportunities in the Nordic region. “This market is quite common and you cannot take advantage of it without language skills”, says Corinna Tammenmaa (Interview #12).

As communitarian philosopher Sandel believed, the common good that comes when politics goes well is a good that cannot be known alone (Morrice, 2000, p.237). When applied to Finland in the Nordic context, it seems beneficial for Finland to be an active member in the Nordic community, which is facilitated through the Swedish language. Communication in English makes the exchange less familiar and more formal. “It is very important to maintain smooth contacts with our Nordic neighbour countries. It scares me, a little, that English is becoming increasingly used in the Nordic context”, says Sandra Bergqvist (Interview #3).

The Nordic cooperation and affiliation, through the Swedish language, is important for several reasons that benefit Finland. Sweden is one of Finland’s main trade partners<sup>3</sup>, and in the past few years, Sweden has become an increasingly important military defence partner of Finland. The reason for this is to strengthen defence capacities and to secure the Baltic Sea, as neither of the two countries are part of a military alliance (Vanttinen, 2021).

While these factors point at an increasingly integrated Nordic region, others point at new generations in Finland that are less interested in the Nordic region.

“Finland’s increasingly stronger position on the international arenas outside of the Nordic region at some stage created an idea that Nordic cooperation might not be as important as before. It has led to a decreased feeling for, and knowledge in, Swedish, among the new generations.” (Stefan Wallin, Interview #1).

In 2021, the Nordic Council of Ministers published a study about young Nordic citizens’ comprehension of the Nordic languages. According to the study, there is an overall trend in the entire region of decreased knowledge and understanding of other Nordic languages (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021). According to some of the informants in this study, there seems to be a decreased interest of Swedish among new generations in Finland, which might correspond with the overall lower knowledge in the other Nordic languages in the Nordic region.

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<sup>3</sup> In February 2021, Sweden was the third biggest source of import of Finland, where Finland imported goods for 603 million euros, after 787 million euros from Germany and 676 million euros from Russia. The same month, Sweden was the second biggest source of export, where Finland exported goods for 497 million euros, in comparison to Germany for 733 million euros and 286 million euros to the Netherlands (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021).

### *Summing up*

The Swedish language in Finland has been a part of establishing multilateral relations in the past, which is still reflected in Finland's cooperation with the Nordic region today. As one of Finland's main trade and defence partners, it is clear that the close relationship to Sweden is important and can be facilitated through the usage of a common language. The communitarian perspective on Finland in the Nordic region would be for Finland to remain well-integrated, as it is more beneficial than standing alone. While some argue that the Nordic region, with its common agenda, has never been as integrated as it is today, new generations' decreased interest in, and knowledge of, other Nordic languages, can be considered as a threat to the Swedish language in Finland.

Finland's international recognition of the Swedish language has put Finland on the map as a precursor within the field of language rights. Although there seems to be tendencies of a monolingual identity among some states in Europe today, Finland has safeguarded the status of the Swedish language, which resonates with Kymlicka's thoughts on minority rights and a multicultural state. Swedish in Finland is an example that counters the monolingual ideology and promotes linguistic diversity. The idea of monolingualism in a multicultural state like Finland is a threat to all linguistic minorities, not only Swedish.

### **5.3. An Evolving Language Landscape**

When assessing the position and the status of the Swedish language in Finland and how rights are fulfilled or threatened, it is important to take into account the environment the language exists in. Several informants noted that the language landscape in Finland has undergone a change in the past few years, for several reasons. The first one is the arrival of new language groups. The second one is the decline in the share of speakers of the national language groups. The third one is a growing group of Finns that identify themselves as bilingual. Finally, a growing presence of English seems to impact on the national languages.

#### *The arrival of new languages*

The group of foreign language speakers in Finland is growing. At the end of 2020, the share of speakers of a foreign mother tongue (not Finnish, Swedish or Sami), was 7,8 percent of the Finnish population (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021, p.6). In the last 20 years, this group has rapidly grown from almost 100.000 in 2000, to almost 433.000 in 2020 (ibid). Correspondingly, the shares of Finnish and Swedish speakers are declining. Between 2015 and 2020, the absolute number of Finnish speakers has declined from around 4,87 million to 4,81 million in 2020 (ibid). As for the Swedish speakers, the population number has varied between

around 300.500 in 1980 to around 288.000 in 2020 (ibid). The share of Swedish speakers is slowly but steadily declining, from 12,9 percent in the beginning of the 1900s to 5,2 percent in 2020 (see Appendix 1) (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021).

The rapid growth of new language groups in Finland alters the language landscape and the language debate. “The language debate concerns more than just the position of the Swedish language. It is also about the Sami languages, the position of Karelian and other minorities, it is about immigrants, and how these different languages relate to one another. It is about multilingualism”, says Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (Interview #6). In 50 years, Janne Väistö predicts that the language landscape will most likely have evolved to a point where Swedish is no longer part of the debate (Interview #13). “There are so many other languages that need to be cared for”, he says. In a theory of justice in a multicultural state, like Finland, Kymlicka argues that group-differentiated rights do not only apply to national minorities, like the Swedish speaking one, but also to immigrants. Kymlicka’s group-differentiated rights for Swedish speakers, and other minorities, is a way to accommodate a linguistically diverse society. Following Kloss’ argument about promotion-oriented versus tolerance-oriented language rights, a national minority should have both promotion-oriented as well as tolerance-oriented rights, like the Swedish language in Finland. Although Kymlicka’s group rights can apply to different minorities, the promotion-oriented and tolerance-oriented rights is only applicable to Swedish in Finland, as the Government not only lets Swedish speakers preserve their own language (tolerance-oriented), but promotes the Swedish speakers’ rights on all national levels (promotion-oriented).

Several informants noted that, although the new language groups are changing the language landscape, they are not a threat to Swedish speakers’ linguistic rights, despite outgrowing the Swedish speakers. “Fortunately the number of immigrants has increased, we need immigrants”, says Stefan Wallin (Interview #1). Several informants argued for a pro-language approach in general: the more diverse a language landscape there is, the better it is for the individual and the society as a whole. This idea embodies both Kymlicka’s liberal theory of justice in a multicultural state, and the communitarian perspective where what is the most beneficial for the society, is also beneficial for the individual. “You learn from the beginning that there are different ways of looking at the world and that there are many different languages spoken in the world”, says an anonymous informant. “There are no disadvantages with languages, there are only advantages. Language is always an asset and an advantage”, notes Elisabeth Naucélér, former Member of Parliament (Interview #5).

“All languages are worth preserving. Finland is not bilingual, we have Sami, Karelian, Romani, and sign language, that are the autochthonous languages. If you consider multilingualism as an obstacle, it will be one. But if you take reality, that is, multilingualism, into consideration when building a society, it becomes different.” (Corinna Tammenmaa, Interview #12).

### *Integration an opportunity*

With an increasing number of foreign languages spoken in Finland, and as these groups are growing, the position of the national languages is nevertheless affected. “It is obvious that the smaller the percentage of Swedish speakers, and the stronger the position of other languages becomes, the more difficult it is to argue for the position that Swedish speakers in Finland have had”, notes an anonymous informant. In multicultural states where several languages co-exist, there seems to be a general consensus among scholars and informants that language policy and rights need to be prioritised. Language policies can impact on intergroup relations, and need to respect identities (Medeiros, von Schoultz & Wass, 2020; Kymlicka & Patten, 2003).

A solution to preserve the national languages when the groups of Swedish and Finnish speakers are diminishing could be integration. Focus should be on improved integration of new Finns in Swedish-speaking environments. From a communitarian point of view where the common good is prioritised over the individual good, successful integration could be a solution to the decline in national language speakers. This integration would, from a communitarian perspective, benefit society as a whole. To further develop on the idea of integration, successful integration could be supported by the normative theory of language rights by Kymlicka and Patten. The theory builds on respecting identities when designing public institutions and assigning rights. Drawing on this argument, new languages in Finland should be taken into consideration in public institutions. While establishing appropriate integration, it is crucial to remember that assimilation is not the goal, but to respect the new languages while integrating its speakers into a new culture. This would benefit both national languages and could, possibly, slow the decline of them, which would contribute to the fulfilment of linguistic rights.

Several informants argued for better integration in both national language groups. “We need to get the authorities to believe in integration in Swedish and also in two languages. If you come to a Swedish-speaking region, Finnish will be present somehow”, notes Sören Lillkung, CEO of the Swedish Cultural Foundation of Finland (Interview #2). According to him, the Finland-Swedes should be better at accommodating new people, which could be a solution to make up for, and counter, the decline of Swedish speakers. An anonymous



informant calls for an improved integration climate, and tolerance, among Finland-Swedes in order for this to happen:

“We say that we support other minorities and that we are very open and liberal, but I still think that we are quite critical of new Finland-Swedes. We have a long way to go if we are to broaden our inclusion”.

### *Language use challenged by bilingualism and English*

Several informants note that there seems to be an increasing number of Finns that identify as bilingual Finnish-Swedish speakers. Although there are no statistics to support this statement, as one cannot register as bilingual in Finland, it is worth exploring as it alters and impacts on the language landscape. Several informants argued that an increased notion of bilingualism would not hurt in Finland, among speakers of both national languages. “If you really invest in bilingualism, it is a strength in society... It becomes a unifying link”, says Olof Ehrenkrona (Interview #9). It seems to be important for speakers of both languages to learn the other language, “to make the public apparatus work in two languages in a natural way” (Åsa von Schoultz, Interview #15). Thomas Blomqvist is positive towards bilingualism and notes that languages are an asset to the individual (Interview #4). According to him, everyone that finishes elementary school in Finland should have some knowledge of the other national language but assesses that “...unfortunately, this is not always the case. There are Swedish-speaking students that do not know Finnish well and Finnish speakers that do not know Swedish well”.

The dilemma of bilingualism in the case of Swedish speakers’ linguistic rights, is whether bilingualism poses a threat to the Swedish language in Finland. Kymlicka and Patten’s argument for the difference between nation-building approaches and language-maintenance approaches in language policy is helpful when analysing bilingualism. The nation-building goal of bilingualism would be assimilation, while the language-maintenance approach to bilingualism would be to preserve both languages. By committing to the Charter in 1998, the renewal of the Language Act in 2003, and by adopting the initial Strategy for the National Languages in 2012, it is clear that the Finnish Government has adopted the language-maintenance approach in the case of Swedish. For this reason, bilingualism should not be a threat to Swedish, but can still be one, depending on how the languages are used.

Several informants agreed that while bilingualism is beneficial for the individual citizen as it facilitates everyday life, it can become a threat to Swedish, as the process of assimilation

with the majority, the Finnish speakers, could become reality. “On an individual level, bilingualism is not a threat, but on a structural level, it is”, says Linnéa Henriksson, Professor and Researcher at Åbo Akademi University (Interview #8). Åsa von Schoultz does not see bilingualism in itself as a threat (Interview #15). According to her, it is the lack of using a language that can become a threat. “The threat is not about Finnish- and Swedish speakers that form families and let their children grow up as bilingual... It is about not using Swedish when interacting in society, or when needing support or service”, she says.

Saussure (1931) and Spolsky (2007) note that language policy is dependent on how the members of a speech community behave. Spolsky’s theory for language policy is useful when analysing the behaviour of Swedish-speaking Finns that switch into Finnish, as the theory is partly based on the external force: how individuals adopt different roles in social settings. According to Spolsky and Saussure, language policy does not only consist of legal frameworks, but practices, such as behaviours and choices of the members of a speech community, and their beliefs, such as values. The goal should then be, according to Spolsky, to take these choices of individuals into account when designing appropriate language policies, in order to maintain and promote a variety of languages. Successful language policy then, partly, comes to depend on if Swedish speakers use their language or not. Several informants noted this as they pointed out that the problem with the implementation of Swedish speakers’ linguistic rights is not the legal framework, but the practical use of Swedish in everyday life.

Swedish speakers are responsible to reassure that rights are fulfilled, which is in line with the tolerance-oriented language rights, defined by Kloss, where language rights ensure the right for individuals to preserve and maintain their own language. In opposition to promotion-oriented language rights where authorities promote the minority language, the tolerance-based right puts the responsibility on the individual minority language speakers. One could argue that promotion-based language rights apply better to Swedish than tolerance-based ones, as it is a national language where authorities make use of it at all levels. Even so, following Stephen May’s argument (2014), there is a gap between Finland’s national language policy and practice, as it seems like Finland-Swedes have to ensure their linguistic rights, therefore making tolerance-based rights relevant for the case. “To be a Finland-Swede... is always about honouring one’s right and making sure that rights are met”, says Jacob Storbjörk (Interview #14). Elisabeth Naclér notes that, in her case, the linguistic rights as a Swedish speaker in Finland, are always fulfilled, as she makes the demand each time (Interview #5). “The enforcement (of the law) makes enormous demands on the individual citizen”, she notes. Several informants assessed that it is a struggle to ensure one’s own linguistic rights in all

situations. “As a Swedish speaker in a Finnish-speaking majority, I am always the one who has to think about my rights. I have to demand it every time... It is a constant struggle”, notes Daniel Enbacka, teacher in a special school in Helsinki (Interview #7).

Several informants assessed that Swedish speakers in Finnish-dominated areas rapidly switch to Finnish, as they do not want to “pick the fight”. In regions where Swedish speakers are the minority, 38 percent always, or most of the time, requests service in Swedish, in contrary to regions where Swedish speakers are the majority, where 79 percent always, or most of the time, requests service in Swedish (Lindell, 2021). 55 percent of the Swedish-speaking participants in a study answered that they switch language if they cannot receive service in Swedish from authorities (Lindell, 2016). According to the open ended answers in the same study, Swedish speakers often switch to Finnish as they do not want to be a burden by highlighting their right to speak Swedish with authorities (Lindell, 2016).

“When I walk into a store (in Helsinki), I do not speak Swedish because I will not receive service in Swedish. I assume that if I try, they will start speaking English to me. To spare both me and the one I am speaking to, I go for Finnish.” (Daniel Enbacka, Interview #7).

Åsa von Schoultz notes that the behaviour of switching from Swedish to Finnish signals, from Swedish speakers, that they do not need service in Swedish (Interview #15). “In the capital region, Swedish speakers have, for a long time, refrained from using their mother tongue. They have wiped out their justification to exist”, she says. Saussure’s argument, supported by Spolsky, that language policy is a social construction dependent on its speech community, shows that when the Finland-Swedes choose not to speak their mother tongue, the language policy will not be implemented and rights will not be fulfilled.

Several informants noted that English seems to have an increasing role in Finnish society today, which can be considered as a threat to the national languages. “The Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedish-speaking minority can agree that English is taking over more and more”, notes Jacob Storbjörk (Interview #14). He gives the example of the workplace in Finland, where it seems more and more common to speak English among colleagues. Also in academia, several informants noted that English is frequently used.

### *Summing up*

The evolving language landscape is both an opportunity and a threat to the Swedish language. Although the arrival of new languages could be considered a threat to the national languages, through appropriate integration, speakers of other language groups can become an asset to the Swedish language if they are integrated in Swedish. Appropriate accommodation, integration, and inclusion of new language groups, could be a solution that would strengthen both national languages. A pro-language approach to the multilingual state embodies both Kymlicka's ideas and communitarian ideas on what is beneficial for society.

The notion of bilingualism should not have a negative impact on Swedish if Swedish-speakers use their language when interacting with society, to maintain it. The language use of Swedish speakers signals whether they need service in Swedish, or not. The increasing position of English in society is also to be taken into account when planning on how to maintain the use of both national languages. The renewed Strategy of the National Languages is an opportunity for the Finland to come with concrete solutions on how to maintain the national languages in an evolving language landscape.

### **5.4. Practice: Regional Differences in the Fulfilment of Rights**

The Constitution, the Language Act and the ECRML are tools that support Finnish citizens' linguistic rights. The conclusion from the insights of the informants is that the legal acts support linguistic rights of citizens to a high degree. As a contrast to the confidence in the legal acts, the informants are also in agreement that linguistic rights are not fulfilled in Finland. The difficulties in implementation depend on regional differences and recruitment to public authorities

#### *A dilemma depending on region*

The fulfilment of linguistic rights depends on the geographical location, as the implementation of linguistic rights varies vastly between regions. As such, there is a significant difference in the realisation of rights, and the experience of linguistic rights, within the group of Finland-Swedes, depending on where they live or are situated. "I have experienced that it is very different depending on if one lives in a capital, a majority area or a minority populated area", notes Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (Interview #6). In Swedish-speaking areas and cities like Osthrobothnia, Jakobstad, and Vaasa, rights are fulfilled to a high degree, as the majority speaks Swedish. In areas where there are some Swedish speakers, rights are fulfilled to some degree. "There is a conjunction between the share of the minority in a certain area, and how the linguistic rights are realised", says Corinna Tammenmaa (Interview #12). Several

informants gave the capital Helsinki as an example where it is difficult to live completely in Swedish, as the share of Swedish speakers is quite low, but also because Swedish speakers in the Helsinki area are fast to switch to Finnish. Daniel Enbacka grew up in Jakobstad but has lived in the capital region for the past ten years. He observes a big difference in the presence of Swedish in everyday life between the two regions (Interview #7): “In Ostrobothnia, Swedish will always be around, whereas here (in Helsinki) you rapidly switch to Finnish”.

### *Recruitment crucial*

The second point when it comes to the implementation of linguistic rights follows the first one: many Swedish-speakers in one area contribute to a high share of Swedish speakers in public authorities and administration who are able to give service in Swedish. The recruitment of Swedish speakers is an important contributing factor to the fulfilment of rights. Åsa von Schoultz notes that there is not only a gap to fill when hiring Swedish speakers in many parts of the country, but also speakers with adequate knowledge of both national languages (Interview #15): “Not only Swedish speaking employees are needed, but bilingual employees to make the entire system work”. Corinna Tammenmaa notes a gap in the number of Swedish speakers and the number of employed Swedish speakers within the public sector in Finland (Interview #12). She explains that the gap is largely due to recruitment in the private sector, as many large Nordic corporations have their headquarters in Stockholm: “You don’t hire the one who gets by, but the one who is the best at his or her job, and that is usually the one who speaks the language”. The close Nordic links within trade and industry might be a reason why Swedish speakers emigrate to Sweden. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, emigration to Sweden has been steady among Swedish speakers. In total, around 19.700 Finland-Swedes moved to Sweden between the years 2000 and 2017, mainly because of employment in the public and the private sector, and education (Kepsu & Henriksson, 2019).

### *No simple solution*

A majority of the informants noted that, while implementation of linguistic rights varies across regions, there is no simple solution to it, as the majority of Swedish speakers in Finland are concentrated in certain areas. As a result of this, the realisation of linguistic rights becomes difficult where there are few, or no, Swedish speakers. Some informants mentioned cities close to the Russian border and northern Finland as examples. “In municipalities in eastern Finland, close to the Russian border, it is obvious that you need much more Russian than Swedish”, notes Janne Väistö (Interview #13). “It is pretty natural in regions where there are no elements of Swedish in everyday life, that there is a higher threshold to accept Swedish

speakers' general rights, or their position in society", notes Stefan Wallin (Interview #1). Sören Lillkung gives the example of the village Ivalo with approximately 4.000 inhabitants, situated in the municipality Inari in northern Finland (Interview #2):

"To my knowledge there might not be one single Swedish speaker there. Would it not be a little lame of me to walk into the police station or the tax office with the mindset that "now we are going to speak Swedish"? You need to have some sort of common sense. We have to live with that we cannot receive service in perfect Swedish in the entire country."

Communitarian Charles Taylor argued that society plays a role in the development of individual capacities. It could be said that Swedish speakers are not able to develop these individual capacities if struggling in a Finnish-speaking environment. The same could be said about Finnish speakers in Swedish-dominated areas. Etzioni argued for "societal designs that combine nurturing communities of both minorities and of the majority". These societal designs could be translated to laws or reforms that, according to Etzioni, should favour the minority and the majority alike. However, the fact still stands: laws or reforms cannot change the reality that there are few or no Swedish speakers in some regions of Finland. In these regions, it is unlikely that rights will be fulfilled.

### *Summing up*

When assessing regional differences in the implementation of linguistic rights, it is obvious why Swedish speakers' rights are not always fulfilled in Finland. Moreover, the situation is rarely about rights being completely fulfilled, or not fulfilled at all. Instead, rights are fulfilled more or less, depending on the location. In Swedish-dominated regions of Finland, rights are fulfilled to a high degree, whereas in parts where there are few or no Swedish speakers, rights are threatened. The implementation of linguistic rights depends on whether one is situated in a monolingually Swedish- or Finnish-speaking municipality, or a bilingual municipality with either Swedish or Finnish as the majority language. Demography highly impacts on the implementation of linguistic rights, as recruitment to public authorities plays a role in it. Recruitment of Swedish speakers to the public sector, like authorities, is easy in regions where there are many Swedish speakers, and difficult, or impossible, in regions where there are few or no Swedish speakers.

### 5.5. Swedish language rights as a political issue

From time to time in the history of Finland, the language issue has sparked a debate. Although many would say that the language strife of the 1930s and prior is not as intense today, the debate has come and gone during the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the focus of the societal debate has shifted.

“There have been long periods when there has been no strife, or where language has not been an important political issue at all. There was a general consensus around the role of the Swedish language as an equivalent language for many decades.” (Åsa von Schoultz, Interview #15).

In this subchapter, Swedish speakers’ linguistic rights, as a political issue, will be assessed. As part of the political issue, the role of the majority, in the debate and the language issue, will be explored.

#### *Polarisation in the political debate*

Corinna Tammenmaa notes how, sometimes, fundamental rights, such as linguistic rights, become politically controversial issues (Interview #12). “We have sometimes had a situation where defending fundamental rights is interpreted as politics, since one must promote it with political means. It is not fair”, she says. Polarisation in society might stem from a general intolerance and affects politics and attitudes on the language issue. The language issue has been used as a political tool to alienate speakers of different language groups by pointing out differences between the language groups. This is part of a political agenda to attract voters and to raise political engagement: “As with all other kinds of polarisation and politics, where you look for differences and enemies, language can also influence public opinion”, says Corinna Tammenmaa (Interview #12). Polarisation has contributed to a nation-building approach to languages, defined by Kymlicka and Patten (2003), where the monolingual state with the “one nation, one people, one language” narrative dominates. “There are those who want to take advantage of contradictions in society”, notes Thomas Blomqvist (Interview #4). Sören Lillkung emphasizes that polarisation exists among both Finnish and Swedish speakers in Finland (Interview #2). He grew up in Jakobstad where the majority speaks Swedish: “The Finnish speakers do not feel at ease there because the Swedish speakers are bad at welcoming them. We should not forget that we are no better ourselves”.

Several informants identified the rise of the True Finns Party in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an important marker that brought back the Swedish language to the political agenda. The True Finns party seems to be the political party that has politicised the language issue the most during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The party has adopted a polarisation strategy in terms of the languages, among other issues, and has used this as a strategy to mobilise voters. "To be an opponent to Swedish is a political strategy to get votes", says Elisabeth Naclér (Interview #5). "The True Finns have become a joint force for all those who oppose all kinds of minorities. That is why they naturally became the joint force of those who think that the position of the Swedish language is too strong", says Stefan Wallin (Interview #1). "Timo Soini<sup>4</sup> is a clever political strategist. He realised that it is easy to mobilise voters around this issue", comments Åsa von Schoultz (Interview #15).

Politicians and political parties are privileged actors that form part of the societal debate and thus have the power to influence public opinion. According to several informants, the True Finns Party has created a negative narrative based on an "us" and "them" idea between Swedish and Finnish speakers, alienating the two language groups from one another. When privileged actors in the public debate speak of something in a certain way, it sends a message to the general public that it is accepted to do so. Several informants noted that when the True Finns came to power in the Parliament in 2011, it became more accepted to be an opponent of Swedish. "It somehow became okay to be against the position of the Swedish language", says Stefan Wallin (Interview #1). "It became more legitimate to speak up about it", comments Linnéa Henriksson (Interview #8). The negative narrative around the Swedish language has created a false sense of the monolingual state by neglecting the Swedish language's constitutional and historical presence in Finland. "How one speaks about the languages, for example in not emphasizing the legal grounds, or the historical background, distorts the public's perception of reality, which must be taken seriously", notes Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (Interview #6). "The True Finns neglect history by claiming that we do not belong here. They simplify the world by bringing back a nation state that never existed and is very Finnish, all of a sudden", says Sören Lillkung (Interview #2). "There is a political agenda behind this, which is not rational nor logical, but has clear political purposes", says Stefan Wallin (Interview #1).

Since the peak of the debate between 2011 and 2014, several informants have noted a shift in the focus of the True Finns Party, which has led to a less heated language debate overall. "They are more interested in the immigration issue since 2015 and what it will do to Finland,

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<sup>4</sup> Timo Soini is a Finnish politician and was the leader of the True Finns party from 1997-2017.



than the forced Swedish”, says Janne Väistö (Interview #13). “They have shifted focus from one out-group to another”, comments Åsa von Schoultz (Interview #15). Charlotta af Hällström-Reijonen notes that the absence of focus on Swedish from the True Finns Party might be a strategic priority for the municipal elections in Finland in 2021 (Interview #16): “They want to recruit municipal elections candidates in Swedish-speaking areas and tone down their negative rhetoric when it is opportune”.

### *Swedish in the curriculum*

For several years, the True Finns Party strived to remove Swedish as a mandatory subject from the Finnish curriculum. Janne Väistö observes a difference in the debate to remove Swedish from the curriculum in the 1980s, compared to the citizen initiative, signed by over 60.000 people, to do the same in 2014 (Interview #13). “In the 1980s, the idea was about freedom of choice. In the citizen initiative, the populist argument was more prominent”, he says. In the 1970s, the term “forced Swedish” (“tvångssvenskan”) was assigned to Swedish in education, which is another example of how rhetoric has played a role in the language debate. The term was coined by the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat. To support the term, The Association of Finnish Language and Culture created a logo with a person throwing the letter “Å” in a garbage bin, a symbolic illustration of the removal of mandatory Swedish from the Finnish curriculum. Stefan Wallin notes how the term forced Swedish in the beginning was referred to with citation marks, in Helsingin Sanomat, that later disappeared (Interview #1). This change made the term more neutral and accepted, he notes. “It became an accepted concept to describe a phenomenon that everyone was familiar with”, he says.

### *The role of the majority*

In addition to political parties, the majority of the population plays a role in the fulfilment of linguistic rights.

“The position of the Swedish-speaking population in Finnish society does not depend on how we view ourselves, but it is increasingly dependent on how much the majority of the population accepts the Finland-Swedish position, reputation and all legal basis.” (Stefan Wallin, Interview #1).

The insights from the informants provide two sides of the same coin about the impact of the majority on the position of the Swedish language. On the one hand, there seems to be an overly negative idea of the language issue, that does not reflect reality. On the other hand, the

majority seems to have a decreased knowledge in Swedish, which alienates Finnish-speakers from the Swedish language, thus empowering the “us” and “them” rhetoric previously discussed. An anonymous informant argued that there seems to be a general consensus that the language debate has gotten worse in recent years: “The general public seems to perceive that it has gotten worse, not within the own circle... they perceive that the national debate and the national attitudes have gotten worse in relation to Swedish”. In a study from 2020, a larger share of Swedish speakers assessed that the attitude towards other language groups had gotten worse in recent years, compared to Finnish speakers (Lindell, 2021). 32 percent of Swedish speakers in a minority and 35 percent of Swedish speakers in a majority assessed that attitudes had gotten worse (Lindell, 2021). These were more than the Swedish speakers that thought that attitudes had improved (Lindell, 2021). Among Finnish speakers, 39 percent assessed that attitudes among language groups had improved while 15 percent thought that attitudes had gotten worse (Lindell, 2021). In the same study, respondents noted that attitudes towards Swedish speakers and other languages in Finland had become more polarised (Lindell, 2021).

### *Two different debates*

Sandra Bergqvist differentiates between a constructive language debate and one that has the goal to bring others down, where only a few actors participate (Interview #3). “The second one is very destructive, we will never get to them. There will always be those who oppose us who speak Swedish”, she says, and continues: “They want to create opposite poles which I do not find constructive, especially in such a fundamental issue as one’s right to a mother tongue”. Many informants note that it is important to differentiate between unconscious obliviousness, and conscious rudeness. According to the informants, in most cases when Swedish speakers’ rights are not fulfilled due to the majority, it is related to forgetfulness or a lack of knowledge among individuals or institutions, not because the majority is making an active choice to neglect Swedish. “Rudeness would be that there is a systematic agenda to neglect the law”, notes Stefan Wallin (Interview #1).

### *Positive interest but limited will to act?*

The general understanding, among several informants, is that the language debate is “not as bad as it seems” and that the negative feeling towards Swedish is a “marginal phenomenon”. Several informants argued that there is an overall notion of acceptance among the Finnish-speaking majority towards Swedish. Jacob Storbjörk believes that political parties have had a positive impact in ensuring the position of the Swedish language (Interview #14): “There is a strong benevolence from the Finnish-speaking majority and most political parties...

A reason that we still have two national languages in Finland is partly because of active political forces”. Stefan Wallin notes that the majority of political parties have resisted the agenda of the True Finns (Interview #1):

“The bearing political forces have, actually in all political parties, so far, resisted this pressure, for example to abolish mandatory Swedish in elementary school... The bearing political forces, including leaders in the traditional parties, all have a strong perception that the Swedish language belongs in Finnish society”.

On the contrary to the idea of benevolence, Åsa von Schoultz argues that there are few political actors that are interested in taking action to improve the situation of Swedish speakers (Interview #15): “When this is brought up in political discussions, there tends to be many discussions among the Swedish speakers, but among the Finnish speakers, there is little interest to discuss it”. She further argues that, in order to improve the situation of Swedish speakers, it takes the “good will of the majority and structural changes”. Although good will might exist among the majority to some extent, as some informants argued, there seems to be a difference between good will, and a willingness to sacrifice something for change, among the majority.

“Many probably think that it is fine that we are a bilingual country and that Swedish speakers should have the right to service in Swedish, as long as it does not affect their situation... as long as they do not have to make a sacrifice, for example to Swedish” (Åsa von Schoultz, Interview #15).

Drawing on Etzioni’s communitarian argument about national ethos, state politics “require shared core values and commitment to the common good to justify inevitable sacrifices” (2011, p.340). There seems to be divided opinions among the informants whether the majority, such as Finnish speakers and bearing political forces, are willing, or not, to work to improve the situation of the Swedish language in Finland.

If one is to believe the general consensus of the informants, that the majority plays a role in the language debate, and hence in the implementation and fulfilment of linguistic rights of Swedish speakers, the question then becomes: is it possible to make demands on an overwhelming majority? And could such a demand be to accept Kymlicka’s group-differentiated rights for Swedish speakers? Åsa von Schoultz asserts that, as of right now, the majority will not accept the demands on sacrifices on an individual level, nor on a political

one: “The will to make structural changes to improve the situation or to get a positive development... is much lower today than it was 15 years ago”. This might be due to a weakened sense of, and knowledge in, Swedish among the majority, something that several informants noted. “There has been a decrease in the national consensus that we have had for a long time about the position of the Swedish language in Finland”, notes Stefan Wallin (Interview #1). The decreased sense of Swedish among the majority, and possibly in the national ethos, reflects on the implementation of linguistic rights. Åsa von Schoultz argues that the lack of interest in improving the situation of Swedish speakers among political actors, puts the responsibility on the Swedish speakers (Interview #15): “It is up to Swedish speakers to bring this up to discussion, and as long as the minority talks about it and tries to come up with solutions that work, you do not get very far”.

### *Summing up*

From time to time, the Swedish language has been politicised. During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the debate has mostly revolved around Swedish in the Finnish curriculum, and the difficulties to communicate with authorities in Swedish. The narrative of privileged actors in the societal debate, such as political parties and individuals, affects the general perception of the two national languages, both positively and negatively. What the majority thinks and how the majority acts in relation to the Swedish language, plays a role in the implementation and fulfilment of linguistic rights. When the majority of political parties are in favour of the Swedish language, which has been the overall case in Finland, Swedish speakers’ rights seem more justifiable in society. Nonetheless, if these political forces do not actively work for the Swedish language, but take a more passive approach to the language issue, not much will change. One or few actors that work actively against Swedish can alter the language situation and the debate, which leads to polarisation that justifies it to be against Swedish for Finnish citizens. This nation-building approach to languages promotes a monolingual ideology that is not the reality in a multicultural state like Finland, and distorts the public’s perception of reality (Kymlicka & Patten, 2003). To some extent, also the Swedish-speaking minority holds power over their situation. Nevertheless, without the good will of the majority and political actors, it is difficult for the minority to reassure its own status and guarantee the fulfilment of linguistic rights.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Final discussion: How to Guarantee the Fulfilment of Linguistic Rights

This subchapter answers the research question and discusses how Swedish speakers' linguistic rights can be fulfilled now and in the future. To depart from the research question, "How are the rights of Swedish-speaking Finns, as incorporated in the Constitution of Finland and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, fulfilled or threatened?", one can first and foremost assess that Swedish speakers' rights are both fulfilled and threatened to different degrees that depend on factors that surround the language issue in Finland. The main finding is that linguistic rights are highly dependent on context, and therefore, there is no simple answer to the question. Instead, rights are fulfilled to different degrees. Sometimes, rights are fulfilled, sometimes they are threatened, and sometimes, they are not fulfilled at all.

The opportunity to receive service in Swedish before authorities and in the organisation of administration seems to be the most prominent example where Swedish speakers' rights are not fulfilled in Finland today. In addition, the cultural and societal needs that the public authorities shall provide for speakers of the two national language groups are not always met.

#### *How are the linguistic rights fulfilled or threatened?*

When assessing how the Finland-Swedes' linguistic rights are fulfilled or threatened, it becomes apparent that it depends on geographical location, recruitment of Swedish speakers to public authorities, education, the usage of Swedish by Swedish speakers, integration of new Finns, where the political debate is at in terms of the languages, and the majority's feelings toward Swedish.

Swedish speakers' linguistic rights are fulfilled to a high degree in Swedish-dominated areas, as it guarantees the possibility to receive service in Swedish from authorities. Linguistic rights are fulfilled when citizens that speak an adequate amount of Swedish are recruited to public authorities. Another factor that directly contributes to the fulfilment of rights was the decision to make Swedish a mandatory subject in the Finnish curriculum in 1968. To learn Swedish in school provides all Finnish citizens with equal opportunities in the future in terms of national language knowledge. The more people that have adequate knowledge of Swedish, the better the implementation and fulfilment of Swedish speakers' rights are. Consequently, the decision to abolish mandatory Swedish in the matriculation exam in 2005 is a threat to Swedish speakers' linguistic rights, and the survival of the Swedish language in Finland.

In regions where there are few or no Swedish speakers, rights are threatened, or not fulfilled at all, depending on the location, as it is difficult or impossible to communicate with

authorities in Swedish. The use of Swedish is another factor that can be a threat. When speakers of the Swedish speech community do not use their own language in society, rights are directly threatened as this signals that Swedish is not needed in Finnish society. When Finland-Swedes choose not to speak their mother tongue, the language policy will not be implemented and rights will not be fulfilled. Consequently, Swedish speakers' linguistic rights are not fulfilled, as it seems like they need to guarantee them themselves, to some extent.

In a language landscape that has substantially evolved in the past 20 years, the national languages are affected. New language groups are growing at a rapid pace, while the national language groups are stagnating or slowly declining. For Swedish speakers' rights to be fulfilled in these circumstances, it is crucial to take into account the evolving language landscape when designing language policies. Scholars in the field and informants in this study agree on that language policy planning is important in a multicultural state that accommodates different language groups. To integrate new Finns into society by providing the means to learn Swedish is a way to prioritise Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in Finland, which indirectly contributes to the fulfilment of Swedish speakers' linguistic rights.

In contrast, rights are threatened when the Finland-Swedes do not accommodate new Finns into their community. The more people that get knowledge of, and learn Swedish, the more beneficial it will be to Swedish speakers' linguistic rights. Bilingualism and the presence of English in Finnish society can be considered as threatening circumstances in the language landscape. To be bilingual in Finnish and Swedish, and to speak English, is beneficial to the individual citizen, but can be a threat to the group of Swedish-speakers' if they always choose to speak Finnish or English when interacting with society.

Finally, the political debate and how the majority population views Swedish speakers are two circumstances that go hand in hand and impact on the realisation of linguistic rights. When the Government and bearing political forces not only support, but actively work for the Swedish language, rights are fulfilled to a higher degree, as it contributes to concrete measures and an overall increased awareness in society. This affects how the majority of citizens views the language issue, and the role of the Swedish language, which affects how rights are fulfilled. When people are positive towards Swedish, it is easier to justify Swedish speakers' linguistic rights. In contrast, a monolingual ideology and polarisation are political tools that threaten Swedish speakers' rights, as they can have direct consequences and affect public opinion. A decreased sense of Swedish among the majority population, and possibly in the national ethos, threatens the fulfilment of Swedish speakers' linguistic rights. The interest in Swedish and the interest in the Nordic region among new generations are two factors that seem to impact on

each other, and can have both positive and negative outcomes for Swedish speakers' rights. If new generations are interested in the Nordic region, it might be motivating to learn Swedish. In contrast, if they are not, Swedish might seem irrelevant.

### *Group rights and the minority status*

With these factors in mind, the question then becomes apparent: can Swedish speakers' rights be fulfilled in Finland, and if so, how? A solution, as previously discussed, could be Kymlicka's group-differentiated rights for Swedish speakers, to improve the implementation of rights in regions where rights are threatened. Following Kymlicka's reasoning, Swedish speakers in Finland are entitled to group-differentiated rights, as they are in a minority, in relation to the Finnish-speaking majority. As the previous discussion has illustrated, the current legal framework that supports linguistic rights in Finland, is not always enough in fulfilling rights. As May argued, although a state has adopted a promotion-oriented based approach to language rights, like Finland with Swedish, there can be a gap between official language policy and practice (2014). Although the status of a national language institutionalises Swedish in Finnish society, it is not adequate for the fulfilment of rights (May, 2014, Nelde et al., 1996). Could then Kymlicka's group-differentiated rights be a solution to the situation? The argument that group rights would lead to equality between the majority and the minority supports Kymlicka's thesis. The communitarian perspective where society plays a role in developing individual capacities could further support the argument for group-differentiated rights, showing that the two perspectives can support each other instead of exclude each other. Group rights could highlight and address the issues in relation to the fulfilment of Swedish speakers' linguistic rights, discussed above. Paz' argument, that language rights can hinder the attainment of goods, as they are linked to other rights that are expressed through language, seems relevant in Finland. When Swedish speakers cannot communicate with authorities in Swedish, it can restrict and hinder other rights.

Another scenario that had been discussed is the one where the Swedish language would receive the status of a minority language. On the one hand, this would not be beneficial to Finland-Swedes, as it would take away their linguistic rights that come with being a national language in the Constitution. On the other hand, if the specific group rights would to be assigned to them as a minority, these rights could strengthen the group in the overall society, according to Kymlicka. Nevertheless, this scenario is not quite realistic, as the status of the national languages has not changed since 1922 when they were confirmed in the Constitution.

The reality where Swedish speakers in Finland would receive group rights, or the status as a minority language, seems unlikely. Although the argument for Kymlicka's liberal group-differentiated rights, supported by the communitarian perspective, is quite clear, it seems almost naïve to believe that Swedish speakers' rights could always be fulfilled when supported by special rights. The reality in Finland still stands: in some regions there are very few, or no, Swedish speakers, Swedish speakers sometimes actively choose not to use their own language, political forces and the majority will not always be sympathetic towards Swedish, and integration of new Finns in Swedish is complex and takes time. Finally, it would be difficult to justify group rights for Swedish speakers, as they are equal to Finnish speakers in the Constitution. It is up for debate whether specific rights for Swedish speakers in Finland would contribute to the fulfilment of linguistic rights.

#### *How to support linguistic rights*

If group-differentiated rights is not an option, what could then be done to ensure, and strengthen, the position of the Swedish language in the future? According to Paz (2013), what generates language conflict in everyday life, and seems to do so in Finland, is communication with public authorities and education. These conflicts can hinder the realisation of rights.

Some informants argued for stronger legislation that obliges authorities to take measure and guarantee Swedish speakers' rights. This would put pressure on political actors and oblige them to act. Another concrete solution would be to allocate more resources to the Swedish language. Improved recruitment of Swedish speakers to public authorities would guarantee service for Swedish speakers, although it is difficult to recruit Swedish speakers if there are few or none available. Nevertheless, the linguistic dimension should be taken into account at an earlier stage, in many sectors, when recruiting, instead of afterwards, when it is more difficult to do damage control. Some informants argued for a more consistent language impact assessment in the sectors that should be able to guarantee service in Swedish. Language policy is crucial in multilingual settings (Medeiros, von Schoultz & Wass, 2020), which is why guidelines for language impact assessment could improve the fulfilment of Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in sectors where service in Swedish should be guaranteed. In general, it seems like raised awareness in public authorities could be a step towards guaranteeing Swedish speakers' rights.

While improved Swedish in communication with authorities seems crucial to fulfil Swedish speakers' linguistic rights more consistently, education is also an aspect that could be improved. Some informants argued for a change in education of the Swedish language in



schools, as many of them agreed that it is not adequate and successful as it is. One option could be to start learning Swedish at an earlier stage, while another option could be to reintroduce Swedish in the matriculation examination in secondary school, which would motivate students to be consistent in their Swedish learning. As reintroduction of Swedish in the matriculation exam is stated in the current Government Programme, it will be interesting to observe if the Government Marin fulfils this promise.

*Can the Strategy deal with issues connected to the fulfilment of linguistic rights?*

At the moment of writing, what gives hope for Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in Finland, is the renewal of the Strategy for the National Languages. While it is not specifically targeted at Swedish speakers only, it is one step forward in improving the language climate in Finland, and raising awareness. The new Strategy could address the language landscape, education, attitudes and the linguistic dimension in authorities. The table below suggests how these issues could be addressed.

Language landscape	Education	Attitudes	Authorities
Integration of new Finns in the national languages	Start learning Swedish earlier	National government campaigns promoting Swedish, bilingualism, and friendly relations between the languages	Establish clear guidelines on how language impact assessment should be carried out, and by who
Address bilingualism while safeguarding the national languages	Restructure Swedish education	Bearing political forces that speak of the Swedish language in a positive way	Take the linguistic dimension into account at an earlier stage of recruitment
Address the presence of English in the workplace and in education	Reintroduce Swedish in the matriculation examination		

The Strategy can be motivated by both liberals and communitarians as Kymlicka and Patten acknowledged that it is necessary for a state to take a stance on language policy, especially in a multicultural state, and not leave it up to the individuals as other liberal scholars would say. Communitarian thinkers, although vague on the topic of language rights, argue that cultural attachments, such as languages, have an intrinsic value to groups that need to be maintained, which is why also the communitarian perspective could be positively inclined towards language policies that favour groups. The renewed Strategy, in combination with the foundation of the comprehensive language legislation, active political forces in favour of Swedish, strong Finland-Swedish institutions, positive attitudes in society towards minorities,

Swedish speakers using their own language, and inclusion and integration in Swedish, seems to be the way forward for Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in Finland in 2021.

## **6.2. Final thoughts**

Although some would call the Finland-Swedes the world's most fortunate minority, and Swedish is a national language in Finland, it has become apparent that linguistic rights of Swedish speakers are not fulfilled, and sometimes threatened. Through the insights provided by the informants in a qualitative approach to research, the reasons behind how linguistic rights are fulfilled or threatened have been explored. It seems like the rights to service from authorities in Swedish and the provision for cultural and societal needs on equal basis as the Finnish speakers, are the most prominent linguistic rights that are not realised in Finland today. Language policy, such as the renewed Language Act from 2003, the initial Strategy for the National Languages of Finland from 2012, and Government Programmes that mention the importance of linguistic rights, reflect a continuous support for the equal status of the two national languages, but could also be considered as concerns for linguistic rights. The call for a renewal of the Strategy in 2019 proved that the previous one had not been as successful as anticipated.

What seems to be the big question when it comes to the language situation in Finland, that has been present ever since the two national languages were granted equal status is: how can linguistic rights of the Swedish speakers be fulfilled when they are in a minority compared to the Finnish speakers? Is it even possible for these two languages to operate on an equal basis, when their circumstances are so different?

In 2021, the new Strategy for the National Languages of Finland will be finalised, which is an opportunity for speakers of both national languages in Finland. In a multilingual state like Finland, language policy and language impact assessment is crucial to define how languages should be cared for, which is supported both by Kymlicka's liberal thoughts on group rights, and the communitarian perspective that emphasises the good of society. Not only is language policy and language impact assessment important for the intrinsic value of the language in a language maintenance approach that Finland has actively chosen to adopt, but also for the extrinsic value, as language is related to other rights. As stated in the Constitution, cultural and societal needs are dependent on language. Although human rights do not seem very relevant in the case of Swedish in Finland, as Swedish is nevertheless a national language, according to the communitarian perspective, context can determine how individuals make

choices in life. When not having linguistic rights fulfilled, to at least some degree, it can be argued that it impacts on other aspects of life and hinders individuals.

Finally, although linguistic rights, as with other rights, should be fulfilled but are not always, it has become clear that the linguistic situation of the Finland-Swedes is very complex. To believe that these rights can always be fulfilled is unrealistic. Instead, what should continuously be done in order to improve the situation, is to focus on how language policy is implemented. Continuous research on the issue is needed, as the situation evolves when circumstances change. Research and language policy can then, hopefully, have positive a positive impact on the fulfilment of linguistic rights in Finland.

The question that remains is: How will the Finnish Government tackle challenges of linguistic rights in the renewed Strategy, and will it contribute to an improved fulfilment of linguistic rights of the Finland-Swedes?

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The share of Swedish speakers of Finland's population

Year	Percent
1815	14,6 %
1900	12,9 %
1950	8,6 %
1990	5,9 %
2000	5,6 %
2010	5,4 %
2020	5,2 %

*Source: Official Statistics of Finland (2021). Population structure (e-publication).*

*[http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/index\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/index_en.html)*

### Appendix 2: Overview of the Informants

Interview	Date	Name	Title, organisation and previous responsibilities
1.	08.12.20	Stefan Wallin	CEO of Milton Networks / Head of Public Affairs, Milton Group. Special Adviser to the Ministers of Transport, European Affairs and Foreign Trade, Interior, and Defence from 1994 to 2000. Deputy Editor-in-Chief for the newspaper Åbo Underrättelser from 2000-2005. State Secretary to the Minister of the Environment from 2005 to 2007. Chairman of the Swedish People's Party (SFP). Minister of the Environment, Minister for Foreign Affairs responsible for Nordic Cooperation. Chairman of the Swedish Parliamentary Group.
2.	10.12.20	Sören Lillkung	CEO of The Swedish Cultural Foundation of Finland. Opera singer. Former Head of department at Novia University of Applied Sciences.
3.	15.12.20	Sandra Bergqvist	Member of Parliament of the Swedish Parliamentary Group for the Swedish People's Party (SFP) & Chair of the Swedish Assembly of Finland.
4.	16.12.20	Thomas Blomqvist	Minister for Nordic Cooperation and Equality & Member of Parliament of the Swedish Parliamentary Group for the Swedish People's Party (SFP).

5.	16.12.20	Elisabeth Nauclér	Former Member of Parliament for Åland in the Swedish Parliamentary Group from 2007-2015. Former head of Administration to the Government of the Åland Islands.
6.	30.12.20	Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark	Director for the Åland Islands Peace Institute. Lawyer. PhD in International Law. Expert member of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on National Minorities from 2002-2006 and 2010-2014 (President of the Committee from 2012-2014). Conciliator at the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration within the OSCE.
7.	14.01.21	Daniel Enbacka	Teacher at Special School Valtteri Skillä.
8.	15.01.21	Linnéa Henriksson	Postdoctoral Researcher and Professor, Social Sciences, Åbo Akademi University. PhD in Public Administration.
9.	20.01.21	Olof Ehrenkrona	Former Ambassador and Senior Adviser for the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs from 2006-2004. Head of Policy Planning in the Swedish Prime Minister's Office from 1991-1994. General Council of Sweden in Åland from 2015-2018
10.	20.01.21	Anonymous informant	-
11.	22.01.21	Markku Suksi	Dr. of Public Law, Professor and Researcher at Åbo Akademi University. Director of Development of Linguistic Matters at the Ministry of Justice from 2011-2012. Vice-Chair of the Advisory Board on Linguistic Matters of the Government of Finland from 2016-2020.
12.	26.01.21	Corinna Tammenmaa	Senior Adviser for Language Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. Jurist.
13.	09.02.21	Janne Väistö	PhD and Postdoctoral Researcher in language policy and educational history at Åbo Akademi University.
14.	05.02.21	Jacob Storbjörk	Assistant of a Member of Parliament of the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group and Vice Chair of the Swedish Assembly of Finland.
15.	08.03.21	Åsa von Schoultz	Swedish Chair in Political Science and Professor at University of Helsinki, Director of the Finnish National Election Study 2021-2025 and PI of the Finnish Parliamentary Candidates. PhD.
16.	11.03.21	Charlotta af Hällström-Reijonen	Director of the Swedish department at the Institute of the National languages. PhD. Former Editor in Chief of the journal Språkbruk.

### Appendix 3: Example of Interview guide

- Introduction
  - Introduce yourself briefly.
  - What is your experience of the Swedish language in Finland?
- The Constitution of Finland
  - According to your experiences, are Swedish speakers' linguistic rights in Finland fulfilled or threatened? How?

- According to your experiences, what could be done in order to guarantee the position of the Swedish language in the future, and the realisation of linguistic rights?
- Are there pros and cons with two national languages in Finland?
- How do the languages co-exist?
- Is it problematic for Finland to have two national languages?
- Are there any issues with linguistic rights that should be dealt with?
- Is it important that Swedish remains a national language in Finland? Why?
- Politics and the language debate
  - Is there a language debate in Finland? If yes, how has it developed over the years and where is it at today?
  - What do you think the language debate depends on? What are the main reasons for it?
  - Who are the actors that impact on the language debate and language situation in Finland?
  - Do you think that political parties can impact on public opinion? How/how not?
  - How have different parties influenced the language issue?
  - In your opinion, are language rights prioritised in Finland today? How/how not?
  - Can political actors do anything to impact on the language issue? If yes, what?
  - What do you think of Swedish as a mandatory subject in the Finnish curriculum?



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