

Tomas Hammar and Markku Peura:

SWEDISH-SPEAKING AND FINNISH-SPEAKING FINNS IN STOCKHOLM IN 1975



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Among the emigrants residing in Sweden, there are both Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking Finns. Comparing these two ethnic groups, we shall look in this article for answers to questions about the economic and social conditions in which Finnish emigrants find themselves, as well as about these Finns' evaluation of their own situation in Sweden. Up to now, researchers have not made enough use of opportunities to compare these two language groups. They may have made the same mistake as many officials and journalists, forgetting that there are a large number of Swedish-speaking persons among the Finns who have migrated to Sweden.¹

The Swedish population register may be blamed for this oversight, for unlike the register in Finland, it contains no information about

the mother tongue of individual persons. A researcher who wants to study Finns resident in Sweden can not therefore draw a particular sample only of Finnish-speaking or only of Swedish-speaking persons. Members of both groups will always be included, and the researcher will be obliged to collect data about individual persons before he can differentiate the two groups. Public agencies that want to mail information to Finns do not for the same reason know whose mother tongue is Swedish and whose Finnish. They therefore distribute material printed in Finnish to persons in both language groups. As a result, these agencies often receive complaints from persons who feel insulted over the fact that no attention is paid to their mother tongue.²⁾

A national registration of mother tongues has been proposed several times. Associations of immigrants in Sweden, among others, argue that such registration involves a great principle and would have a practical impact on the implementation of Swedish immigration and minority policy. It is likely that a change will finally be brought about in the population register.³⁾ But so far the idea of language registration has not been accepted in unilingual Sweden. The indigenous minorities, the Tornedal / Finns and the Lapps in the North, are supposed to remain in the periphery or learn Swedish fluently if they move south. Only since the large immigration waves of the 1960s and the 1970s have students of foreign origin become numerous in Swedish schools. In this new situation, the issue is not one of two national languages established on a constitutional status, as is the case in Finland, but of several languages spoken by immigrant groups of varying size. In 1982, 335 students whose mother tongue was Lappish were enrolled in the Swedish schools; and according to official statistics, 21 other languages were represented by larger numbers of students, Finnish was the mother tongue of 37 067, Spanish of 4 956 and Turkish of 1 914, etc.⁴⁾

Finnish is the first immigrant language not only because of its numerical importance, however. It has a long history in Sweden. From the Middle Ages to 1809, Sweden and Finland were two parts of one state, and there were always Finnish-speaking populations also in regions that belong to present-day Sweden: Stockholm Finns, Norrbotten Finns and Finns in forested provinces, where they introduced new methods of cultivating land by burning the woods. Consequently, Finnish is often given a special status among immigrant languages in the present debate on immigrants and minorities, comparisons are often made between the strong legal status of the Swedish language in Finland and the unclear position of the Finnish language in Sweden, as for instance when demands are raised by Finnish parents in Sweden

that Finnish be used as the language of instruction for Finnish students also in schools in Sweden.

At present, little is known about the Swedish-speaking Finns who live in Sweden. Finnish statistics reveal that 16 562 Swedish-speakers emigrated in the period 1970-1978, and this corresponds to 11.6 per cent of all the emigrants.⁵⁾ The Swedish-speaking minority in Finland is only 6.4 per cent of the total population, however, and the proportion of Swedish-speaking emigrants was almost twice as high as the Swedish ratio of the population. They also have a greater propensity to stay in Sweden, even though many of them do also return. The end result is that about 20 per cent of the Finns in Sweden speak Swedish as their mother tongue. There is, as we have seen, no official registration by language, but according to a reasonable estimate, the Swedish-speaking Finns in Sweden number about 60 000 persons, not counting children born in Sweden.⁶⁾

The volume of emigration from Finland to Sweden has by and large been decided by employment opportunities and wage differences in the two countries. In some periods, Swedish employers have actively recruited workers in Finland, but to a large extent Finns have found jobs in Sweden on their own. Young Swedish-speaking Finns have been at an advantage thanks to their fluency with the language of the land. They have enjoyed a head start over their Finnish-speaking compatriots when new employment opportunities have opened up in Sweden. The emigration of Swedish-speaking Finns has indeed grown to the extent of arousing fears that too few would be staying at home for maintaining schools, cultural activities, associations and institutions in some areas in Finland.

There are two national federations of Finnish associations in Sweden, one for the Swedish-speaking emigrants, "Finlandssvenskarnas Riksförbund i Sverige (FRIS)," and another for the Finnish-speaking ones, "Riksförbundet Finska Föreningar i Sverige (RFFS)." Both are recognized and financially supported by the Swedish state, and cooperation between them is strengthened by a number of common interests. However, the future status of the Finnish language in Sweden and, in particular, the need for Finnish classes and schools are of course the crucial issues, especially for the federation of Finnish-speaking associations (RFFS).

Emigration from Finland to Sweden should be seen as part of the great waves of international migration that have been taking place in this century; but in many respects it also resembles the internal migration taking place within a single country. Swedish-speaking Finns from Österbotten move to Sweden in the way Swedes from the North of Sweden go south inside the boundaries of Sweden. The same kind

of economic situations determine these migratory flows, and as no language barriers exist and no passports or permits are required, thanks to the Nordic agreement recognizing the free circulation of workers in a common Nordic labour market, the difference between international and internal migration is in fact very small.

In research on migration, comparisons should therefore be made between these two forms of migration to a much greater extent than has been done so far. Emigration from Finland, immigration to Sweden, return to Finland, re-emigration to Sweden, etc., all these movements are seldom final in the same way as migration from Mediterranean countries or countries outside Europe often is. The Swedish- and Finnish-speaking Finns who move to Sweden and return to Finland should be studied as interesting cases on the borderline between internal and international migration. So far, attempts to compare these two groups have been made only in a few Swedish immigration projects. In this article, we shall present some results from one attempt of this kind.

Survey of political resocialisation of immigrants in 1975-1976

During the years 1975-1976, a large survey was made in the city of Stockholm, covering samples of immigrants born in Finland, Poland, Yugoslavia and Turkey as well as a sample of native Swedes. Altogether, more than 2 500 interviews were done, and 940 of them were interviews with persons born in Finland.⁹⁾ The reason for this enlarged sample of Finns was the language division within the group. We needed a sample large enough to secure a few hundred Swedish-speaking Finns, but we could not know in advance who belonged to this group or what would be the proportion of Swedish-speaking immigrants living in Stockholm. We assumed that the proportion would be above average, and this was correct: 32 per cent of all the Finns in the city of Stockholm reported that Swedish was their mother tongue.

Table 1. Mother tongue as reported by respondents

	Finnish	Swedish	Russian	Lappish	Uncertain	Total
Number	630	302	1	1	4	941
Per cent	67.0	32.4	0.1	0.1	0.4	100

In a pilot study of Finns in the industrial municipality of Södertälje, some twenty miles south of Stockholm, we found in 1973 a number of interesting differences between Swedish- and Finnish-speaking Finns.¹⁰⁾ The proportion of Swedish-speaking Finns was lower in Södertälje than in Stockholm, about 22 per cent, which probably is close to the average for Sweden. Some findings from Södertälje in 1973 will be used in the following presentation of results from Stockholm in 1975.

We asked all the Finns in Stockholm: "What is your mother tongue?" As the respondents were all born in Finland, we have reason to believe that those who answered "Swedish," had spoken Swedish already in Finland. Only in exceptional cases may persons have identified themselves as Swedish-speaking although their first language had actually been Finnish; this presupposes that they had arrived in Sweden at a very early age and then quickly switched languages.

Many of those who had stayed a long time in Sweden did not want to give an interview, explaining that they were no longer immigrants. We had to tell them that we were studying long-term consequences and wanted to share the experience of all those who had once moved to Sweden. This explanation was usually accepted, and only 7 per cent of the sample categorically refused to take part. When analysing the results, however, we should remember that many of those interviewed had lived for quite long periods in Sweden. It is an empirical question whether or not they considered themselves "immigrants" or to what extent.

Language fluency

Many Swedish-speaking Finns are of course also proficient in the Finnish language. In Finland, it is even more common that those whose mother tongue is Swedish also know Finnish. According to a survey made in 1950, 46 per cent of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland said that they knew Finnish too, while only 8 per cent of those who were Finnish-speaking knew Swedish.¹¹⁾ This is what we might expect to find in a society where one language dominates strongly. These figures are very old, however, and the proportion of bilingual people has probably increased somewhat in both language groups as a result of a higher level of education and because of the two-way migration between Finland and Sweden. Several hundred thousands of Finns now living in Finland have during one period or an other worked in Sweden, and then at least to some extent been exposed to the Swedish tongue.

We asked the Finns in Stockholm: "What languages do you speak yourself?" and we gave them seven response alternatives, as can be seen in table 2.

High proportions of Swedish-speaking persons, of course, answered, "Swedish," and high proportions of Finnish-speaking persons answered, "Finnish". Much more interesting is the widespread bilingual proficiency. Among Swedish-speakers, 13 per cent said that they were quite bilingual and another 24 per cent said that their Finnish was rather good. Among Finnish speakers, there were even more bilinguals. Thirty-six per cent knew Swedish as least as well as Finnish. Another 40 per cent said that their Swedish was not very bad. Only one out of four had no or very little knowledge of Swedish. Compared with the survey made in Finland in 1950, the Finnish-speaking emigrants in Stockholm interviewed in 1975 were to a much greater extent able to speak Swedish. This is, of course, what should be expected, as many of them had lived in Sweden for years.

Table 2. Self-declared language proficiency

Language proficiency	Persons whose mother tongue was Swedish (Swedish-speaking persons)	Persons whose mother tongue was Finnish (Finnish-speaking persons)
Only Finnish	0%	4%
Finnish and some Swedish	0%	21%
Finnish and rather good Swedish	1%	40%
Both languages equally well	12%	32%
Swedish and rather good Finnish	24%	3%
Swedish and some Finnish	30%	1%
Only Swedish	34%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Table 2 also says something about the language proficiency in general in Stockholm at the time of the interviews. It should be expected that an improvement would have taken place since then, mainly because of the reduction in new immigration to Sweden. But as early as 1975, the following summary could be made in Stockholm: Three out of

every ten persons born in Finland spoke Swedish as their mother tongue. Among the seven whose mother tongue was Finnish, five had a good or at least a fair knowledge of Swedish. Nevertheless, the Swedish language was a problem for not less than 25 per cent of all those whose mother tongue was Finnish.

This summary also indicates a better situation in Stockholm in 1975 than in Södertälje in 1973. In response to the same question, 46 per cent of those born in Finland who were living in Södertälje said that they spoke only Finnish or in addition also a little Swedish.¹²⁾ We can hardly explain this improvement in language proficiency as a result of formal or informal education. The results are better in Stockholm thanks to a higher proportion of Finns with Swedish as their mother tongue and thanks to a higher general level of education among the Finns resident in Stockholm. We can study these differences more in detail as we now make an attempt to classify the Stockholm sample by social class.

Social class

The Stockholm labour market is much more differentiated than it is on average in Sweden. The proportion of workers is lower in general, but probably also among immigrants in the city, even if it is true that there are always many workers among immigrants. It is easier for Swedish-speaking Finns to obtain white-collar employment where good command of Swedish is required, and bilingual persons are in some cases even preferred, especially in jobs related to immigrants (language teachers, hospital and childcare personnel, etc.). We have divided the Finns interviewed into two groups, where all those with occupations organized by the National Federation of Trade Unions (the Landsorganisation or LO) are called "workers," while all others are labelled "middle class." The term "middle class" is not used here in a theoretical sense; it is instead a category in which quite different occupations have been included, ranging from employers and higher civil servants, doctors and architects to hospital personnel and teachers, etc.¹³⁾

Seventy-four per cent of all the Finns in Stockholm were workers, with only a few per cent more among the Finnish speakers than among the Swedish speakers. Thirty-two per cent of the Swedish speaking Finns were classified as "middle class," while the figure for Finnish-speaking persons was 23 per cent. There is a class difference, but it is small. Most surprisingly, perhaps, we find a relatively high proportion

of Finnish speakers in Stockholm in occupations that often require a high language proficiency. Compared with the findings in Södertälje, there are about twice as many "middle-class" Finnish speaking Finns in Stockholm.¹⁴⁾

Table 3. Class-division

Mother tongue	"Middle class"		Workers		Total	
	Number/ % of language group	% of class	Number/ % of language group	% of class	Number/ % of language group	% of class
Swedish	90 40.9%	31.7%	194 30.6%	68.3%	284 33.3%	100.0%
Finnish	130 59.1%	22.8%	440 69.4%	77.2%	570 66.7%	100.0%
Combined	220 100.0%	25.8%	634 100.0%	74.2%	854 100.0%	100.0%

N = 854. Data are missing for 87 persons with no occupation or failing to give information about occupation. The same applies also to table 4-11.

Table 3 may also be read in another way. While Swedish is the mother tongue of one-third of the total sample, this is true of 31 per cent of the workers and 41 per cent of the members of the "middle class." We obtain a table with four boxes through this cross-tabulation of social class and mother tongue. This is the table that we shall use in the following presentation of some of the Stockholm findings. The classical issue of the role of class, on the one hand, and language and ethnic group, on the other, may thus be said to be the general theme of our discussion.

Intention to stay in Sweden and to become naturalized

We have found a higher propensity to stay in Sweden among Swedish-speaking Finns. According to our interviews, they had also arrived at an earlier date and consequently lived a longer time in Sweden (table 4).

Table 4. Year of arrival in Sweden

Year of arrival	Swedish-speaking persons		Finnish-speaking persons	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Before 1960	138	45%	157	25%
1960-1966	83	28%	160	25%
1967-1975	83	27%	317	50%
Combined	304	100%	634	100%

Half of the Swedish-speaking persons had lived more than 15 years in the country. The same proportion of the Finnish speakers had spent less than 8 years in Sweden. The difference is significant. During the years 1968-1970, when emigration from Finland reached its peak, 27 per cent of the Finnish-speaking immigrants arrived but only 16 per cent of their Swedish-speaking compatriots.

Table 5. Proportion of women

Mother tongue	"Middle class"	Workers	Total
Swedish	54%	55%	56%
Finnish	72%	63%	65%
Combined	65%	60%	62%

There are many more women than men among the Finns in Sweden, owing to a high immigration rate among young women, many marriages with Swedish men, and a higher male rate of return migration. According to table 5, two-thirds (or 65%) of the Finnish speaking Finns in Stockholm were women. The over-representation of women was even more marked among the Finnish-speaking middle class (72%). Unfortunately, we cannot discuss here whether this is a result of age structure, marriage pattern or level of education, although these are questions of considerable interest.

Table 6. Intention to stay

Mother tongue	"Middle class"	Workers	Total
Swedish	73%	76%	75%
Finnish	70%	61%	63%
Combined	71%	66%	67%

The interviewees were asked whether they intended to return "within one year," "within one to five years," or "some day," or if they intended to remain permanently in Sweden. Only about one per cent answered "within year," and about five said within one to five years," while one out of four gave the vague and noncommitting answer "some day." Quite a high proportion said that they intended to stay on in Sweden. In other words, the Finns in Stockholm were a population of whom two-thirds had settled permanently, and this was true irrespective of social class or mother tongue, except that Swedish speakers were slightly more inclined to stay than Finnish speakers.

Table 7. Proportion of Swedish citizens

Mother tongue	"Middle class"	Workers	Total
Swedish	40%	29%	32%
Finnish	18%	15%	15%
Combined	27%	19%	21%

The somewhat greater permanence of settlement among the Swedish-speaking Finns becomes even more evident from the percentage, resorted in table 7, that had acquired Swedish citizenship. Of the Finns living in Stockholm in 1975, 21 per cent had Swedish passports. Since then, the number of naturalizations has gone up, and the proportion has probably increased considerably. In 1975, however, there were twice as many naturalized Swedes among Swedish-speaking persons than among Finnish speakers. At the same time, there was also a clear difference between social classes. Fewer workers had changed citizenship, and the highest proportion of naturalized immigrants was found among the Swedish-speaking middle class (40%), the lowest among the Finnish-speaking workers (15%).

The Finns' evaluation of their emigration to Stockholm

Finns have moved to Stockholm mainly for economic reasons. As we have seen, this migration took place many years ago. We asked those interviewed to evaluate their emigration, comparing their life in Stockholm with their previous life in Finland.

The question was: "Compared with your life in Finland, what are your opportunities here to earn much money, to find good housing,

to feel good at work, to find satisfaction in general, to do something actively to improve your lot, to speak out freely, and to gain respect from other people?" Three alternative responses were offered for each one of the items: Life could be "worse," "the same" or "better." In table 8, the proportion that answered "better" is recorded, beginning from the top with items having the highest percentage of positive answers.

Table 8. Emigration evaluation

"Life is better in Sweden with respect to..."	Swedish-speaking emigrants	Finnish-speaking emigrants
Income	83%	82%
Housing	63%	78%
Work satisfaction	42%	35%
General satisfaction	38%	30%
Political participation	30%	16%
Freedom of expression	24%	28%
Leisure time	27%	25%
Respect from others	14%	14%

An overwhelming majority responded that they have obtained higher income and better housing. Between 30 and 40 per cent are more satisfied with their work in Stockholm, and also express greater satisfaction in general. Although this is not shown in table 8, we should also mention that less than 10 per cent say that they are worse off in Sweden than in Finland, in reply to these first four questions.

Swedish-speaking Finns feel that with respect to their opportunity to take part in politics, life is better in Sweden, while the opposite is true for the Finnish-speaking persons. Here we do not know to what extent language plays a role as regards their political participation. But in answer to the question about freedom of expression, Swedish- and Finnish-speaking persons reply almost in the same way. Between 25 and 28 per cent feel that the situation is better for them in Sweden, three per cent of the Swedish speakers and nine per cent of the Finnish speakers say that it is worse, while according to the large majority there are no differences. Possibly, language proficiency plays a minor role with respect to the legal differences in question.

Finally, the last two questions in table 8 deal with leisure time and with the respect shown by other people. In response, about 25 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively, found that life in Sweden was better, and about the same percentage gave the opposite answer, that life in Sweden was worse. Emigration to Sweden had meant neither improvement nor deterioration for the large majority.

Attitudes to Finnish language and Finnish culture

At the beginning of the 1980s, Finns in Sweden have become more conscious of the value of the Finnish language and culture. When our interviews were made, the so-called "ethnic revival" was not yet a strong movement in Sweden. It is interesting to note that, nevertheless, both Swedish- and Finnish-speaking Finns in Stockholm took a relatively strong positive attitude to Finnish culture.

Table 9. Proportion with a positive attitude to the study of Finnish in Swedish schools

Mother tongue	"Middle class"	Workers	Total
Swedish	61%	68%	66%
Finnish	76%	82%	81%
Combined	70%	78%	76%

Those interviewed were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "Finnish children should study the Finnish language at school, even if this takes time away from other subjects." All those who agreed fully and those who agreed on the whole are recorded in table 9, which shows that as early as 1975 between two-thirds and three-fourths of the Finns in Stockholm wanted Finnish children to study Finnish in school. The proportion is, of course, somewhat higher among the Finnish-speaking respondents, but it is high also among the Swedish speakers, who evidently often have a sympathetic view of active bilingualism. No major difference exists between the social classes, but the workers showed a slightly more positive attitude. The highest percentage in table 9 is found in the box representing Finnish-speaking workers.

We shall conclude by comparing the responses to the following statement: "For Finns, it is more important to preserve their own culture than to adapt to the Swedish culture." Also this time, only those who agreed are recorded in the table (table 10).

Table 10. Proportion with a positive attitude to preservation of Finnish culture

Mother tongue	"Middle class"	Workers	Total
Swedish	38%	45%	40%
Finnish	52%	54%	53%
Combined	46%	51%	50%

This statement was more complex than the previous one. First of all, it may be hard to know what is meant by Finnish and Swedish culture. About half of the interviewees gave their support to the fostering of Finnish culture in Sweden. Just as in the answers to the school question, a higher proportion of positive answers came from the Finnish-speaking Finns and a somewhat higher proportion from the workers.

Mention should also be made of another question relative to the attitudes of Swedes. We asked those interviewed whether they were in agreement with a statement that "Swedes consider themselves to be better than Finns living in Sweden." We expected to find a much higher proportion of Finnish-speaking Finns to be in agreement with this, as they might be more exposed to negative attitudes in Sweden. But, as is seen in table 11, there was no major difference between the two groups. About two-thirds of the members of both language groups said that Swedes were cocky.

Table 11. Proportion in agreement with the statement that Swedes consider themselves better than Finns

Mother tongue	"Middle class"	Workers	Total
Swedish	64%	67%	66%
Finnish	67%	70%	70%
Combined	66%	69%	68%

remarks

Comparing Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking immigrants, we have obtained a number of more or less expected results. The interviews were done in Stockholm in 1975, however, a period when Swedish immigration policy was explicitly given a partly new direction, one accepted by all parties, pointing towards a multicultural Sweden. The data presented here are not however, solely of historical interest. They give us some preliminary knowledge about a Finnish population relatively permanently settled in Stockholm, of which one-third spoke Swedish as their mother tongue and two-thirds, Finnish.

Many tables have indicated that Swedish-speaking Finns have enjoyed some, although not very large, advantages compared with the Finnish-speaking Finns. In some respects, class differences have been larger than language-group differences. We must bear in mind, however, that we have not applied controls for several other relevant

variables in our analysis here. The Swedish-speaking Finns had lived many more years in Sweden than the Finnish-speaking immigrants. There was a higher over-representation of women in the latter group. Some of our results may depend also on these and other factors that have not been discussed here. We shall have to apply controls of this kind, and also make comparisons with the results of interviews done with native Swedes. But there is one simple conclusion to be drawn immediately: In the study of Finnish immigrants in Sweden, a clear distinction must be made between the two language groups, the Swedish and the Finnish.

NOTES

1. In Finland as well as in Sweden, the Swedish-speaking Finns are called "Finland-Swedes." The Finnish-speaking Finns living in Sweden call themselves "Sweden-Finns." These terms cannot be rendered smoothly into English, so they are not used here.
2. See, for example, "Rösträttsprojektet, en slutrapport" ("The Voting Right Project, a Final Report") from the Swedish Immigration Board, 1980.
3. Language registration has been discussed by the Swedish Commission on Immigration Policy in its report "Invandrar- och minoritetspolitiken," SOU 1984:58 (Immigration and Minority Policy). The Swedish Commission on Immigration Research is undertaking some pilot studies.
4. Immigrants in Sweden, SCB (Central Bureau of Statistics), Stockholm 1983, p. 41.
5. Report No. 5 by the Finnish Commission on Emigration, "The Principles of Finland's Policy on Emigration," Helsinki 1980, p. 22.
6. Allardt, E and Starck, C, Språkgränser och samhällsstruktur, Finlandssvenskarna i ett jämförande perspektiv (Language Borders and Social Structure, Comparative Perspectives on the Swedish-speaking population of Finland), Lund 1981, p. 101.
7. Report No. 5 by Finnish Commission on Emigration, p. 24.
8. Jaakkola, M, Sverigefinländernas etniska organisationer, (Ethnic Associations of Finns in Sweden), EIFO nr 22, Stockholm 1983.
9. Tung, R K-C, Exit-Voice Catastrophes, Dilemma between Migration and Participation. Diss. Stockholm 1981, Chapter 11.
10. Hammar, T och Tung, R K-C, Finländare i Södertälje (Finns in Södertälje), Södertälje 1975, p. 19 f.
11. Allardt, E och Starck, C, op. cit. p. 146.
12. Hammar, T och Tung, R K-C, op. cit. p. 21.
13. Hammar, T, Det första invandrarvalet (The First Immigrant Election), Stockholm 1979, p. 150.
14. Op. cit. p. 23.
15. Hammar, T, och Tung, R K-C, op. cit. p. 18.
16. Majava, A, Migration between Finland and Sweden from 1946 to 1974, Demographic analysis, preliminary report, mimeo. 1975, p. 28.