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Chapter 23

Rethinking Finland's Official Bilingualism in Education



Tuuli From

Abstract Finland is an officially bilingual country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Comprehensive education is organised along two separate, monolingual strands. The separation of Swedish- and Finnish-medium schools has been presented as a precondition for protecting Swedish language. However, while the present educational policies promote multilingualism, some critical questions concerning the system based on language separation arise. In both Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools, the linguistic backgrounds of pupils are increasingly diverse. In the past decade, an increasing demand for bilingual educational solutions has emerged among the families where both national languages are spoken but also among non-Swedish-speaking families. Using a theoretical framework influenced by the notion of linguistic governance, this chapter illuminates how some educational practices are considered as thinkable and others as threatening the status quo of Finland's societal bilingualism. Placing monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools in shared facilities has encountered resistance and revealed a monolingual spatial ideology. Instead, bilingual practices maintaining institutional separation, such as bilingual education for Finnish-speakers have been proposed as acceptable solutions. In the most recent of these debates, such as in the planning process of a bilingual public school in the capital, Helsinki, discourses of profit and commodification of language are starting to unfold. The chapter concludes that the question of state bilingualism in Finnish schooling might be heading towards increasing differentiation in relation to the national languages.

Finland is an officially bilingual country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. The state bilingualism in Finland was established along the first Language Act (1922) and dates back to the era when Finland was under the Swedish rule. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Swedish inhabitants began settling into areas inside the current state borders of Finland. From 1809, Finland was incorporated

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into the Russian Empire until Finnish independence in 1917 but even during this time, the formal status of the Swedish language in Finland's political and cultural life remained strong.¹ At present, Finnish is the mother tongue for 88.7% of the population and Swedish for 5.3%.²

In international comparison to other bilingual countries such as Canada and Belgium, Finland's official bilingualism is often regarded as well functioning, since an equal status is provided to both national languages instead of mere formal recognition in society.³ Yet regardless of the historically established status of state bilingualism in Finland, the relationship between the national languages has not always been without tension in different political and societal venues. Finland's educational system, which is based on the institutional separation of the national languages from early childhood education all the way to higher education, is at the centre of some of the most central debates.⁴ According to the Basic Education Act (628/1998), education for the Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking pupils shall be provided separately. As a result, the educational system for comprehensive education is divided into two monolingual, Finnish- and Swedish-medium strands, which the families are expected to choose according to the language mostly spoken at home.⁵ This excludes the possibility of bilingual schools, where pupils could receive instruction in both national languages independent of their linguistic backgrounds.

In the current critical approaches, language policies are typically understood and conceptualised as multi-sited processes that are negotiated across different scales of space and time, in policy discourses and everyday practices of education.⁶ From the theoretical perspective of *language governance*, the aim of language policies is to manage the tension between language separation and linguistic diversity through direct or indirect attempts to influence linguistic environment and behaviour.⁷ For a long time, debates of language governance were primarily anchored to the idea of nation-state and the linguistic hierarchies within. However, in the more recent debates of the role of language in society, language has begun to gain meanings other than cultural and political. As Monica Heller and Alexandre Duchêne note, processes of language-based social differentiation are increasingly tied to the discursive sphere of profit, emphasising individual linguistic skills and competences and their potential exchange value.⁸

Traditionally, language separation has been understood as a means for governing linguistic diversity in the name of language purity.⁹ In minority contexts, language separation has been employed as a policy and practice for protecting the minority language from mixing with other languages.¹⁰ Similar rhetoric has been present also in the debates of Swedish in Finland. Sari Pöyhönen and Taina Saarinen point out that even in the formal policy debates of Finland's societal bilingualism, Swedish in fact often occupies "the discursive space of minorities" due to its de facto minority status.¹¹ Due to the premise of separation, the somewhat paradoxical goal of linguistic governance in Finland has been a manifestation of state bilingualism, where individual bilingualism is highly desirable, whereas institutions should remain monolingual.¹² The paradox of Finnish state bilingualism can be characterised as *parallel monolingualisms*, which refers to the co-existence of two separate linguistic systems in society.¹³

So far, the requirement to study Swedish as a subject in the Finnish-medium schools and vice versa has been considered as the primary means for providing everyone with the necessary skills in both national languages.¹⁴ The separation of the national languages in the educational system remained unquestioned for a long time, whereas the requirement to study Swedish has raised tensions particularly in the less Swedish-speaking areas of Finland.¹⁵ At the same time, a different kind of development is in sight in terms of interest in Swedish-Finnish bilingualism. In the past ten years, an increasing demand for bilingual educational solutions has emerged particularly among the families where both national languages are spoken but also among non-Swedish-speaking families.¹⁶ The interest in bilingualism has raised new kinds of critical questions in relation to educational equality and national languages in education: Is the systematic separation of Finnish and Swedish and the present regulation of bilingual education sustainable in the current situation? Moreover, if a broader variety of bilingual solutions were to be available, how would an equal access to bilingual resources be provided?

In this chapter, the framework of linguistic governance is utilised to illuminate the discursive and material conditions under which some bilingual educational practices are considered as thinkable and others as threatening the status quo of the national languages in education. The chapter also discusses access to bilingual education in Finnish and Swedish and the distribution of linguistic resources with this regard. Placing monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools in shared facilities in co-located campuses has encountered resistance and provoked debate, in which a monolingual spatial ideology has been reproduced but also questioned.¹⁷ Plans for actual bilingual schools have been occasionally under nationwide debate since 2011 and in the political decision-making process in the capital, Helsinki, but without being fully resolved due to legislative and language policy controversy. Instead, bilingual practices maintaining institutional separation, such as bilingual or language immersion education for Finnish-speakers have been proposed as acceptable solutions.

Framing the Preconditions for Finnish-Swedish Bilingualism in Education

In the policy discourses of state bilingualism in Finnish education, the separation of the national languages is reproduced as an issue of protecting Swedish as a *de facto* minority language. In Finnish legislation, Finnish and Swedish share equal status as national languages. For instance, state authorities and bilingual municipal authorities shall provide their services in both national languages.¹⁸ In comprehensive education, the linguistic rights in relation to the national languages are equally as extensive for both Finnish and Swedish. According to the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the national languages shall not be mixed in mainstream basic education either but “the language of instruction or the language used in extracurricular teaching shall be

either Finnish or Swedish” and basic education is to be arranged separately for both language groups.

The local authority in a municipality which has both Finnish and Swedish-speaking residents shall be responsible for arranging basic and pre-primary education separately for both linguistic groups. (Basic Education Act, 628/1998, 4§, amendment 1288/1999)

The premise of separation of the national languages is further developed in the Local Government Act (410/2015) which holds that municipal educational authorities must organise comprehensive education in Finnish and Swedish separately for both language groups regardless of the local language conditions. Separate departments for both languages in public educational administration are required.

Bilingual municipalities shall set up a separate decision-making body for the administration of education for each language group, or a joint decision-making body divided into sub-committees for the language groups. The members of the decision-making body or sub-committee must be elected from among persons who are part of the language group in question. (Local Government Act 410/2015, 30§)

In public and policy discourses, the separation of Swedish- and Finnish-medium schools is often presented as a precondition for protecting the smaller of the national languages. Particularly in the regions and municipalities, where the percentage of Swedish-speakers is relatively small, increasing bilingualism and the dominance of Finnish in and outside school is seen as imposing challenges to the support of the Swedish language.¹⁹ The challenge is explicated in a report published by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre:

A majority of the pupils daily present in Swedish-medium schools come from homes where the status of Swedish language is not as self-evident as in the school. Many pupils are accustomed to switch between languages and codes as they move around between the school, home and leisure time. In an increasingly heterogeneous language environment, the school's role as a bearer of language, identity and culture becomes more distinct. ... It is not as evident in distinctly Swedish-speaking environments, but in Finnish dominated environments the language of the school and the teachers, the language in all school subjects and for example in learning materials gains a special role.²⁰

At the same time when the educational language rights concerning the de facto minority language Swedish can be considered as secured through the parallel educational system, some critical questions concerning the present system arise. Aligned with the present multilingual paradigm in education, the current National Core Curriculum for basic education in Finland applying to both Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools promotes language awareness and linguistic diversity as core values in institutional education.²¹ However, as Ennser-Kananen and colleagues also point out in this book, it seems unlikely that these values actually connect to policies and practices that would promote multilingualism in basic education. Mostly, Finnish and Swedish are treated as equal parallels under the label of national languages throughout the curriculum but the relationship between Swedish and linguistic diversity is further elaborated for example in the parts dealing with the subject Swedish language and literature, taught in Swedish-medium schools.

Swedish is one of the two national languages of Finland, and the syllabus in Swedish language and literature is taught with the same scope, objectives, and content as the syllabus in Finnish language and literature, although with some minor differences due to certain linguistic and cultural characteristics. It is important to emphasise the core cultural tasks of the subject in Swedish-speaking schools in Finland. The pupils' skills in the school's language of instruction are continuously supported, along with their language awareness. Plurilingualism is utilised as a resource. The diverse linguistic backgrounds of the pupils are taken into consideration in the instruction of mother tongue and literature as well as in other subjects.²²

Interestingly, the numerical power imbalance between the national languages or the de facto minority position of Swedish is not discussed but the status is implied in the phrasing "minor differences in linguistic and cultural characteristics". The central, culture-bearing, role of the subject Swedish and literature and the importance of supporting Swedish as the school's language is emphasised but presented as an equal goal with the promotion of language awareness and the recognition of pupils' diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The language ideology underlying the parallel school systems for Finnish and Swedish is also stated in other national policy documents that do not directly oblige providers of education but participate in the discursive construction of language separation in education. One of these documents is the Strategy for the National Languages of Finland from 2012, which frames the conditions according to which the increasing bilingualism of individuals can be taken into account in Swedish-medium schools:

The impact of increasing bilingualism at individual level must be taken into account in the future when planning and organising various services provided by society. This is the case, for instance, when evaluating future school arrangements. It may then be justified to seek ways of supporting the equal development of both languages among bilingual children. However, the objective must be that everyone gets equally good basic education regardless of the language. A Swedish-language school cannot act as a language school because its task is to be an institution that passes on and creates Swedish language in Finland. Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers are not in a fully equal situation in this respect. Since Swedish speakers constitute a de facto minority, they need more support from society for their language and its development than members of the Finnish-speaking population do.²³

Even though the Strategy for National Languages of Finland does not take an explicit stand on other languages than Finnish and Swedish, it constructs a language ideological stance that supports language separation and the governance of bilingualism in schools. Primarily, this is done for the sake of acknowledging the special support a de facto minority language might need in a society dominated by Finnish and to guarantee the quality of education also in Swedish-medium schools. However, this kind of an ideology conflicts with the overall multilingual paradigm in educational policies and also with the educational realities in Swedish-medium schools. Similar to Finnish-medium schools, the linguistic backgrounds of the pupils in Swedish-medium primary education are increasingly diverse too: according to 2013 statistics, 51% of the pupils in Swedish-medium schools are monolingual Swedish, whereas 40% are bilingual with Swedish and Finnish. Four percent of the pupils speak only Finnish and 5% other languages at home.²⁴ This demographic change

is reflected in the recently revised Strategy for the National Languages of Finland, which does not include a similar phrasing of the role of Swedish-medium schools but, quite the opposite, emphasises that they should appear as an appealing choice for bilingual and multilingual pupils as well.²⁵ However, the scale and influence of this notable discursive shift remains to be seen.

Within the limits of the present regulations, the only existing model for bilingual instruction in Finnish and Swedish is language immersion education. Language immersion is a form of teaching a group of pupils with another language than their first language and organised mostly in selective classes of municipal schools.²⁶ Language immersion education conforms to the present legislation, since it does not conflict with the requirement of separating the speakers of Finnish and Swedish in education. Therefore, it does not challenge the ideology of separation and can be regarded as an acceptable solution within Finnish society even in the discursive space of minority language protection and a considerable alternative for those who desire an access to bilingual education.²⁷

Overall, from the perspective of educational inequality, the present system of bilingual education entails certain problems. The availability of language immersion varies regionally and cannot be regarded as an equal choice of language education for everyone.²⁸ In general, the criteria for accessing bilingual education in Finland is not always transparent and language emphasised education has been connected to patterns of parental school choice of middle-class families.²⁹ Since the present bilingual solutions do not enable contact between Finnish- and Swedish-speakers in Finland's present school system, the most probable encounters between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils take place in so-called co-located schools.

Governance of Bilingualism and Language Separation in Co-located Schools

Co-located schools are school campuses where monolingual Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools share the premises but function as separate administrative units and most often also as separate pedagogical institutions. Instruction is given separately in Finnish for the pupils in the Finnish-medium school and in Swedish for the pupils in the Swedish-medium school. Co-located campuses have become increasingly common in bilingual municipalities with a trend towards shared facilities and they currently number about 40–50.³⁰ So far, the reasoning for co-locations have primarily been economic, but the initiatives have provoked lively language politics debates and accusations of endangering the separate school spaces considered as crucial for the Swedish language and culture in Finland.³¹ However, in the recent debates a shift towards a qualified acceptance towards co-location as a bilingual solution has been present. Nevertheless, from the perspective of language governance, the preconditions under which they can be considered as acceptable remain, as

described in the following media appearance of a local government representative, Dan Johansson, in a bilingual municipality in south-western Finland.

He points out that the concept of school encloses much more than mere teaching. It has to do with culture and traditions, friendship and values.... Thus, to place two schools under the same roof should not be an economically rationalised question, Johansson says and adds that such a decision is much broader a question than one might think. Moreover, he points out that parents who have chosen a specific school language for their children also have the right to expect that the school fully functions in the chosen language.³²

According to Johansson, a number of communal aspects have to be taken into consideration while planning co-locations. Moreover, a dimension of linguistic governance is outlined; as a bilingual space, a co-located school is presented as a potential threat to monolingual education in the language chosen by the parents.

Co-located Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools can be considered as sites where the language and education policies regulating the separation of the national languages become materialised and shape social practices. As spatial constellations, co-located schools challenge the idea of institutional separation of Finnish and Swedish in education, even if they are often established on practical and economical grounds rather than desires for bilingual pedagogical co-operation. When planning and building facilities for new co-locations, the policy of language separation has typically been taken into consideration by creating architectural solutions that enable the governing of language in space and time. In the following excerpt from a project plan created by the municipality's technical department for a co-located campus in a bilingual municipality in southern Finland, the principle of language governance in the campus unfolds:

In the spatial solutions of the schools, flexible, easily extendable or reducible, adaptable solutions shall be used. The spaces will be planned as pedagogically modern and functional and put into practice so that the identity of both languages and schools is secured. ... The independence and co-operation of the schools have been the point of departure for the planning. The territories perceived according to the linguistic zones have been clearly indicated in the plan. Mutual spaces, on the other hand, enable natural contact inside the building. The central and compact common spaces enable social encounters during the day. ... Securing the independence of the two languages in everyday teaching activities is connected to the pedagogical objective.³³

In the plan, the premise of language separation and the governing practices that are required to meet the pedagogical objective are at the core of spatial planning. The measures lay out a paradox of sharing the building but keeping distance, maintaining natural contact only in designated areas. Interestingly, bilingualism and its potential benefits for the community are not mentioned in the plan but the premise is rather safeguarding the independence of the schools. However, it does not specify which of the languages needs protecting. In this particular municipality, Finnish is the majority language by 64%, whereas 30% of the inhabitants are Swedish-speaking. Even if the Swedish language is a de facto minority language in this bilingual municipality, the plan does not explicitly point out that the aim of linguistic governance in this particular campus would specifically be the protection of the minority language.

Instead, the plan reproduces the separation of Finnish and Swedish in education as an unquestioned policy and ideology.

Schools as institutional spaces entail ideals and objectives of management and control.³⁴ The notion of performative architecture has been proposed for conceptualising the connection between school design and the learning that is planned to take place there.³⁵ In co-located schools, a central dimension of this performative architecture is the policy of language separation. Ethnographic research carried out in co-located schools has been able to confirm that the spatial solutions described in the architectural plans shape the social and linguistic practices in these schools, and particularly with regard to separation.³⁶ “Natural” contacts and social encounters, as mentioned in the previous quote, do not occur much. Even if most of the studied co-located schools aim to organise mutual activities to maintain a sense of community, the pupils seem to orientate themselves towards the material and social language boundaries, as well as linguistic hierarchies in their everyday spaces.

The balancing between separation and co-presence of two languages can be assumed to hinder the recognition and implementation of the pedagogical and educational possibilities that a bilingual school environment would entail. In this sense, co-located schools can be considered to hold under-utilised potential for language learning, promoting language diversity and pluralism of identities, even if some of the schools actively seek to deconstruct the institutional separation in their everyday curricular activities.³⁷

Bilingualism as Profit in the Debates Around the Nordic School in Helsinki

The demand for bilingual schools is often presented as an interest deriving from the outside of the Swedish-speaking community and Swedish-medium language immersion for the Finnish-speakers is suggested as a solution for this interest. In the past decade, however, the policy of separation of the national languages has also been discussed in relation to proposals of actual bilingual schools.³⁸ In these instances the politically established status of Swedish in Finnish society and recognition of the Swedish language as a valuable resource unfold, resulting in debates where language governance and discourses of profit intertwine.³⁹ The on-going debate of a prospective bilingual public school in Helsinki represents a discursive shift, where language is detached from political and cultural debates, whereas individual needs and the right to education according to these needs are emphasised.⁴⁰

In 2014, the Swedish People’s Party in Finland (SPP) handed in a motion about the establishment of a new kind of bilingual school to the Helsinki City Council. The plan was to establish a public school under the Finnish-speaking department of the municipal educational administration of Helsinki. The concept was named in Swedish as *Nordiska skolan*, the Nordic school. The official language of the school was proposed to be Finnish, in order to comply with the requirement of language separation in the

legislation. Moreover, the school would primarily have been directed to Finnish-speakers and operate along the same lines as bilingual or international schools in Helsinki.⁴¹ As a political party promoting the position of Swedish in Finland, SPP has been reluctant towards bilingual solutions in education but promoted the separation of the national languages and monolingual institutions as a means for supporting societal bilingualism.⁴² Instead, language immersion and advancing the starting point of language instruction in primary education have been recommended policies in the party's political statements. The initiative for a Nordic school can be understood as SPP's attempt to manage the debate and the prospective political and educational implications, since the interest towards bilingual schools had shown to be prominent particularly among Finnish-speakers. Moreover, it can be interpreted as an attempt to define the discursive conditions and institutional boundaries inside of which these potentially unwanted educational experiments take place. For SPP, the decisive issue throughout the debate has been that the school should be administered under the Finnish-speaking educational department, which was presented as a means to avoid the undermining of the Swedish-medium school network.

The motive remained on the table for several years, but in 2017, as the concept of the Nordic school appeared in the Helsinki City Strategy⁴³ approved by the City Council, planning was relaunched in the Finnish-speaking department of the Education Committee of the City of Helsinki. In the meantime, the plan for the administrative model and the official language curriculum had changed from monolingual Finnish to bilingual. As the proposed school would have both Finnish and Swedish as the official languages of instruction, it would require either an exceptional permit from the Ministry of Education and Culture or an amendment to the legislation regulating the separation of the national languages in education.⁴⁴ The latter alternative has provoked particular opposition among politicians and representatives of Swedish-speaking organisations in Finland, since it has been interpreted as a step towards dismantling the linguistic and cultural autonomy of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland.⁴⁵ The most recent Helsinki City Strategy (2021–2025) confirms the plan of the Nordic school but the administrative and pedagogical details remain to be discussed.

So far, the debate on bilingual schools has enclosed two main competing discourses. On one hand, there is the discourse promoting the separation as the protection of linguistic and cultural spaces, appealing to a minority language perspective and reconstructing an ideology of language purity. On the other hand, there is a discourse promoting the instrumental value of language and the potential benefits of the increased contact between the language groups. In their analysis of the media debate on bilingual schools, Sally Boyd and Åsa Palviainen named these discourses as *the preservation discourse* and *the idealist discourse*.⁴⁶ Writing back in 2015, the authors highlighted some neoliberal tendencies, such as freedom of choice and the value of language as an individual asset in the idealist discourse, but hesitated to identify solid patterns of linguistic commodification in the debate.

Looking at how the debate has developed subsequently amidst the more recent, concrete planning debates and documents for the Nordic school in Helsinki, it may be argued that the rhetorical shift towards a more commodified view of language

education is starting to emerge more clearly. In the plan, opened for political debate in March 2020, the proposed Nordic school is described as a “concept created in co-operation with Nordic networks”.⁴⁷ The plan is explicit about using service design in the development of the school concept, a notion common in for-profit services. Furthermore, the plan has been co-developed with potential stakeholders—city dwellers, teachers, pedagogues, researchers—in several workshops, where the *pedagogical vision, innovation, stepping-stones* and *guidelines* for the process have been discussed.

In the plan, the proposed school is described as a multilingual public school that welcomes everyone without entrance exams:

The Nordic school is a multilingual school operated by the City of Helsinki that is open for everyone, and emphasizes Nordicness, multilingualism and phenomena related to sustainable development in its operation. In the Nordic school, the child can begin their individual educational path in early childhood education and continue until the upper secondary education. The school functions in Finnish and Swedish. The pupil will grow up to be a bilingual, culturally and linguistically aware young person and find their own way of expressing themselves. During their education, they can study from two to four foreign languages, a part of which can be other Nordic languages. ... The school is a multilingual meeting place, which offers the pupils an uninterrupted school day from the morning until the afternoon activities.⁴⁸

The description of the school paints a picture of an inclusive, multilingual school that acknowledges the pupils’ individual pedagogical and linguistic needs. The proposed Nordic school would deconstruct the idea of language separation, since it aims to bring together Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils and pupils with other languages in shared classrooms. However, this would happen under the label of Nordicness, rather than Finnish-Swedish state bilingualism.

The idea of Nordicness expands the definition of bilingualism and bilingual resources beyond the borders of the Finnish nation-state.⁴⁹ This, as such, is nothing new, since Nordic connections have traditionally been present in the debates of studying Swedish in Finland, and Swedish has been pointed out as Finland’s entrance ticket to Scandinavia.⁵⁰ The possibilities that the Swedish language provides for Nordic co-operation are also mentioned in the national curriculum. Halonen and colleagues have noted that in the Finnish-medium classrooms, Swedish is often “defamiliarised” as a foreign language rather than a national language of Finland.⁵¹ However, in the present debate on the Nordic school, the idea of Nordicness is combined with individual virtues, such as persistence, rather than communal characteristics, resulting in a new kind of neoliberal pupil subject.

In the Nordic school, perseverance, versatile skills in thinking and communication are appreciated and the pupil is encouraged to seek for solutions by experimenting curiously. ... The guiding principle of the Nordic school is that the pupils will grow up to be Nordic adolescents, who master Swedish, Finnish and other Nordic languages. In the learning objectives are included persistence, openness and linguistic and cultural awareness. The aim is to feed the pupils’ curiosity, enthusiasm for learning and desire to experiment.⁵²

In the mutual understandings of Nordic constructed in the field of education, Nordic is often used to refer to the shared values of democracy and equality in Nordic

educational systems.⁵³ Even if the survival of such values in the present educational policies have been increasingly questioned due to marketisation and differentiation of Nordic societies and educational systems, the absence of these references in the plan of the Nordic school is remarkable. Instead, while describing the benefits of bilingualism in the plan, individual, instrumental aspects are emphasised:

Bilingualism is a notable benefit for the learner. According to studies, bilinguals are more effective in sorting information and perform better than monolinguals in linguistic and mathematical tasks as well as tasks that require creativity. ... In addition to the benefits on an individual level, a bilingual school produces interaction between the domestic language groups of Finland.⁵⁴

The benefits of bilingualism that are raised in the planning document adhere to a neoliberal discourse of language as an individual resource.⁵⁵ The significance of Finland's societal bilingualism and the increased contact between the domestic language groups are mentioned as an additional goal. However, while the value of linguistic resources is repeated throughout the plan, the aspect of Finland's societal bilingualism is only mentioned once.

Conclusion: A Critical Focus on Bilingualism as an Inclusive Resource

This chapter has provided an analysis of the national languages in the educational system of Finland from the perspective of language governance. The framework of language governance has provided a lens for looking at the separation of Finnish and Swedish and the recent negotiations of bilingual educational solutions. In the past decade, discussions of both co-locating Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools and the initiatives for actual bilingual schools have channelled a multiplicity of ideological and political stances with regard to the separation. While the primary agenda of the Swedish-speaking political representatives seems to be the protection of the present legislation, which aims to keep Finnish- and Swedish-speaking pupils in their separate schools, the political debates of developing bilingual educational practices have moved on to a new discursive space where language governance is founded on managing individual skills rather than collective identities. Even while questioning the policies of language separation and representing a more inclusive view of linguistic spaces, the present debates and plans for bilingual schools also entail risks of social differentiation. Despite controversy about the position of Swedish in Finland, bilingualism in Finnish and Swedish is a resource, which is not only symbolically valuable in a bilingual country like Finland but also recognised as a material asset.⁵⁶ In the present plans of a bilingual school in Helsinki, this asset would be particularly within the reach of the parents who are capable of conducting school choice.⁵⁷ In recognising the benefits of the proficiency in national languages, it is therefore necessary to pay attention to how access to bilingualism is regulated and for whom this resource is available.⁵⁸ Pupils with other home languages than Finnish or

Swedish have especially restricted availability of these resources and this might lead to increasing differentiation in the future. Inequalities in access to language education is discussed in more depth by Ennser-Kananen and colleagues in this book.

The emphasis on linguistic diversity in Finnish national education policies can be assumed to amplify the voices of resistance towards the unconditional separation of national languages in the basic education system of Finland in the near future as well. At the same time, means and resources for supporting the significant number of bilingual and multilingual pupils are critically discussed in Swedish-medium schools.⁵⁹ Many of these current questions touch upon language and social differentiation but it seems that Finnish-Swedish bilingualism is struggling to enter the discursive space of multilingualism as one means of addressing educational inequality.

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