



# Good evening, Stockholm!

English in Scandinavia – monster or mate?

Catrin Norrby  
Stockholm University



# Overview of talk

- **Background and overview:**
  - Snapshot of English in today's Scandinavia: Facts and figures
- **(Re)actions:**
  - Official language planning: legislating language
  - Higher education sector: language policy
- **Reality:**
  - English in the city streetscape
- **Future:**
  - English only or friendly co-existence?

# English in Scandinavia

1. English as a lingua franca
2. English as a school subject
3. English in certain domains <—
4. English as an act of identity
5. English in the linguistic landscape
6. English loanwords

# English, English everywhere...



Advertisement in national newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, Feb. 2012

- Culture and media
- Advertising
- Research
- (Higher) education
- Business
- Large private companies

## *The Assessment of Pupils' Skills in English in Eight European Countries (2002)*

- Tested English skills among grade 9 students in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain
  - Listening comprehension
  - Language correctness
  - Reading comprehension
  - Written production
  - Student assessment of the test questions + their English skills
- Student & teacher questionnaire on use of and attitudes to English.

# Test results – country & score - %

Results:	Top tier	Middle tier	Bottom tier	
<b>overall</b>	Norway, Sweden 70	Finland, Netherl., Denmark 65–60	Spain <50	France <40
<b>listening</b>	Sweden, Norway >70	Denmark, Netherl., Finland 68–60	Spain, France <40	
<b>correct</b>	Finland, Norway, Netherl., Sweden 69–65		Spain, Denmark 59–55	France <40
<b>reading</b>	Sweden, Norway, Finland 89–80	Denmark, Netherl. 79–75	Spain 65	France <60
<b>written</b>	Norway, Sweden <60	Finland, Denmark, Netherl. <50	Spain <30	France <20

# Swedish student attitudes

- 96% like English as a language –  
– *average 80%*
- 92% like English as a school subject
- 98% say it is important to know English –  
– *average 89%*

# Attitudes to English

- Swedish respondents rated EN as:
  - More adapted to modern society than Swedish
  - More beautiful than Swedish
  - This was not the case among French respondents
  - Both Swe and French respondents saw the instrumental value in knowing English
  - A third of Swedes saw English proficiency as a marker of education as opposed to only 12% of the French
  - Swedes generally more positive towards English
- From Oakes 2001



Which languages do you speak well enough in order to be able to have a conversation excluding your mother tongue? - % of respondents

Country:	At least one L	At least two Ls	At least three Ls	None
EU (25)	56	28	11	44
Sweden	<b>90</b>	48	17	<b>10</b>
Denmark	88	<b>66</b>	<b>30</b>	12
Finland	69	47	23	31
UK	38	18	6	62

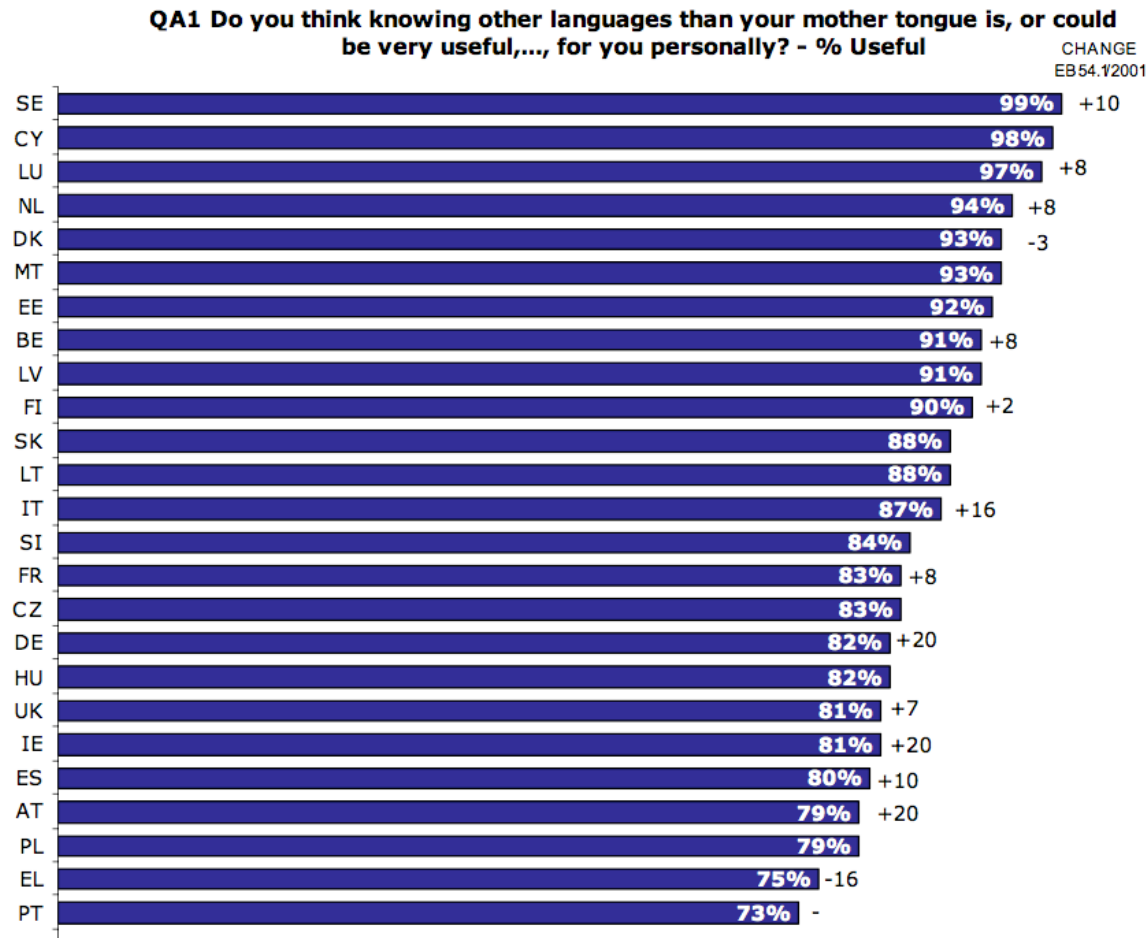
Source for slides 9–12: Special Eurobarometer 243. "Europeans and their languages"

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_243\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_243_en.pdf)

## Three most widely known languages – % of respondents

Country	Language 1	2005 (2001)	Language 2		Language 3	
EU	English	38 (32)	French	14 (11)	German	14 (8)
Sweden	English	89	German	30	French	11
Denmark	English	86	German	58	French	12
Finland	English	63	Swedish	41	German	18
UK	French	23	German	9	Spanish	8

# Attitudes to knowing other languages



QA2a. Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are the most useful to know for your personal development and career? - %

Country				
EU	English 68%	French 25%	German 22%	Spanish 16%
Sweden	<b>English 97% (1)</b>	German 37%	Spanish 22%	French 13%
Denmark	English 94% (2)*	German 55%	Spanish 10%	French 8%
Finland	English 88% (4)	Swedish 30%	German 19%	Russian 10%
UK	French 62%	Spanish 34%	German 27%	English 5%

\* 94% in DK, NL, CY; 91% in MT

# English in Higher Education in Sweden

*I chose to come to Sweden to study comparative politics because I wanted to learn English in a country where I had never been before*

*(L. Leboef, 20, from France, cited in Hyltenstam 1998:221)*

# English in Higher Education in Sweden: courses and programmes in English

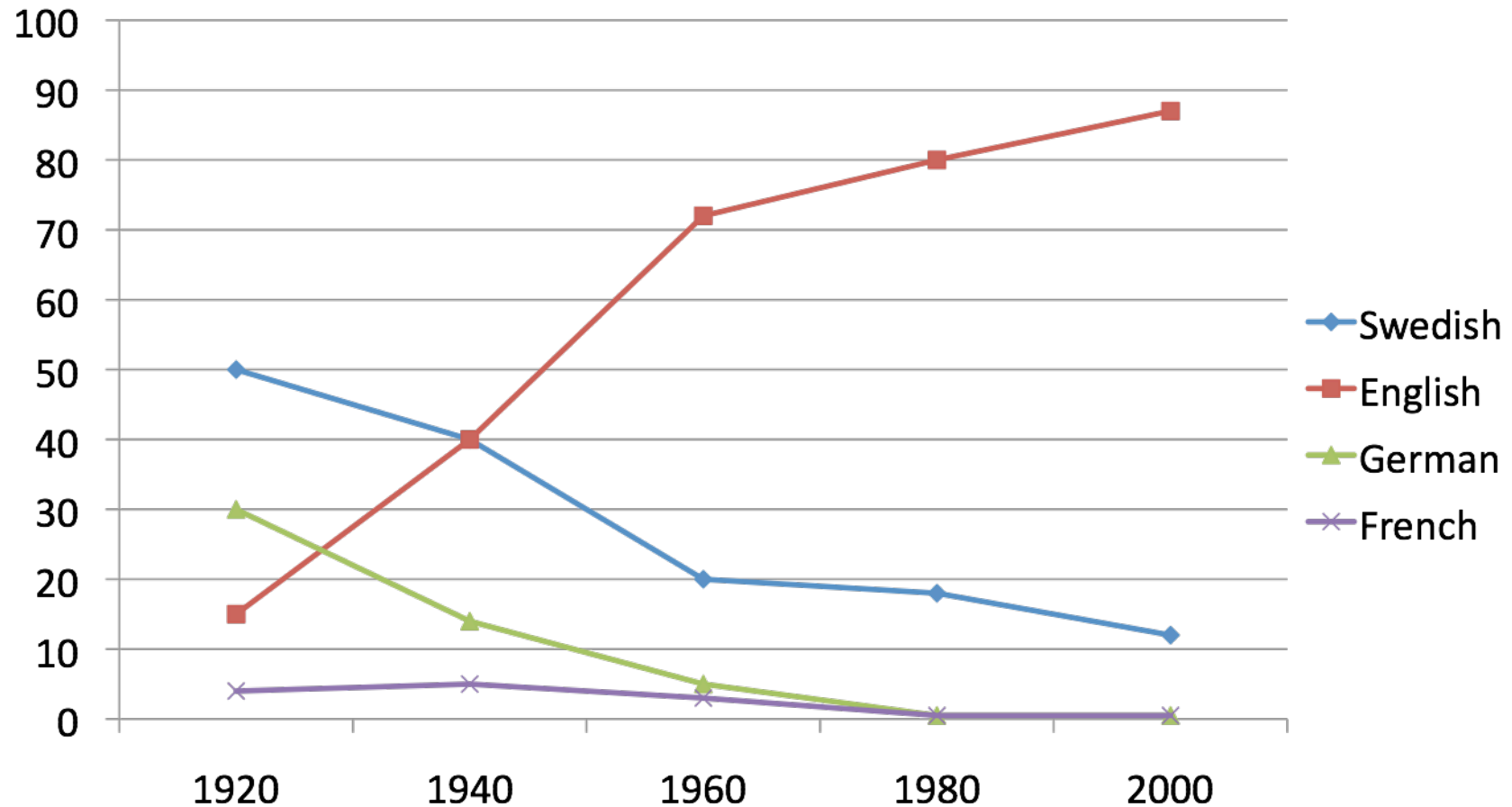
- **Internationalisation of HE** (figures from 08/09):
  - In ten years number of international students tripled to 36,600 = one in four newly enrolled student
  - Courses and programmes offered in English:
    - 18% of all courses, 36% of Master level courses
    - 25% of all programmes, **65% of Master level programmes**

# English in Higher Education in Sweden:

## Actual *use* of English

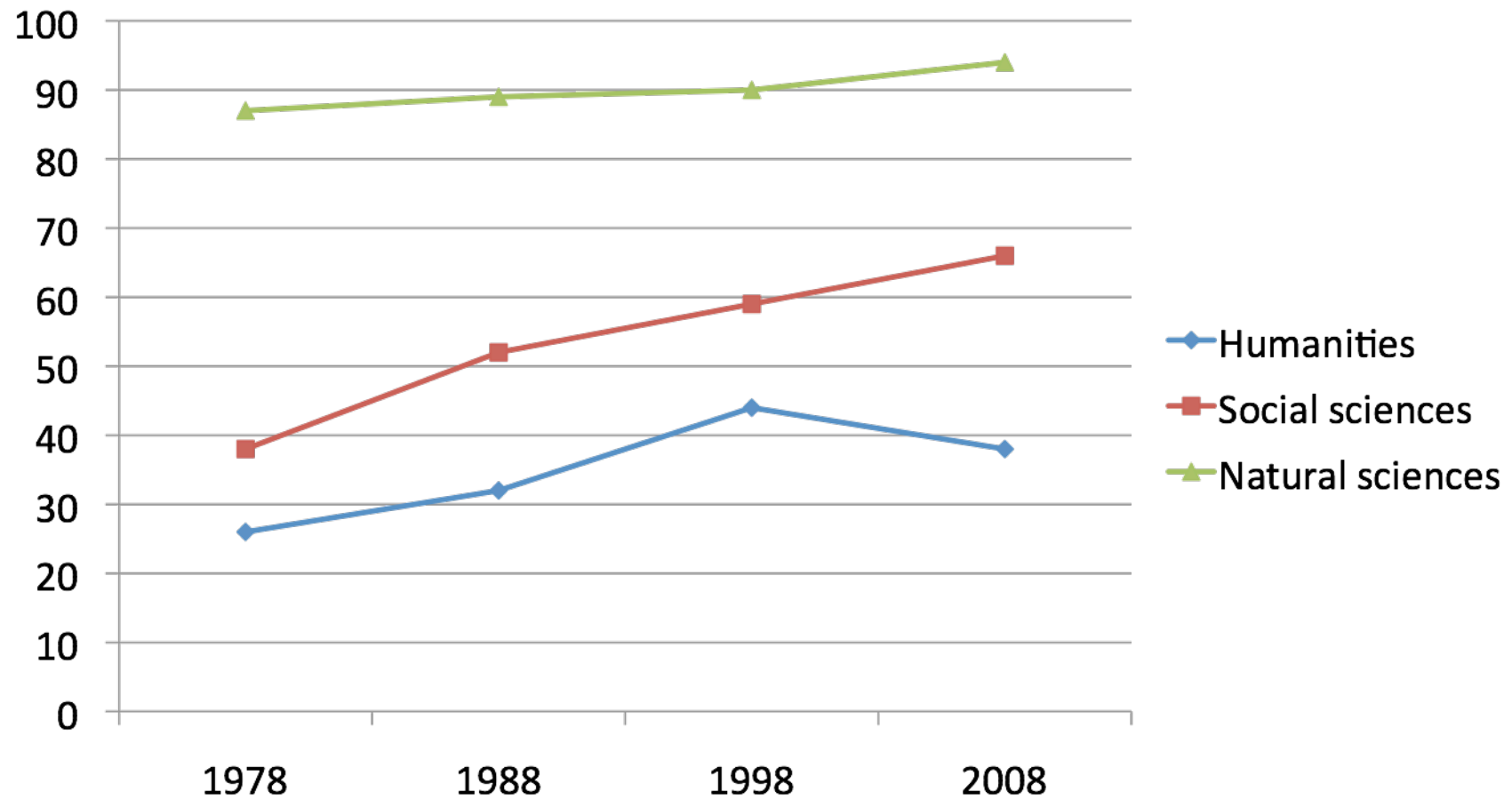
- Conflict between stated language of instruction and actual language use:
  - Swedish often used between Swedish-speaking students and teachers, as the informal language of instruction (Söderlundh 2010)
  - English is present even when subject is taught in Swedish: course literature often in English
- Most international students have another L1 than English

# English in Higher Education in Sweden: Language of doctoral theses





# Doctoral theses written in English - %



# English in research, Sweden

Faculty & University	No. of PhD theses (2001)	English	Swedish	Other
Medicine, UU	147	99%	1%	—
Medicine, KI	110	100%	—	—
Technology/Natural sciences, UU	102	100%	—	—
Technology, KTH	104	98%	2%	—
Social sciences, UU	54	74%	26%	—
Humanities, UU	74	39%	51%	9%

Data from the Swedish Research Council

UU: Uppsala University, KI: Karolinska institute, Stockholm

KTH: Royal Technical College, Stockholm

# English as Lingua Franca in scientific communication

- In communication between scientists from smaller language communities (e.g. Scandinavian), English is used partly as a result of conscious internationalisation, partly as a result of WW2 and the shift away from German to English;
- English used in academic teaching in Scandinavia from the 1970s, but significant increase in the last 10–15 years due to international student mobility

# Reactions 1: language planning

- Fear of domain loss in research and higher education →
- Domino effect with other public domains under threat →
- Diminished use of Swedish →
- Call for action to revert the situation →
- National Language planning →
- Swedish Language Act (2009)
- University Language Policies implemented

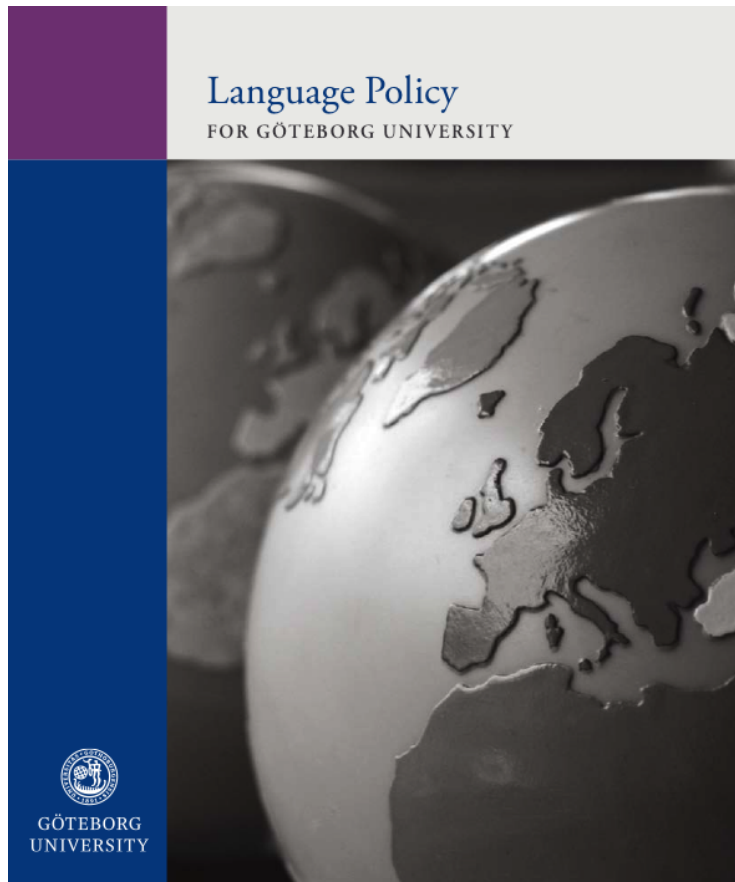
# A national language policy for Sweden: the Language Act (2009)

- Swedish is the principal language in Sweden
- Everyone resident in Sweden is to have access to Swedish and Swedish is to be usable in all areas of society
- The language of the public sector is to be cultivated, simple and comprehensible
- All residents of Sweden are to be given the opportunity to learn, develop and use Swedish.
- Swedish is the official language of Sweden in international contexts

Source:

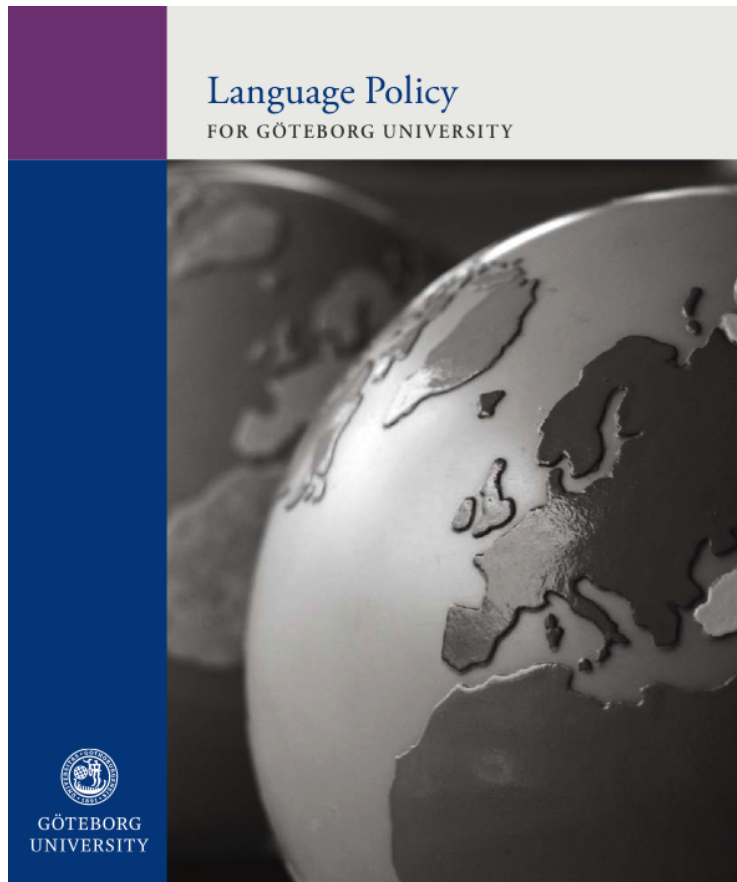
[http://www.eui.eu/Projects/InternationalArtHeritageLaw/  
Documents/NationalLegislation/Sweden/languageact.pdf](http://www.eui.eu/Projects/InternationalArtHeritageLaw/Documents/NationalLegislation/Sweden/languageact.pdf)

# Reactions (domestic market)



- “Swedish should be the main language of teaching in first cycle courses (Bachelor level)”
- “Dissertations in languages other than Swedish are to include extensive summaries in Swedish”
- “Within all the scientific fields the university should endeavour to use adequate terminology in Swedish”

# Reactions (international market)



- ...should be an attractive university for international researchers, teachers and students also outside Scandinavia. Teaching in English... is a prerequisite for this. The number of courses in which English is used as the language of teaching should...increase.
- Course literature in English
- All teaching staff should be prepared to teach in English or at least teach bilingually with visual support in English

# Tensions

- **Language policy in higher education:**
  1. Promotion of national language in UG courses (particularly lower levels) for the domestic market
  2. Promotion of English in higher level UG and PG courses and more widely at UG level aiming at the international market



# English in the city

- Research site:
- Gallerian shopping centre, Stockholm City
- About 80 shops, restaurants and services under one roof
- Estimate: four out of five signs in shop windows in English or partly in English



Photo: Catrin Norrby

A bit of both...



Photos: Catrin Norrby

# The future

- **Does English pose a real threat to the national languages in Scandinavia?**

- Fear of loss of domains to English → national language policy implementation  
versus
- Laissez-faire among ‘ordinary people’, in particular younger people

- **Exaggerated fear?**

- Strength of national languages
- Language loyalty among its speakers
- Parallel use of national language and English rather than domain loss and extinction →
- Bilingualism ... not a monolingual mindset

See: Boyd 2011, Norrby 2008, Salö 2010

- TACK SÅ MYCKET
- THANKS SO MUCH
- OCH / AND
- VÄLKOMNA TILL STOCKHOLM
- WELCOME TO STOCKHOLM



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