

## **DO THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES OF EUROPE NEED A NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY? SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SWEDISH FROM A MULTILINGUAL PERSPECTIVE**

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### **1. Introduction**

In October of 2000, the Swedish government commissioned a parliamentary committee to investigate the current status of the Swedish language in Sweden and to suggest measures to strengthen its position. In April of this year, the committee submitted its report. The purpose of this paper is to give some background to the report and to examine critically some of its suggestions, including the new constitutional amendment that is proposed. This might be of some general interest, as new policies for national majority languages have recently been carried out for some EU member states (France and Finland) and one candidate state (Poland). Similar developments may well be in progress in other parts of Europe. Language policy for the European Union is also a perennial topic of discussion (Conference Report, 1998). The conditions leading to Sweden's concern about the status of the majority language apply to many other European languages also (Boyd & Huss, 2001). Our discussion will be colored somewhat by the fact that, while we are both long-time residents of Sweden, neither of us is a native speaker of Swedish.

The official commission report (SOU, 2002: 27)<sup>2</sup>, a document comprising almost 600 pages, begins by stating the reasons for the official investigation which are threefold (p. 21):

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<sup>2</sup> This number is the official designation of this document in Sweden. Since there is no author, we will use this number in this paper to refer to the commission report. Page numbers will be given after a second colon.

- 1) that English has acquired an increasingly strong position internationally and therefore has become an ever more important language in Sweden as well;
- 2) that Sweden has become a more multilingual country, primarily by the recognition of the five official national minority languages;
- 3) that the demands for a good competence in language, both oral and written, have increased generally in society.

The first two reasons, taken together, can be seen as motivating the focus of the investigation: the national majority language Swedish, which is considered by some debaters to be increasingly hard pressed by English on the one hand and by minority languages on the other. Corpus planning for the national language, Swedish, has long been carried out by institutions such as the Swedish Academy, the Swedish Language Council and the Swedish Centre for Technical Terminology. The activities of the language council have been mainly focused on keeping track of ongoing changes (rather than trying to combat them), publishing dictionaries and writers' aids, and also promoting clarity in official language, based on democratic ideals. However, status planning has not been considered necessary until recently. The status of Swedish as the undisputed national majority language, which can be used virtually everywhere by virtually everyone, has until recently been taken for granted. The language has not had official status, nor has legislation been considered necessary to guarantee its position. Ongoing political, economic and social changes have however led to a greater concern that status planning may now be desirable.

In the remainder of this paper, we will briefly sketch the current situation for languages in Sweden other than Swedish and follow that with a critical analysis, from a multilingual perspective, of some suggestions made by the commission and of the proposed amendment to the Swedish constitution.

## **2. History and current situation for English and for the minority and immigrant languages**

### **2.1. English**

The commission's view is that English is becoming increasingly dominant in a number of domains in Sweden in which the majority language previously was the only language used. This view is certainly at least partly correct. The question is to what extent this can be seen as something that is an immediate "threat" to Swedish.

English is a pervasive presence in Sweden, as it is the first 'foreign' language learned in school. Instruction begins sometime during the first four years of school (age 6-10). Throughout school, English is one of only three subjects required to be passed for successful completion of both lower and upper secondary school, as well as for entrance to higher education. Outside the school system, English is used, sometimes alongside Swedish, sometimes replacing it, in many official domains: science, business, culture, entertainment and of course, information technology (Gunnarsson, 2001; Hyltenstam, 1999; Melander, 1997, 2001; Teleman, 1993). The educational emphasis on English, together with all these sources of English input, have led to a relatively high level of proficiency in and a very positive attitude towards English among many Swedes (Wingstedt, 1998). This positive attitude is not, however, shared by many of those who have been most active in voicing a concern about the role of English. They include many academics, particularly in the field of language cultivation and Nordic languages. The general public, according to a recent survey (Wingstedt, 1998) are largely indifferent to the increasing role of English.

Besides being important as the first foreign language, English is also one of the ten most common mother tongues among pupils in school. Pupils entitled to mother tongue instruction in English include not only children with one or both parents originating from Great Britain, the United States, Ireland, Australia, Canada etc, but also parts of Asia and Africa, provided the parents use the language at home with the child. This role for English is not mentioned at all in the committee report.

Education with English as the medium of instruction, which is offered in a few independent schools in the major cities, is at least as popular among English-speaking families who originate in Asia and Africa as those originating in Europe or North America, as well as among Swedish-speaking pupils. Education through the medium of English is also becoming popular in some publicly funded municipal schools, where neither the pupils nor the teachers are primarily English-speaking. This form of education has met a lot of criticism and is under study in many parts of the country where it is being carried out. A major problem seems to be that the teachers' proficiency in English is inadequate, which often leads to the instruction being carried out more traditionally (i.e. strongly teacher-dominated) than in other subjects.

## 2.2. Immigrant languages

The situation of immigrant languages is another factor leading to the commission's work. As early as the late 1960's, Sweden began providing state support for instruction in Swedish as a second language for adults. This instruction was and still is free for adult immigrants with residence permits. Instruction in Swedish as a second language is also available for school pupils, if the teacher deems it necessary. In the mid-1970's Sweden formulated its first comprehensive policy towards immigrants living within its borders. The new policy established the goal of active bilingualism for children who had a mother tongue other than Swedish, and made the provision of home language instruction compulsory for municipalities, assuming certain conditions were upheld. For the pupils it was optional. The intention of the lawmakers was that this decision should even provide for instruction in languages other than Swedish as media of instruction, not only as a supplementary school subject. However, only a small proportion of the pupils entitled to the instruction were actually able to receive instruction in their mother tongues as media of instruction. The decision to provide home language instruction was based on the belief, supported by research, that children who had a firm grounding in their mother tongue were more successful in learning a second language. The home language was mainly viewed as a means to an end, the end being successful learning of Swedish as a second language.

After the new immigration policy came into effect, Sweden acquired a positive image for providing this instruction, as it was rather unusual that such instruction was provided in other host countries at the time (unless such instruction was aimed at segregating minority pupils from going to school with majority pupils, as in some parts of Germany). This instruction was continued during the 1980's in various forms. At the beginning of the 1990's, when there was a severe economic downturn for Sweden, and the municipalities no longer received special funds for home language instruction or for instruction in Swedish as a second language, there was a general shift in emphasis from the "home languages" to Swedish as a second language. There seemed to be a general feeling that Sweden no longer could afford to support both. The earlier argument of the mother tongue as a means to successful bilingualism was no longer repeated.

In 1995, Swedish as a second language was officially made a school subject in its own right, with its own curriculum and grading criteria. In the meantime, much of

home language instruction was dismantled, as it became easier for the municipalities to avoid fulfilling their obligation to provide the instruction. Home language instruction was provided increasingly after regular school hours and by peripatetic teachers who thus had poor working conditions and only limited contact with colleagues teaching other subjects. In the late 1990's, home language instruction was renamed "mother tongue instruction", but this name change was accompanied by a further deterioration of the conditions of provision of the instruction: now the pupils had to choose one mother tongue: Swedish or another language. If Swedish was chosen, thus entitling the pupil to instruction in Swedish with majority pupils, then the pupil's right to mother tongue instruction was forfeited. If another language was declared to be the pupil's mother tongue, then the pupil was considered to have Swedish as a second language, and was sent to this instruction. The possibility that a pupil could have two mother tongues was not considered by these lawmakers.

### **2.3. National minority languages**

The case of national minority languages in Sweden is interesting in the context of language policies. In the spring of 2000, Sweden ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>3</sup>. This was the starting-point of an official Swedish minority policy, the first ever, which caused a profound change in the language-political situation in Sweden. Until the year 2000, Sweden had been a rather exceptional country in Europe in that the Swedish authorities had treated immigrant and minority languages as one group and avoided paying any special attention to the latter.

When the period of overt assimilation policies towards minorities ended in Sweden and the new immigrant policy was formulated in the 1970s, the historical minorities did not get any special attention. In some respects, they gained through immigration, for instance they could now apply for home language instruction in the school. In the Swedish Instrument of Government of 1974, 'religious and ethnic minorities' were granted the right to maintain and develop their cultures and no distinction was made between immigrants and historical minorities. However, there was an underlying assumption that the social and cultural needs of the latter, in those days

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<sup>3</sup> For a more comprehensive presentation of this theme, see Huss (2001).

primarily understood as the Finnish and Sami-speaking populations in northern Sweden, were best met by general cultural policies applying to all groups.

The official abandonment of assimilationist policies in Sweden in the 1970's coincided with a new type of minority activity in many parts of Europe and beyond. Historical minorities in various countries were experiencing an ethnic revival and many of them saw as their primary goal to secure the maintenance and development of their formerly neglected and even stigmatized cultures and languages. In the Nordic countries, the Sami had been the first to mobilize themselves and in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a veritable explosion of ethno-political and cultural activities among the Sami. The Swedish Tornedalians and Sweden Finns joined the ethnic revival somewhat later, in the 1980s. In the wake of the official multiculturalist immigrant policies in Sweden, these three historical minority groups saw their chance to make their voices heard (Huss, 1999).

The Sweden Finnish group differs from the other two groups by being the largest immigrant group by far in Sweden and Scandinavia but at the same time a group with very long linguistic roots in Sweden. From the Middle Ages to 1809, Finland was part of Sweden and even after that period, continuing migration movements tied the two countries together. The outcome has been an old Swedish-speaking population along the western and southern coastal regions in Finland, and their mirror-image in Sweden, Finnish-speaking groups in the middle and northern regions of Sweden.

The situation of two other minorities, the Roma and the Jews, are concerned, the situation is somewhat different. Until now, their language and culture maintenance efforts have not been as visible in society as those of the Sweden Finns, the Sami and the Tornedalians. In regard to the Roma, this is highly understandable in the light of the tradition that Romani is partly regarded as a secret language. There has been a certain reluctance among the members of the group to allow publication of dictionaries and text-books for use outside the group, or to organize mother tongue instruction in Romani. The Romani language has not only been a core-value of the Roma culture but a sign of belonging to the group (Fraurud & Hyltenstam, 1998: 243). There has been the understanding, as described for instance by Vuorela & Borin (1998: 60-61), that children will learn Romani as part of growing up, simply because it is the insider language of the community.

Yiddish-speakers are the group that has until now been the least visible among the historical language minorities discussed in this paper. This is partly the outcome of the general Jewish integration strategy applied in Sweden: the creation of in-group supportive networks financed by the group, independent of the host state (Boyd & Gadelii, 1999: 316). In some homes, Yiddish has been transmitted from parents to children, while in others, Swedish early became the family language. In some Jewish associations in Sweden, Yiddish has played and still plays a fairly important role (Boyd & Gadelii, 1999: 317-18).

Estimated sizes of the national minority groups in Sweden and the number of the speakers of minority languages in 1999 are given in the table below. These numbers are only rough estimates, as no registration of ethnicity or language is made in the Swedish census.

National minority groups		Speakers of national minority languages	
Sweden Finns	400,000	Finnish	250,000
Tornedalians	70,000-80,000	Meänkieli	50,000-60,000
Sami	15,000-20,000	Sami	10,000
Roma	15,000-20,000	Romani	10,000
Jews	20,000	Yiddish	5,000-6,000

Table 1. National minority groups and speakers of national minority languages in Sweden (Huss, 2001).

### 3. Critical discussion of the commission's report

As outlined above, the background of social and political changes leading to the committee's work include the spread of English and the increasing linguistic diversity in Sweden. The committee claim, however (SOU, 2002: 27:23) that the measures they suggest should promote the use of Swedish, but *not* at the expense of a "necessary use of English and other foreign languages". It ought to be unquestionable that the measures suggested not infringe on the few rights already accorded the national minority languages in 2000. It is too bad that it was not specifically stated that the suggestions ought not to infringe on use of other mother tongues in Sweden such as the immigrant languages or sign language. Perhaps these languages are included in the vague term "foreign languages". This formulation of, in principle, a lofty goal, is only one example of many where we suspect that the commission temporarily ignored the fact that a large proportion of the population do not have Swedish as their (only) mother tongue. One

estimate is that as many as 20% of the current population have foreign background. Despite the efforts of the commission to make sure that the investigation and report were broad, and included special chapters on language diversity and Swedish as a second language, we found several places where more ethnocentric attitudes seem to surface.

We support, however, many of the measures suggested, and believe that the commission's work in large part is laudable. Among other things, their work has brought language policy, and in particular, language status planning into focus and it has now become a more common topic of debate, for example in the recent parliamentary election campaign. However, we find several instances in which the commission has suggested measures we believe *will* have detrimental effects on other languages, primarily the national minority languages and the mother tongues of immigrants to Sweden. We are also afraid some of the suggestions will obstruct necessary and desirable international contacts which up until now have involved using English as a *lingua franca*.

### 3.1. Goals of the commission

The commission sees its work as aiming at guaranteeing three conditions (SOU, 2002: 27:22):

- 1) that Swedish should be a complete and society-supporting language<sup>4</sup>,
- 2) that Swedish used in the public sphere should be correct and well-functioning,
- 3) that everyone should have the right to language: Swedish, the mother tongue, and foreign languages.

The first aim is a bit difficult to interpret. What exactly is a “complete and society-supporting language”? By this the commission means (p. 419) that Swedish should continue to be the “common language in Sweden and therefore the language which, in a multicultural society, makes it possible for persons with different language backgrounds to communicate and co-operate”. That seems perhaps harmless enough, but (as is pointed out in debates about a reduction in the number of working languages within the EU) what it in fact implies is that persons who have this “common language”

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<sup>4</sup> We regret this rather awkward English term. The term in the Swedish original is “samhällsbärande”, a term which was probably coined by the commission. The commission's explanation of this term is given in the text.

as a mother tongue will always be at an advantage in such communications and cooperation, compared with persons with other mother tongues.

The second goal is also problematic, as it is unclear what exactly is meant by “correct” (by whose standards?) or “well-functioning” (for whom?). The issues discussed in the corresponding part of the report include mass media language, the language of public administration and information technology. In the area of public administration, the commission wishes to guarantee that Sweden continue its work towards clarity and simplicity. In the other two arenas (mass media and information technology) that these not be further encroached upon by English. The question arises as to what extent the Language Council that the document proposes to form can exert a significant influence on media and information technology originating in other countries or prevent it from being used in Sweden.

We are concerned that the stipulation that the Swedish used in public administration should be “correct” might furthermore be misused to exclude persons with other mother tongues from employment in the public sector in capacities such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, judges, social workers etc. It has already proven difficult for persons with foreign background, including persons with higher education, to attain access to qualified employment. This goal, as its stated here, could provide further hindrances to their efforts (Boyd *et al.*, 2000; Boyd, 2003).

In the third goal, “mother tongue” refers to mother tongues other than Swedish and in this way, long-term linguistic diversity in Sweden is set up as a goal. Nevertheless, the reader soon gets the impression that Swedish in its various forms –as a mother tongue, second language or regional variety– is the language to be protected against “other languages, especially English” which have gained in strength “in certain domains” and “internationally as well as nationally” (p. 465). Minority mother tongues are as a rule treated separately and the measures proposed to guarantee their survival in Sweden are few, and usually more weakly formulated than the corresponding measures proposed for Swedish. Many speakers of minority languages see the role of the minority language in school education as crucial for its survival, and the report does include proposals concerning minority languages in the Swedish school system. Here the focus is on mother tongue instruction, that is, a couple of weekly lessons of the mother tongue in an otherwise Swedish school. It is proposed that mother tongue instruction be

strengthened and its status be enhanced, that the number of mother tongue teachers be increased and the municipalities be made to better inform parents about the possibilities of choosing mother tongue instruction.

However, there is ample evidence to the effect that mere lessons in a language are not enough if children are to become bilingual or if minority languages are to be maintained in the long term. Education through the medium of the minority language is needed to reach that goal. It is actually stated in the report that bilingual education is a very positive and empowering form of education which leads to better school achievement, better Swedish, a higher degree of bilingualism and a favorable identity development among immigrant and minority pupils. Nevertheless, in contrast to what is the case with mother tongue education, there are no direct proposals concerning bilingual education or minority language medium education. This easily gives the impression that there is no real wish to promote long-term bilingualism and minority language maintenance in Sweden.

### **3.2. New constitutional amendment**

The document proposes (SOU, 2002: 27: 470) a new amendment to the constitution as follows:

§1 The Swedish language is the main language of Sweden and the official language in international contexts.

§2 Those who conduct affairs within public administration must use a clear and understandable Swedish.

§3 In other [parts of ] the constitution there are other regulations about how the Swedish language should be used. There are also regulations about the use of the national minority languages, sign language and other languages.

The use of the term “main language” in paragraph 1 is discussed briefly in the report. It is mentioned that “main” was used instead of “official” because there are three minority languages which can also be regarded as official languages. It is also stated that the term “main language” emphasizes the importance of the Swedish language and at the same time implies that Swedish is the language spoken by a great majority of the inhabitants of the country. The term “main” is also said to imply that Swedish is not the only language in the country; there are other languages as well to be taken into consideration. (SOU, 2002: 27: 69) However, there is also an evaluation in the term “main” which is unfortunate in this context. Clearly, there is thus only one “main”

language in the country, together with many other languages. If it is called “main” because it is spoken by the vast majority of inhabitants, it seems odd that we should need a constitutional amendment to confirm this. If it is called “main” because it is important, then the implication is that it is more important than all the others. It is difficult to draw any other conclusion than that this is the view of the commission.

The second part of the first paragraph in the amendment concerns Swedish as the official language of the country in international contexts. The use of the word “official” is in this case motivated by stating that “official language” is the term mostly used internationally.

In the text, two examples of international contexts where Swedish is proposed to be the official language are given: the European Union and Nordic cooperation (p. 469). Implicitly other such contexts are supposed to exist as well, although there in fact are few where Swedish can be used today. Furthermore, even the two examples mentioned are problematic. The official language policy of the European Union is constantly discussed and there is no guarantee that the present situation will prevail indefinitely, that is, that the national languages of all member states can be used to some extent within the European Union. As the number of member states increases, a revision of the language policy towards a much more limited number of official languages is a possibility. In that case, the proposed Swedish Language Law would be in conflict with the future language policy within the European Union.

Within the field of Nordic cooperation, promoting Swedish as the (only) official language in international contexts is also very problematic. The three official minority languages Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami are today used in various kinds of official, international contexts with the users of these languages in the neighboring countries. Promotion of contacts over the borders between speakers of the same or similar minority languages is also an important obligation included in the two European conventions recently signed and ratified by Sweden (see above). To introduce a law making Swedish the official language in such contacts would be clearly against the spirit of these conventions. English is also sometimes used in Nordic contexts because many Finns, Greenlanders and Icelanders have problems using neighboring languages.

The second paragraph of the amendment is probably intended to encourage a continuation of the work with simplicity, clarity and openness in official

communications. This effort is laudable, and to the advantage of persons who do not have Swedish as a mother tongue in their role as *receptive* participants in communication. As indicated above, the law could however be used to exclude them from participation as speakers and writers, as their abilities to produce “clear and understandable” Swedish could be questioned.

It is furthermore unclear why it must be specified that the language used in public administration should be Swedish, when in fact, as mentioned earlier, speakers of the three minority languages Finnish, Tornedal Finnish and Sami already have a legal right to use these languages in public affairs in certain municipalities in Sweden. In addition, it seems unwise to stipulate that a public authority, which would include e.g. universities, should be required to conduct all its business in Swedish. For example, if the law is applied strictly, it might be difficult in the future for a Swedish university to host an international conference such as this one, to hold guest lectures with international speakers, hold courses in English or to receive foreign guest researchers. This law could be used by Swedish-speakers to require that interpretation of the proceedings and translation of documents from English into Swedish be made. If the law is used in this way, it could reduce international contacts in many areas such as health care, education, science and culture, since many activities in these areas are within the realm of public affairs.

### **3.3. Underlying attitudes sometimes surface**

**3.3.1. Democracy.** There is another interesting inconsistency in the commission report; we wonder if similar arguments have been voiced in other parts of Europe. It is argued in some parts of the document that it is in the interest of democracy that Swedish be used as a “common language” in the public discourse within Sweden. This means that everyone is operating on the same terms. At the same time, the first paragraph of the amendment is intended to guarantee that Swedish continues to be used as a working language within the European Union. In that context, it is seen as a democratic right that Swedish speakers can communicate with the EU institutions in their own language. In a European context, Swedish speakers realize that they are at a disadvantage if they cannot communicate in Swedish. If using one’s own language is a democratic right within Europe, why is it not a right within Sweden? If it is democratic to conduct the

public discourse in Sweden in one language, it should not be a different matter in Europe.

**3.3.2. Universities and colleges.** One area where specific regulations are recommended is in the area of academic life. A suggestion made there is that English, Swedish and other languages should as much as possible be used side-by-side. An example of a regulation in this area is that when graduate students write their doctoral theses in English or another language other than Swedish, they should include a summary in Swedish. If the thesis is written in Swedish, it should include a summary in English (or another language). This is in our view an example of a positive step towards both internationalisation and of good language cultivation. Foreign students can obtain help with translations of their summaries into Swedish. This work will facilitate the maintenance and development of scientific terminology in Swedish, without reducing the possibility of international exchange of scientific results. This regulation has, however, been strongly opposed by the medical and technical faculties of many universities.

**3.3.3. Normality.** In the committee report, there is a marked tendency to focus on Swedish and state what the “normal” state of affairs should be. We would like to claim that there is a risk that everything beyond that will be seen as exceptions or something “less normal”, or even less important. A proposal on p. 122 reads: “Swedish shall normally be used within official administration. Further on, it is seen as important to make Swedish “visible in public spaces” and to mark the position of Swedish as a *complete* language. It is therefore proposed that signs and other information from state and municipal authorities ”normally” be in Swedish and, in relevant contexts in the national minority languages (p. 123). The addition about minority languages is very important here because according to the new minority language policy the three official ones (Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami) should also be made visible in “public spaces” and they can also be seen as being “socially complete”. In many cases, proposals focusing on Swedish should be complemented with similar proposals about minority languages, for instance,

- \* that state and municipal authorities shall have Swedish names,
- \* that these names shall normally be used in communication within the country,
- \* that the authorities shall have Swedish e-mail addresses.

The underlying difficulty here and in various other sections of the report might be that the writers have wanted to oppose an overuse of English in various contexts but they have not explicitly expressed that English is the target. This gives the impression that Swedish is promoted at the cost of all other languages.

Another example of thoughtless assumptions that Swedish is the only mother tongue can be found on p. 153: “The schools should promote and stimulate the use of computer programs in Swedish”. This could be interpreted as being against the efforts of some bilingual schools to promote computer programs in Sami, Finnish and other minority languages. The case is similar when measures to promote the creation of new terminology for various fields, the development of the language of the media, the improvement of the quality of translations and the promotion of corpus planning measures for the language use of the authorities. Efforts are proposed to promote Swedish in all these fields, establishing it as the “normal” language in society and leaving immigrant and minority languages to be treated separately in special, minor sections. Important links and points of comparison between Swedish and other languages are therefore left unnoticed.

**3.3.4. Language attitudes.** Another example of a strong Swedish bias in the text is found on p. 177 where a proposal is made to “take measures in order to changes attitudes towards the Swedish language and its varieties in a positive direction”.

This proposal must be seen in the light of the fact that according to an attitude study referred to in the report, 96% of the informants considered the Swedish language as “very important”. It is stated that attitudes towards other languages spoken as mother tongues in Sweden should also be improved and another study is referred to where it is shown that 40% of the Swedish population agrees with the statement that “it would be best for Sweden if everybody in Sweden spoke Swedish as their mother tongue”. But when it comes to proposals concerning immigrant and minority languages, there is only a general proposal that “these languages be promoted”, not that the attitudes towards them should be improved (p. 204). A better proposal would have been that attitudes towards all languages spoken in Sweden –mother tongues, second languages and foreign languages– should be improved. That would have been more in tune with the general goal of the new policy: everybody’s right to language.

#### 4. Conclusion

By entering the arena of status planning, Sweden has made some positive steps. The recognition of national historical minority languages was an important first step. It is also laudable that the commission attempted to look at the broad picture of language status in Sweden, including the status of minority languages, immigrant languages and sign language. The report includes important information and some good suggestions regarding other languages, although many of them are not strongly worded.

However, we feel we must point out that they have also fallen into some traps of ethnocentric thinking. By treating Swedish separately from other languages in the report, it's been possible temporarily to "forget" about language diversity. At the same time, certain similarities in the situation e.g. of traditional dialects and minority languages become obscured and several inconsistencies arise. By guaranteeing a strong position for Swedish, the effect can be, after the tentative step forward of granting some new rights for historical minority languages, two steps backwards toward more linguistic uniformity and a guarantee of national hegemony of Swedish in Sweden.

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