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**Stenberg-Sirén, Jenny**

**De Ridder, Reglindis**

**2023**

http://hdl.handle.net/10138/564683

Stenberg-Sirén, J 2023, Linguistic standards and model speakers : Journalists' views on media's role for Swedish in Finland. in R De Ridder (ed.), "One size fits all"? : Linguistic standards in the media of pluricentric language areas. PCL-PRESS, Graz, Berlin, pp. 145-173.

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**In: Reglindis De Ridder (ed.) (2023): "One size fits all?" Linguistic standards in the media of pluricentric language areas: PCL-PRESS/epubli. Graz/Berlin p. 145-173.**

**Jenny STENBERG-SIRÉN**

(Helsingfors universitet/Helsingin yliopisto, Finland)

# Linguistic standards and model speakers
# Journalists' views on media's role for Swedish in Finland

## Abstract

*Finlandssvenska* [Finland Swedish] is (1) a national language in Finland, (2) spoken by a minority of the population. It is also 3) a non-dominant variety of Swedish. These three facts affect the status of Finland Swedish. The only national arena where *spoken* Finland Swedish is displayed to a greater extent are the Swedish programs produced by *Svenska Yle*, the Swedish program department of the Finnish Public Service Broadcasting Company *Yle*. To get a deeper understanding of the role of media for Finland Swedish, a qualitative analysis was conducted focusing on how journalists working at *Svenska Yle* see *Yle's* mission for the Swedish language in Finland. The analysis shows three prominent views. First of all, we see a top-down-model where *Yle* should provide a language model for the speech community. Many journalists see themselves as so-called model speakers. Secondly, there is a bottom-up-model, where *Yle* should be a mirror of the linguistic variation in society. This is especially reflected in its use of dialects as part of a Finland-Swedish identity. Thirdly, *Yle* is seen to have a language policy mission in strengthening the vitality of Finland Swedish and enhancing its status in society. This is done by keeping the language vibrant and viable in all kinds of modern-day situations and giving it a visible platform, but also by Svenska *Yle*'s journalists acting as ambassadors for the Swedish language in Finland. All three roles affecting the status of Finland Swedish can be seen in the journalists' arguments. They focus mainly on Finland Swedish as a national variety in its own right, enhancing its uniqueness and the language group identity in relation to both the dominant variety Sweden Swedish and the national majority language Finnish.

## 1. Introduction

Swedish is considered a pluricentric language (Bijvoet / Laureys 2001; Norrby et al. 2012, 2020; Reuter 1992, Tandefelt 2015), meaning that it is a national language in more than one country with somewhat differing norms for the standard varieties (Clyne 1992, p. 1). The dominant variety, *sverigesvenska* [Sweden Swedish], is used in Sweden and spoken by 85 percent of the population. The variety of Swedish spoken in Finland is called *finlandssvenska* [Finland

Swedish] and can be seen as a non-dominant variety of Swedish (Norrby et al. 2012, 2020; Reuter 1992, Tandefelt 2015).[1] Finnish and Swedish are both national languages in Finland. Finnish is spoken by 86.5 percent of the population and Swedish is the mother tongue of about 288 000 individuals or 5.2 percent of the population (Statistics Finland 2022). Finnish is also one of the official minority languages in Sweden, spoken by about 200 000-250 000 people there (minoritet.se 2022). Officially, Swedish is not a minority language in Finland, but it is spoken by a minority and can be seen as a minoritised language to some extent (see section 2.2).

The Swedish language planning in Finland is built on a 'survival ideology', based on the assumption that Swedish in Finland would not survive as a separate language. Therefore, it cannot (be allowed to) deviate too much from Swedish in Sweden (Thylin-Klaus 2012). Hence, few differences can be found on a grammatical or an orthographical level and the main distinctive features are *finlandisms*, words and phrases specific for Finland Swedish, and differences in pronunciation (af Hällström-Reijonen 2012; Norrby et al. 2012; Reuter 1992, 2014).

An important part of the process of language standardization is the codification of the norms in grammars and dictionaries (Haugen 1966, p. 931). However, other types of texts might serve as unofficial forces establishing the norms of the standard variety. According to Ulrich Ammon (2004, p. 277), these constitute *model texts* and are found in for example books and magazines. Similarly, oral models for the standard may be found on the theatre stage or in broadcast media, particularly public service broadcasting (PSB). The producers of the oral model for the standard variety, for example news readers, can be called *model speakers* (Ammon 2004, p. 277). For a pluricentric language, the question is which standard variety – or which standard varieties – are being used by media.

In this study, I analyse how journalists at *Svenska Yle,* the Swedish department of the Finnish Public Service Broadcasting Company, see their own role and the role of media for the Swedish language in Finland. Do they see themselves as so-called *model speakers*, thereby accepting the role of language management actors (Muhr 2012)? How do they position their own and *Yle's* language mission in relation to the different roles of Finland Swedish?

[1] I use Finland Swedish as the English term for *finlandssvenska*, since it is established in linguistic literature, and similarly Sweden Swedish for *sverigesvenska*.

## 2. The three roles of Finland Swedish

The status of Finland Swedish has three dimensions. It is a national language, it is spoken by a minority of the population, and it can be seen as a non-dominant variety of a pluricentric language.

### 2.1. Swedish as a national language in Finland

Finland was part of Sweden for roughly 700 years, until the war between Sweden and Russia in 1808–1809. As a result, Finland became an autonomous part of Russia, which lasted until 1917 when the nation gained independence. Since the foundations for a modern society were laid during the Swedish reign, for centuries Swedish was the language of the elite, the courts, academia, and the church (Reuter 1992). Today, the majority language Finnish dominates in all of these areas, and English is also very present, especially in business and academia.

The legal position of Swedish is strong. The Constitution of Finland (11.6.1999) and the Language Act (6.6.2003/423) regulate the use of Finnish and Swedish in the courts, in the military and in government and municipal institutions, guaranteeing the right to official information in both languages. The constitution states that:

> "The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis." (The Constitution of Finland 1999, Sec. 17, Subsec. 2.)

There are also specifically Swedish-language institutions, for example a Swedish military brigade and a Swedish diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and perhaps most importantly, a separate Swedish-language school system from pre-school to universities.

The Swedish-speaking population is mainly located along the western and southern coastline and on the Åland islands. The region of Ostrobothnia in the west, the archipelago in the southwest and the regions west and east of the capital area are traditional Swedish dialect areas (for a research overview, see Sandström 2013). In some of these areas, the local majority language is Swedish, whereas in the capital Helsinki and other larger cities, Finnish holds a strong position and the majority of the Swedish-speakers are in fact bilingual (Saarela 2021, p. 43). In a sense, Swedish is a regional language in Finland, and in large parts of the country, Swedish is relatively invisible outside of school.

## 2.2. Swedish as a minority language in Finland

In Finland, the native languages of the citizens are registered in the Population Information System (Digital and Population Data Services Agency n.d.), giving us seemingly precise data about the language situation. Only 5.2 percent of the Finnish population have registered Swedish as their mother tongue (Statistics Finland 2022). However, since one can only include one language in the system, the number of people with proficiency in Swedish is probably much higher. About one third of the Swedish speakers have a Finnish-speaking partner, which means there are many bilingual families and children (Saarela 2021). Even so, the Swedish-speaking population in Finland is a numerical minority, even though Swedish in many respects is on par with Finnish in terms of legal rights.

Swedish is a compulsory subject in Finnish-language schools, as is Finnish in Swedish-language schools in Finland. However, since 2005 the final exams in Swedish (for Finnish-speakers) and Finnish (for Swedish-speakers) are no longer compulsory in the matriculation exam, and the number of students taking the exams have dropped significantly in both language groups (Johansson 2022; Studentexamensnämnden 2022). As a result, fewer people working as public servants have a deeper knowledge of Swedish. For most of the positions in public offices, the language requirements include excellent skills in Finnish and only satisfactory skills in Swedish, which in practice means that it is much easier for Finnish-speakers to get the positions. Consequently, Swedish-speaking citizens do not always get service in Swedish and the good intentions of the Language Act are often not met in reality, a fact that is also concluded in the National Language Strategy (Nationalspråksstrategi 2021).

For the Swedish-language media in Finland, the dominance of Finnish in public offices means that the official terminology is mostly in Finnish. Since news journalists cannot wait for the documents to be translated in ministries and government institutions, they often have to come up with the Swedish translations themselves. Therefore, they work closely with the media language advisers in order to find correct equivalents in Swedish for new terminology (Stenberg-Sirén 2021b).

In addition to challenges with getting service in their mother tongue, the Swedish-speaking Finns also have to cope with negative attitudes towards Swedish. Especially the Finns Party (a right-wing party strongly promoting "Finnishness") is challenging the status of Swedish in Finland. They are strongly opposed to Swedish being a mandatory subject in schools. In their

"Suomalaisuusohjelma" (strategy for "Finnishness"), they state that the Finnish language unites all people living in Finland, thereby disregarding the Swedish-speaking Finns as well as all people with other language backgrounds residing in Finland. In addition, they claim that having to learn Swedish disrupts the language identity of the Finnish-speakers and disturbs their self-image. (Finns Party 2022).

However, these negative attitudes towards Swedish are not clearly represented in the general public. In a panel study by Thomas Karv and Jenny Backström (2022, p. 15), about 60 % of the Finnish-speaking respondents thought that the Swedish language is an important part of Finnish society and 71 % claimed that they would like to have better skills in Swedish. However, about 60 % also thought that Swedish should not be mandatory in schools and that the importance of Swedish language skills is constantly decreasing.

Of the Swedish-speaking respondents in the same study, about 80 % believe that there is a future for the Swedish language in Finland and 96 % are proud to be *finlandssvensk* [Swedish-speaking Finn]. On the other hand, almost 60 % feel that the attitudes among Finnish-speakers towards Swedish in Finland have worsened during the last two years. Only 7 % totally agree with the statement that Finland is a well-functioning bilingual country (40 % partly agree). (Karv/Backström 2022, p. 11).

## 2.3. Finland Swedish as a non-dominant variety of a pluricentric language

Key concepts in the theory of pluricentric languages are language and identity, but also language and power. There is an asymmetrical power relationship between the dominant and the non-dominant varieties (Clyne 1992, p. 455). In order to qualify as a pluricentric language there needs to be a linguistic distance between the different varieties, which is related to identifiable national norms (idem 1992, p. 1–3; Muhr 2012; Norrby et al. 2020; Wide et al. 2021).

The national norms for Finland Swedish were created during the standardisation of the language (Engman 2016; af Hällström-Reijonen 2012; Laurén 1985; Stenberg-Sirén 2018; Thylin-Klaus 2012). The Finland-Swedish standard language was codified by Hugo Bergroth, first for the theatre and shortly after for schools and the general public (Bergroth 1917, 1918, 1924). He focused on the differences between Swedish in Finland and Swedish in Sweden,

concerning both written and spoken language, the main point being that Finland Swedish should not deviate from Sweden Swedish. His normative works can be compared to those of Erik Wellander (1965) in Sweden, and laid the foundation for the language norms we still use today.

Since then, one of the most comprehensive collections of normative language advice for Finland Swedish can be found in the Finland-Swedish lexicon by Hällström-Reijonen and Reuter (2000) and in Reuter (2014). The present-day language maintenance and cultivation is done mainly by *Institutet för de inhemska språken* [the Institute for the Languages of Finland]. The institute is an official language management organisation that works with language documentation, language cultivation and guidance. The language advisers have a hotline for language questions, which anyone can call, they arrange courses and give public statements. They also cooperate with the media language advisers, who work with the media organisations. Importantly, the language advisers at the language institute in Finland collaborate closely with their counterpart in Sweden, Språkrådet. (Stenberg-Sirén 2021b).

In the list of eight development levels of pluricentricity by Rudolf Muhr (2012, p. 32–34), Swedish is placed on level 5, "*Languages where the status of pluricentricity is acknowledged by the 'mother'-variety*" and 6, "*Languages where the pluricentricity is deliberately practised by model speakers of the respective NV*" [italics original]. These high levels show that the standard varieties have reached a certain degree of status and have completed the standardisation process as described by Einar Haugen (1966).

One of the main differences between Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish are so called *finlandisms* (af Hällström-Reijonen 2012). Finlandisms are words, phrases, or structures that are used solely in Finland Swedish or used in a different way than in Sweden. Differences between the two varieties can also be found on a pragmatic level, showing differences in styles of communication in social situations (Norrby et al. 2020). However, just as with Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch (De Ridder 2020a, p. 67), the most notable difference between Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish is pronunciation. The differences especially concern intonation, word reductions and certain quantity features (Ivars 2015; Kuronen / Leinonen 2011; Leinonen 2013, 2015; Reuter 1992, 2015; Stenberg-Sirén 2018).

A comparison of the lists of features of dominant (Clyne 1992, p. 459–460) and non-dominant varieties (Muhr 2012, p. 39–41) shows that Finland Swedish

does not meet all the criteria in the typology of non-dominant varieties. For example, the language community shows great loyalty towards Finland Swedish and there is a strong language planning apparatus in place. Ellen Bijvoet and Godelieve Laureys (2001, pp. 209–212) see many similarities between Belgian Dutch, the non-dominant national variety of Dutch, and Finland Swedish. They are both surrounded by vital dialects and they use – what the speakers of the dominant variety would consider – archaic words compared to the dominant variety, which is spoken in the neighbouring country. Both languages incorporate loan words from the local majority language (Finnish) or the other official language, in the case of Belgium, French (which historically has been considered more prestigious). Language issues are often discussed in both societies and even purist tendencies can be seen. (Bijvoet / Laureys 2001; De Ridder 2020a).

For many Swedish-speaking Finns, Sweden feels culturally close. Especially in the region of Ostrobothnia and on the Åland islands, many follow Swedish media and popular culture. As many as 70 percent of Finland Swedish teenagers use media content from Sweden regularly (Stenberg-Sirén 2021a). However, so far there have been no studies showing that consumption of media content from Sweden would have a noticeable impact on the Finland Swedish variety *per se*, like the accelerated language shift in Austrian Standard German towards the dominant form of German Standard German, which Muhr (2003) ascribes to language contact through media. Another interesting area in this regard is linguistic practices on social media. De Ridder (2020b, p. 132–133) discusses how popular YouTubers in Belgium and Austria avoid using regional varieties as a way to attract greater audiences from dominant language areas. It remains to be seen, if their language use can have a long-term effect on the language of their young followers.

## 2.4. Finland-Swedish under pressure

The status of Swedish in Finland is dependent on its three-fold role. The language is in a minority position and the proficiency of Swedish among the Finnish-speaking majority is diminishing. Still, while the language maintains its status as a national language, it has a high degree of protection. It is also strengthened by the fact that Swedish has a much higher number of speakers than Finnish on an international scale and that knowledge of Swedish is helpful in inter-Nordic communication. As an illustration of the triangular position influencing the

status of Finland Swedish and the two dominant languages in its proximity, they are combined in Figure 1.

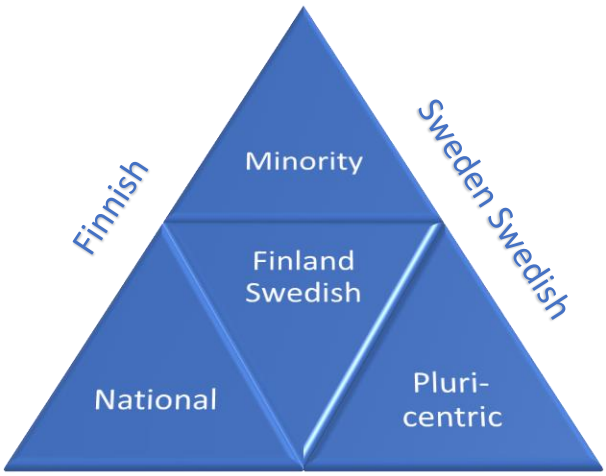



Figure 1. Finland Swedish as a national, minority language in a non-dominant position of a pluricentric language area

The Finland Swedish variety is also influenced by its surroundings. Naturally, the majority language Finnish has a great influence, as well as the growing use of English in the Finnish society. The dialects affect the standard variety, especially regionally. Changing language norms in Sweden are closely followed by the language planning organisations in Finland and, more often than not, the same norms are applied to Swedish in Finland as well. In other words, Finland-Swedish journalists work in multi-faceted linguistic surroundings.

## 3. The role of media in language management

In the traditional language standardisation model the final steps are continuous cultivation and modernisation of the standard variety (Haugen 1966; Ammon 2004). All language users participate in this process by speaking and writing the standard language in different contexts, but for some it is part of their professional roles to act as "language norm authorities" (Ammon 2004, p. 277). These are for example teachers, whose task it is to correct other people's language when it deviates from the standard. Others might be editors-in-chief, publishers or language advisers. Mostly, language management focuses on written language, but particularly in broadcast media it also concerns spoken language. Since media language has the potential to reach large parts of a speech

community, media language management can be an effective way to cultivate and develop also the spoken norm (Stenberg-Sirén 2021b). Therefore, it is important to study if and how journalists working as *model speakers* (Ammon 2004) see themselves in that capacity.

## 3.1. Journalistic practice and language support elsewhere

Several studies emphasize the role of media for non-dominant languages. Laura Baranzini and Maria Chiara Moskopf-Janner (2020) show that in the case of the Swiss variety of Italian, norm-authorities like teachers and language experts tend to turn to the standard in Italy. The media, however, uses some features typical of Italian in Switzerland, mostly culturally specific words and expressions with zero equivalence in the Italian standard. Since the variety is not explicitly codified, media can function as a codifying agent by using the non-dominant forms in a formal context and thereby normalise it (Baranzini / Moskopf-Janner 2020, p. 147).

Even though minority languages are not necessarily national varieties of pluricentric languages, they share many features in their positions as non-dominant languages/varieties. Studies about minority language media (MLM) often emphasize the ways in which media can empower minority languages (Cormack / Hourigan 2007; Jones / Uribe-Jongbloed 2013). MLM can help minority language speakers to take part in political and societal activities in their own language, be part of identity building for the minority group and create a sense of belonging. Media in marginalised languages might be a sign of vitality and a signal to the majority that the minority is part of contemporary society. Finally, yet importantly, MLM puts the minority language and by extension also other minoritised languages and language varieties out there in the public sphere, exposing language users to the language (Cormack 2007, p. 53-55). This linguistic normalisation is very important for both the minority and majority language speakers.

For MLM practitioners, language is often an emotional matter, and the foundation for their journalistic practice. This can be seen for example in interviews with Sámi media professionals conducted by Lia Markelin, Charles Husband and Tom Moring (2013, p. 108). The journalists express "a clear belief in the centrality of language to Sámi identity; and to the potential role of the media in contributing to the revitalisation and maintenance of the Sámi language."

In addition to feeling responsible for the language and culture, MLM journalists may take on the role of watchdogs for the language minority's rights. In their study of four minority language newspapers in Italy, Romania and Finland, László Vincze and Peter Holley (2013) conclude that the newspapers often advocate language rights and minority politics. Some of the newspaper journalists described how they felt obliged to protect the minority language and report critically if public administration failed in providing services in the minority language. Consequently, their ethnolinguistic identity affected the journalistic operations and practices. The same can be seen in Elizabeth Burrows' (2018) study of indigenous media producers, who sometimes chose the perspective of the indigenous community over general journalistic objectivity.

The combination of journalistic ideals and language support has also been studied on a broader scale. In their study of journalists from ten European minority language groups (Basque, Catalan, Galician, Corsican, Breton, Frisian, Irish, Welsh, Scottish-Gaelic, and Sámi), Iñaki Zabaleta et al. (2010) found that 66 percent considered themselves not only journalists, but also supporters or advocates of the language. They identified as professional journalists with an "additional journalistic role before the community in terms of nourishment and defence of their language" (Zabaleta et al. 2010, p. 198).

## 3.2. Broadcast news language and language ideologies at *Yle*

The Finnish Broadcasting Company *Yle* was founded in 1926 and is a public service-company, financed by a specific *Yle* tax. The Act on the Finnish Broadcasting Company regulates that the Finnish Broadcasting Company *Yle* (henceforth *Yle*) has to "treat in its broadcasting Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking citizens on equal grounds" (Act on the Finnish Broadcasting Company 1380/1993, Sec. 7, Subsec. 2, Para. 4). There is no definition of what "equal grounds" means, but based on that phrasing as well as the public service mission, Swedish-language programs have traditionally occupied a strong position within *Yle*. They are produced in a separate department called *Svenska Yle* and the content is presently distributed through a television channel, two radio channels and on the Internet.

In *Yle's* current strategy (Yle 2020) the company emphasises diversity and the need for an open dialogue with everyone in society, but language is not explicitly mentioned in this context. The only reference to language in the strategy is in connection to the *Yle* law. However, language guidelines can be

found in internal documents. The language guidelines for the Swedish programming at *Yle* state that all content must be made comprehensible for listeners and viewers who lack knowledge of languages other than Swedish (Yle 2006, p. 2). In practice, this means that all other languages must be translated with the help of subtitles or dubbing for children (e.g. on television) or voice-overs (e.g. in documentaries, but also on the radio). Nevertheless, the internal documents do not place any societal responsibility on *Yle* in terms of the Swedish language. Instead, this responsibility is assigned to the journalists. The initial sentence in an internal handbook (Yle 2014) states:

> "Du som jobbar på Svenska Yle har ett särskilt ansvar för det svenska språket och du är en språklig förebild i alla professionella sammanhang."
>
> "You, who work at *Svenska Yle*, have a particular responsibility for the Swedish language and you are a linguistic role model in all professional contexts." [Author's translation]

The journalists are guided in this task by professional media language advisers. They give recommendations on lexical issues, pronunciation, and linguistic norms, and work in close proximity to the journalists. They also collaborate closely with *Institutet för de inhemska språken* [the Institute for the Languages of Finland], as well as with their colleagues in Sweden (Gustafsson, 2017). Among the journalists there is a strong tradition of relying on language recommendations from the language advisers. This could be seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was suddenly a great need for new terminology, for example related to quarantine and other protective measures like face masks, to the different phases of the pandemic, and to issues related to medical treatment and healthcare (Stenberg-Sirén 2021b).

The internal handbooks also include pronunciation guidelines, mainly for more formal program genres like the news. The guidelines especially focus on pronunciation features that distinguishes Finland Swedish from most of the spoken varieties in Sweden. They describe a pronunciation which reflects the spelling, including features that divert from everyday speech and dialects in Finland. Such features are for example the pronunciation of the final phoneme /t/ in definite nouns (e.g. *bordet* [the table]) and in non-finite verb forms (e.g. *hoppat* [(has) jumped]), which is almost always dropped in everyday speech and in dialects in Finland. Other features include the pronunciation of the full forms of function words like *inte* [not] and *till* [to], instead of the everyday forms *int* and

*ti*. The recommendations also include phonological quantity features. The Swedish rules of quantity require either V:C or VCC – for example /va:ra/ [to be] – but the short form /vara/ is a normal feature in many dialects and in everyday speech in Swedish spoken in Finland (Ivars 2015; Leinonen 2015; Stenberg-Sirén 2015; Wikner 2018). According to the recommendations the elisions should be avoided. (Yle 2014).

My phonological analysis of the pronunciation in the Finland Swedish television and radio news readings 1970-2009 reveals that the news journalists follow the pronunciation recommendations closely (Stenberg-Sirén 2014). In addition, the study shows a shift towards a more formal pronunciation in the 1990s and 2000s. Furthermore, changes in two socially marked quantity features characteristic of Finland Swedish can be seen (Stenberg-Sirén 2015). The short forms mentioned above, typical of dialects and traditionally less prestigious varieties, have increased slightly. The other socially distributed quantity feature is the combination of a long vowel and a long consonant, for example in the word *baka* [to bake], which in the Helsinki-region can be pronounced /ba:k:a/ (see also Leinonen 2013, 2015; Wikner 2018, 2019). The frequency of this (formerly) prestigious trait has decreased markedly in the news readings during the 1990s and 2000s.

My studies also show a strong standard language ideology among *Svenska Yle's* journalists (Stenberg-Sirén 2016, 2017). Based on other questions in the survey that is used in this study, I analysed their views on language norms as well as dialects and regional features in the media language. The analysis shows that on a general level the journalists have a positive attitude towards regional features in media language, but only in certain program genres. For instance, in talk shows and regional programs, regional features are acceptable in the language of the journalists, but not in the news. Additionally, the regional features should not be too prominent and they think that journalists should avoid using dialects, since they might be difficult to understand. (Stenberg-Sirén 2016).

In Stenberg-Sirén (2017), I analyse how the journalists at *Svenska Yle* relate to the pronunciation guidelines and the standard language norm the language recommendations describe. In general, they have quite a restrictive view and do not want to allow for deviances from the language recommendations. Up to 84 % think that it is important that all journalists at *Svenska Yle* follow the pronunciation guidelines. However, the analysis of other questions reveal more

nuanced opinions. In their descriptions of "good broadcast language", the word *korrekt* [correct] has the highest frequency, but also the word *ledigt* [relaxed] is mentioned in many answers.

The standard language ideology dominating the views expressed by the journalists (Stenberg-Sirén 2016, 2017) in combination with the observed changes in pronunciation (Stenberg-Sirén 2014, 2015) can be interpreted as a sociolinguistic neutralisation of the standard language and as a sign of a continuous standardisation process of the Finland Swedish standard language (Stenberg-Sirén 2018).

## 4. Study design

The present study builds on my previous studies about language and language attitudes in *Svenska Yle* (Stenberg-Sirén 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). The aim is to analyse how *Svenska Yle's* journalists view their own and the media's language planning role. Do they see themselves as model speakers and how do they describe their role in relation to the different roles of Finland Swedish?

The data for this study was collected through an online questionnaire answered by Swedish-language journalists working at *Yle* in October 2014. The questionnaire consisted of 39 questions about views on broadcast language, broadcast language norms, and linguistic attitudes. While a majority of the questions were multiple-choice questions, in most cases the respondents were also allowed to add comments to their answers. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Data from the same questionnaire are used in previous studies (Stenberg-Sirén 2016, 2017), but the particular questions in focus here have not been analysed before. Even though some years have passed since the data was gathered, there is no reason to believe that the views of the journalists would have changed significantly during this time.

A total of 25 % (93 persons) of the employees at *Svenska Yle* answered the questionnaire. The distribution was fairly representative in relation to different program departments, gender and regional background. However, there were fewer respondents in the youngest age groups, which could be an indication that they do not find studies about language important. Another reason might be that most of them were working for the youth radio channel, and many of them were freelance journalists or working on short term contracts, which might lower the interest in taking part in tasks not directly related to their jobs. Hence, one needs

to keep in mind that the views represented here are mostly from established journalists.

The present study focuses on the journalists' understanding of *Yle's* mission for the Swedish language in Finland as well as their own role for the language. The following two open-ended questions in the questionnaire specifically addressed this issue:

> 24. *Vilket uppdrag upplever du att Yle har för svenskan i Finland? Uppfylls det?*
>
> In your opinion, what mission does *Yle* have for the Swedish language in Finland? Is the mission fulfilled? [Author's translation]
>
> 25. *Vilket uppdrag upplever du att du som enskild redaktör har för svenskan i Finland?*
>
> In your opinion, what mission do you as an individual journalist have for the Swedish language in Finland?[2] [Author's translation]

The first question was answered by 79 respondents and the second by 75 respondents, in total 154 answers. Of the 93 respondents, 11 did not answer either question. In a few cases, the respondents referred in their answer to another question in the questionnaire. In these cases, I included those answers as well. Since this was a web-based questionnaire, it is quite natural that the answers were not particularly long. The longest answers were about 150–160 words, and the shortest ones 1–2 words.

Qualitative content analysis (see for example Schreier 2013) was used to analyse the data. In the first step, I read through the answers many times, to see emerging patterns. Some answers contained several different aspects, and therefore I colour-coded the separate content units (arguments or examples). That helped me with the categorisation, which I did in several stages, until all content units were placed under a category (presented in section 5). Since one answer can contain several content units that belong to different categories, the number of content units is greater than the number of answers. After the initial categorisation I analysed the content units thematically. First, I focused on how the journalists describe their own and *Yle*'s mission for the language. Secondly, I delved deeper into whether their arguments focus on Finland Swedish as a national language, on the language in a minority position in the Finnish society

[2] The word *redaktör* is generally translated as *editor*, but at *Svenska Yle* the word *redaktör* is also used as a synonym to journalist (*radioredaktör, tv-redaktör*).

or on the pluricentric position and the relation to Sweden Swedish.

As illustrations of the results, some of the journalists' answers and comments are included as quotes with an English translation in brackets. In some cases, I also refer to quantitative results, mainly as an illustration of how frequently certain arguments occur. However, since the number of answers is limited, it is not relevant to perform a detailed quantitative analysis.

## 5. Results

The analysis of the answers to the two questions shows an imbalance in the quantity and quality of the answers. Question number 24, about *Yle's* mission for the language, was answered by more respondents and their answers are longer and qualitatively richer than the answers to question number 25 about the mission of individual journalists. Several of the respondents refer to the answer to question 24 in their answer to question 25, meaning that they see their individual mission as the same as the company's. As one respondent puts it:

> "*Redaktörerna är ju Svenska Yle, så svaret är det samma som på föregående fråga.*"
>
> "The journalists make up Svenska *Yle*, so the answer is the same as to the previous question." [Author's translation]

Since question 25 was the last question in the questionnaire (followed by demographic questions), there might be some fatigue involved as well explaining the smaller number of answers. Another possibility is that it felt more meaningful to discuss the mission of the company as a social actor, rather than the limited influence of individual journalists.

The dominating view among the respondents is that *Yle* has an important mission for Swedish in Finland. The word *important* is mentioned 50 times in this context. Other recurring phrases are that *Yle* has "a big role" and that *Yle* is "a role model". In short, the respondents' descriptions of *Yle's* role correspond to the idea of broadcast media providing model texts and model speakers. However, some variation can be seen in the respondents' descriptions of the types of roles they ascribe to *Yle*. Their arguments can be placed into three categories: *model*, *mirror* and *policy*.

## 5.1. Media as linguistic role models

The category called *model* contains answers with the view that *Yle* should provide a model for "*gott språk*" ["good language"]. The main point in this category is a top-down-model, where media offer a model – or several models – for the language to the people. The respondents argue that the language should be correct, good, rich, reliable, nuanced, and of high quality. *Yle* should set a good example, as mentioned in Quote 1, which is representative of this category.

> Q1) "*Yle har ett uppdrag att bidra till ett gott språk – föregå med gott exempel*."
>
> "Yle's mission is to contribute to a good language – to set a good example." [Author's translation]

Many of the content units placed in this category only contain the qualitative assessments mentioned above and the rather vague expression 'good language'. They do not use linguistic terminology and were not asked for explicit definitions of the norm(s), but the more elaborate answers include examples of what this role entails. Some of these mention that the language should be free of Finnish and English influences, that finlandisms, dialect and slang should be avoided, and that it should be (presumably grammatically) correct, which are characteristic of the standard language norm. The content units in this category relate to the almost purist views that could be seen in their comments about the language recommendations analysed in Stenberg-Sirén (2017). The arguments in this category also point out that *Yle* should *spread* the norm, thereby implying a more active role than just providing a model for the audience to adhere to.

In their answers about their individual mission, the same arguments can be seen, but they are not as straight-forward. Many respondents mention that they *try* to set an example and they *strive* to use the language correctly, perhaps showing a sign of humbleness and insights about their own limitations. Another frequent word is *responsibility*, showing that they take this mission seriously. An example of this can be seen in Quote 2:

> Q2) "*Jag är en droppe i medieflödet, men varje droppe räknas. Jag tycker alltså att det känns viktigt att vara en språkmodell. Det är ett ansvarsfullt jobb.*"
>
> "I am a drop in the media ocean, but every drop counts. I think it feels important to be a linguistic role model. It is a job filled with responsibility." [Author's translation]

However, some feel that *Yle* is not successful in being a role model. Several respondents point out that especially younger journalists are not skilled enough to be linguistic role models. Their language is not good enough, they do not read enough and they use Finnish words and expressions in their language. Another respondent has nearly given up, stating that the Swedish language is already in such a bad shape, that they doubt *Yle* can do much to improve it.

## 5.2. Media as mirrors of language in society

Not all of the journalists agree that *Yle* should provide a linguistic model. A couple of them think that the idea of media being norm authorities is outdated and based on false premises:

> Q3) *"Däremot är det ett missförstånd att journalister har någon sorts ansvar för språket. Journalister på Svenska Yle har nästan ingen möjlighet alls att påverka den svenska som talas och skrivs i Finland. Vårt uppdrag är att använda det språk som medborgarna skapar*."
>
> "However, it is a misunderstanding that journalists have any kind of responsibility for the language. Journalists at *Svenska Yle* have almost no possibility at all to influence the spoken and written Swedish language in Finland. Our mission is to use the language the citizens create." [Author's translation]

The point of being in touch with the language in use in the speech community can be found in many answers. However, unlike the respondent in Q3, many still feel that they have a responsibility for the Swedish language as well. The content units about media displaying the linguistic diversity of society make up the second category – *mirror*. The basis for this category is a bottom-up-model, where the language varieties of the people are shown in the media, instead of media providing a model for the people. The content units in this category state that media language should be modern, innovative, relaxed and reflect the linguistic diversity of contemporary society. However, the categories are not exclusive, and *Yle* can be seen as having a dual mission, as the respondent in Quote 4 points out.

> Q4) "*Mycket viktigt tudelat uppdrag. Att stå för ett gemensamt standardsspråk för hela Svenskfinland, men samtidigt visa på mångfalden i språket som finns*."
>
> "Very important dual mission. To provide a common standard language for

Swedish-language Finland, but at the same time show the linguistic diversity that exists." [Author's translation]

Many examples in this category mention dialects and regional varieties, which some respondents think should be allowed on air to a greater extent. Regional variation is a reflection of the language of the audience and part of their language identity, and as one respondent writes: "*Yle måste representera verkligheten*" ["Yle has to represent reality"].

Content units in this category also mention other examples than dialects. The word *diversity* occurs several times, involving for example accents and giving space to new speakers of Swedish. One respondent writes that also Finnish words should be allowed, since "*Vi bor i Finland och det får också märkas*" ["We live in Finland and that should be allowed to show"]. There are mentions of "new words", to keep the language "up to date" and to follow the language development in Sweden. However, there is some reservation regarding recent linguistic developments from Sweden, as shown in Quote 5.

Q5) "*Vi skall följa med i tiden och var försiktigt moderna. Vara intresserade av hur svenskan utvecklas i Sverige och anamma de bästa bitarna*."

"We shall follow the trends and be carefully modern. Be interested in how the Swedish language evolves in Sweden and embrace the best parts." [Author's translation]

The phrases "carefully modern" and "embrace the best parts" in Q5 reveals a view that language can be managed and that it is possible to pick and choose from a linguistic smorgasbord. In general, a certain conservative view can be seen in their comments, even though the respondents point out that the media language should mirror the language development in society.

## 5.3. Media as language policy agents

The third category, *policy*, contains arguments relating to the status of Swedish in Finland. Many respondents use the word *levande*, which translates to *alive*, but also to *vital* in a linguistic context. They argue that *Yle's* mission is to maintain and uphold Swedish in Finland, but also to make sure that it evolves and stays functional. It is a question of survival of the language:

Q6) "*Yle måste visa att det går att tala och skriva svenska utan att ta till finska ord,*

*uttryck och direktöversättningar. Att vara den enda officiella kanalen på svenska medför det ansvaret – en viktig del av hela svenska språkets överlevnad i vårt land*."

"*Yle* must demonstrate that it is possible to speak and write Swedish without resorting to Finnish words, expressions or bad translations. Being the only official channel in Swedish contains that responsibility – an important part of the survival of the Swedish language in our country." [Author's translation]

One of the arguments in Quote 6 is that Swedish in Finland should be 'clean' of Finnish influences and that *Yle* is responsible for displaying that linguistic model. Another point, made by several respondents, is that *Yle* offers visibility to the Swedish language in Finland in general, and specifically to the members of the language minority:

Q7) *"Det handlar om att ge språket synlighet, att ge publiken möjligheter att höra sitt eget språk, och se tv-program på sitt eget språk*."

"It is all about making the language visible, to give the audience a chance to hear their own language and to watch television programs in their own language." [Author's translation]

The respondents in Q6 and Q7 refer to the fact that *Yle* is the only broadcasting company producing programs in Finland Swedish, with a marginal addition of the audio-visual content produced by the newspapers. *Yle* serves as the only national arena for spoken Finland Swedish. Some mention that for people living in environments dominated by Finnish, *Yle's* programs might be the only place they hear Swedish. Another argument is that since many Swedish-speakers live in dialectal areas, *Svenska Yle* connects them linguistically through the standard language and creates a common ground, which strengthens the identity of the language group. Finally, *Yle's* Swedish-language content is a way to make the minority group visible in the Finnish society:

Q8) *"Yles roll att lyfta fram tvåspråkigheten är oerhört viktig. För att upprätthålla en stark tvåspråkighet är det viktigt att Yle producerar radio, tv och webb på svenska*."

"*Yle's* role to highlight bilingualism is very important. To maintain a strong bilingualism it is important that *Yle* produces radio, tv and web content in Swedish." [Author's translation]

Another way to display the Swedish language is through interviews. The language policy for *Svenska Yle* states that television and radio programs must be available also for monolingual Swedish-speakers. Consequently, journalists often make a concerted effort to find people with skills in the minority language (see also Standaert, Bouko & Vandendaele 2020). By interviewing Finnish-speaking politicians in Swedish, *Svenska Yle's* journalists not only remind them of their need to be proficient in Swedish, but also offer them an opportunity to actually use the language. Requiring public figures to communicate in a minority language can be seen as a language-policy act. However, this is not necessarily something the journalists actively think about:

> Q9) *"Försöker envisas att våra politiker ska tala svenska i intervjuerna, på nåt plan är det väl ett slag för tvåspråkigheten, även om jag egentligen inte har tänkt i de banorna*."
>
> "I try to insist that our politicians should speak Swedish in interviews, in some way I guess that is a way to support bilingualism, even though I had not really thought about it that way." [Author's translation]

Considering the number of comments about the ways *Svenska Yle* and the journalists (should) strengthen Swedish in Finland, by upholding the standard language, by embracing variation, by actively developing the language, displaying it on the public arena and adding to its vitality, it is clear that the respondents feel responsible for the language. Some aspects they connect to the public service mission of *Yle*, but some aspects are closer to the role of language activists. As one respondent writes: *"Svenska Yles redaktörer har en viss ambassadörsroll vad gäller svenskan i Finland* ["*Svenska Yle's* journalists have a certain ambassador's role regarding Swedish in Finland"].

## 5.4. Reflections on the roles of Finland Swedish

The second part of the analysis focuses on the three status aspects of Finland Swedish. On some level, all three of them can be seen in the answers. Still, the dominating view relates to Finland Swedish as a language in its own right, with a standard variety as well as regional varieties and dialects that media should display.

There are many references to Finland Swedish as a language with its own language group identity, for example *"den finlandssvenska språkutvecklingen"*

["the Finland-Swedish language development"], *"finlandssvenskt uttal"* ["Finland-Swedish pronunciation"], and the strengthening of the Finland-Swedish identity. Those references can be seen as implicitly relating to the dominant variety Sweden Swedish, even though it is not explicitly stated. The role of Finland Swedish as a non-dominant variety of Swedish is touched upon in just a few of the comments. Naturally, all references to Swedish on a general level can be seen as a reflection on Swedish as a pluricentric language, but the few explicit mentions of Sweden Swedish are rather defensive, as in Quote 10:

> Q10) *"Att upprätthålla (den korrekta och lediga) finlandssvenskan, inte låta sig köras över av rikssvenskan*."
>
> "To uphold (the correct and relaxed) Finland Swedish, and not allow it to be over-run by Sweden Swedish." [Author's translation]

The attitudes towards Sweden Swedish vary among the respondents, which can be seen in their answers to other questions in the questionnaire analysed in Stenberg-Sirén (2017). While some feel it is important to follow the norms from Sweden, others want to allow for finlandisms and other specific features of Finland Swedish, and they are quite emotional in their defence of their own language and language identity. In that sense, all the comments about the uniqueness of Finland Swedish can be seen as a defence of Finland Swedish in its position as a non-dominant variety in relation to Sweden Swedish.

The role as a minority language in Finland is more clearly seen in their comments. Keeping Finnish influences out of Finland Swedish, providing words for current affairs in Swedish and avoiding "dåliga översättningar från finskan" ["bad translations from Finnish"] are examples of comments about elaborating and protecting Finland Swedish. Giving Swedish a platform in the Finnish society is related to its status as a national language as well as to its function as a minority language. Enhancing the status of Swedish in Finland can be seen in several comments, as well as in Quote 11:

> Q11) *"I ett nötskal märker jag att som Svenska Yle-reporter påminner man om svenskans existens i Finland*."
>
> "In a nutshell, I have noticed that I as a reporter at *Svenska Yle* remind people of the existence of Swedish in Finland." [Author's translation]

The conclusion of the analysis of how the different roles of Finland Swedish can be seen in the respondents' answers is that the journalists are highly aware of the non-dominant position of the language. It is non-dominant in relation to the dominant variety of Swedish in Sweden and it is non-dominant in relation to Finnish in the Finnish society. However, the respondents are not complying with this position and in many answers defence and pride of their own language Finland Swedish shines through.

## 6. Summary and discussion

The aim of this study was to analyse how journalists working in *Svenska Yle* see their own and *Yle's* mission for the Swedish language in Finland and how they connect that mission to the different roles of Finland Swedish. In short, the journalists apply three roles to the public service broadcaster *Svenska Yle*. First, they describe a top-down-model, where the media provide a language model for Finland Swedish to the audience. Secondly, they describe a bottom-up-model where *Svenska Yle* mirrors the linguistic diversity of contemporary society. Thirdly, they argue that *Svenska Yle* plays an important role for the status of Swedish in Finland. Finally, all three roles affecting the status of Finland Swedish are reflected in their answers. The uniqueness of Finland Swedish is enhanced, which can be interpreted as a defence against the dominance of Sweden Swedish as well as the national majority language Finnish.

The dominating view among the journalists is that *Yle* should provide a model for a "good language", with attributes typical of a standard language norm. Previous studies (Stenberg-Sirén 2016, 2017) confirm that most of them have a strong standard language ideology, being restrictive of allowing regional variation in the language of journalists in more "serious" program genres and believing in the importance of following language recommendations and guidelines. In other words, they see themselves as model speakers (Ammon 2004, p. 277). On a somewhat contradictory note, they enhance the importance of a correct (standard) language, but also want to allow for typical Finland-Swedish linguistic features strongly connected to the identity of the language group.

Similar views were found by Zabaleta et al. (2010) in their study of European minority language journalists, who often saw themselves as a combination of journalists and language activists. Likewise, Markelin et al. (2013) show that Sámi journalists harboured a strong belief that the Sámi language is central to their identity and that they had a responsibility for the language.

According to Cormack (2007, p. 54), a language minority needs a common identity in the struggle with other language groups. The idea that media can create a sense of a shared community can also be compared to the idea of an "imagined community", as proposed by Benedict Anderson (1991).

One of the key issues when discussing pluricentric languages is power (Clyne 1992, p. 455–456). The dominant variety has by default more power, at least in terms of the number of speakers, and in the case of Swedish also regarding the normative work done by language management agencies in Sweden. The language planning institutions in Finland closely follow the language recommendations and norms from Sweden, which means that the dominant variety has power over the development of the language. In general, minority language groups have less power than majority language groups, which can be seen also in Finland. The majority language Finnish dominates in most public contexts and the language rights of Swedish-speaking Finns are not always fulfilled (Nationalspråksstrategi 2021).

For Finland Swedish, being a non-dominant variety of a pluricentric language as well as a national minority language, it stands between two languages with more power. This fact is reflected in the views of journalists at *Svenska Yle.* In relation to the minority language position, they assign *Svenska Yle* the role of a language policy actor. Most of them assume responsibility for the language and believe that *Yle* has an important mission in upholding the vitality of Finland Swedish. The fact that the Swedish language is displayed in the Finnish society through media plays a symbolic role. According to Cormack (2004) media is significant as to how the community is represented both within itself and to outsiders. In short, media attention strengthens the minority's self-confidence, gives the language legitimacy and promotes the prestige of the minority language.

The complex relationship to Sweden Swedish is seen in their will to follow the common norms of the Swedish language, but also in their enhancement of the specific features of Finland Swedish. This correlates well with the views of Clyne (1992, p. 1): "Pluricentric languages are both unifiers and dividers of peoples. They unify people through the use of the language and separate them through the development of national norms and indices and linguistic variables with which the speakers identify." The journalists at Svenska *Yle* point out the value of their own language (variety) and want to shield it from too strong influences from both Finnish and Sweden Swedish.

## Bibliographical note

Jenny Stenberg-Sirén (jenny.stenberg-siren@helsinki.fi) is a University Lecturer in Journalism at the Swedish School of Social Science at the University of Helsinki. The focus of her research is on Finland Swedish, media linguistics, standard languages, language ideologies, social media, journalism and minority language media.

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