



Language Policies in Finland and Sweden

Interdisciplinary and Multi-sited Comparisons

Edited by Mia Halonen, Pasi Ihalainen
and Taina Saarinen



MULTILINGUAL MATTERS: 157

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Mia Halonen, Pasi Ihalainen and Taina Saarinen
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Part 1

Theoretical and Methodological Introduction

1 Diverse Discourses in Time and Space: Historical, Discourse Analytical and Ethnographic Approaches to Multi-sited Language Policy Discourse

Mia Halonen, Pasi Ihalainen and
Taina Saarinen

Politics and policies are essentially multi-sited by nature, taking place, being constructed, contested and reproduced on different horizontally and vertically linked levels simultaneously and in different times and places. The current volume of original studies focuses on language policy discourses analysed at the methodological crossroads of cultural and political history and the history of ideas, ethnology, ethnography, language policy studies and sociolinguistics. It demonstrates how a multidisciplinary approach to multi-sited language policy discourses – and to policy discourses at large – enables us to better analyse and grasp their multiple dimensions and to overcome some current methodological challenges in various disciplines. Policy analyses of the suggested kind can, we argue, bring the various disciplines together in terms of methodology.

Motivated by experiences in comparative and transnational historical research and language policy research, this volume addresses the following general questions: Firstly, what kinds of new methodological options are opened for various fields of scholarship by the suggested multidisciplinary analysis of multi-sited language policy discourses from a comparative perspective? This theme is elaborated on in the theoretical and methodological sections of this introduction based on various case studies. Secondly, how have language policies been discursively constructed in Finland and Sweden,

and which factors explain the differences that are discernible? And thirdly, what is the role of transnational interaction in the field of language policy discourses crossing boundaries?

As far as language researchers are concerned, among whom discourse analytical approaches to language policies have been long established, this volume is intended to increase awareness of the continuous presence of past experiences, remembrance and constructions of the past – that is, the ideological use of interpretations of the past in political arguments, or history politics – in contemporary language policy debates. This entails awareness of history and language being inseparably linked both through topical continuity and in everyday practices. This also requires a clarification of the concept of ‘context’, which is treated somewhat differently in our disciplinary frameworks. In language studies, it has been customary either to understand context in broad terms, as referring to the various features of the societal situation, or more narrowly, as the properties of the immediate linguistic action itself (see for instance Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). For Blommaert (2001), in turn, context is really about normalised power and hegemony. In this volume we understand context as something that is in constant dialogical interchange with the phenomena under scrutiny and thus inseparable from them (van Dijk, 2008).

In the field of history, the concept of context is generally understood in even broader terms. For most historians interested in linguistic action, potential contexts outside of an (intentional) speech act or communicative interaction are infinite, and it is seen as the very duty of a historian to determine which ones were in each case most relevant to contemporaries in the creation of meaning. These contexts may consist of linguistic conventions and related debates but also of political, social, cultural, intellectual and generic (etc.) structures and factors (Hyrkkänen, 2002; Skinner, 2002).

Among historians, on the other hand, an increased awareness of the multi-sitedness and multilayeredness of past political discourses helps them to appreciate the parallel analysis of a rich variety of sources from the point of view of active uses of language as engagements in discursive processes. It also helps, as we shall demonstrate below, to overcome methodological distinctions between the history of action and events, on the one hand, and that of discourses, on the other, or distinctions between the study of macro-level semantic change at a community level and micro-level historical pragmatics at an individual level. Instead of challenging alternative approaches to historical research with postmodern theories, we simply advocate the application of up-to-date approaches to the analysis of policy discourse developed within language research to linguistically oriented historical research as well. Their application should be easy to accept for

the growing number of historians who recognise the constructed nature of political, social and cultural conceptions. We thus wish to encourage historians of ideas, politics and culture to proceed to further stages of linguistic turns that have already renewed much of historians' methodological arsenal since the emergence of the first applications of John Austin's speech act theory – originally presented in *How to do Things with Words* (1962) – in the late 1960s, most notably by Quentin Skinner (1969). Linguistically oriented historical research continues to have a lot to learn from language studies; we just need to move on from the application of and debate on theories that had already been established by the 1970s and to update methodologies with empirically oriented analyses in the applied language studies of the 2010s. For historians this may mean, as we shall show, the adoption of an understanding of politics essentially as a discursive process. In addition to analysing multi-sited policy discourses, this update can mean experimenting in the spirit of detailed textual analyses with carefully contextualised ethnographic data instead of the more conventional study of extensive source corpora. It may also mean exploring the applicability of the concept of the 'historical body' to historical research (discussed under 'Methodological and Empirical Motivation', below).

This volume thus provides language and language policy researchers, historians and ethnologists, among other scholars, with theoretical, methodological and empirical tools for understanding political phenomena that are historically, politically and linguistically diverse. We want to carry further the several linguistic turns in the human sciences that have been following each other since the 1960s, radicalising the methodological implications of the linguistic, discursive, spatial and mobility turns not only for language policy studies but also for historical and ethnological research through a methodologically ambitious multidisciplinary research project. The multiple and interconnected data, foci, theories and methods in this volume illustrate the multi-sited nature of policy discourses. Yet we aim to test, comment on and discuss the initial hypothesis and its methodological implications further.

As the national contexts for our empirical studies we have chosen Finland and Sweden and the respective statuses of Finnish and Swedish, and, in relation to these, minority languages – indigenous, migrant and other languages brought to the scene by globalisation, such as English – in the two Scandinavian/Nordic countries since the mid-19th century. These countries have shared a long, entangled history since the Middle Ages but are currently very different as far as language policies are concerned. One of our starting points is that the official majority language of each state has an official (national or minority) language status in the other: Swedish in