

Integrating Content and Language Learning: Swedish LSP for Philosophers – Philosophy in Swedish

by

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Introduction

A pedagogical experiment on how to integrate courses in Swedish (for Finns) as the second national language of Finland

The experiment is based on the following items:

- Constitution
- Language laws
- The Language Examinations for the Civil Service Language Proficiency Certificate
- Mission of the University of Helsinki and its vision of the future
- Mission of the Language Centre

Key areas of development:

- *Bilingualism*

The visibility of bilingualism at the University of Helsinki will be improved, and course offerings in Swedish, also to Finnish-speaking students, will be increased through bilingual teachers and Nordic cooperation.

- *Multidisciplinarity*
- *Specialisation*
- *Continuous development*
- *Cooperation and networking*
- *Internationalisation at home*

Strategy for the development of teaching and studies 2004 – 2006

- The contents, quantity and quality of education on offer shall correspond to the changing needs of the faculties

- The Language Centre will intensify cooperation with the faculties in the planning and implementation of language studies; English and Swedish
- Language studies will increasingly be integrated into teaching provided by the faculties, especially according to the principle of *plurilingualism* promoted by the Council of Europe, people are encouraged to achieve proficiency in a repertoire of languages, in different contexts and at various levels.
- Student-centred approach

The Language Centre of the University of Helsinki was very pleased when the Department of Social and Moral Philosophy asked for *a special tailor - made course in Swedish and offered co-operation in creating a subject integrated learning environment for their students.*

Swedish (as LSP) for Philosophers – Philosophy in Swedish

1. Language Course LSP – Swedish (as the second national language in Finland) for Finnish speaking students (N=11) in Practical Philosophy (RH)
2. A course in Practical Philosophy for Swedish speaking students (N=10 + Finnish speaking Language students (N=11) (KK)

Program 1 (Hämelin)	+	Program 2 (Klockars)
54 t + self studies		28 t + self studies
Swedish for SocSci, Phil.		Kant, Hegel, Marx
Finnish speaking Finns		Swedish speaking Finns
		Finnish speaking Finns
reading,		reading
listening,		listening
discussion,		(discussion)
writing		(writing)

- Oral skills presentations

Course material: “Swedish for Finnish speaking students in the faculty of Social Sciences”

Units:

- ☒ Education at the University
- ☒ Sociology
- ☒ Social psychology
- ☒ Environment
- ☒ Working life and Labour Policy
- ☒ Economics
- ☒ State Government, regional and local administration in Finland and Sweden
- ☒ Finnish Foreign Policy
- ☒ Information and communication

Literature:

Fredriksson, Gunnar (1997); 20 filosofer
(om Kant, Hegel)
Vad är demokrati? Nyläsning av klassiker
(om Marx) Timbro. Bonniers 1987.

The Philosophy Course (KK)

Philosophy course intended for both natively Finnish speaking students of practical philosophy (Faculty of Social Sciences) participating in language course in Swedish and natively Swedish speaking students of philosophy (Faculty of Arts).

Participants: roughly half and half, altogether around 20.

The background context and make-up of the cultural conditions of the course:

- the language course is obligatory, but not as a major subject
- for historical-cultural reasons it is by many experienced as more compulsory than other compulsory courses, and this creates an initial attitude of suspicion and resistance
- Swedish a minority language, Finnish by far the dominant language. This implies that the students have relatively little real life experiences of using Swedish, and this in turn creates a rather high threshold for using Swedish

In order to deal with and transcend these initial realities, with the aim in mind to give the students a real possibility to learn more Swedish, the philosophy course for its part in the whole provides:

- a context of experiencing Swedish in use within their major subject, in contrast to just being forced to learn the language
- with the additional possibility to learn the subject matters of the course and pass exams independently of the language course itself
- no demand on but efforts to encourage the Finnish speaking students to participate, orally or in writing, in Swedish during the philosophy course. They have the possibility to remain so called listening pupils.
- through this a possibility to assess their own level and to learn philosophical terminology in Swedish
- background material for the studies of Swedish in the language course part

Level of the course: the course is planned as a course on the intermediate level of studies in philosophy. Because most students take this course the 2nd or 3rd year of their studies, this level is thought to fit their studies in their major subject. A basic course would only repeat what they should already know, and would be less intellectually stimulating. On the other hand, many clearly perceive the subject matter as rather difficult due to their level of language skills. According to my experience, however, most (roughly 2/3) of the Finnish speaking students also decide to take the exam in philosophy and have been sufficiently successful in this.

Feedback from students

- Demanding, shocking, useful, effective
- Integration was motivating, good variation, useful discussions on real subjects
- Perhaps too demanding, but on the other hand, one can manage more difficult situations than one could expect
- One almost forgot the compulsory element, group meetings in classroom and self study in balance
- Useful / not useful to give a presentation in front of the group
- Before my course I could not talk with my colleagues at work, but now it is possible
- It is easy to continue from here

Assessment

- the students seem highly pleased with this possibility, and have gladly participated in the philosophy course
- students of the two groups meet

- in reality very few of the Finnish speaking student participate actively in discussions
- there is consequently not much interaction between the Finnish speaking and the native Swedish speaking participants during the lectures themselves
- some complain that the subject matter is too difficult for the level of their language skills
- most of the textual material of the course is also available in English and/or Finnish, which makes it possible for them to study the subject matter outside of the classroom.
- since roughly 2/3 of the Finnish speaking pass the exam in the philosophy course with good results their language skills seem better than what they themselves initially believed

Ideas for improvement

- the subject matter could be presented on a less difficult level
- the natively Finnish speaking students could be encouraged to participate more actively using Swedish
- introduce small group discussions
- the philosophy teacher and the language course teacher could participate more actively in each others courses, at least in the beginning

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We consider that we have improved the learning environment for the students by this course, reached quite many goals and managed to realize many of the missions and visions of the University of Helsinki and the Language Centre and also the Department of Social and Moral Philosophy.