

Bi- and multilingual universities – Challenges and future prospects

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FROM MONOLINGUAL TO BI- AND MULTILINGUAL INSTRUCTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

In a recent publication Charles van Leeuwen, Maastricht University, tells about the first European university language centre, the *collegium trilingue*, which was founded in Louvain by Erasmus Roterodamus some 500 years ago. Erasmus had noticed that students had insufficient skills in the three mandatory languages, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and the new-founded college should improve this state of affairs. Unfortunately, the first language centre was discontinued when Erasmus left Louvain a few years later.

Van Leeuwen also highlights the role that language centres can play at bilingual and multilingual universities. Various types of English-medium instruction are offered at Maastricht University, but, at the same time, large parts of programmes are taught in Dutch.

In the same publication Michael Langner, University of Freiburg, reports on his own university, where French and German are languages of instruction. English is on the increase at many faculties, and so are courses of English at the Language Centre.

The linguistic situation of Maastricht and Freiburg universities resembles that of the University of Helsinki (HU), where instruction is traditionally offered in Finnish- and Swedish, where English-medium instruction is increasing, and where some departments require skills in two foreign languages.

A Historical Overview of Language Usage at the University of Helsinki

HU has never been a Finnish-language university only; it has either functioned in languages other than Finnish or it has been bilingual – profiling as trilingual today. The four names that the University has had in the 325 years of her existence reflect the history of Finland and its first university: the Royal Academy of Turku, the Imperial Academy of Turku, the Imperial Alexander University, and the University of Helsinki.

Royal Academy of Turku 1640–1808

In the Middle Ages Finns achieved higher education at European universities, those of Paris, Prague, Leipzig, Erfurt, Rostock and Greifswald, even Rome and Louvain. The Academy of Turku was founded in 1640 with Latin as a teaching and working language – as was the case at other European universities. Finnish was not taught as a subject, but, for the sake of practise, instructors had their students translate foreign-language texts into Finnish. There was also interest in Finnish for practical reasons: foreign civil servants stationed in Finland needed a working knowledge of Finnish. Latin, Greek and Hebrew were the main languages studied but instruction was even provided in modern languages such as French and Italian.

During the Great Nordic War (1700-1721) the Academy was closed for almost ten years, and the professors took their refuge in Sweden. When the Academy was reopened in 1722 only three professors returned. Many of the new teachers came from Uppsala University in Sweden or other European universities. Latin maintained its position as the official language of the Academy but, in the Age of Utility (1740-1760) – so called because interest was concentrated on social and practical matters – Swedish began to gain ground in Natural Sciences and Economics. The Academy had several famous Swedish professors in those disciplines, e.g. Anders Celsius (physics), or Carl von Linnæus (botany). The Master's theses which were written under their guidance were often in Swedish and not in Latin.

From Imperial Academy of Turku to Imperial Alexander University 1809-1917

After the Finnish War (1808-09) and the separation from Sweden Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy under Russian rule. Although more than 80 % of the population spoke Finnish as their mother tongue, Swedish was chosen as the language of administration by the Diet held in Porvoo 1809. The Language Act of 1863 declared Swedish as Finland's official language but it also

prescribed that authorities should within twenty years' time acquire enough skills in Finnish to understand what the Finnish-speaking citizens asked them. However, the act was too complicated for common people to understand, so it could not be enforced in practice.

One year after the fire of Turku, i.e. 1828, the Academy was moved to Helsinki, Finland's new capital, and renamed Imperial Alexander University. In the 1830s the first lectureship in Finnish was founded for teaching practical Finnish to future civil servants and clergy. The first Master's theses written in Finnish also appeared in the 1830s.

New developments followed. According to the 1828 statutes the language of instruction was not Latin only, the lecturer was allowed to use another language of culture, e.g. French, German or Swedish. The 1852 statutes allowed Swedish to be used in doctoral theses, whereas the first doctoral thesis in Finnish appeared in 1858. Swedish remained the language of administration and instruction.

Important Finnish-language dates:

1855	Speech in the Ceremonial Hall of the University
1860s	Language parties emerged: the Fennomans and the Svecomans
1863	Finnish-language lectures officially allowed
1872	Requirement for skills in Finnish imposed on teachers at the Faculties of Theology and Law
1884	Rector's opening speech
1893	Professor of Finnish began to use Finnish at University Senate meetings
1894	Teachers required to give proof of oral & written skills in Finnish – not yet lecture in Finnish
1902	University Senate decided that in matters to be settled by the Senate or the Vice Chancellor the minutes should be written in the language that had been used in the petition

University of Helsinki 1919

After Finland's Declaration of Independence the present name of the University was established by the Act of 1919. An increasing number of students spoke Finnish as their mother tongue. At the time of World War I more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of those registered at the University stated that their mother tongue was Finnish. The statutes of 1924 prescribed both Finnish and Swedish as languages of instruction.

Ardent language disputes raged in bilingual Finland of the early 20th century, with quite a number of disputes also taking place within the University. In order to settle the language disputes a Language Law was passed in 1937, which stipulated that a set student quota and 37 professorships be reserved for Swedish-medium instruction. Apart from this, Finnish was to be the language of instruction and administration. Consequently, we had – by law – a bilingual university in Helsinki.

Bilingual University

The University of Helsinki is responsible for ensuring that a sufficient number of Swedish-speaking persons are educated to meet national needs in disciplines such as Law, Medicine (actually even Veterinary Medicine) and Agriculture & Forestry. After the Swedish School of Social Science in 1984 was attached to the University we also have a national responsibility for Swedish-language education within the field of social work. Separate programmes/courses for Swedish-speaking students are offered at the Faculties of Humanities, Maths & Science, Education, and Social Sciences. The Rector or a Vice Rector must be Swedish-speaking, and there is a law-prescribed Board for Swedish-language operations as well as a Swedish Affairs unit within central administration.

The degree system of the Finnish universities was reformed in the 1970s with language requirements included in the degrees. Language centres were created to ensure LAP and LSP instruction for undergraduates. The foreign languages to be studied as degree languages were – and still are – English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish. Most faculties required skills in one foreign language, some disciplines or departments in two. Extra language studies were welcomed – or at least allowed by most faculties. The role of the second national language was also specified in the degree requirements. Every student, irrespective of his/her major field of study, had

to attain a certain skills level in the country's second official language (Swedish, if the student's mother tongue was Finnish, as it was in 95 % of cases, and Finnish for those from Swedish-speaking families).

Courses of Swedish for Finnish-speaking students mostly covered the demand, whereas there was little instruction in Finnish for Swedish-speaking students dispersed at various faculties and universities in Helsinki. Most had obtained sufficient skills in the majority language at school or in society and were bilingual, but an increasing number of students with poorer skills in Finnish entered the University.

One thing that contributed to improving the situation was the HU's Bilingualism Programme (1997). The objectives included service and information in the two languages, Finnish and Swedish: public speeches, brochures, newsletters, websites, signs etc. The Bilingualism Programme led to the so-called Language Alliance (Språkallians), and to bilingualism being highlighted in the University strategic plans.

The Språkallians scheme, cooperation between seven universities in the greater Helsinki area, made it possible to expand course offerings in the national languages for Swedish-speaking students. Courses in the mother tongue, Swedish (especially Academic Writing), and courses of various levels of Finnish were organized by the Alliance. The project led to founding a three-year lectureship in Finnish (2004-2006) for the benefit of Swedish-speaking students, co-funded by the Alliance universities.

Bilingualism was given an essential role in the University Strategic Plan for 2001-2003, and the wording was not very much different in the new plan for 2004-2006. In both bilingualism is a value and a key area of development. See the quotations in the handout (appended to the paper, after the text).

Trilingual University

Today the University of Helsinki has some eighty co-operative agreements with foreign universities. Here are some figures that show the development:

International Students at the University of Helsinki (rounded figures)

<u>Students</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>95/96</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2004</u>
Exchange	-	30	200	500	700	800	750
Degree	350	?	1100	1050	1200	1200	1300
Total			1200	1500	1900	2000	2000+

In 1992, HULC began to arrange preparatory courses in English for students going abroad. Similar courses in French, German, Italian and Spanish have also been organized for a number of years. In the early 1990s the expansion of international relations made many departments realize the importance of teaching courses in English. In the mid-1990s the LC was requested to design courses for instructors planning to teach through English.

For information on HULC's TTE (= Teaching through English) project and its follow-up projects I refer to the following documents:

- Lehtonen & Lönnfors & Virkkunen-Fullenwider, 1999: *English or not English: that is the question! Teaching through English at the University of Helsinki* (book)
- Lehtonen & Lönnfors: *Teaching through English: a Challenge for the Non-Native Instructor* (paper at BMU conference, 2005)
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The overall objectives for internationalization and ways of promoting it were described in the Strategy for the Development of International Operations at the University of Helsinki 1996-2005, as well as the Strategic Plans for 2001-2003 and for 2004-2006. See the handout.

In order to boost internationalisation at the University, the University Senate approved a new action plan for international operations, International Action Plan for the University of Helsinki, 2004-2006, which replaced the plan approved in 1996 and was to extend until the year 2010 (see handout).

Present situation

Today HU has some thirty-five Swedish-language professors and approximately one hundred lecturers/teachers. One-fourth of Finland's Swedish-language Masters graduate from the University

of Helsinki, and some six per cent of the students are Swedish-speaking. In the academic year 2005-2006 a Swedish-medium Master's programme is offered at the Humanities (Culture and Communication), and Swedish-language teacher training – previously offered in co-operation with Turku and Vaasa – will be started in Helsinki. The Swedish School for Social Science will offer a tailored two-year Swedish-medium Master's programme for social workers with Bachelor's degrees. Extra funding is allocated to the faculties for offering Swedish-medium instruction ('bilingualism coefficient'), there is a Swedish-speaking member at every campus board and a full-time translator (Finnish-Swedish) within central administration.

Content & language integrated classes with Finnish and Swedish students are being developed on the Viikki campus, which is the home of four faculties (Agriculture and Forestry, Bio-sciences, Pharmacy, and Veterinary medicine). The Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry have requested a Swedish-language programme instead of the unconnected courses offered so far, and the request is supported by the University Board for Swedish Operations.

The external evaluation of Education in Language and Communication skills, 2001-2002, revealed that the University lacked the overall responsibility for mother tongue instruction (Finnish and Swedish). A result of the evaluation was that the LC was granted project funding for developing communication studies in the native languages (2004-2006). The first year of our "Mother tongue project" was allotted to piloting: courses of Finnish for Finnish-speaking students (and their teachers), and courses of Swedish for Swedish-speaking students. Mother tongue instruction has up to this time been neglected by many faculties but was included in language requirements of the new degrees (starting point 1 August 2005).

In 2004 HU had some 2000 foreign students, with degree, exchange and visiting students included. In the academic year 2005-2006 some four hundred English-medium programmes/modules will be offered, and, in addition to the existing Master's programme in Social Sciences, there will be a Master's programme in Bio-sciences. Foreign degree students are welcome to participate in language centre courses, and the LC annually provides a substantial number of courses of Swedish as well as a couple of courses of English especially tailored for International degree students; the Department of Finnish is responsible for courses of Finnish.

The University today follows the principle of trilingualism. The faculties' homepages are in three languages (Finnish, Swedish, and English), the three languages are used alternatively in the

University's official speeches, and all essential University documents, such as strategies, annual reports, study guides, personnel plans etc., are supposed to be produced in three language versions.

At HULC several languages are used daily, and most of the staff speak four or five languages. Staff meetings used to be held both in Finnish and English; we recently switched to Finnish only (with transparencies or handouts in English) for the sake of brevity and because nearly all foreign teachers have acquired sufficient skills in Finnish – thanks to the staff courses of Finnish offered by the Language Services, the paid unit of the LC. On some occasions people speak their own mother tongue to speakers of other languages, in other words, so we use a multilingual or mixed mode of speech.

Lastly, I will give you some fresh figures from the LC's annual report for 2004. The table shows how many students were enrolled at the various language courses that year. You will find the figures in the handout.

FROM MONOLINGUAL TO BI- AND MULTILINGUAL INSTRUCTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Important dates for Finnish:

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Strategic Plan 2001-2003

p. 12

*The University of Helsinki will safeguard the essential element of bilingualism, **instruction given in Swedish**, and will develop it as a part of the Finnish university system.*

*The Swedish-speaking part of the population must have equal educational opportunities as prescribed by law. In order to realise this, the importance of **Swedish-language, permanent posts** prescribed by law will be stressed to ensure continuity, and students will be recruited to subjects where the instruction is in Swedish. The Swedish-medium courses offered also give Finnish-speaking students a chance to become acquainted with their own fields and their terminology in the second national language, and thus to improve their chances to enter working life both in Finland and in the other Nordic countries.*

*There are too few Swedish-speaking teachers in the Helsinki area, and those graduating from Vaasa do not seek jobs in this area in large enough numbers. The problem can be solved by **training Swedish-speaking teachers** in the Helsinki area. This can be done as a part of teacher training at the University of Helsinki, together with Åbo Akademi University.*

Strategic Plan 2004-2006

p. 39-40

An alteration in the Universities Act adds a third task to those prescribed by law:

... The University of Helsinki and [some other universities]... shall be responsible for ensuring that a sufficient number of Swedish-speaking persons are educated to meet national needs...

According to the special provisions of the Universities Act:

*... In the admission of students to disciplines which are taught in the Swedish language only at the University of Helsinki, measures shall be taken to ensure that a **sufficient number of Swedish-speaking people can be educated to meet the national need.***

(values)... **Bilingualism** is a significant part of the Finnish national culture. This is why it is important that the most versatile university in Finland should give **teaching in both domestic languages** in the major academic fields.

p. 45

(key areas of development)... *The **visibility of bilingualism** at the University of Helsinki will be improved, and course offerings in Swedish, also to Finnish-speaking students, will be increased through bilingual teachers and Nordic cooperation.*

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STUDENTS	1982	1989	95/96	1998	2000	2002	2004
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Strategy for the Development of International Operations at the University of Helsinki 1996-2005

Two language educational goals are mentioned among the general objectives (p. 7):

- *To encourage the development of versatile language and communication skills. Students will also be encouraged to study in languages other than their own.*
- *To promote the teaching of Finnish, Swedish and the Finnish culture to foreign students and staff members.*

Chapter 2 describes the present state of internationalisation as to teaching and studies (p. 10):

... *During this decade the University of Helsinki has increasingly been able to participate fully in international student exchange programmes. Since 1991 the total number of outgoing and incoming students has grown five-fold and the number of incoming students keeps growing year by year...*

... *Throughout the 1990's the **number of courses offered in languages other than Finnish and Swedish has increased considerably...***

Chapter 3 offers remedies for increasing internationalisation:

... *The University supports the faculties by allocating a bonus on the basis of foreign exchange students hosted by each faculty...* (p. 14)

... *Faculties should establish clear-cut guidelines for the selection of foreign students... Foreign degree students must, on the one hand, be guaranteed the same opportunities and conditions of study as Finnish students, and, on the other, they must be required to meet the same standard of academic performance as their Finnish fellow-students.*

... *The University will draw up a policy for educational cooperation with the Third World.* (p. 16)

... *The two official languages of Finland, **Finnish and Swedish, are taught to foreign degree students, exchange students, researchers, teachers and other personnel...** The Language Services of the Language Centre offer courses to people outside the University...* (p. 16)

... *The **degree programme Finnish Language and Culture** offered by the Department of Finnish is the most significant ... international programme available at the University of Helsinki. Finnish Language and Culture can be chosen as a major, minor or as an elective subject to support other studies.*

... *The teaching of the Swedish language and culture takes place at the Language Centre, the Department of Nordic Languages and the Department of Nordic Literature, and the Renvall Institute...*

... *instruction has to be given also in **languages other than Finnish or Swedish**, in practice mainly in English...*

[These courses] *make student exchange possible, and Finnish students may find these courses an efficient way of developing their language skills and communicating with foreign students...* (p. 17)

Strategic Plan 2001-2003

According to the Strategy for 2001-2003 the key areas of activities in regard to internationalisation are Nordic affairs, the Baltic states, and co-operation concerning the Baltic Sea. (p. 10). A quotation:

... *Co-operation and student exchanges will be intensified through exchange agreements with Baltic universities and through general Nordic and European networks... Co-operation with Russian universities will be continued* (p. 12).

There is also reference to the Bologna Declaration of 1999 and increasing co-operation with other European countries.

The chapter on teaching includes a passage important from the LC's point of view – and actually discussed with us when the Plan was being finalized; not much has changed in the present requirements:

*Language skills that are versatile on the one hand and profound on the other hand are an important element in a high quality degree that can compete on the job market. The aim is **that graduates should have good enough skills in the second domestic language and in at least one foreign language** to enable them to use these languages to study, to follow developments in their own fields, and for professional purposes* (p. 18).

Under the heading Instruction given in foreign languages and instruction of the domestic languages to foreigners several measures are suggested:

Support services for teaching in a foreign language will be jointly developed by the Personnel Training Unit and the Language Centre...

*The position of the summer courses given in foreign languages will be established (**Helsinki Summer School**).*

*Instruction in the two domestic languages (**Finnish and Swedish**) intended for international exchange and degree students will be improved to serve the needs of both groups better. (p. 20)*

Strategic Plan 2004-2006

The new plan mentions the student and researcher mobility achieved by 'an internationalised university' among the values (p. 40). One of the ten key areas of development is **Internationalisation at home**:

University personnel will be internationalised through personnel training and international mobility. *The number of international teachers, teacher and researcher exchange as well as courses held in foreign languages will be increased. All students will be encouraged to participate in courses taught in foreign languages. (p. 45)*

International Action Plan for the University of Helsinki, 2004-2006

(replaces the plan approved in 1996 and will extend until the year 2010). The Plan describes the present state of internationalisation as follows:

*... All faculties organise courses given in foreign languages [almost exclusively English]. Some faculties offer access to clear educational modules that can be used by international exchange and degree students. Mostly, however, instruction given in foreign languages consists of **separate and unconnected courses**... (p. 22).*

The aim concerning international degree students is stated as follows:

*There will be international degree students in every faculty. Several faculties will **offer two-year Master's level programmes for international students**... The courses offered within these programmes can also be utilised to benefit exchange students...*

One of the steps to be taken is teaching of Finnish:

*Courses of **Finnish for International Students** will be organised so as to offer courses in particular to international students beginning their studies, so that their basic language skills can be ensured and they can adapt to the University community and to Finnish society (p. 30).*

One of the measures that promote internationalisation of teaching is the Helsinki Summer (cf. Strategy 2001-2003):

The Helsinki Summer School, started in 2000, will be established as a desirable and interesting target for international students. The Helsinki Summer School will be realised as cooperation between the universities in the Helsinki Metropolitan area.

Number of Students at HULC Courses in 2004

English	2534	
Swedish	2286	(= second national language)
French	1891	
Spanish	1624	
German	1183	
Russian	721	
Italian	554	
Estonian	171	
Chinese	133	
Japanese	126	
Arabic	77	
Dutch	71	
Portuguese	65	
Finnish	40	(= second national language)
Hungarian	23	
Danish	22	
Total	(16 languages)	11521 students