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LANGUAGE PLANNING IN FINLAND: CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH?

Sauli Takala

Institute for Educational Research
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

1. Language Policy and Language Teaching Policy

As I have noted in another context (IEE Vol. 4, 1985, 1911-1912), contrary to a commonly held view, several languages are spoken in most countries of the world. There are many times more languages than there are states. The crucial role of language for individuals, social groups and states has made it important for states to define national language policies. Depending on their internal linguistic situation, the relative political power of different linguistic groups, views on language rights and language equality, and other similar factors, states may choose to promote a policy of a unilingual, bilingual, or multilingual society. This general language policy, whether it has explicit statutory legitimation (e.g., Canada and Finland) or implicit social legitimation by tradition (e.g., the United States), is one of the major determinants of a nation's language teaching policy. Another major determinant is the nation's political and economic orientation towards other nations, which partly explains clear shifts in language teaching policy, especially after the Second World War. I have used the term "foreign language teaching policy" to refer to the plans and practical measures undertaken to fulfill a country's needs for people with knowledge of foreign languages. The need to teach citizens to understand and use either a second or a foreign language arises from language contacts both within the country and with other countries.

2. Emergence of Foreign Language Teaching Policy

Systematic attempts to define a national policy of foreign language teaching are of relatively recent origin. The growing need for such a policy is due to a number of developments. The fact that the teaching of foreign languages has expanded to encompass larger sections of the population including both younger and adult learners means that language teaching has become increasingly more institutionalized. It has become more organized and systematic, which means that roles and tasks have been specified in greater detail. Language teaching is not the activity of individual teachers only. It is a system of activities at several levels. In order to understand language teaching in all its complexity, it is necessary to be aware of its various levels and subsystems and of their interrelationships. It is also necessary to relate language teaching to its broader educational and societal context.

International organizations have contributed to exploring problems related to defining national language teaching policies. Two seminars sponsored by the UNESCO Institute for Education in the 1960's addressed problems related to an early start of foreign language

learning (Stern 1967). Since the early 1960's the Council of Europe has actively worked for the improvement of foreign language teaching in Europe. Through a number of seminars, symposia and projects (Trim et al. 1980) its work has stimulated foreign language teaching in member countries and beyond. More recently the Final Act of the Helsinki Accords (1975) commits the signatory states "to encourage the study of foreign languages and civilization as an important means of expanding communication among peoples."

In the United States the growing enthusiasm for teaching foreign languages in the elementary schools (FLES), the National Defence Education Act (1958) in the aftermath of Sputnik, and the Bilingual Education Act (1968) all encouraged the expansion of language teaching. Quite soon enrollments dropped and many colleges and universities stopped requiring a foreign language for admission. A commission was set up by President Carter in 1978 and its report "Strength Through Wisdom" was published the following year. The commission reviewed the current situation and made a number of recommendations to improve it. In Finland a national commission has recently (1979) outlined a comprehensive plan for foreign language teaching policy for the next few decades.

3. Components of Foreign Language Teaching Policy

As linguistic conditions and social systems differ, foreign language teaching policy may range from an explicit, detailed, and binding document to implicit tradition. Thus each country will have to decide what criteria its foreign language teaching policy has to fulfill.

It is obvious that even countries where some "language of wider communication" is spoken will find that there is a need to have some knowledge of other languages. The first stage in defining a foreign language teaching policy usually consists of assessing the country's need for people with a requisite type and extent of knowledge of different languages. Several studies conducted in Sweden in the early 1960's (e.g. Dahllöf, 196x, 1963) were among the first systematic attempts at needs assessment. Since then a number of needs assessments have been carried out in several countries. Typically they have dealt with language needs in business and industry (e.g., Emmans et al. 1974, BOTB 1979). Recently more detailed methods have been developed for identifying the needs of people learning foreign languages (Richterich and Chancerel 1980).

An important decision concerns the degree of choice made available to students. Should all students be required to study a foreign language irrespective of their motivation and linguistic ability? Should they all study the same languages for the same number of years, have the same number of lessons per week, and pursue essentially the same objectives, or should there be different options on these points? Some countries (e.g., Hungary, Norway, the Soviet Union, Sweden) have decided in favor of making the first language the same for all students whereas some other countries (e.g., Finland) offer students a choice of the first language.

Another major area for planning is related to continuity in language teaching and learning. The Finnish Commission outlined in broad terms the general approach of teaching and the general progression of objectives on different levels of the educational system. Such an outline is designed to improve articulation between different types and levels of educational institutions which provide language learning services.

Foreign language teaching policy also has to tackle the quantitative and qualitative targets of language teaching. Thus it may be useful to estimate how many people will need to know particular languages and what kind of knowledge they will need to have.

After the scope and general orientation of language teaching has been determined there is a need to set up an efficient administration and organization to take care of the initial and inservice education of language teachers, to promote syllabus design and materials construction, and to make language learning services available from compulsory education to adult education (Strevens 1977).

The system of language teaching is a complex whole. Its successful performance requires continuous research, development and evaluation as well as close links between theory and practice. Foreign language teaching policy is designed to coordinate all these activities and to help language teaching become a self-corrective system.

4. Language Policy in Finland

4.1. Historical Background Sketch

The linguistic situation of any country can only be understood against a geographical and historical background. These two factors, making Finland a northern border-area between the eastern and western civilizations, have decisively determined the direction and quality of Finland's international political and cultural relations. It is only relatively recently that conscious political will has begun to exercise an influence in this area.

Finland's contacts with Sweden date back at least to the 12th century, perhaps much earlier although the question is the topic of a lively scientific debate. Early Christian influence (Roman Catholic) came from the west and from the east (Orthodox). Gradual assimilation with Sweden followed and in 1523 Finland became a Duchy of Sweden ruled by a Crown Prince. Finland became and remained a battlefield between east and west, Sweden and Russia. In the aftermath of one of the Napoleonic wars, through a Russo-Swedish peace treaty in 1809, Finland passed into the hands of Russia, but became a Grand Duchy. The Czar was represented by an appointed Governor General, but the old constitution was retained and the use of Swedish law and the Swedish ecclesiastical and administrative tradition continued. This idyllic situation was broken in the 1880's when harsh restrictive measures were introduced and a policy of Russification pursued. This was strongly opposed and was only marginally successful. After the October Revolution in Russia, Finland was declared an independent republic on December 6, 1917.

4.2. Linguistic Situation and Early Language Policy

As described in greater detail elsewhere (Takala and Havola 1983), the Swedish-speaking population was estimated at 70,000 (c. 17.5%, total population c. 400,000) around 1600. The maximum absolute number of Swedish-speaking Finns was about 355,000 in 1940 (9.5%) and has slowly decreased to some 300,000 in 1980 (6.3%). They have always lived in the coastal areas in western and southern Finland.

Bilingualism was quite frequent among clergymen, officers, business people and artisans in coastal towns. Finnish was used occasionally in official contexts. Due to the strong influence of the Hansa trade, German was also used to some extent in some major port towns. The growing domination of Swedish in Finland is attributed to the process of modernization and bureaucratization of Sweden's growing political power after several

military conquests. More civil servants were needed to manage the growing written records and many of them came from Sweden. When Russia occupied Finland for a brief period of time at the beginning of the 18th century, many civil servants fled to Sweden and never returned after the hostilities were over. They were often replaced by civil servants born and raised in Sweden. This development was sealed in the school ordinance of 1649 which made Swedish the language of instruction (in addition to Latin that had been used earlier) but made no provision for Finnish. In the 1700's, Swedish became the sole language of instruction in secondary education.

The dominant position of Swedish was challenged in the so-called language feud, which ended in a victory for the champions of the Finnish language ("Fennomans"). This was concretized in the Language Edict of 1863, issued by the highly respected Czar Alexander II as the Grand Duke of Finland, which ensured the Finnish language equal status with Swedish in official transactions. A grace period of twenty years was granted due to the deficient knowledge of Finnish by many civil servants.

Development in other areas was also rapid. Finnish became an elective school subject in secondary schools in 1841, the first Finnish-speaking secondary school was founded in Jyväskylä in 1858, the first training school for Finnish-speaking primary school teachers in the same town in 1863, the first professor of Finnish took his office at the University of Helsinki in 1851, the first doctoral dissertation written in Finnish in 1858, etc. The University of Helsinki was made officially bilingual in 1923, and Finnish was made the main language of instruction in 1937.

The first books published in Finnish had been an ABC book and a translation of the New Testament in the 1540's. Finland got her first printing press as late as 1642. During the long period of Swedish rule, some 1,500 different books in Finnish were printed, about 5-6 books per year. This constituted about 7% of all published books. The readership was very limited and the editions very small, and it was only in the late 1800's when literary works outweighed religious and moral books in number.

The Constitution of the new republic (1919) made Finland officially bilingual, guarantees basic language rights and ensures that equal consideration shall be given to satisfying the material and cultural needs of both language groups. The linguistic status of each local unit of self-government (municipality) is determined by the Language Act of 1922, amended in 1975 in the interest of the Swedish-speaking minority. The municipality is bilingual if the minority amounts to 8% of the total population in the municipality or is at least 3,000 people. The status of each municipality is assessed every ten years, after the national census. This was done last in 1982 and covers the period 1983-1992. A municipality cannot be declared monolingual unless the share of the minority has dropped below 6% and the Government can grant special dispensation for ten years even if that figure has not been reached. The Swedish-speaking population on the Åland Islands has been granted strong unilingual guarantees.

There are 396 unilingually Finnish municipalities, 21 bilingual municipalities with Finnish majority, 20 bilingual municipalities with Swedish as the majority language, and 24 unilingually Swedish municipalities, 16 of which are on the Åland Islands. It is of extraordinary significance to the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland that most of them now live in bilingual municipalities.

5. Construction of Language Teaching Policy

5.1. Decades Following Initial Linguistic Legislation

After the intensive and far-sighted linguistic legislation during the early years of sovereign nation-building, there was no major activity in language planning in Finland during the next few decades. The Act of Compulsory Education in 1921, which was in effect basically until 1957, did not include any second or foreign language as a school subject. Secondary schools have traditionally had ancient and modern languages as compulsory subjects and no major changes were made during the first decades of independence. The planning of language teaching can be considered to have started only after World War II, when there started to emerge attempts to make a second/foreign language a regular school subject for all school students. In what follows I will deal with the planning of language teaching by level of schooling.

5.2. Primary Education

The 1952 Committee Report on Primary Education suggested that those students who have the interest and requisite ability should be given an opportunity to learn some basic skills in a foreign language. This would be elective and arranged in those municipalities where conditions were favourable for starting the instruction. It is noteworthy that the committee had surveyed parent opinions through a questionnaire and had arranged an experiment to try out the teaching of foreign languages in the primary school. Such research and development activities have seldom been undertaken by Finnish committee and commissions.

The 1964 Curriculum Committee Report recommended that all primary school pupils should have the opportunity of language study. This was motivated by the increase of the service sector, increased travel, widened interests, and continued studies. For all these, some knowledge of a foreign language would be useful. The committee suggested that either the other national language or English should be compulsory for two years. After that pupils could be exempted if they had serious difficulties in learning another language. Pupils with reading and writing problems could be exempted at parents' request. In 1965 specific regulations were given concerning class size, marking, teacher qualifications, etc. Even though municipalities were not obliged to arrange the teaching of a second/foreign language, there was a great interest, which is evidenced by the fact that in three years there were only five municipalities where such teaching was not arranged.

5.3 Comprehensive School

Every student studies the other national language and one foreign language as compulsory school subjects in the comprehensive school. As explained elsewhere, Finland would like to ensure sufficient variety in the study of languages, i.e., in practice to make sure that we are not faced with a situation that most students after leaving school only know English. The first language (A-language) starts in grade 3 (aged 9) and continues for seven years (2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 periods per week/per grade). The second language (B-language) starts in grade 7 (aged 13) and has 3 + 3 + 3 lessons per week/ per grade. The third optional language (C-language) starts in grade 8 and has 2 + 3 weekly lessons per week/per grade.

When the comprehensive school was gradually introduced, some critics deplored the quality of the upgrading training arranged to give primary school teachers competence to teach a foreign language. Without such arrangements it would not, however, have been possible to get the foreign language teaching expansion under way. More appropriate is the

criticism directed towards the insufficient planning of language teaching policy. In lack of clearly defined national language teaching policy, many municipalities started with Swedish but soon switched to English. One of the consequences was that many class teachers, after considerable investment of time, money and energy, found that they had no practical use for their newly acquired competence to teach Swedish. This led to disappointment and bitterness whose justification cannot be denied. This is an object lesson of how educational innovation can be inefficient if all of its aspects, and not least its organizational-administrative infrastructure, are not clearly spelled out in systems terms.

5.4. Senior Secondary School

Those students who go to the senior secondary school basically continue to study the languages they started in the comprehensive school. The A- language has 3 + 3 + 2 courses, the B-language 2 + 3 + 2 courses, the C- language 3 + 3 courses. If the student had not taken the C-language in the comprehensive school, she can take the D-language with 3 + 3 courses. These C- and D-languages are optional for those who have taken a long course in mathematics. There can be two additional courses in the A- and B-languages in the first two years, and 3 optional continuation courses in the C- and D- languages in the third year.

5.5. Vocational Secondary School

Vocational secondary education, which is undergoing a major overhaul between 1982-1988, consists of two levels: the school (or craft) level takes 2-3 years and the institute (technician) level 4-5 years. All vocational education will be arranged in 25 basic lines containing about 250 lines of specialization. During the period of general studies, the other national language and one foreign language are both compulsory (57 lessons, each). In the specialization period at the school level, the two languages are alternative subjects (57 lessons). Thus the students who graduate from the school level institutions will have had 57 + 114 lessons of language study. At the institute level, the other national language and one foreign language are compulsory subjects. These students will have 171 lessons of the other national language and 228 lessons of the chosen foreign language. They can also take a voluntary additional course in the two languages or in a third language.

5.6. Tertiary Education

At present, all new university students have one study period for improving their knowledge of the other national language and at least one study period for a foreign language (sometimes two foreign languages are required). To give an example, the degree requirements in psychology (4.5.1979/470) state that students must have such a knowledge of Finnish and Swedish which is required of civil servants in bilingual municipalities, and to have such a reading knowledge of two foreign languages and such an oral proficiency in one of them which are needed in the profession and in professional development.

Each university has set up a Language Center to provide this kind of language teaching for non-language majors. R & D work in this area and coordination of work among the Language Centers is the responsibility of the Language Centre for Finnish Universities, which is a separate operating unit of Jyv{skyl} University.

5.7. Adult Education

The study of foreign languages by adults in a variety of institutions has been among the most popular subjects. The percentage of those taking courses in various languages of all participants has been around 20 in the 1960's and 1970's. The coursebooks for radio and TV courses have enjoyed good sales figures: a recent course in English had some 70,000 copies bought (beginners' book) and a course in Russian 45,000 copies (first book). TV-viewing figures varied between 100,000 and 330,000.

5.8. Some Recent Developments

A total of about 11.5% of all class time is spent on learning foreign languages in the comprehensive school. English is studied for seven years typically 2 lessons a week, which amounts to about 600 lessons or 450 clock hours by the end of the comprehensive school. By the end of the upper secondary school (age 18-19), students have had a total of about 850 lessons or some 635 clock hours in English. In comparison to the situation when the previous secondary school system was operational, the total number of English lessons has been cut by age 18-19 by some 230 lessons (21%), the total number of the other national language (Swedish) by 300 lessons (33%), but the number of lessons for the third language (usually German) has increased by 115 lessons (37,5%).

The overall picture is not quite as bad as we might gather from the facts cited in the above. The new school system has brought all students within the compass of foreign language study in the comprehensive school. All students now study two, about one quarter three foreign languages. The optional third language gives a chance for a five-year course of study in a widely used "world language", which gives some counterbalance to the dominant position of English. What is alarming is the recent news, not fully documented, that a substantial number of students in the senior secondary school drop a third or fourth language after the second year and some do not take it/them at all. There has been a substantial drop in the number of students taking the optional foreign language tests in the matriculation examination: in 1982, of those eligible to take an optional foreign language test only 63% chose to do so in German, 40% in French, 50% in Russian, and 76% in English. From 1984 to 1985, the decrease in the number of students taking this kind of test was 34% in German, 22% in French, and 35% in Russian. These developments are clearly undesirable since better knowledge of foreign languages is needed in the future. The reason for this alarming situation is most likely to be sought in the mistakes made in the planning of the new senior secondary school, which is somewhat misleadingly called course-based senior secondary school. It does not namely offer the degree of flexibility in terms of course choice, rate of progression etc that the name suggests.

6. Systems-level Planning of Language Teaching Policy

In the 1970's, there was very intensive planning at all levels of education and the teaching of foreign languages was always one of the most difficult problems to solve. To deal with this situation, a commission was set up with Mr Jaakko Numminen, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, as its chair. The present writer acted as one of the secretaries of the commission. The commission was charged with the task of investigating to

what extent the other national language and foreign languages are taught in the Finnish educational system as well as outlining a plan, which would guarantee that the provision of teaching them in formal and informal schooling is adequate in view of the national cultural policy and national needs in modern languages.

The committee recognized that different languages have different functions in handling language contacts and communication tasks. The committee presented certain percentage figures as targets of what proportion of the active population should in the future know various languages and what level of knowledge they should possess. The committee proposal is a long-term plan and refers to a situation when the present reforms at all levels of the educational system have been implemented.

The committee recommends that the entire Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking active populations should in the future know the other national language and some foreign language. All Finnish citizens should have at least some knowledge of English. About 30% of active population should know German and Russian in the future and about 15 to 20% French. The committee recommends further that 10-15% of Finnish-speaking active population should understand spoken and written Norwegian and Danish. There should also be a few hundred people who know other European languages and somewhat less people with a knowledge of important non-European languages. Four levels of proficiency were indicated (cf. Appendix).

The committee stated that its quantitative and qualitative targets for the knowledge of foreign languages can best be achieved by increasing the number of students who study other languages than English as their first language. It proposed that from the Finnish-speaking students about 70% should read English as the first language, about 15% Swedish, about 5-7% German, about 5-7% also Russian, and 2-3% French.

The Committee also recommended that its state-wide blueprint should be concretized at a regional (province, *län*) and local (*kunta*) level. It recommended that municipalities should be required to plan the extent of the provision of language teaching depending on their size. When the new act on the municipal school system (479/1983) and the statute based on it (722/84) were given, they included instructions concerning obligatory regional and local plans of language teaching. The Cabinet approved a general plan for language teaching for the period of 1985-1991 (Table 1).

The Numminen Commission discussed briefly the need of non-European languages in Finland. Since the mid-1970's the role of "new" areas has increased in Finland in terms of markets and cultural interaction. This was recognized when a "second Numminen Commission" was set up. The Committee for Non-European Cultures and Languages was to inquire into the present situation, and the need for education and research, non-European languages and the cultures they convey. The committee noted that several developments had brought Finland into contact with non-European cultures and countries. This in turn has brought about a greater need for a more profound knowledge of foreign cultures, especially Asian, African and Latin American, and the languages spoken there. In its report, submitted in February, the Committee recommends the creation of the following positions during the period 1987-1995: 7 professors, 11 lecturers, and 15 assistants. The report has been favorably reviewed in mass media.

Table 1. Target Percentages for Different Languages in School Year 1991-1992
(actual choices for 1983-84 in brackets)

Language	A-language (grades 3-9)	B-language (grades 7-9)	C-language (grades 8-9)	C+D-language in senior secondary school
English	81.5% (85.6)	11.1% (10.9)	3.0% (1.4)	3.0% (0.9)
Swedish	9.0% (7.6)	86.8% (85.0)		
Finnish	4.5% (5.0)	0.7% (1.0)		
French	1.5% (0.4)		7.0% (6.6)	20.0% (18.4)
German	2.0% (0.9)		21.0% (23.3)	62.0% (63.7)
Russian	1.5% (0.5)		4.0% (2.4)	10.0% (8.0)
Latin		0.3%		
Italian		1.5%		
Greek				

7. Role of Research in Defining Educational Policy

7.1. General Educational Policy and Research: Strategic Situation

The role of research in defining language teaching policy is not easy to assess. In fact, as Leimu points out in his paper, it is not easy to assess the contribution of research to our high-level educational decision-making. He also gives reasons why the teachers and general public underestimate this contribution. Leimu's characterization is an excellent draft for a "history" of the emergence of systems-related educational research and evaluation activities in Finland. I wish to illustrate the development on the basis of my twenty-year involvement in this activity and use foreign languages as an example.

In Finland, the study of languages has always been the most salient feature distinguishing the academically oriented education from primary education and from vocational education. Foreign languages, like mathematics, have traditionally been regarded as theoretical and difficult subjects. These two subjects were the primary reason for the fact that 8% of all students in the former secondary school had to repeat a grade each year in the 1960's and another 20% were conditionally promoted and had to do extensive make-up work in the summer and pass a test. The reputation of being theoretical and difficult subjects provided the rationale for streaming the teaching of mathematics and languages (with the exception of the mother tongue) in grades 7 through 9. When streaming was not introduced solely as a pedagogical measure to provide for individual differences but was an administrative selection measure with serious consequences for students in the lower sets, this ensured that

these subjects stayed in the limelight of debate and criticism. The common image of foreign languages also was the main reason why the comprehensive school was originally planned as a school with only one foreign language as a compulsory subject. Two languages were made obligatory as a consequence of a political compromise, in which the party representing the Swedish-speaking minority played a decisive role. This decision has not been fully accepted but is occasionally challenged. One does not have to be a sooth-sayer to predict that the teaching of foreign languages will soon emerge as an issue also in the vocational school and in the universities where it has recently been expanded.

Seeing how prominently language teaching has featured on the agenda of discussion and educational decision-making, it is not surprising that foreign languages have tended to be a trail-blazer in this country in several fields: testing, syllabus construction, needs assessment, systems-level educational policy planning, evaluation, research, creation of professional societies and publication channels, seminar and congress activities, etc.

It appears, then, that research started making some contribution when there were efforts to expand the teaching of foreign language to the whole age group. The present writer's work in the mid-1960's on the evaluation of the outcomes of expanded language teaching was soon expanded to cover other topics, when more funding became available to set up a group at the Institute. It is symptomatic of the reserved attitude of the university community that we had to refer to ourselves as "Research Group of the National Board of General Education" and we could not publish our reports in the Institute report series but had to mimeograph them. This mimeographed series, without any covers, appeared for 4 years (until 1971). When this research started being published in the regular report series, the cover indicated that the report was "Research Commissioned by the National Board of Education". This decision, I believe, was a pre-cautionary measure on the part of the Institute leadership but also reflected the wish from the fund-giver to highlight their R & D orientation and commitment.

The fact that research related to the introduction of the comprehensive school was done with annual contract money at our Institute created a situation where we, the young fledgling researchers, came to work very closely with the planners in the National Board of General Education. We met several times a year and had regular contact by phone. Both parties shared a sense of excitement in being involved in important and far-reaching work. All this was, in retrospect, basically a reasonable way of initiating commissioned research.

We had to spend several years, on precarious annual funding, trying to show that research can be useful, that in the ripeness of time it deserves more permanent funding. We had an interest in participating in a variety of R & D activities to show that we have something to contribute, certainly to the better definition of problems but also to the solution of topical problems. This meant that early years had to be spent in serving acute needs of monitoring the progress of the reform, which some university departments mistook for lack of interest - or worse - lack of ability to do more varied and more theory-based research. Thus the situation was not easy: trying to prove to the money-givers that we can do relevant and useful work, and to persuade the university community that we are not simple-minded evaluators whose results are questionable because of limited research competence, or what is worse, because of suspect research integrity. Those of us who have been in on this kind of work from the beginning have had the questionable pleasure of being suspected and criticized by all parties. Yet, we have not had the emotional pleasure of indulging in similar criticism.

As Leimu explains in his paper, we have preferred what he calls the "Finnish model of research utilization": direct channels of information and direct research participation in

planning, rather than relying only or mainly on reports and articles in newspapers. This is partly explained by the development described in the above, but partly also by experiences of what consequences criticism might have. One of the leading educators in Finland has in recent years incited researchers to participate in debate and criticism. You can do that if you have a secure tenured position and have no real interest in being able to pursue your ideas in concrete development work. If you sincerely believe in the advantage of direct research participation in the planning, preparation and implementation of major educational reforms, you will not act the "naive" critical researcher. You know that central educational authorities appoint committees and working parties, fund seminars and congresses, invite speakers, etc. Research has no guaranteed representation in such activity, unlike political ideologies and teacher unions. It has not been invited to participate because it has been critical but because it may serve some useful functions: to provide input but also to legitimate the product - we asked them but they could not give us any simple and concrete answers. As a professional educational researcher, you have to a certain extent to humor the central educational decision-makers.

As Leimu also points out, we feel that as the only educational research institute with clearly defined nation-wide tasks, we have special responsibility for ensuring that reliable and generalizable large-scale, systems-level data are available for macro-level description and analysis. This is a task that other institutes cannot undertake, and due to their own history and tasks find difficult to understand and appreciate. Schools and teachers are the primary source of empirical data needed for such work. Many of us have teacher training and practical teaching experience, which enhances our credibility in the teachers' eyes. Our active participation in syllabus work, in-service conferences, textbook teams, examination bodies, articles in teachers' professional journals etc. has earned us grudging acknowledgment by subject teachers and their association (mother tongue, mathematics, foreign languages). The majority of all teachers probably have a negative view of research: it is irrelevant, or if potentially relevant, too theoretical and incomprehensible. This criticism is often voiced in newspapers and conferences. Only a naive researcher, with no need to obtain representative empirical data, would voice his or her worry and criticism of the present mood and orientation of the teaching profession. As a professional researcher, you have to a certain extent to humor the militant teaching profession.

As a new institution, trying to learn to do research with soft funding and a low salary, we have been subject to internal but also public criticism by the university community. There are several concrete examples where the work presented by our researchers as academic dissertations has been labelled, without the need of justifying the opinion, as non-independent work by teams or simply suspect because they are related to national educational reforms, or worse, have been funded on a commissioned research basis. Since you hope to increase cooperation with university departments, and perhaps sometimes apply for a position in such departments, you - as the weaker party - try to avoid confrontation, and to a certain extent humor the university community.

To summarize, if you believe that research can contribute to the rational development of our educational system, you try to understand how the system works. You do not act the naive, detached, researcher who is - and insists that it behooves him/her to remain - blissfully unaware of the intricacies of how change and reforms are planned and implemented in practice, rather than they, in theory, ought to be, if only we acted rationally. Educational research, on our view, ultimately seeks to improve education and instruction and researchers need to know how this can be best done in real life. Educational researchers must know how to pursue high educational ideals given the constraints of the current and foreseeable

situation.

7.2. Research in Defining Language Teaching Policy

After the general discussion in 7.1., I will deal only briefly with the role that research has played in defining language teaching policy in Finland. As I have explained elsewhere (Takala, 1979; 1980; 1982), researchers played a prominent role when the teaching of foreign languages to non-language majors was reformed in the universities and the system of Language Centers was created. Unfortunately, it appears that the momentum has not been kept up. Teaching and material construction have become dominant routine activities, and a confrontation between Language Centers and faculties/students may be looming on the horizon.

Since the mid-1960's there has been a very close link between the language teaching specialists at our Institute and the various national bodies responsible for developing language teaching in our schools. Our researchers have played a clear role in the preparation of all of the recent national syllabuses and promoted the idea of the need to utilize effectively research information available in our own country and abroad (cf. the papers by Leimu and Vähäpassi). It can be stated unequivocally that thanks to the experience and dedication of our researchers, the Finnish syllabi and guidelines for teachers have a solid research foundation and need not fight shy of inter national scrutiny and comparison.

Our researchers have been actively engaged in the development of the external matriculation examination (A-levels) in foreign languages and the mother tongue (Finnish).

The present writer was invited to serve as one of the secretaries of the first Numminen commission to represent expertise related to research on language learning and teaching, and wrote a number of reviews for the commission. I also outlined the plan for a national center for the study of language learning and teaching, which the committee endorsed. Last March the center was set up at our university and I was appointed to serve as its director for the first term. The Center has started a large-scale assessment of the needs of foreign language skills in Finland as its first concrete activity.

To summarize, research has played a role in helping to define an overall systems-level blueprint for Finland's language teaching policy. It did not have any role to play in the early decision to stream the teaching of foreign languages, and a very minor role in studying the prerequisites for the discontinuation of streaming. It has not been consulted when frequent changes have been made in the school timetable (number of lessons). By contrast, research has been allowed to contribute without any limitations, in fact one might say that researchers' genuine commitment has been fully utilized and even exploited, in the concrete implementation of general principles into syllabuses and didactic guidelines for teachers. Personal career development - formal qualification through dissertations - has been sacrificed in the interest of developing teaching and learning in schools. Thus, as a generalization, researchers - being a new and small community with no real power, unlike political parties and teacher unions - have had a limited and non-institutionalized position in nation-wide educational planning and policy development. Yet, many researchers have been obliged to spend a lot of time on such activity, being forced to delay personal career development and inviting the suspicion and criticism of the traditional university community.

8. Conclusion

Finland offers an interesting case study of a nation trying to come to grips with the

realities of language needs, both within the nation itself and in contacts with the rest of the world. Being a small and culturally quite a homogenous country, in spite of its two officially recognized languages and its officially not recognized Sami language minority, Finland has tried to respond to its language needs by systematic planning. Being also a centralized country, with a national policy outlined for many areas of culture, the chances of implementing systematic plans are better than in larger countries, especially if they have a federal system and a large degree of decentralized decision-making. It will have appeared from the above, however, that in spite of attempts at rational planning, different interest groups have at critical times managed to influence developments more than their relative sizes would give rise to expect.

The population of Finland constitutes 1 per mille (0.1%) of the world's population, 4 per mille of the world's industrial production, and 7 per mille of the world's total export. Export is responsible for about one third of our GNP, being about 100 billion marks. The number of Finnish nationals working abroad to promote export had doubled during the past five years. These changes, coupled with an explosive growth in international communication and contacts, and the technology to record and transmit sound and images have caused a profound change in a linguistic situation in Finland. From an essentially underdeveloped rural society in the periphery of Europe with limited contacts with the rest of the world, Finland has become a modern and relatively affluent society (15-17th in terms of national wealth, according to UN statistics), with lively contacts with the outside world. The growing contacts have essentially meant the growing influence of English and the growing impact of the Anglo-Saxon cultural models. This trend has been so distinct that, at present, and more so in the future, the linguistic situation in Finland is such that most native speakers of Finnish are more comfortable in using English than Swedish and most native speakers of Swedish will have to be trilingual, with a good command of both Finnish and English. Whether one likes it or not, Swedish is fighting for its position as a vital and viable language in Finland, and German, Russian and French are, even with declared official support from the Government, similarly working hard to carve out a niche in the language teaching program and actual teaching and will have a hard time doing so.

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APPENDIX

Table 2 . Percentages of Pupils who Studied Different Languages as the First Language: Secondary School

Year	English	German	French	Latin	Russian	Total (N)
1962	56.9	42.6	0.1	0.3	0.1	194,093
1965	60.3	38.6	0.2	0.7	0.2	214,039
1970	78.9	20.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	267,956
1974	90.7	8.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	218,406

Note: The figures refer to the situation before the introduction of the comprehensive school

Table 3. Percentage of Students Taking the Matriculation Examination Tests in Different Languages either as an Obligatory Test (a) or voluntary test (b) and combined (c)

Year	English			German			French			Latin			Russian		
	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c	a	b	c
1970	59	26	85	40	41	81	.2	4.4	4.6	.8	6.2	7.0	.1	1.0	1.1
1975	77	17	94	21	50	71	.2	8.6	8.8	.7	3.1	3.8	.2	3.0	3.2
1978	93	5	98	7	53	60	.2	10.7	10.9	.4	1.6	2.0	.2	6.0	6.2
1986	88	4	92	1	30	31	.2	7.6	7.8		0.5	0.5	.4	3.5	3.9

Note: Swedish has not been entered into the table since all Finnish-speaking students have to take an obligatory test in Swedish. Other languages (e.g., Spanish, Italian) combined: less than 0.2%. Note also that the percentage of those Finnish-speaking students (N= 1,217) who had Swedish as their first language in 1986 was 3.4, which is not shown in the table.

Table 4. Percentages of Students Who Study Different Languages as the First, Second and Third Language: Comprehensive School

Year	English			Swedish (Finnish)				German		French			Russian	
	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	3	
1972	88.9	48.0	0.0	9.6	47.7	1.5	4.3	0.0	88.6	0.0	7.0	0.0	4.4	
1975	91.9	11.3	0.1	2.7	87.5	5.1	1.2	0.2	88.7	0.0	3.9	0.1	6.4	
1977	91.7	6.5	1.4	3.1	92.7	4.6	0.8	0.4	86.8	0.1	5.4	0.2	6.2	
1984	90.2		4.5	8.1	91.9			0.8	67.6	0.4	19.1	0.5	7.6	

Note: 1= first obligatory language (from grade 3), 2= second obligatory language (from grade 7), 3= third optional language (from grade 8).

Table 5. Optional Foreign Language Tests in the Matriculation Examination

Language	1982	1984	1985	1986
German (a)	26,315			
(b)	16,480	14,860	11,826	10,926
(c)	63%			
(d)		-1,620	-3,034	-900
(e)		- 9.8%	- 20.4%	-7.6%
French (a)	6,786			
(b)	2,717	3,113	2,834	2,756
(c)	40%			
(d)		+ 396	- 279	- 78
(e)		+14.6%	- 9.0%	- 2.8%
Russian (a)	3,185			
(b)	1,592	1,810	1,280	1,277
(c)	50%			
(d)		+ 218	- 530	- 3
(e)		+13.7%	-29.3%	-0.2%

- (a) = number of students studying the language in the final grade
- (b) = number of students taking the exam
- (c) = ratio of (b) to (a) in percentage
- (d) = change from the previous year in absolute numbers
- (e) = change from the previous year in percentage