

Swedish Minority Language Rights in Ecolinguistic Perspective

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As the presence of English in Europe continues to grow, mounting interest is building in the position of national languages among European institutions, societies, and people. Swedish, like many national languages throughout the world, is in an awkward position. It is at the same time a strong national language with the potential to dominate other languages within national borders and a potentially subjugated language with respect to English as an international language (Boyd & Huss, 2001). Do language policies that pertain to multilingualism in Sweden reflect this duality such that all languages in the Swedish linguistic landscape are treated equitably? With concern increasing about the role of English in Sweden, there is a risk that the positions of minority languages will be overshadowed by policy attempts to strengthen Swedish.

This paper uses an ecolinguistic approach (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001) to explore holistically the development of language status planning, particularly with respect to language rights, for Sweden's five recognized minorities and their languages: the Sami (Sami), the Tornedalers (Meänkieli), the Swedish Finns (Finnish), the Roma (Romani), and the Jews (Yiddish). Swedish minority language issues are situated in historical and sociolinguistic context relative to English and Swedish, and then recent language policies, including *Mål i mun* (Kommittén för svenska språket, 2002), are analyzed in light of this context. In all, this analysis brings to light the complex tripartite inter-relationship among English, Swedish, and minority languages in Swedish language policy.

Key terms: ecology of language, language policy, linguistic rights, minority rights

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