Deafness & Education International

ISSN: 1464-3154 (Print) 1557-069X (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ydei20

When language recognition and language shaming go hand in hand – sign language ideologies in Sweden and Norway

Hilde Haualand & Ingela Holmström

To cite this article: Hilde Haualand & Ingela Holmström (2019) When language recognition and language shaming go hand in hand – sign language ideologies in Sweden and Norway, Deafness & Education International, 21:2-3, 99-115, DOI: 10.1080/14643154.2018.1562636

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14643154.2018.1562636

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 21 Mar 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 1713

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Citing articles: 2 View citing articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=ydei20

DEAFNESS & EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL
2019, VOL. 21, NOS. 2–3, 99–115
https://doi.org/10.1080/14643154.2018.1562636

When language recognition and language shaming go hand in hand – sign language ideologies in Sweden and Norway

Hilde Haualand[a] and Ingela Holmström [b]

[a]Department of International Studies and Interpreting, Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway; [b]Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the similar approaches to, yet different contexts of legal recognition of sign languages in Sweden and Norway. We use examples from sign language documentation (both scientific and popular), legislation that mentions sign language, organization of implementation of sign language acquisition, and public discourse (as expressed by deaf associations' periodicals from the 1970s until today), to discuss the status and ideologies of sign language, and how these have affected deaf education. The legal documents indicate that Norway has a stronger and more wide-reaching legislation, especially sign language acquisition rights, but the formal legal recognition of a sign language is not necessarily reflected in how people discuss the status of the sign language. Our analysis reveals that the countries' sign languages have been subject to language shaming, defined as the enactment of linguistic subordination. The language shaming has not only been enacted by external actors, but has also come from within deaf communities. Our material indicates that language shaming has been more evident in the Norwegian Deaf community, while the Swedish Deaf community has been more active in using a "story of legislation" in the imagination and rhetoric about the Swedish deaf community and bilingual education. The similarities in legislation, but differences in deaf education, popular discourse and representation of the sign languages, reveal that looking at the level and scope of legal recognition of sign language in a country, only partially reflects the acceptance and status of sign language in general.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 16 November 2018
Accepted 18 December 2018

KEYWORDS
Sign language; sign language legislation; language ideology; language acquisition; deaf associations

Introduction

When the Swedish government mentioned the bilingualism of deaf people in a governmental document in 1979 (Statens Offentliga Utredningar

CONTACT Ingela Holmström ingela.holmstrom@ling.su.se Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

[SOU][1], 1979:50), it was possibly the first government in the world to recognise the bilingualism of deaf people (Murray, 2015; Svartholm, 2010). With this, the Swedish government also indirectly recognised the sign language used by deaf[2] people in Sweden. Stockholm University was also one of the first universities outside the U.S. to initiate academic research on sign language (McBurney, 2012). In both formal and informal discourse, Sweden has served as a role model for both international and national associations and alliances of deaf people who strive towards official recognition of sign languages in their home countries and the right for deaf children to learn sign language. It appears, however, that the legal recognition of Norwegian Sign Language (NTS) and other regulations regarding the right to learn and use sign language (directly or by way of signed language interpreters) is stronger in Norway than is the case for Swedish Sign Language (SSL)[3] in Sweden. In this article, we compare the legal recognition of sign language in Norway and Sweden and highlight some examples of the implementation of legal rights to (sign) language acquisition and how sign language has been discussed in the public domain. The study confirms that legal recognition alone is not sufficient to understand the status of a signed language in a particular country (cf. De Meulder, Murray, & McKee, 2019; Murray, 2015). In the case of signed languages, education policies and resources, disability politics, research activities and attitudes among sign language people are factors to consider when assessing the status of a particular signed language and the people who use the language.

Background: monolingual welfare states

Both Sweden and Norway belong to the so-called universalist type of welfare states (cf. Esping-Andersen, 1990), where the government takes responsibility for providing a wide range of services to the citizens. Universities, general education and various social services are generally considered a public responsibility, with traditionally very few private providers or agents involved. For public affairs, both countries appear to be monolingual, with Norwegian and Swedish as the main administrative languages, with some exceptions in areas with large Sami populations. Both countries have officially recognised some linguistic minorities, and in different ways, the sign languages used by deaf people in each country.

[1]Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU) is a series of Swedish state public reports and are termed with year and number.

[2]None of the Nordic languages use the capitalized "Deaf" in written form, which has been widespread in the English literature during the past decades. We follow the Nordic tradition of using non-capitalized "deaf", also in order to not claim a certain cultural or linguistic identity on behalf of the people we write about.

[3]Hereafter, we will use the abbreviations SSL or NTS if we specifically refer to one of these two languages. If we refer to sign languages in general, we will write *sign language.* If it is in a context where it is opposed to (a) spoken language(s), we will use the term *signed language(s).*

Spoken/written Swedish or Norwegian are however considered the "default" languages in the two countries, a view which not "only obscures the actual diversity of everyday language, but also, and with greater social consequences, sets some speakers up as legitimate 'default' members of a society while excluding others" (Piller, 2016, p. 62). One indication of this mindset is that teaching Swedish or Norwegian to deaf children and other children from linguistic minorities is generally considered as more important than encouraging them to use a minority language. Considering the dual status of deaf people as both disabled people and as members of a linguistic minority (De Meulder & Murray, 2017), the persistence of teaching deaf children a spoken language is also related to ideas about normalcy and integration of disabled people in society.

A comparative study – our approach

Language planning, social justice and language shaming

When signed languages were identified as natural, human languages (Stokoe, 1960), the new insight also offered deaf advocacy organisations a way of packaging a number of rights within a linguistic framework (Murray, 2015). The work to improve deaf peoples' lives did however not start with the new knowledge about the nature of signed languages. Some of the earlier activities may retrospectively be considered as examples of *language planning* (Reagan, 2010), although it is doubtful that the activists themselves saw their work through a language planning lens. The work to document and collect (including attempts to standardise) the signs used by deaf people in Nordic countries before and after World War II, as well as the continuous work to allow signs in the schools for the deaf since the early twentieth century, can be considered as *corpus planning* and *acquisition planning* respectively, which are also two of Reagan's four language planning categories. Corpus planning activities include sign language lexicography, the development of written representations of sign languages and the creation of manual sign systems. Acquisition planning activities are closely connected to the education of deaf children and the right to learn and use sign language at school, for example through a sign bilingual education, but is also about hearing parents' rights to learn the sign language their children learn. The two other categories Reagan (2010) discusses are *status planning* and *attitude planning*. Status planning includes the efforts to recognise sign languages, for example as official or minority languages in legal documents. Attitude planning activities, finally, are about efforts to change misconceptions and misunderstandings about sign languages, for example the idea that there is a universal sign language and that sign languages not are "real" languages (Reagan, 2010).

Sign languages have historically not been considered as languages at all, and "the fact that it is necessary to pass a law recognizing a sign language as a

language reveals […] the weak status of sign languages" (Murray, 2015, p. 395). We will not elaborate the various definitions and levels of official sign language recognition and legislation here, partly because many of the definitions and concepts remain undefined (Spolsky, 2009). By comparing the status of SSL and NTS in Sweden and Norway, it becomes apparent that both languages are indirectly devalued in terms of insufficient resources for training and acquisition, as well as an isolation of or watering down of sign language environments, which also directly threatens the vitality of the language (Lyxell, 2014; Språkrådet, 2017).

Linguistic diversity and language ideologies are closely tied to material and economic inequalities, education philosophies, accessibility and political participation (Piller, 2016), and in the case of deaf people, to ideas about disability (De Meulder, 2015; Murray, 2015). Language ideologies also include subordination: a language, or speakers of a language, become subordinated by a dominating language or language speakers. A sign of linguistic subordination is when a language is legally protected, but at the same time provided with limited resources to implement the legislation (Piller, 2016). To deaf people, access to and use of sign language is crucial for their access to education and participation in society (WFD, 2018), and hence, language rights also becomes a question about social justice. We also apply Piller's framework where linguistic diversity and social justice are considered as two sides of the same coin in our analysis. Another concept we use is the term *language shaming*, or "enacting language subordination" as "(social) media campaigns or face-to-face interactions that deride, disparage or demean particular ways of using language" (Piller, 2017). In this article we expand the meaning of *language shaming* to include public acts such as a government's reluctance to provide sufficient resources, efforts that limit the possibility to learn sign language, dismantling of arenas where sign language is used and various acts of problematization of a language and/or the people who use this language.

Finally, we build our analysis upon the growing research literature about and meta-studies of sign language legislation and recognition (examples are De Meulder, 2015; De Meulder et al., 2019; Murray, 2015; Reagan, 2010), and our study should also be considered as a contribution to the growing body of research that critically assesses the impact of sign language legislation.

Methodological framing

The four categories outlined by Reagan (2010) have guided our analysis, and we outline and compare milestones in (1) research (cf. corpus planning), (2) recognition and legislation (status planning) and (3) education (acquisition planning) of sign language in Sweden and Norway, before we discuss (4) the public discourses related to sign language recognition in the two countries (which can also be considered as examples of attitude planning). Our sources are foremost historical documents like government documents (Acts, regulations,

parliamentary decisions etc.), research papers (foremost those that can be used to describe and understand the development of research, documentation and acquisition of NTS or SSL), and the periodicals of the deaf associations from the 1970s onwards.[4] We have searched legislation and regulation digital databases in the two countries for documents that contain the phrase "sign language"[5], but have also searched for concepts like "deaf", "hearing impaired" (or "hard of hearing") to see if we could find legislation where deaf people are mentioned without any explicit reference to (sign) language. There are very few examples of public/printed discussions on the status of sign language outside the periodicals of the deaf associations, so these journals' discussions about topics related to SSL and NTS, have been of particular interest for our comparative discussion, especially for the public discourse part. Observations from social media, and informal talks with former activists in the associations of the deaf in the Nordic countries are also part of our material.[6] We used a qualitative approach to the material, and aimed to map where sign language has been mentioned in e.g. governmental documents, in order to identify when and at what governmental level or branch sign language has been mentioned or discussed. Reagan's classification enabled a categorisation of the material as various aspects of language planning activities, even though the authors or policy makers behind the texts may not have considered themselves as language planners. We do not give an exhaustive overview of the development or all language planning activities in the two countries, but will highlight some of the milestones that retrospectively seem to be of importance for the current status of SSL and NTS.

Language planning activities in Sweden and Norway

The different aspects of language activities (research, recognition, education and public discourse) are closely related in both countries, and for the sake of readability, we will describe and outline these aspects in four separate sequences, before presenting a summarising discussion at the end of the article.

Language documentation

After the Second World War, the deaf associations in the Nordic countries joined forces in an effort to create a unified Nordic sign language, and the national periodicals frequently printed photos with what was decided as the "correct" or standard sign equivalents for a range of words that are used in the spoken languages in these countries (SDR 9/1950). The work resulted,

[4]For the sake of readability, the two periodicals will be referred to as the Swedish periodical SDR-kontakt and/or Dövas Tidning; and as the Norwegian periodical, Døves Tidsskrift.

[5]We used the search strings "teckenspråk" for Swedish searches and "tegnspråk" or "teiknspråk" (Norway has two written language variants) for the Norwegian searches.

[6]In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to Asger Bergman, Tord Lind, Mats Jonsson, Lars-Åke Wikström (1943–2018) and Svein Arne Peterson for sharing their knowledge and experiences with us.

among other things, in a Swedish dictionary which consisted of 2700 signs that were partly made up of common Nordic signs and partly SSL signs (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1968). The work to standardise the Nordic sign languages was not very successful, and most deaf people continued to use the signs of their own national sign language. Nevertheless, the standardisation work was an arena where representatives from the Nordic associations of the deaf discussed language issues before they had the knowledge or evidence that the sign languages they used were natural languages. The grammar of the spoken languages was considered the "correct" grammar, and the sign equivalents for the words were regarded as ideally following the word order of the spoken languages (Bergman, 2013; Svartholm, 2010). The work to standardise the signs, and the idea that a spoken language could be accompanied by sign equivalents for each spoken word, is however part of the context for understanding the status of current sign language documentation in Sweden and Norway.

The first initiative to research SSL was not only a consequence of Stokoe's work (1960), but also a result of a dispute over whether to use speech or signs in deaf education. The associations of deaf people in Sweden and Norway had encouraged the introduction of Total Communication (i.e. a system of expressing spoken and sign languages simultaneously) into deaf education to replace the spoken language only ideology that had been prevalent until the 1970s (SDR 2/1972, 18/1973). Swedish teachers observed soon that sign language and spoken language were so different in grammar and structure that it was not possible to express both languages simultaneously, and the Swedish Ministry of Education, *Skolöverstyrelsen,* set up a working group to examine this issue (Bergman, 2013; SDR 10/1973). The working group confirmed that it was impossible to make any decision on the issue of utilising Total Communication or not because of the lack of research on the SSL structure (ibid.). Skolöverstyrelsen therefore initiated and funded a research examination on the structure of SSL, which established research on SSL at the Department of Linguistics at Stockholm University (ibid.) that is still ongoing. Three decades later, in 2008, a free digital SSL dictionary was set up at Stockholm University's website, which is continuously updated with more signs, financed through national governmental funds.[7] In the early 2000s, the work to create a SSL corpus started and the work to expand it is still ongoing. Hence, SSL has quite a robust history of research and documentation supported by governmental authorities, compared to many other countries. Research into SSL gained much support from the Swedish deaf community in the formative years (Bergman, 2013; Wallin, 1987; see also SDR's periodicals from the 1970s and 1980s). The Swedish Association of the Deaf (SDR) has also used the research to gain governmental support for legislation and recognition. Some

[7]Available at https://teckensprakslexikon.su.se/.

of the deaf research assistants at Stockholm University were also active in SDR, and could use the research to gain governmental support for legislation and recognition.

As in Sweden, the context of the early research into sign language cannot be separated from the impact of the Total Communication ideology in Norway, but the outcome was quite different. While the incompatible differences between SSL and spoken Swedish sparked an interest and request for more research on the signs used by deaf people, the first Norwegian researchers on NTS (Marit Vogt-Svendsen and Odd-Inge Schröder) were met with criticism in the periodical from the Norwegian Association of the Deaf (NDF), which asked "Have sign language researchers become our enemies?" (Døves Tidsskrift, 11/1975; see also the public discourse section below for more on this). The close cooperation between researchers and the deaf association that characterised the early language documentation work in Sweden (and elsewhere, cf. Murray, 2015) was virtually nonexistent in Norway before 1986. Today, most research on NTS is located at the sign language interpreter education units at universities in Trondheim, Bergen and Oslo, and there is no linguistic research unit that has been founded in a similar way as in Sweden. The Norwegian Support System for Special Education runs a free database with signs from NTS (www.tegnordbok.no), but this work is not anchored in any of the universities mentioned above. Lindsay Ferrara at the interpreter education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim has however recently (2019) received a grant to establish a NTS corpus.

The Norwegian deaf community has despite the (as) yet limited research on NTS, and explicit language shaming of NTS in their own periodical, gained legal recognition of the right to learn and use sign language that appears to be stronger than in Sweden. In the next section, we will take a closer look at language legislation in the two countries.

Status planning – language legislation

Reagan (2010) mentions status planning as the most visible language planning activity regarding sign languages from a global perspective. Status planning activities include legal recognition; De Meulder (2015) has categorised recognition of sign languages into explicit and implicit recognition, where the latter "refers to legislation that implicitly acknowledges the use of sign language via measures addressing disability access" (De Meulder et al., 2019). As will be shown below, SSL and NTS have been implicitly recognised since 1979 and 1985 respectively, and explicitly since 2008 (NTS) and 2009 (SSL).

The Swedish government mentioned the bilingualism of deaf people in a governmental report on special education in 1979 (SOU, 1979:50). Two years later, the parliament adopted a budget proposal that stated in an appendix that

> individuals who are deaf from childhood must be bilingual in order to function with each other and the general society. Bilingualism for them, according to the investigation, means that they must master both their visual/manual sign language, and the language of the society that surrounds them, Swedish. (Proposition 1980/81:100, p. 297, our translation)

In 1983, a complementary bilingual curriculum for the deaf school was issued (see section on language acquisition below). Another implicit recognition was made in 1994, when a reform for people with disabilities was implemented. Through this, the county councils' responsibility for providing interpreter services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people was clarified in the Health and Medical Services Act (Svensk författningssamling [SFS], 1982:763). SSL was however only indirectly mentioned in this act through the underlying meaning of "interpreter service". Despite the rather moderate and implicit legal recognitions of SSL, and that no law or regulation had been formulated to explicitly ensure SSL's status as a language in Sweden or deaf people's right to learn it (SOU, 2008:26), Sweden was accorded an international reputation as a role model for bilingual education for deaf children (Mahshie, 1995; see further the public discourse section below).

At the end of the 1990s, SDR requested the Swedish government to recognise SSL as a minority language in a law. The minority language committee discussed the issue, but concluded that parliament's decision of 1981 "officially recognized the sign language as deaf people's mother tongue and recognized deaf people's right to bilingualism in sign language and Swedish language." (SOU, 1997:192, p. 94f, our translation). The committee rejected the status of SSL as a minority language, and stated that SSL should be considered as a communicative means that helps deaf people ("despite their handicap") to communicate with others (SOU, 1997:192, p. 95). When a new language Act was proposed in Sweden, the issue of SSL as a minority language once again appeared (SOU, 2008:26). When the Act was passed in 2009, SSL was not recognised as a minority language, but the Act defined SSL as "equal to" the five other minority languages that were recognised and protected (SFS, 2009:600). The Language Act emphasises society's *responsibility* for SSL, not deaf and hard of hearing people's *rights* to use SSL (SOU, 2011:30). As will be shown in the language acquisition section below, this puts certain limits on the opportunity to learn SSL.

The first explicit mention of sign language as a natural language in Norway was in a white paper on special education (Stortingsmelding 61, 1984/85), which stated that the new knowledge about sign languages as natural languages must have consequences for education of deaf children, and that considerations should include how deaf people could be more involved in educating deaf children (Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet, 1985, p. 28.). The white paper had no immediate effect on the implementation of sign language related actions or measures to promote the use of sign language in schools (Ohna, Hjulstad, Vonen, Grønlie, & Hjelmervik, 2004). It was not until the parliamentary debate

over the future of the deaf schools in 1991 (where the white paper from 1985 was discussed), that some members of the parliament proposed and supported the idea that the government should investigate how NTS could achieve legal recognition as a minority language in Norway (Skaten, 1991).

NTS was implicitly recognised in both the Education Act and the National Insurance Act in 1997. The latter incorporated an individual's right to interpreting services for hearing impaired individuals, and defined interpreting as a benefit "for improving the ability to work and the ability to function in everyday life" (National Insurance Act, sections 10–5 and 10–7). The Education Act states that "pupils who have sign language as their first language […], have the right to primary and lower secondary instruction both in the use of sign language and through the medium of sign language" (Education Act, 1997, section 2–6). The consequences of this Act will be discussed below, in the acquisition planning section. In 2008, a white paper on language stated that NTS is one of the indigenous Norwegian languages, along with Norwegian, Sami and Kven, and that it is a part of the Norwegian heritage that the public should protect and promote (Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, 2008). As a consequence of the white paper from 2008, protection and promotion of NTS also become part of the mandate of the Language Council in Norway. The white paper from 2008 is to date the only explicit recognition of NTS, although the parliament has requested the government to draft a general Language Act, where NTS should also be included.

Language acquisition

Since sign languages are rarely intergenerationally transmitted within the family and only four to eight percent of deaf children have deaf parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004), both children and parents rely on external resources to learn sign language. Both countries have established programmes for parents of deaf children where they can learn sign language, but whereas Swedish parents are offered about 240 hours of instruction in SSL since 1998 (SFS, 1997:1158; see also Lyxell, 2014), Norwegian parents are entitled to approximately 1600 hours (organised as 40 week-long training classes during the period that the child is between the ages 1–16) of instruction and training in NTS since 1996 (Statped, 2011).

Bilingual education

In Sweden, the official switch of teaching methods towards a bilingual approach came with a complementary curriculum for the deaf schools in 1983 (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1983), and was a consequence of the approval of the 1981 budget with its recognition of deaf people as bilinguals (Svartholm, 2010). This curriculum explicitly mentioned deaf students' bilingualism, and that the instruction should be conducted in SSL and Swedish (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1983). The Swedish curriculum was specifically formulated for the deaf schools, and was

not used for deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream schools. SSL is today only mentioned in the special schools' section of the Education Act, chapter 12 (SFS, 2010:800), and is only mentioned as a school subject in these schools. In SOU, 2011:30 the commission proposed that public schools should also offer SSL as a subject, but as of 2018, deaf and hard of hearing students outside the five regional state deaf schools lack the right to learn SSL in school. A few municipalities offer students SSL courses in their schools, but the organisation, structure and quality of this teaching varies greatly.[8] Furthermore, there are few opportunities for teachers to learn SSL, and special education training programmes do not offer SSL courses. The schools for the deaf may hire teachers who do not know SSL in advance, and then have to purchase SSL courses for these teachers.[9]

In Norway, a curriculum for NTS as a subject was implemented in 1993, building upon a national curriculum from 1987. The aim of this curriculum was also to make deaf pupils bilingual (Amundsen, 1993; Ohna et al., 2004). In 1997, a right to receive their education in and about sign language became part of the Education Act, which applies to all schools (not only so-called special schools, as in Sweden). The Education Act does not mention the hearing status of the children, and only targets children "who have sign language as their first language or who on the basis of an expert assessment need such instruction" (The Education Act, § 2–6). The regulations and curriculum pertaining to the Education Act, reveal however that this right only applies to deaf and hard of hearing children (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2014). The parts of the general curriculum developed specifically for children who receive their education in sign language, is explicitly made for *hearing impaired* pupils. From 2016, the right to education in NTS also includes preschool children (Act on Day Care Institutions, 2016, §19-H), but without the ties to a hearing loss that characterises the Education Act.

There are, however, two features that currently undermine the individual right of a child whose primary language is NTS for receiving their education *in* and learn *about* NTS. Firstly, there are only a few municipal programmes or classes with deaf students that are taught in NTS and where deaf children meet peers who also communicate in NTS on a daily basis. Most deaf children attend a public school near their home, and are often the only child at the school who is supposed to receive their education in NTS. They may attend a part-time programme where they can meet other (mainstreamed) deaf students for a few weeks every year, and they may also receive some of their education through video communication on a distance learning basis (Hjulstad, 2017). The second undermining aspect is the low demands on teacher competencies. The

[8]One such municipality is Sundsvall, where the council has decided to provide such courses through a decision 2017-06-21 (https://sundsvall.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/BUN-2017-06-21-protokoll.pdf).

[9]However, since the 1990s, entire teacher training programmes aimed for teaching in the deaf schools have been sporadically been offered, but the students attending them are required to know SSL in advance, and practical training in SSL has not been a part of the programmes. Also, shorter SSL courses at university level for teachers of the deaf have sporadically been offered since the 1980s.

government expects that teachers of deaf students have a knowledge in NTS that equals half a year of full-time study for grades 1–7 and one year for grades 8–10 (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015). Most teachers have no prior knowledge in NTS before entering the courses. The government has not set up any specifications regarding the expected knowledge in NTS for preschool teachers (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017).

Although Sweden was the first country to initiate bilingual education for deaf children, Norway has since the 1990s overtaken Sweden in official regulations on this issue through the provision of a larger amount of sign language courses for parents and promoting deaf children's rights to learn and use NTS in all types of schools. However, in Sweden, more deaf schools exist currently (in contrast to Norway); schools which are crucial arenas for natural sign language acquisition. There are however few opportunities to learn SSL outside these schools. Despite the legal support for sign language acquisition and bilingual education in both countries, the limited resources allotted to teaching, learning and using sign language in educational settings reveal a considerable official linguistic subordination (cf. Piller, 2016) of SSL and NTS in Sweden and Norway respectively.

Public discourses

While the status of Sami people and Sami languages is discussed in the media in the two countries, it is quite rare to see similar discussions on the status of the sign languages, except in news reports about the lack of resources for language acquisition, whether this is for a spoken or signed language, for a particular deaf or hard of hearing child or group of children. This is a sign that "[a]lthough there is an increasing academic and policy recognition of deaf people's cultural-linguistic minority status, the general public accepts deaf people are disabled and therefore does not question their use and need of sign language." (De Meulder & Murray, 2017, p. 148). There are few, if any, places where NTS and SSL have been extensively discussed as languages outside the periodicals published by the deaf associations in the two countries. We therefore consider that what these periodicals have written (or not written) about SSL or NTS respectively, is indicative of how the languages have been discussed in public.

For decades since the 1970s, the Swedish periodical has declared SSL's official status as a language, and deaf people as bilingual. For example, in 1974, a section for SSL was created in the National committee for Swedish language cultivation, and SDR wrote that this was to be regarded as "an official recognition that the sign language is a language" (16/1974, p. 1). Other examples of such statements can be found in the Swedish periodical, e.g. SDR 1/1978, 14/1979, and 1/1980. The periodical is however silent about the government report from 1979 and the parliament's approval of the budget proposal that was signed on 14 May 1981. This day is today celebrated as the SSL Day, but was not recognised as such before 1991, when a group of deaf students at Stockholm University

marked the tenth anniversary (SDR 6/1991), and in 1997, when the Örebro Deaf Association initiated celebrations that they decided should take place on 14 May. The date was established as the annual SSL Day at the national level in 2006, when a gala was held in Stockholm City Hall, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the budget approval (SDR 2/2016). This "delayed" recognition of the budget proposal and current celebration is also an example of how the Swedish deaf community has succeeded in utilising the rather modest legal recognition as a tool to construct and confirm an imagined community (cf. Anderson, 1983), united by its common language heritage and recognition as bilinguals.[10] What helped spread the information about Sweden's (assumed) legislation on the bilingualism of deaf people around the world, is probably also the activities and networks of Swedish board members in the World Federation of the Deaf (from 1983 onwards), and by the deaf research assistants at Stockholm's University (Wallin, 1987).

A travel report in the Norwegian periodical from a trip to Stockholm in 1980 (Danielsen, Larsen, Nesje, & Ødegård, 1981, pp. 2, 4) is a sign that the development in Sweden and the research activities at Stockholm University were known among deaf people in Norway. The report from Stockholm is however not illustrative of how NTS and the emerging knowledge about sign languages was discussed in the Norwegian periodical *Døves Tidsskrift*. One of the most tenacious critics of research on NTS as a natural language was the editor of the Døves Tidsskrift. Many of his articles and op-eds are examples of *language shaming*; expressions of views that subordinated NTS as inferior to Norwegian. In an article that reported from a Nordic seminar in Denmark in 1975 (where William Stokoe also participated), the editor criticised the researchers for their interest in "all the bad, unfortunate, misleading and confusing signs used by the deaf". Under the heading "Have the sign language researchers become our enemies?"[11], he also questioned deaf children's abilities to learn two languages (Sander, 1975). The debate for or against research on sign languages and how to define sign language, remained deadlocked and personal in the periodical from 1975 and throughout the 1980s (Døves Tidsskrift 11/1975, 20/1978, 12/1982 (to mention a few issues where the topic was discussed)). NDF officially abandoned the attempts to construct artificial signs, and fully recognised the knowledge that signed languages are full-fledged natural languages in 1985 (Ringsø, 1986).

Just as the periodical in Sweden remained quite silent on the issue of SSL and the bilingualism of deaf people in the budget proposal in 1981, the Norwegian periodical was also silent on the white paper for the first few months after it had

[10]The development of 14 May as a symbolic date in the Swedish deaf community resembles the development of the celebration of 17 May (The Norwegian Constitution day) in Norway. The celebration of the anniversary of the constitution day started 10–20 years later, when it soon become part of the construction of a national Norwegian identity whilst Norway and Sweden were part of the same union.

[11]Original heading; "Er tegnspråk-forskerne blitt våre fiender?". Excerpt translated by us from "Alle de dårlige, uheldige, misvisende, meningsforvirrende tegnene som brukes av de døve" (p. 4).

been released in 1985. According to personal communication with the secretary general in NDF in 1989 (Svein Arne Peterson), the statement on sign language and education of deaf children in the white paper was however utilised by NDF in their protests against the government's plans to close the schools for the deaf in 1989–90, as well as by some members of the parliament who opposed the plans (Døves Tidsskrift 9/1990). NDF and other activists succeeded in convincing the parliament that the schools for the deaf should continue to exist, and be considered as normal schools for deaf children, where the language of instruction was sign language. In the parliamentary debate on the future of the special schools in June 1991, several members of the parliament suggested that NTS should become an official language, and the Norwegian periodical reported that "Sign language will be recognized" (Skaten, 1991, our translation).

Although the Norwegian periodical has, during the last few decades, written about and supported legal and scientific recognition of NTS, accounts from social media reveal that there still exists a popular view that NTS has a lower legal status than sign languages in the other Nordic countries (e.g. Mittet, 2017). Through interviews with older Norwegian deaf people, Holten and Lønning (2011) revealed that many had a perception of deaf people as subordinate and inferior to hearing people, which supports Myers-Scotton (2006) assumption that if leaders of a group display a certain attitude towards a language, it is more likely that this attitude is reflected in the population. The explicit pride in SSL by the Swedish deaf community, is not seen to the same extent for NTS in Norway.

Language planning and language shaming

Norway appears to have stronger legislation regarding the opportunities to acquire NTS through education and to request interpreters when interacting with non-signers. Parents are offered many more hours of sign language instruction as compared to in Sweden, and deaf and hard of hearing children have the right to learn and use NTS regardless of the type of school they attend, while Swedish children only get instruction in and about SSL in the regional state deaf schools. Our analysis has revealed that SDR and the linguistic research community in Sweden seem to have had quite some success in utilising the rather vague statements in the government documents to raise awareness about and pride in SSL, both among signing deaf people and in the community in general. In contrast, the periodicals published by NDF reveal a rather hostile reaction during the 1970s and 1980s to the knowledge that signed languages were natural languages, and traces of internal subordination of NTS can still be observed in the deaf community today.

The formalised low expectations towards teachers' knowledge in NTS to teach the language, stands out as official language shaming, as it testifies to a belief that NTS is easily learned. The consequence is not only that deaf pupils never get a chance to learn NTS properly, but that this deprives them from access to

a language they can learn effortlessly. Comparing the resources given for parental training in sign language also reveals an example of language shaming especially in the Swedish context, i.e. how government authorities sanction the learning of SSL by offering parents 240 hours of training with the aim of giving "the parents such skills that they can use sign language in a functional manner in contact with their children and thereby promote the children's development" (SFS, 1997:1158, p. 2§, our translation).

Despite legal recognition that targets language acquisition, it is the children's hearing impairment that is the decisive issue regarding the opportunities to learn the national sign language in both countries, which is also a confirmation of the dual category status of deaf people: sign language people can be seen as "both a linguistic minority and a group of people with a disability" (De Meulder & Murray, 2017, p. 139). It may be this dual category status that continuously reinforces the subordination of sign languages and their users, and can help us to understand why language legislation and language shaming seem to go hand in hand in the context of sign languages.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Hilde Haualand is an associate professor at the Department of International studies and Interpreting at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway. She is a social anthropologist, and recent publications are on sign language interpreters and professionalism, sign language interpreting services, the politics of video interpreting, disability and marginalization.

Ingela Holmström is an assistant professor in the Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, Sweden. Her research is directed towards communication issues in interaction between deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing people both in and outside school contexts. She has a special interest in bi- and multilingualism.

ORCID

Ingela Holmström http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8762-7118

References

Act on Day Care Institutions. (2016). Section 19 H, Ministry of Education.

Amundsen, G. (1993). *Mønsterplan for grunnskolen (M87): fagplaner tilpasset døve elever i grunnskolen* [Curriculum for primary and lower secondary school (M87): Curricula adapted to deaf students in primary school] Oslo: Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

Bergman, B. (2013). Teckenspråksforskningen då och idag [Sign language research then and now]. In B. Lindblom (Ed.), *Text, tal och tecken: Några perspektiv inom språkforskningen* (pp. 139–149). Stockholm: Kungliga vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien. [Text, speech and sign: Some perspectives in language research].

Danielsen, A., Larsen, P. C., Nesje, M., & Ødegård, A. (1981). Studietur til Stockholm om tegnspråket. [Study trip to Stockholm about sign language]. *Døves Tidsskrift*, *62*(2), 4–6.

De Meulder, M. (2015). The legal recognition of sign languages. *Sign Language Studies*, *15*(4), 498–506. doi:10.1353/sls.2015.0018

De Meulder, M., & Murray, J. J. (2017). Buttering their bread on both sides? The recognition of sign languages and the aspirations of deaf communities. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, *41*(2), 136–158. doi:10.1075/lplp.41.2.04dem

De Meulder, M., Murray, J. J., & McKee, R. (Eds.). (2019). *The legal recognition of sign languages: Advocacy and outcomes around the world*. Multilingual Matters.

Døves Tidsskrift, issues 11/1975, 20/1978, 12/1982, 9/1990 Døves forlag [Deaf Peoples' publishing press].

Education Act. (1997). Section 2–6, Ministry of Education.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hjulstad, J. T. (2017). *Embodied participation in the semiotic ecology of a visually-oriented virtual classroom* (doctoral dissertation). Norwegian University of Technology and Science, Trondheim, Norway.

Holten, S. M., & Lønning, H. R. (2011). Døves språkholdninger og norsk tegnspråk [Deaf peoples' language attitudes and Norwegian sign language]. *Norsk Lingvistisk Tidsskrift 2011–2*, *1*, 7–24.

Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet. (1985). *Stortingsmelding nr. 61 1984/85, Om visse sider ved spesialundervisninga og den pedagogisk-psykologiske tenesta*. Oslo: Author. [About certain aspects of special education and the pedagogical-psychological service].

Kultur- og kirkedepartementet. (2008). *Stortingsmelding nr 35 (2007/08) Mål og meining: ein heilskapleg norsk språkpolitikk*. Oslo: Author. [Language and meaning: A complete Norwegian language policy].

Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2015). *Kompetanse for kvalitet: strategi for videreutdanning for lærere og skoleledere frem mot 2025*. Oslo: Author. [Expertise for quality: Strategy for further education for teachers and school leaders until 2025].

Lyxell, T. (2014). *Se språket: Barns tillgång till svenskt teckenspråk* [See the language: Children's access to Swedish sign language]. Rapporter från Språkrådet 3. Språkrådet: Institutet för språk och folkminnen.

Mahshie, S. N. (1995). *Educating deaf children bilingually. With insights and applications from Sweden and Denmark*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University.

McBurney, S. (2012). History of sign languages and sign language linguistics. In R. Pfau, M. Steinbach, & B. Woll (Eds.), *Sign language. An international handbook* (pp. 909–948). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyer Mouton.

Mitchell, R. E., & Karchmer, M. A. (2004). Chasing the mythical ten percent: Parental hearing status of deaf and hard of hearing students in the United States. *Sign Language Studies*, *4* (2), 138–163.

Mittet, S. (2017, December 21). Norsk tegnspråk som offisielt språk! Det er en virkelig skam for det norske landet at det står tilbake som det eneste land i Norden som ikke har tegnspråk som offisielt språk [Norwegian sign language as official language! It is a real shame for Norway that it is left out as the only country in the Nordic countries where sign language is not an official language]. Facebook status update. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/groups/StoppAudisme/permalink/1954770474536663

Murray, J. J. (2015). Linguistic human rights discourse in deaf community activism. *Sign Language Studies*, *15*(4), 379–410.

Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple voices: An introduction to bilingualism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Ohna, S. E., Hjulstad, O., Vonen, A. M., Grønlie, S., & Hjelmervik, E. (2004). *På vei mot en ny grunnskoleopplæring for døve elever: En evalueringsstudie etter Reform 97* [Towards a new primary school education for deaf students: An evaluation study of Reform 97]. Oslo: Skådalen kompetansesenter.

Piller, I. (2016). *Linguistic diversity and social justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Piller, I. (2017, August 28–30). Language shaming: Enacting linguistic subordination, plenary presentation at the 16th International Conference on Minority Languages, Jyväskylä.

Proposition 1980/81:100, Appendix 12. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

Reagan, T. (2010). *Language policy and planning for sign languages*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Ringsø, T. (1986). Er det nødvendig med slik tegnspråkkrangel i Døves Tidsskrift? [Is it necessary with such a sign language quarrell in Døves Tidsskrift?]. *op-ed Døves Tidsskrift*, *67*(49), 6.

Sander, T. J. (1975). Er tegnspråk-forskerne blitt våre fiender? [Have the sign language researchers become our enemies?]. *Døves Tidskrift*, *56*(11), 4–6.

SDR periodicals, Sveriges Dövas Riksförbund [Swedish Deaf Association], issues 9/1950, 2/1972, 10/1973, 18/1973, 1/1978, 14/1979, 1/1980, 6/1991, 2/2016.

Skaten, I. (1991). Tegnspråket skal anerkjennes! [Sign language will be recognised!]. *Døves Tidsskrift*, *72*(26), 6–7.

Skolöverstyrelsen. (1968). *Teckenspråk för döva: Illustrerad ordbok över svenska teckenspråket* [Sign language for deaf people: Illustrated dictionary for the Swedish Sign Language]. Stockholm: SÖ-förlaget.

Skolöverstyrelsen. (1983). *Läroplan för specialskolan: Kompletterande föreskrifter till Lgr 80* [Curriculum for the special school: Supplementary regulations to Lgr 80]. Stockholm: Liber.

Spolsky, B. (2009). *Language management*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Språkrådet. (2017). *Språkstatus: Språkpolitisk tilstandsrapport frå Språkrådet*. Oslo: Author.

Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU 1979:50. *Huvudmannaskapet för specialskolan: Betänkande av integrationsutredningen* [The principal organizer of the special school: Report from the integration investigation]. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU 1997:192. *Steg mot en minoritetspolitik* [Steps towards a minority policy]. Stockholm: Jordbruksdepartementet.

Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU 2008:26. *Värna språken: Förslag till språklag* [Protect the languages: Suggestions for a Language Act]. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU 2011:30. *Med rätt att välja: Flexibel utbildning för elever som tillhör specialskolans målgrupp* [With the right to choose: Flexible education for students belonging to the special school's target group]. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

Statped. (2011). *Evaluering av tegnspråkopplæringen for foreldre "Se mitt språk"* [Evaluation of the parental sign language learning "View My Language"]. Oslo: Author.

Stokoe, W. C. (1960). Sign language structure: An outline of the visual communication systems of the American deaf. *Studies in Linguistics*, *8*, 78. Occasional Papers, no 8.

Svartholm, K. (2010). Bilingual education for deaf children in Sweden. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *13*(2), 159–174. doi:10.1080/13670050903474077

Svensk författningssamling, SFS 1982:763. *Hälso- och sjukvårdslag* [Health and Medical Care Services Act]. Stockholm: Socialdepartementet.

Svensk författningssamling, SFS 1997:1158. *Förordning om statsbidrag för teckenspråksutbildning för vissa föräldrar* [Regulation on state grants for sign language training for certain parents]. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

Svensk författningssamling, SFS 2009:600. *Språklag* [Language Act]. Stockholm: Kulturdepartementet.

Svensk författningssamling, SFS 2010:800. *Skollag* [Education Act]. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2014). *Veileder for opplæring av barn og unge med hørselshemming*. Oslo: Author. [Guide for training children and adolescents with hearing impairment].

Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2017). *Svar på spørsmål om hvilken kompetanse den som gir tegnspråkopplæring må ha*. Oslo: Author. [Answer to the question on what competence the person giving sign language education must have].

Wallin, L. (1987). *Döva och tvåspråkigheten* [Deaf people and the bilingualism]. Presentation at the 10th WFD-congress in Helsingfors, Finland. Sveriges Dövas Riksförbund.

World Federation of the Deaf [WFD]. (2018). *WFD position paper on inclusive education*. Approved 10 May 2018.