



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Border crossing: Immersion Teacher Educators Share Successes and Challenges

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Dual Language/Immersion Education

Swedish immersion



1. A one-way immersion program, developed for Finnish speakers
2. Early total programs (kindergarten-grade 9)
3. 0.5 % of the entire student population attends immersion (approximately 5,000 students)
4. Special features:
 - a) use of Finnish (L1) approximately 10% of the instructional time from the first school year, though literacy formally taught through Swedish.
 - b) oriented towards multilingualism

Teachers in Finland, generally



- A popular profession. Numbers of applicants many times higher than the intake to teacher education programs.

—————> The qualification situation relatively good

- The profession has a high status in Finland
- Teachers are autonomous in their work; right to decide on teaching methods, teaching materials and pupil/student assessment. Possibilities to draw up local curricula within the frameworks of given national curricula.
- The teaching system is based on trust rather than control. Teachers are not evaluated through external or formal measure. There are no regular annual national tests for pupils in basic education.
- The teaching profession is slightly more female-dominated than in other countries and the profession is ageing in Finland (compared with OECD average).

(The National Board of Education, Finland 2013)

Teachers in immersion



- Swedish immersion belongs to the Finnish-speaking education system, where Finnish speakers are trained to be teachers. Swedish speakers are mainly trained to function as teachers within the parallel Swedish-speaking education system in Finland.

Immersion teachers; formal requirements

In a decree from 1998 the language competence of a teacher who uses another language as language of instruction (than that of the school) is regulated as follows:

””henkilö, joka hallitsee opetuksessa käytettävän kielen”

(a person who masters the language to be used in teaching)

This decree was specified in 2005 by the National Board of Education and stipulates that the required language competence is achieved when:

- teachers have completed a university degree which includes 80 ECTS of language studies in the language used as the language of instruction
- teachers have passed the National Certificates of Language Proficiency that can be taken at Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels.

Skill level descriptions; advanced level (levels 5 and 6)



Understands longer sections of speech at normal speed in face-to-face situations and from TV and radio, even though comprehension sometimes requires a certain amount of effort. Understands structurally and linguistically complex texts and literature of our time. Speaks and writes clearly and fluently on various topics, but the use of less common vocabulary and complex sentence structures may, however, cause difficulties. Generally has a good and versatile command of grammar and vocabulary.

Understands a wide range of spoken and written language without difficulty. Experiences only occasional difficulties with subtle differences of tone and nuance in expressions. Speaks and writes extremely fluently in a situationally-appropriate style. Is able to express even subtle nuances of meaning. Has a solid command of grammar and vocabulary in almost all situations; even small inaccuracies are rare.

Development of in-service and pre-service education for immersion



- 1987 The first immersion group established in the city of Vaasa
From local to national interest via scientific evaluations
required by the National Board of Education
A research team at the University of Vaasa provided individual
coaching of bilingual teachers (with Swedish as their dominant
language and high fluency in Finnish/with Finnish as their
dominant language and high fluency in Swedish)
- 1989 Courses on immersion and bilingualism, seminars,
conferences offered at the University of Vaasa
- 1994 Development of a PD-program (60 ECTS) for teachers;
in-service education

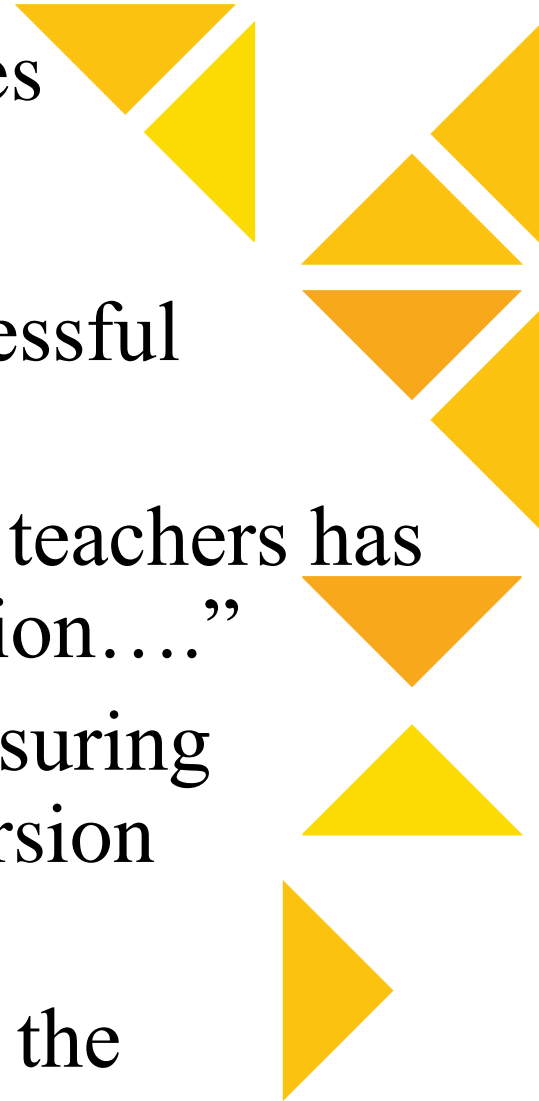
Development of in-service and pre-service education for immersion



- 1997 The Centre for Immersion and Multilingualism was founded at the University of Vaasa
- 1998 Pre-service education for class teachers and kindergarten teachers offered by University of Vaasa and the teacher training college in Kajaani (University of Oulu)
- 2009 Last intake of students to the program (due to economic crisis of the University of Oulu the teacher training college in Kajaani was closed down)
- 2012 The first government language strategy is published

Strategy for the National languages of Finland (2012)

- “Immersion has proved to be a successful teaching method...”
- “A shortage of qualified immersion teachers has impeded the expansion of immersion...”
- “Better conditions are created for ensuring adequate and high-standard immersion teaching.”
- “Effort will also be made to expand the provision of language immersion”



Actions for promoting immersion



- Within the appropriations reserved in the State Budget for the personnel training of teaching staff, enough immersion teachers are trained both within basic training and further training to meet this country's need for them. (Ministry of Education and Culture)
- As part of the preparations for the training, the need for immersion teachers is determined on the basis of the demand for immersion. Together with universities, the Ministry will create a specialisation path for immersion teachers within the training programmes for kindergarten teachers, class teachers and subject teachers. (Ministry of Education and Culture)

Actions for promoting immersion



- A curriculum for national immersion teaching is drawn up as part of the revision of curricula in basic education. The core curriculum takes into account the continuum and special features of immersion teaching. (National Board of Education)
- Municipalities and parents are informed of immersion activities and possibilities. (National Board of Education)” (p. 26)

Pre-service programme in immersion education, 300 ECTS (2014-)

BACHELOR'S DEGREE 180 ECTS
MASTER'S DEGREE 120 ECTS

University of Vaasa

Åbo Akademi University

GENERAL
STUDIES,
STUDIES IN
LANGUAGE AND
COMMUNICATION
15 ECTS

MAIN SUBJECT:
SWEDISH LANGUAGE
INCLUDING COURSES
ON BI- AND
MULTILINGUALISM
165 ECTS

PEDAGOGICAL
STUDIES FOR
TEACHERS
60 ECTS

MULTIDISCIPLINARY
STUDIES IN THE
SUBJECTS AND
CROSS-CURRICULAR
THEMES TAUGHT IN
BASIC EDUCATION
60 ECTS

Contents of the studies

MAIN SUBJECT: SWEDISH LANGUAGE INCLUDING COURSES ON BI- AND MULTILINGUALISM 165 ECTS

Swedish: 70 ECTS

Courses in language skills, grammar, Swedish literature, translation, Nordistics, Danish and Norwegian, Academic writing etc.

Multilingualism: 45 ECTS

Courses in bi- and multilingualism among individuals, in education and society, language learning and acquisition, language immersion and other bilingual education, Swedish as a second language, current research areas in immersion and multilingualism etc.

Bachelor's and Master's theses: 10 + 40 ECTS

themes related to immersion and multilingualism

Contents of the studies

PEDAGOGICAL STUDIES FOR TEACHERS 60 ECTS

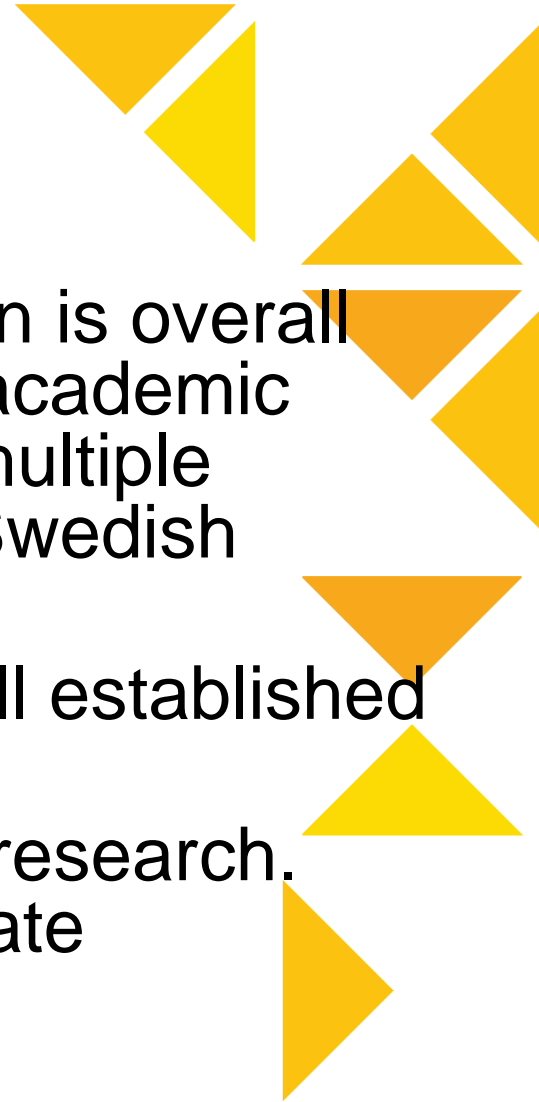
Courses in education, educational psychology, special education, school didactics, teacher identity etc. 40 ECTS
4 practice periods (in immersion education) 20 ECTS

MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN THE SUBJECTS AND CROSS-CURRICULAR THEMES TAUGHT IN BASIC EDUCATION 60 ECTS

Courses in all school subjects, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry, biology, geography, music, physical education, art etc.

Successes

- A. The outcome of Swedish immersion is overall positive (language development + academic achievement). A recent interest in multiple language acquisition provided via Swedish immersion.
- B. Existing immersion schools are well established and function well.
- C. Swedish immersion backed up by research. Researchers and teachers co-operate intensively. Dedicated teachers.



Successes

- D. Teachers in immersion have possibilities of meeting annually and exchange experiences.
- E. Immersion and CLIL education is explicitly mentioned in the national curriculum and special features are recognized.
- F. A substantial input on the Swedish language in the new pre-service program in immersion education. Immersion teacher students learn both language skills and subject-related terminology in Swedish.



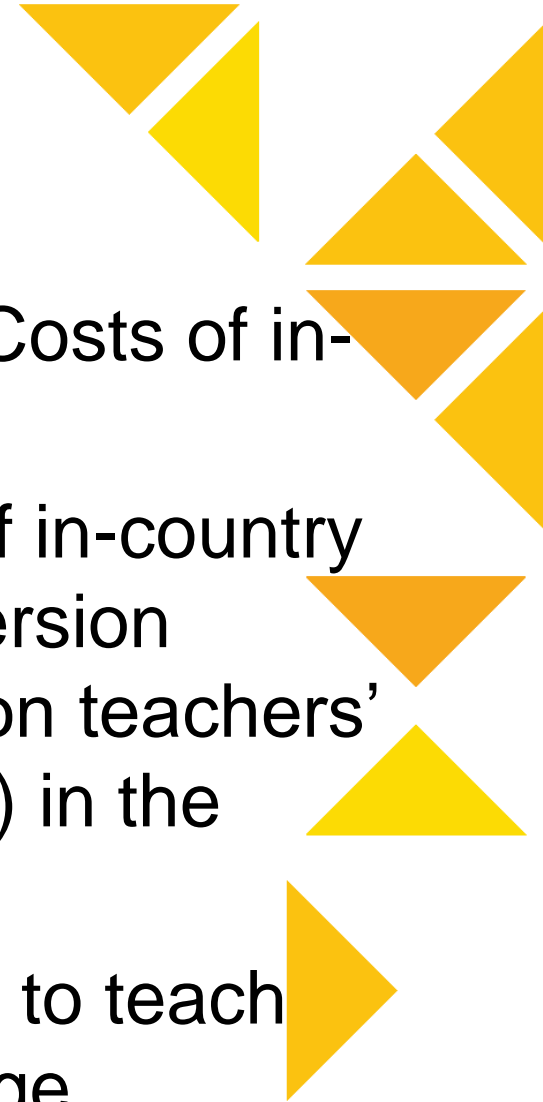
Challenges



- Swedish immersion very dependent on the goodwill of the national government
- The overall diminishing presence of the Swedish language in Finland (motivation; interest in other languages than Swedish)
- Swedish immersion only offered in the bilingual (Finnish-Swedish) areas of Finland.
- No teaching material available (teachers develop their own and share with each other)

Challenges

- Availability of in-service education/Costs of in-service education
- No research on potential benefits of in-country knowledge and experience of immersion teachers and on effects of immersion teachers' mother tongue (Finnish or Swedish) in the immersion classroom.
- A shortage of subject teachers able to teach their subject in the Swedish language



Thank you
Kiitos
Tack

