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The origin of semilingualism: Nils-Erik Hansegård and the cult of the mother tongue

David Karlander[1] | **Linus Salö**[2,3]

[1]School of English, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, Hong Kong

[2]Centre for Research on Bilingualism, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

[3]Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

Correspondence
David Karlander, School of English, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong.
Email: dakar@hku.hk

Abstract

'Semilingualism' is one of the most questionable theories produced in the language sciences. Yet, little is known about its origins. We present a critical account of the history of semilingualism, tracing its roots in the work of Nils Erik Hansegård, (1918–2002), inaugural chair of Sámi at Umeå University (1975–1979), who developed a theory of semilingualism (halvspråkighet) in the 1960s. We show how Hansegård theorized semilingualism using ideas from Nazi German linguistics, producing an unforgiving theory of linguistic pathology directed at minoritized bilinguals in Sweden's far north.

KEYWORDS
history of linguistics, linguistic deficit theory, mother tongue ideology, Nazi linguistics, semilingualism, Torne Valley (North Bothnia)

Abstract

"Puolikielisyys" oon yks mutäärnin kielitietheen enniiten kritiseerattu teurii. Kuitenkhaan sen alkuperästä ei tietä niin paljoa. Tässä artikkelissa met presenteeraama kriittisen syynäyksen puolikielisyyen idéhistuuriasta. Met vuotatamma teuriin jälkiä, jokka vievä ruottalaisen fenno-yykristin Nils-Erik Hansegårdin kielitietheellisheen työhön Tornionlaakson kielitilantheesta. Met näytämä kunka Hansegård (1918–2002), joka oli ensimäinen saamen kielen professori Uumajan yniversiteetilä (1975–1979), otti ideoita nasistisaksalaisesta kielitietheestä ko

hään formyleerasi teoriita "puolikielisyyestä". Hänen työn resyltaattina synty antheeksiantamaton kielipatolookinen teorii, joka sitten kohistu Norrbottenin kakskielishiin minuriteethiin.

1 | INTRODUCTION

'Semilingualism' is widely regarded as one of the most misguided theoretical notions ever produced in academic linguistics. It was first conceived in the 1960s as a 'half', 'reduced' or 'limited' form of bilingualism—a 'substandard' or 'deficient' command both of one's first and second languages, but soon fell into disrepute. Since the mid-1970s, critics have dismissed semilingualism as a conceptually flawed, empirically unsupported and ideologically biased theory (e.g. Edelsky et al., 1983; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986; Yamamoto, 2021). Another, more recent, strand of critique has centred on the impact of semilingualism, inquiring its conceptual permutations and institutional effects in and beyond linguistics—from Swedish minority politics (Salö & Karlander, 2018, 2022) to raciolinguistic ideologies in American schools (Flores, 2019; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Yet, despite the persistence and intensity of these critical engagements, the *origins* of semilingualism have received little attention.

It is sometimes noted that semilingualism was coined by Swedish Finno-Ugrist Nils Erik Hansegård (1918−2002), who himself claimed to have theorized semilingualism—*halvspråkighet*—'in the late 1950s or early 1960s' (Hansegård, 1990, p. 111)[1] to describe the 'half-mastery of language' (Hansegård, 1962a, p. 4) which he thought prevailed in the minoritized Finnish[2] population of North Bothnia, Sweden's northernmost province. He argued that semilingualism—which he defined as a 'deficient command of language' in bilinguals (Hansegård, 1968, p. 110)—was a psychopathological consequence of the assimilatory language policies which the Swedish state had imposed in North Bothnia since the 1870s (see Hansegård, 1962a, 1962b, 1966, 1968). He wrote on semilingualism throughout the 1960s, laying down a definitive version of his theory in the book *Bilingualism or Semilingualism* (Hansegård, 1968). His ideas enjoyed some credibility for a few years, but soon begun to draw flak, gradually descending into infamy (Salö & Karlander, 2018, 2022).

Parts of this story are occasionally recounted in critical discussions of linguistic deficit theories. There is, however, more to it. Although Hansegård is sometimes correctly given the dubious credit of first theorizing semilingualism, neither he nor his critics have said much about the actual process of theorization (e.g. Hansegård, 1968, 1990; MacSwan, 2000; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986). The immediate sources, situated aims and contingent logics of Hansegård's scholarly practice remain poorly understood, with misconceived or oversimplified genealogies lingering in some critiques of semilingualism. This is unfortunate. A critical understanding of a historically layered theory like semilingualism must encompass a twofold historicization (see Bourdieu, 2000; Rheinberger, 2010). It must historicize the concept by analyzing the scholarly practice from which the concept precipitated, and historicize the practice by analyzing its sources. The origins of semilingualism can, thus, only be discerned through a critical engagement with Hansegård's theoretical labour *and* with the history of the intellectual and ideological content of this labour.

[1] All translations by the authors.

[2] The term 'Finnish' refers to Finnish- and Meänkieli-speaking populations, their languages and linguistic varieties, capturing the historical nomenclature of the sources.

We offer such an analysis in this article. We show that Hansegård's theory of semilingualism was not simply an instantiation of an age-old vision of linguistic deficiency or deficit, but directly and actively derived from Nazi linguistics, fusing mother tongue determinism with doctrines of pathological bilingualism. The origins of semilingualism, as we shall see, are far more complex and far more sinister than what previously has been acknowledged.

2 | HISTORICIZING SEMILINGUALISM: METHODOLOGICAL AND CONTEXTUAL REMARKS

Linguistic theorization is a creative yet socially and historically contingent activity. Its primary concern lies not with a totality of concepts and doctrines but with an immediate set of sources, observations and ideas, subject to the linguist's use and misuse. Adopting a view from the sociology of science (Feyerabend, 1975; Latour, 1999; Pickering, 1992), we might say that the practice of linguistic theorization unites disparate and sometimes irreconcilable elements, fusing them into a new synthetic whole. A historical understanding of a linguistic theory must be sensitized to these acts of theory creation (Harris, 1981; Joseph, 2018). It must, following Latour (2017, p. 126), engage with linguistics as 'it is practiced', with linguistics 'in action', analytically returning the disembodied voices of linguists to their 'terrestrial bodies of flesh and blood in narrowly situated places'. This understanding requires a sensitization to the practices whereby linguists shape their concepts and theories, and to the conditions under which these practices take shape (Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Hutton, 1999; Joseph, 2018; Koerner, 1995). It likewise calls for heuristic rigour: linguistic theories and concepts, and the practices through which they were conceived, must be treated with the same analytical detail as any other sociolinguistic object. A thorough understanding of the origin of semilingualism must consequently account for Hansegård's work of theorization—his modes of reasoning, motives and practical manoeuvres—critically tracing the ideational and ideological content of his scholarly practice back to its immediate sources.

In what follows, we engage with this task from two concomitant points of view. We begin by mapping the genealogy of semilingualism in Hansegård's practice of theorization, focusing on the period leading up to the publication of *Bilingualism or Semilingualism* (Section 3). Our analysis draws on unpublished manuscripts, notes, drafts, clippings and letters in the Hansegård archive at Uppsala University Library (UUB) (Hansegård, 1993), supplemented by biographical and autobiographical accounts (Hansegård, 1961a, 1967, pp. 19–26, 1990; Wande, 1996; Ellström, 2001). We then trace the bearing elements in Hansegård's theory of semilingualism (Hansegård, 1968) along with ideational and intertextual routes back to their sources (Section 4), historicizing the final output of Hansegård's theoretical labour through a close analysis of his published and unpublished linguistic writings, as well as archival materials (Hansegård, 1961a, 1961b, 1993).

Proceeding in this way, we locate the immediate theoretical origins of semilingualism in Nazi linguistics, that is to say, in linguistics carried out by Nazi scholars in Germany and its occupied territories under the Nazi regime. Hansegård derived the bearing theoretical elements of semilingualism from two centrally placed actors in the language sciences of the Third Reich. He drew on Georg Schmidt-Rohr's (1890−1945) visions of the genius of the mother tongue, pathological bilingualism and linguistically conditioned worldviews, and Friedrich Kainz's (1897−1977) ideas of the inner organization of language.

The term *Nazi linguistics*, which is widely used in the historiography of linguistics (e.g. Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Hutton, 1999),[3] does not imply epistemological unity or a shared theoretical

[3] Compare *NS-Sprachwissenschaft* (Knobloch, 2005)

core. The Nazi seizure of power in 1933 had profound effects on the institutional organization and membership of German language sciences, but did not establish a single master narrative on language. Linguistic theory, as Hutton (1999, p. 57) points out, was not 'important enough for dictatorial decree,' but was allowed to remain 'polyphonous' (Knobloch, 2005, p. 305). The interrelationship of academic linguistics with the political agenda, ideological tenets and crimes of Nazism was, however, manifest in the widespread collusion of linguists with the Nazi state. The protagonists of Nazi linguistics conducted politically profitable research on topics like mother tongue, *Rasse* (race) and *Volk* (people), carried Nazi Party (NSDAP) membership cards and held academic, bureaucratic and political positions of power (Hutton, 1999, 2022; Simon, 1985; Knobloch, 2005; Wiley, 2002). This was the theoretical–ideological nexus from which Hansegård imported the bearing elements of semilingualism.

Hansegård's adaptation of Nazi linguistic sources was selective and principled work, but nonetheless embedded in the sociolinguistic situation of Sweden's far North. It effectively transposed the doctrines of Schmidt-Rohr and Kainz to a new setting and a new set of concerns. From 1953 to 1966, Hansegård lived among the minoritized communities of inland North Bothnia, who, in the early 1950s, had been subject to assimilatory policies for nearly a century (see Salö & Karlander, 2018; Wande, 1984). He taught in a school with a large Finnish student body, and married a Sámi lay-linguist—Sara Sarri (Hansegård) (1912−2004)—in 1957. They raised their children in Sámi (Hansegård, 1959, 1967). In the early 1960s, Hansegård begun to appropriate Schmidt-Rohr's and Kainz's ideas of mother tongue determinism and pathological bilingualism to characterize the language and linguistic practices of his Finnish students, validating his own preconceptions and unsystematic impressions of their linguistic and cognitive dispositions. This theoretical engagement was closely connected to his teaching, but also to his budding linguistic research and language activism (e.g. Hansegård, 1957a, 1957b, 1958). By framing semilingualism as a concrete proof of the oppressive nature of Sweden's monoglot regime, Hansegård successfully advocated for increased mother tongue provisions for minoritized Finnish-speaking students in the schools of North Bothnia (see Salö & Karlander, 2018). While this was a sincerely progressive agenda on Hansegård's part, it nonetheless reiterated Schmidt-Rohr's (1933) and Kainz's (1941–1969) visions of pathological bilingualism.

3 | THE ORIGINS OF SEMILINGUALISM

3.1 | Kiruna, 1953–1966

In August 1953, Hansegård travelled from the medieval university town Uppsala in Sweden's south-eastern heartland to Kiruna, one of the newest cities in the country. Kiruna was 18 years older than Hansegård, who just had turned 35. The town was the hub of a booming mining industry, a subarctic outpost of the Swedish nation state.

Hansegård came to Kiruna to teach. He had successfully applied for a position as upper secondary school teacher of Swedish and English and was eager to start. The road to the job had been long and circuitous. Hansegård hailed from a bourgeois Stockholm family. Both his parents had been practising lawyers. Their marriage came to an end in 1927, leaving his mother to care for seven children (Ellström, 2001). The divorce brought hardship to the family. Young Hansegård dropped out of school in the mid-1930s, 'due to economic reasons and laziness' as he later explained (Hansegård, 1990, p. 94). He worked in temporary jobs and completed his military service, periodically returning to school on public scholarships. He passed his upper secondary finals in June 1944, a few weeks before his 26th birthday and matriculated at Uppsala University the following year. At Uppsala, he studied Nordic philology, English linguistics and Finno-Ugric languages—Finnish and Sámi—as well as literature and pedagogy, gaining a bachelor's degree in 1949 and a *magister* in 1953.

Hansegård's relocation to Kiruna was congruent with his interest in Finno-Ugric linguistics, as Finnish and Sámi were widely spoken in and around the town. Inland North Bothnia had been ruled by the Swedish crown since the early 16th century, but its Swedish population had always been negligible, consisting mainly of an administrative and clerical elite, tasked with the management of Sweden's colonization of the far North. The advent of modern industrial mining in the 1880s would, however, forever change the sociolinguistic makeup of the region. The rapid growth of the mining industry, bolstered by the founding of Kiruna in 1900 and a railroad inaugurated in 1903, caused an influx of Swedish workers to inland North Bothnia, outnumbering the Finnish and Sámi populations within a few decades. The industrialization of Kiruna displaced Sámi reindeer herders and swept up Finnish smallholders, accelerating the sociolinguistic homogenization of the mining districts.

The economic, institutional, communicative and linguistic expansion of the Swedish state in North Bothnia embodied a liberal nationalistic idea of national unification and modernization. The dominance of Swedish was galvanized by assimilatory educational policies, directed mainly at the increasingly proletarized Finnish population, accelerating its language shift to Swedish. Between the 1870s and mid-1950s, the linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Finnish population was a priority of the Swedish state and church. Swedish-only policies were widespread in schools and other educational institutions, vocational training facilities (*arbetsstugor*) and military units in these years (Salö & Karlander, 2018, 2022; Wande, 1984). The intensity of the assimilatory regime begun to wane in the late 1930s, with standard Finnish being introduced as an elective subject in North Bothnian secondary schools in the mid-1950s, including the one in Kiruna where Hansegård taught. Yet, the scope and effects of this policy shift were limited. Finnish and Sámi languages were actively supressed at all tiers of the education system well into the 1970s. Swedish was—and remains—the dominant language.[4]

Teaching in Kiruna in the 1950s was a direct encounter with the assimilatory language regime and its lasting effects. Hansegård would soon emerge as one of its most vocal critics. In February 1957, he delivered a radio lecture where he denounced the 'linguistic oppression' which the Swedish state enacted against the Finnish communities in the far North. 'It is not compatible with the idea of Sweden as a state founded on principles of justice and personal integrity [*rättsstat*]', Hansegård argued, 'that at least 35,000 [Finnish-speaking] Swedish citizens have no rights to their mother tongue' (Hansegård, 1957b). He chastized educators and politicians for ignoring the linguistic needs of the Finnish communities and attacked the 'fanatical teachers who regarded Finnish almost as a moral flaw' among the people of North Bothnia (Hansegård, 1957b), insisting that Finnish speakers had an inalienable right to use their mother tongue in education.

Hansegård's critique of Sweden's language policies was anchored in his teaching practice. In the mid-1950s, he regularly had his students write essays on *the language question in North Bothnia* or on their *experiences of learning Swedish* under a monoglot regime. Hansegård preserved a few of these essays in one of his first studies of the sociolinguistic conditions in and around Kiruna (Hansegård, 1958). These texts speak volumes about the everyday manifestations of Sweden's assimilatory language policies, offering a rich, multi-voiced account of the institutional order that Hansegård had set out to change. As student Torgny L, whom Hansegård categorized a 'Finnish speaker', reflected in an essay on the sociolinguistic situation in the Torne Valley area of North Bothnia:

> Many children in the Torne Valley do not know a single word of Swedish when they start school. Because of this, they are taunted and ridiculed by their more fortunate [Swedish speaking] classmates, and perhaps even by the teachers. It is certainly inhumane to use

[4] Sweden officially recognized Sámi, Meänkieli and Finnish as 'national' minority languages in 1999, increasing local institutional support for these languages.

> various punishments to force children to stop speaking Finnish at recess. Children should of course be taught Swedish with Finnish as a medium. (Torgny L, 1957, cited in Hansegård, 1958, 6ff)

Having entered school in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Hansegård's students had experienced the Swedish-only education policy first hand. For students like Torgny L, education meant switching language. 'The way things are nowadays', another student gathered, 'children must learn Swedish from the cradle' (Henry D, 1956, cited in Hansegård, 1958). The social subordination of Finnish and Sámi speakers remained in place. The schools of North Bothnia did 'not take into consideration what language one has acquired as a child, but would assume that everyone has Swedish as their mother tongue', as student Dagny D described the situation in 1957 (cited in Hansegård, 1958). Through a symbolically violent encounter with the Swedish-only regime, Finnish-speaking students would 'become aware of the fact that they were not equal to Swedish speakers', as another student wrote (Börje W, 1957, cited in Hansegård, 1958, p. 6).

The student essays filled a dual function in Hansegård's (1958) study. On the one hand, Hansegård treated them as hard evidence of the oppressive nature of Sweden's education system, attesting to the punitive character of the Swedish-only regime. On the other, he framed the *linguistic form and style* of these essays as hard proof of the mental and linguistic deficiencies of his minoritized students.

While the content of the essays resonated with Hansegård's progressive language political stance, the Swedish skills of his minoritized students failed to meet his standards. Hansegård dwelled on his impression that there was *something* perplexingly 'un-Swedish' about their essays (Hansegård, 1958, 1961a, 1968), but could not easily pinpoint or describe this quality. The texts contained few formal errors, and even fewer errors which Hansegård could attribute to Finnish interference. While he found the morphosyntax of the texts almost completely acceptable, *something else* was not quite right: the texts *looked foreign*. 'Every now and then', Hansegård wrote a few years later, 'the essay of a Finnish student makes a somewhat *abstruse* impression', verging on partial incomprehensibility (Hansegård, 1961a, p. 9). 'I believe', he continued, 'that although there are no grammatical or syntactical errors modelled on Finnish patterns, and no phrases that are impossible [to produce] in Swedish, a Finnish substrate is nonetheless present' (Hansegård, 1961a).

The title of the study—*Report on Finnish Interference in Finnish Speaking Students* (Hansegård, 1958)—is an unambiguous indicator of Hansegård's epistemological stance. The study presented a typology of the linguistic 'errors' which Hansegård had detected in the students' writing, attributing their idiosyncratic Swedish to Finnish influence. The empirical material, however, was unsystematic and relatively small, and the presence of 'errors' scant. Hansegård (1958) reported 'interference errors' in less than one quarter of the essays written by Finnish students. The average number of such errors was less than nil point six (0.6) per essay. Hansegård conceded that some errors, mainly those pertaining to grammatical agreement and orthography, did not occur only in the Swedish writing of Finnish–Swedish bilinguals but also in the essays in some of his 'Swedish speaking'—that is, non-Finnish—students.

Despite the apparent reasons for epistemological prudence, Hansegård (1958) offered an assertive judgement of the linguistic and cognitive abilities of his minoritized bilingual students, arguing that the errors in their Swedish writing were indicative of deeper intellectual deficiencies. 'It is possible', Hansegård reasoned, 'that the obfuscated and impoverished thinking, which occurs in the essays of some Finnish speaking students, might be caused by a flawed command of the foreign language, Swedish', while granting that it nevertheless could be 'very difficult to distinguish deficient intelligence [*bristande begåvning*] from deficient proficiency [*bristande behärskning*] in the foreign language' (Hansegård, 1958). As second language speakers typically had 'difficulties grasping and

representing abstract ideas', they would 'comfortably withdraw to a more primitive, concrete linguistic level' (Hansegård, 1958).

Hansegård (1958) observed his students' language and made inferences about their minds. He treated their supposedly 'unusual' linguistic forms—stylistic slips, non-standard words, occasional idiosyncrasies and 'errors'—as manifestations of their befogged and defective cognition. Linguistic form, on this account, provided strong evidence of the mental status of the individual who produced it. 'Primitive' and 'concrete' language was isomorphic with 'primitive' and 'concrete' thought. Aphasia, low intelligence and cognitive disorders were suitable analogies for the language of bilinguals (Hansegård, 1958; see also Hansegård, 1968, p. 43).

These were impressionistic ideas, which Hansegård predicated on prejudices and random observations rather than on reading and reflection. In the late 1950s, Hansegård was at loss to understand what he believed to be his Finnish students' enduring linguistic dispositions. His academic training had focused mainly on language structure, philology and literature, and offered few tools for grasping the sociolinguistic situation in Kiruna (Wande, 1996, fn. 6). Attempting to explain the sociolinguistic dynamics of multilingual North Bothnia with an optics imported from psychological and psycholinguistic research, Hansegård's (1958) study reveals a desire for new epistemological frameworks, In the following years, Hansegård's interest in the psychology of *imperfect learning*, as it were, continued to grow, gravitating towards German-language linguistics and psycholinguistics.

3.2 | With Kainz at Vienna, 1961

In the autumn of 1961, Hansegård spent two months at the University of Vienna. The change of milieu marked a new phase in his career. In the beginning of the year, Hansegård had defended his *licentiate* thesis on Finnish loanwords in Jukkasjärvi Sámi, which he had written while teaching in Kiruna. Encouraged by professor Björn Collinder at Uppsala, Hansegård now aimed for a doctorate on the same topic. The posting in Kiruna had kindled Hansegård's interest in the effects of bilingualism on the 'intellectual and spiritual life' of 'Finns and Sámi' in North Bothnia (Hansegård, 1959). Over the next seven years, he would delve deeper into his case, expanding it towards new theoretical horizons (Hansegård, 1967).

Hansegård surmised that his doctoral research would benefit from a more thorough engagement with psycholinguistics and other new frontiers of the language sciences. This was Hansegård's main reason for travelling to Austria. At the University of Vienna waited professor Friedrich Kainz, who Hansegård regarded as 'the world's leading expert on psycholinguistics' (Hansegård, 1961a, 1ff). This characterization of Kainz was symptomatic of Hansegård's intellectual tastes and priorities. His readings in psycholinguistics were geared towards German-language traditions in which scholars like Kainz, Schmidt-Rohr and Weisgerber played major parts. In the early 1960s, this interest, much like Hansegård's wide-eyed admiration of Kainz, was rather quaint. Few of Hansegård's contemporaries would have agreed that Viennese psycholinguistics was an intellectual frontline in any sense of the term. Levelt (2013, pp. 535–545) characterizes Kainz as an arcane compilator, whose magnum opus *Psychologie der Sprache* (Kainz, 1941–1969) encompassed thousands of references but no new experimental or empirical results. Hansegård had spent a year reading its first four volumes in preparation for the sojourn at Vienna.

Arriving in October 1961, Hansegård was determined to make the most of the visit. Apart from Kainz's seminars in linguistics and the philosophy of language, he attended Eberhard Kranzmayer's lectures on lexical semantics and followed Heinz Kronasser's introductory course in linguistics. He heard Erich Heintel lecture on semiology, Viktor Frankl on logotherapy, Weriand Merlingen on

'Indo-Germanic' etymology and Josef Haekel on ethnological theory. He spoke regularly with Kainz, and occasionally with Kranzmayer, Kronasser and Otto Höffler, professor of Nordic philology (Hansegård, 1961b).

Of these scholars, Kainz had the most decisive impact on Hansegård's development. Hansegård's ideas about *inner and outer language, reduced languages* and *abstruse form*, as well as his Bühlerian trifurcation of language into *volitional*, *cognitive* and *emotional* functions (Hansegård, 1961a, 1968), were influenced by his reading of Kainz's *Psychologie* and his interaction with Kainz. It was also Kainz who instructed Hansegård to read Schmidt-Rohr's *Mutter Sprache* (1933) (Hansegård, 1961b), a work that would have thoroughgoing effects on Hansegård's theorization of bilingualism and semilingualism. From Schmidt-Rohr (1933), Hansegård adopted a vision of languages as *discrete conceptual inventories*, and of bilingualism as the social and psychological copresence of these inventories. Hansegård's firm belief in the irreducible cultural worth, mental primacy and cognitive determinism of an individual's *mother tongue* was significantly guided by these doctrines—a 'cult of the mother tongue' (Hutton, 1999, pp. 289–294)[5] derived directly from Schmidt-Rohr (1933). Similarly, his construal of 'reduced' forms of bilingualism as *dangerous* or *pathological* was tangibly—if not exclusively—shaped by his engagements with Kainz and Schmidt-Rohr.

Hansegård's linguistic thought made a leap at Vienna, acquiring theoretical direction and substance. The Viennese liaison did not only tie Hansegård to various outmoded German and Austrian research traditions, but also to their political history. In the early 1960s, Austrian institutions were still haunted by the legacy of Nazism (Feest, 2018; Fischer & Wimmer, 1993). Schmidt-Rohr, whose works were still taught at the university, had been a committed Nazi functionary, serving as head of the language political bureau of the SS-Ahnenerbe (Hutton, 1999; Simon, 1985, pp. 189–194; Knobloch, 2005, pp. 229–248; Levelt, 2013, p. 511). Many of the professors whose talks Hansegård attended—including Kranzmayer, Heintel, Haekel and Höffler—were former NSDAP members (Knobloch, 2005). Other faculty, like holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, were living victims of Nazi rule.

Kainz too had a background in the Nazi movement. He had applied for party membership a few months after the German Annexation of Austria in March 1938 and was admitted at the end of the year (Levelt, 2013, p. 545). The driving cause for Kainz's commitment to Nazism, as Gelbman (2004) and Levelt (2013) argue, was professional opportunism. During the first year of Nazi rule in Austria, Kainz was elevated from untenured *Privatdozent* to director of Vienna's *Institute of Psychology*, after the Nazis had forced its former director Karl Bühler into exile. In 1939, Kainz was awarded a salaried position as extraordinary professor of aesthetics and the philosophy of language (Benetka & Kienreich, 1989, 119ff), which let him finish the first two volumes of the *Psychologie* and write large parts of volumes III and IV (Levelt, 2013, 511ff).

Levelt (2013, p. 545) describes Kainz as the 'last all-round representative' of a German-language psycholinguistic tradition dating back to Wundt, Steinthal and Humboldt, while noting that Kainz's *Psychologie* 'did not leave a ripple on the field [of psycholinguistics] as a whole'. Despite this relative insignificance, Kainz nevertheless enacted a personal and theoretical influence on Hansegård and, by extension, on theories of linguistic deficiency proliferated after World War II. While Hansegård's interest in minority languages coincided with the consolidation of bi- and multilingualism as independent research areas in Anglophone language sciences, Hansegård's actual work moved in another direction. He imported his central theoretical ideas from an *arrière-garde* of incrementally peripheral scholars, with little name recognition outside German-speaking academia, forging a conceptual bridge between post-war linguistics and its uncanny past. This affinity becomes apparent through a close analysis of the bearing elements in Hansegård's theory of semilingualism.

[5] Compare Knobloch (2005, p. 230) *Muttersprache-Fraktion im NS*.

4 | THE BEARING ELEMENTS OF SEMILINGUALISM

4.1 | Mother tongue as worldview

In *Bilingualism or Semilingualism*, Hansegård (1968) envisioned languages as closed systems, organized by language-specific rules and principles. The unicity of a language was manifest in all its elements, from sounds and morphology to syntax and lexicon. Individuate languages were *essentially* different in form and content. Although Hansegård granted that some languages could exhibit considerable similarities, a natural language was an 'ingenious creation' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 60) with a 'unique structure' that harboured 'a unique creative genius' (*skaplynne*) (Hansegård, 1968, p. 15). A language was part of the 'cultural heritage' of a community, guaranteeing 'fundamental similarity' between its members, simultaneously shaped by and shaping their distinctive 'spiritual culture' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 16). The relationship between a language and its speakers was organic, transcending the control and agency of single individuals. To have language meant subjecting oneself to the genius of a mother tongue.

Hansegård saw his work as a synthesis of linguistic and psycholinguistic (*språkpsykologiska*) approaches to bilingualism, aimed at explaining the relationship between languages and their internal organization in speakers (Hansegård, 1968, p. 6). The notion of the *mother tongue* was central to this bridging operation. For Hansegård, the genius of a language was psychologically and sociologically actualized through the process of first language acquisition. The 'unique structure' of a language was only meaningful for those socialized in a language since infancy through the care of parents, relatives and community members, united by the bond of the mother tongue. This fetishization of a language–culture nexus made it impossible to reduce languages to constellations of autonomous signs and sign relations. Hansegård regarded the mother tongue as a historically generated structure with a distinct cultural and psychological reality, irreducibly situated among and within its native speakers. A mother tongue, Hansegård maintained, imposed linguistic conformity, conceptual unity and symbolic coherence on the native members of a linguistic community, granting them a shared worldview, a shared identity and a shared sense of historical continuity.

These ideas were articulated in Hansegård's deterministic reflections on linguistic meaning (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 44–87). To Hansegård, *a language was primarily substance, not form*. A language would always 'bring order and regularity to the world with which we interact, constructing our worldview [*världsbild*]' (p. 54). The mother tongue was bound to 'shape our perceptions and guide our entire engagement with the world. 'A language', Hansegård explained, 'is an interpretation of reality. We acquire this interpretation unconsciously, when acquiring our mother tongue. Language provides different concepts and forms of thought [*tankeformer*], and different linguistic systems (*langues*) contain partially different concepts and forms of thought' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 54). Linguistic difference, thus, always entailed psychological difference. The 'forms of thought' embedded in the conceptual frameworks of a language created indelible imprints on the inner life of its native speakers. A mother tongue would always dominate its linguistic community, shaping the collective worldview of its members.

Hansegård crafted these ideas with input from Schmidt-Rohr (1933), the first four volumes of Kainz's *Psychologie* (1941–1969) and, to a lesser extent, Weisgerber (1941, 1950). A mother tongue, Hansegård suggested in the spirit of these authors, is a cultural filter placed between humans and the natural world. It offers perpetual mediation, imposing a 'cognitive intermediate world' (*en tankens mellanvärld*) which categorizes and actualizes phenomena in accordance with the intrinsic principles of the language. Hansegård adopted this deterministic view of mediation from Weisgerber, who construed the intermediate world (*Zwischenwelt*) as a hermetic cognitive schema, limited by

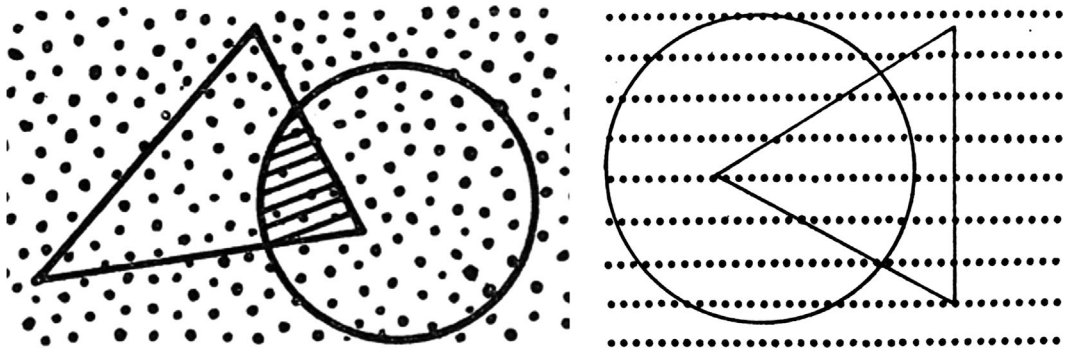

FIGURE 1 The semantic difference of related concepts in hypothetical language A (triangle) and hypothetical language B (circle). Left: Schmidt-Rohr (1933, p. 48). Right: Hansegård (1968, p. 78).

the boundaries of the mother tongue (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 20–21, 60–81). He assumed that the acquisition of a 'mother tongue' was inseparable from the acquisition of the worldview embodied in the language, organically connected to its community of native speakers. A speaker never simply mastered a mother tongue but was at once *mastered by* the mother tongue.

Hansegård regarded worldview and linguistic meaning as profoundly intertwined. His elaboration of this vision drew on Schmidt-Rohr's suggestion that all languages must be 'conceptually selective' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 69; see Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, pp. 12–13), explicitly invoking the *Mutter Sprache* as an authoritative source on relationship mother tongue and worldview (see Hansegård, 1968, pp. 20–27, 69–87). Borrowing terms, examples and even illustrations from Schmidt-Rohr (1933), Hansegård likened languages to 'catalogues of concepts' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 69), calquing Schmidt-Rohr's *Begriffsschatz* as *begreppsskatt* (Hansegård, 1968, passim; Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, passim). A language, in this view, was a closed system of classification, the categories and categorical boundaries of which imposed a culturally specific way of denoting—and by extension perceiving—the world. The 'meanings of words' in one language would always differ from 'the meanings of words' in all other languages (Hansegård, 1968, p. 70). A hypothetical Amerindian language (*indianspråk*), Hansegård insisted, likely had a word for 'parrot', while a hypothetical Inuit language (*eskimospråk*) likely lacked it (Hansegård, 1968, p. 70). More generally, the semantic 'space' of linguistic categories of certain languages covered a greater or smaller selection of objects, phenomena and qualities than did the corresponding categories of other languages, as 'different languages focus on different properties of a given state of affairs' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 86).

Evidence played only a minor role in Hansegård's reasoning. His empirical illustrations were limited to a few Sámi and Finnish examples—mainly terms for temperatures and colours. Hansegård's aim was not to present crosslinguistic comparisons of concepts, words or semantic fields, nor to expound the organization of a conceptual inventory in a single language. Instead, he proposed a universal schema of linguistic difference. He developed his claims around a set of figures (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 69–71, 78–79), which he had adopted from Schmidt-Rohr (1933, p. 13, 48–49, 80) already during the stay at Vienna (Hansegård, 1961a, p. 7, 1961b).

Hansegård sought to show that a concept in one language *always* differed from superficially similar concepts in other languages. Concepts in different languages could overlap *to some degree* but never 'fully correspond to each other' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 70), always remaining distinct in structure and essence. As shown in Figure 1, Hansegård (1968, p. 78), calquing Schmidt-Rohr (1933, p. 48), theorized language-specific concepts as essential *difference*, with concepts of each language covering different segments in a space of semantic primes, represented by dots. While linguistically encoded

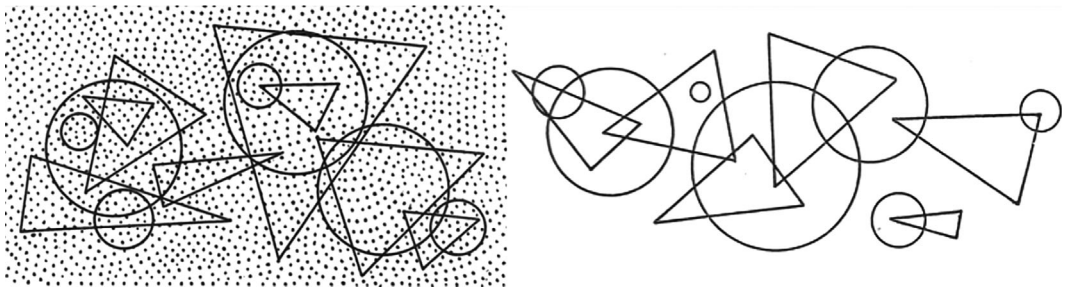

FIGURE 2 The relationship between the conceptual inventories in two hypothetical languages. Left: Schmidt-Rohr (1933, p. 49). Right: Hansegård (1968, p. 71).

concepts could be semantically proximal in different languages, their semantic content could never be identical. 'Lappish [Sámi] and Swedish concepts overlap just as little as the circles and triangles' in Schmidt-Rohr's model, Hansegård asserted (1968, p. 71).

The same essential difference characterized the relationship between the conceptual inventories in any two languages (see Figure 2). A language-specific conceptual system, composed of linguistically fixed categories, was incommensurable with the conceptual categories encoded in any other language. The conceptual systems of any two languages could cover related semantic fields, but the linguistic coding of the world would always be different in each language. One-to-one correlations between languages were barred from Hansegård's model. Difference, wholeness and boundedness were construed as the essential and defining properties of all language-specific conceptual systems (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 68–81; compare Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, pp. 39–49).

Calquing Schmidt-Rohr's figures, Hansegård underscored the cognitive reality of Schmidt-Rohr's semantic theory. Every language had 'a logic of its own', and this logic would inevitably be the logic of its speakers (Hansegård, 1968, p. 53). Similar to Schmidt-Rohr (1933, pp. 12–99), he construed crosslinguistic lexical differences as evidence for a linguistic, language-specific determination of speakers' worldview (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 60–87), unreservedly accepting Schmidt-Rohr's contention that the presence of 'a conceptual inventory [*Begriffschatz*] with its own particular characteristics' in every human language was 'the primary proof' of the fact 'that languages lead their speakers to think in a particular manner' (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, p. 12). By this circular reasoning, Hansegård framed linguistic difference both as cause and evidence of cognitive difference.

4.2 | Isomorphism between 'inner' and 'outer' language

Hansegård was taken in by Schmidt-Rohr's linguistic determinism. He found support for it in Kainz's discussions of the isomorphic relationship between 'inner language' and 'outer language', that is, between cognitive processes and observable linguistic form (Kainz, 1954a, pp. 148–156, 1954b, pp. 21–22, 1954c, pp. 351–358; compare Hansegård, 1968, pp. 44–59). 'The linguistic activities that take place inside an individual'—'inner language'—and 'sensorily perceivable [outer] language' were manifestations of the same linguistic system. Any language, Hansegård reasoned, encompassed a set of invariable words and structures. The human capacity to have language—the natural or divine 'gift of language' (*språkgåva*; Hansegård, 1968, p. 40)—could only be realized through an individual appropriation of this system. To possess inner language presupposed an absorption of an 'extraneous living language, which originally exists outside us' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 49). Inner language was an individual instantiation of a shared code, consisting of 'internalized' linguistic norms, forms and patterns.

Under normal conditions, the process of 'internalization' corresponded to the acquisition and development of a mother tongue. While no speaker could be expected to master *every* word or *every* morphosyntactic and stylistic pattern of a language, all native members of a linguistic community would always *share* a mastery of the phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical *core of their language* (*språkets kärna*; Hansegård, 1968, p. 37). Through 'internalization', the 'system of norms' contained in the mother tongue 'fuses with our personality, so that it no longer feels alien to us, but [feels] as our own'. 'Whenever we speak', Hansegård insisted, 'it feels as if we are retrieving the language from within ourselves and not from the suprapersonal [*överindividuella*] linguistic system' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 49).

Hansegård's theorization of inner and outer language posited isomorphism between linguistic production and the internalized linguistic system. Hansegård attributed this idea to Kainz (Hansegård, 1968, p. 44, 50–56, 101–102), who had defined inner language as the 'mental command' (*geistige Besitz*) of a system of linguistically meaningful signs and their rules of use, enabling individuals to employ a language in speech, and for silently formulating 'thinking concepts' (Kainz, 1954a, pp. 148–156). While Hansegård defined inner language as impervious to direct observation, he argued that observable outer language nonetheless offered direct access to the linguistic system internalized in an individual (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 50–59). And while inner language could never transform 'inner linguistic activities' into 'articulated linguistic signs' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 44), the 'articulated linguistic signs' of the outer language would always be isomorphic to their inner linguistic correlates. Any overt linguistic token corresponded to some element or property of the inner language (Hansegård, 1968, p. 59). For Hansegård, this isomorphism was above all perceptible in the semantic structure of a language. The linguistically encoded conceptual inventory mirrored and instantiated the linguistically conditioned worldview of speakers. An individual's overt use of language reflected their mental and spiritual dispositions (see Kainz, 1954c, pp. 351–358).

This circular logic was central to Hansegård's theorization of semilingualism. While the notion of internalization let Hansegård place languages *inside* individuals *and simultaneously* retain his construal of languages as suprapersonal entities, the postulate of isomorphism granted him analytical access to the internalized language. As inner and outer languages were modally distinct but formally identical, Hansegård presumed that each localization of a linguistic system could be captured with methods from philology, lexicography and descriptive grammar, elevating normative linguistic description to a psycholinguistic technique. The doctrine of inner–outer isomorphism served to validate Hansegård's ideas about the 'impoverished thinking' and 'abstruse' language of 'semilingual' minoritized Finns in North Bothnia. It allowed him to posit an overt connection between the linguistic system and the individual speaker, and between the individual and the linguistic community, drawing on Schmidt-Rohr (1933) and Weisgerber (1941) to support this claim (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 44–96). By accepting these doctrines, Hansegård could treat overt linguistic form as a diagnostic device, and accordingly construe individuals with a 'deficient [*bristfällig*] command of language' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 110) as cognitively deficient or abnormal—that is, as semilingual. Idiosyncratic linguistic production was accordingly a window into the inner faculties of semilingual speakers, offering 'solid' evidence of their cognitive abnormality.

4.3 | Pathological and normal bilingualism

A belief in isomorphism between overt linguistic form and psychological dispositions does not *automatically* produce visions of abnormality. The pathologization of language, as instantiated in any theory of internal linguistic deficiency, requires a fixed point—a vision of normality in which normative

judgements can be grounded. 'The abnormal', following Canguilhem (1991, p. 243), is 'ab-normal', in that it 'comes after the definition of the normal', appearing as a negation of the terms of normality. The idea of normal language, like all visions of normality, contains a possibility of inversion. Unless language is normatively fixated beyond the mind, mouth or manual operations of the single individual, individual linguistic difference and variability cannot be construed as deviances. The establishment of norms creates the possibility of perceived abnormalities.

Hansegård envisioned linguistic normality as a manifestation of essential difference, particularity, wholeness and boundedness. Any normal language would always be distinct from all other languages, growing organically within a delineated linguistic community, at once embodying and shaping its spiritual culture (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 60–63). Linguistic normality amounted to systemic discreteness and stability, sociolinguistic unity and intergenerational continuity. The genius of a language could, in Hansegård's view, be captured in dictionaries and linguistic descriptions (Hansegård, 1967, 1968). This conviction was congruent with Hansegård's vision of linguistics as the sciences of *individual* languages (Hansegård, 1968, p. 20).

Hansegård's interest in linguistic normality and abnormality is discernible already in his early writings on Finnish and Sámi (Hansegård, 1958, 1961c, 1962b). Hansegård paid explicit attention to notions of linguistic normality in his doctoral thesis (Hansegård, 1967, pp. 69–82) and in *Bilingualism or Semilingualism* (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 97–113). In these two works, Hansegård asserted that *normal language users* must *internalize* the forms and structures of their mother tongue. While he granted that no speaker could know the entire lexicon of a language, he nevertheless insisted that a *normal* command of language required a large vocabulary—the larger the better. He further demanded that *normal linguistic production* must be correct, intuitive ('automatic') and creative, and that proficient speakers should *master* the cognitive, emotional and volitional functions of their mother tongue. In addition to placing these demands on the outer language of speakers, Hansegård required that *normal speakers* had developed almost a metaphysical *connection* to the system of meaning embedded in their mother tongue. The decoding of aural and textual messages in a *normally internalized* mother tongue would always elicit 'vivid and opulent semantic representations' (*betydelseföreställningar*) *within* the individual language user (Hansegård, 1967, pp. 69–70, 1968, 97ff).

Hansegård embraced Kainz's suggestion that 'far-reaching damages in the outer language could affect the inner language' of an individual (Kainz, 1954b, p. 22). In Hansegård's theorization of semilingualism, the idea of extensive isomorphism between inner and outer language extended the scope and aggravated the implications of this vision. It allowed Hansegård to treat supposed errors in the outer language as isomorphic with inner linguistic deviations. Overt linguistic abnormalities became inseparable from inner psychological abnormalities, serving as evidence of their reality. Linguistic idiosyncrasies, in Hansegård's view, were not merely transgressions of rules, but at once causes and proofs of some inner, psycholinguistic pathology. A systemic deviation in the command of the mother tongue was reflective of a deviant psyche. 'Not having language fully at one's disposal (semilingualism)', Hansegård declared, 'causes a depletion of spiritual life: a paucity in individual meanings and a lack of nuance in emotional experiences' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 58).

As this dialectic of normality and abnormality lay at the root of Hansegård's vision of bilingualism and semilingualism, it might appear paradoxical that he sympathized with the emerging idea that 'bilingualism is generally desirable and useful—if it is managed correctly' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 129). While his treatment of bilingual linguistic production drew inspiration from error analysis (e.g. von Weiss, 1959; see Hansegård, 1968 pp. 63–67), Hansegård granted that bilingualism could be a cultural and cognitive resource, insofar as bilinguals had a slight possibility of accessing two linguistically encoded worldviews. This 'dual orientation' (*tvåfaldig orientering*) to reality could, at least in theory, endow bilinguals with 'an increasingly nuanced way of seeing', preventing them

from settling with 'an overly simplistic understanding' of the world (Hansegård, 1968, p. 81). Yet, such positive effects could in no way be taken for granted. While Hansegård saw bilingualism as a differentiated phenomenon, which involved 'many different degrees of proficiency' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 65), the effects of bilingualism were, in most cases, negative.

In Hansegård's view, some forms of bilingualism were abnormal, with semilingualism being the worst scenario imaginable. Only 'natural bilingualism'—a mother tongue-like mastery of the second language paired with a 'full command' of the mother tongue—entailed positive effects. 'If bilinguals are to benefit from their bilingualism', Hansegård wrote, their 'two languages must be allowed to develop; neither of them must be neglected or quashed' (Hansegård, 1968, p. 81). Unless minoritized bilinguals were allowed to cultivate their mother tongue, they were at risk of permanent linguistic and spiritual injuries (Hansegård, 1962a, 1968, pp. 109–112). A combination of a 'neglected' or 'abandoned' mother tongue and a hybrid or incompletely acquired second language was bound to damage their cognitive and affective capacities (Hansegård, 1968, p. 110).

Hansegård's construal of linguistic pathology was influenced by Schmidt-Rohr's ideas about healthy mother tongues and dangerous bilingualism. Similar to Hansegård, Schmidt-Rohr regarded 'some types of bilingualism' as 'completely harmless', while insisting that other types had a 'disastrous, soul-killing, spirit- and culture-exterminating effect' (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, p. 179; see Hansegård, 1962a, 1966, 1968, 1990). Like many Nazi linguists, Schmidt-Rohr campaigned against hybridization, dissolved categories and transgressed boundaries (Hutton, 1999; Knobloch, 2005). In his ideal society, the mother tongue of the *Volk* would be free from foreign influence and reign supreme in all sociolinguistic domains. This ideal could best be realized through the officialization of the mother tongue as the language of the state, the borders of the pure mother tongue becoming isomorphic with the borders of the racially and ethnically cleansed polity (Hutton, 1999, pp. 260–305). The copresence of two or more languages was always a threat to this idealized sociolinguistic order, entailing destructive multiplicity, hybridity and crossing. Bilingualism could be accepted, Schmidt-Rohr reasoned, as long as it was achieved through foreign language instruction in an otherwise monolingual, mother tongue-based education system, granting bilingual competence only to a small and reliable elite. The *normalizing* control of educational specialists would guarantee a formal and functional separation of foreign languages and the mother tongue, guarding the latter from conceptual and systemic degeneration. Under these conditions, bilingualism would remain harmless (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, pp. 178–187).

True to this vision, Schmidt-Rohr argued that 'damaging and dangerous' (*schädliche und gefährliche*) forms of bilingualism would beset any *Volk* whose mother tongue lacked official consecration and institutional support (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, p. 180). The 'soul-killing', 'spirit- and culture-exterminating' effects of involuntary bilingualism and coerced assimilation were permanent threats to any minoritized community. Similar to Weisgerber, Heinz Kloss and other Nazi linguists, Schmidt-Rohr was concerned about the situation of the German-speaking communities outside Germany's 1918 borders, combining an interest in minority language rights with imperial visions of an expanded *Lebensraum* (Hutton, 1999; Knobloch, 2005; Simon, 1985), fearing that the dominance of foreign languages and the social subordination of the mother tongue would cause language shift and linguistic hybridization. These sociolinguistic processes were not only deemed to dissociate minoritized Germans from their *Volk* and *Vaterland*, but also seen as a cause of psychological injuries in minoritized children (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, p. 188). For Schmidt-Rohr (1933), their mouldable young minds were particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of unchecked bilingualism, as it would 'disturb' them 'in the establishment of the conceptual classes that are necessary for cognitively grasping the world', making them 'uncertain about how to arrange the appearance of the world [*Welterscheinung*] in conceptual units' (p. 181); 'a semi- and miscomprehension' of linguistic concepts was

accordingly 'much more harmful' than morphosyntactic errors (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933). This suggestion was likewise calqued in *Bilingualism or Semilingualism* (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 84–87, 110–112).

Hansegård fully subscribed to the idea that the social demotion of the mother tongue was an absolute evil for any minoritized community (Hansegård, 1962b, 1966, 1968). In the spirit of Schmidt-Rohr, he argued that a 'deficient command of language'—'semilingualism'—would harm and constrain bilingual speakers in every conceivable way (Hansegård, 1968, p. 110). The abandonment of the mother tongue could only create unnatural hybrid languages, marked by conceptual disarray and categorical fragmentation—a 'Swedish with Finnish semantics' in the case of the Finnish population in North Bothnia (Hansegård, 1968). This pathological language had 'inhibited' the 'entire personality' of its speakers, depriving them of 'the richness of emotionally tinted experiences which give rise to deep and refined sensations' (Hansegård, 1968). Hansegård (1962b, p. 218) likened the plight of the Finnish population of North Bothnia to Schmidt-Rohr's characterization of South Tyrol as a 'paradigm case of the dangerous form of bilingualism', where an institutionally supported national language had been forced upon a defenceless minority (see Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, pp. 183–186). The social subordination of an ethnolinguistic group, Hansegård agreed with Schmidt-Rohr, was a linguistically and cognitively degenerative process. Enforced bilingualism, resulting in language shift, linguistic hybridization and semilingualism, would shatter the genius of the mother tongue, deforming it and dissociating it from its historical community of native speakers.

5 | DISCUSSION

Tracing the origins of semilingualism in the bearing elements of Hansegård's theory—mother tongue as worldview, isomorphism between 'inner language' and 'outer language', and the cognitive reality of 'abnormal' forms of bilingualism—we depart from previously proposed genealogies of semilingualism. Some scholars have suggested that Hansegård coined the notion *ex nihilo*, without serious input from linguistic research (Edelsky et al., 1983; MacSwan, 2000). Others have surmised that some earlier vision of linguistic deficiency or deficit 'lay behind' Hansegård's ideas of semilingualism, presenting Bloomfield's remarks on 'illiterate speech' among the Menominee (Bloomfield, 1927) as a direct precursor to Hansegård's concept (Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

While it is true that Hansegård's theorization drew on earlier scholarship, the origins of semilingualism cannot be reduced to a single eccentric act of creation nor to a family resemblance with superficially similar concepts. Assertions that languages or linguistic competencies may be 'half', 'deficient' or 'reduced' certainly predate both Hansegård and Bloomfield. Examples can be drawn from almost two and a half millennia of Western linguistic thought: from the bastardized Hebrew described in the biblical *Book of Nehemiah* or Herodotus' account of the Greek–Scythian mixed language spoken in Gelonus, from the Roman jargon rejected in Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, Bruni's rebuttal of the half-Greek, half-Latin of Grosseteste's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, or Luther's warnings against a double neglect of Latin and the mother tongue in his 1524 treatise on education, and onwards, to modern dialectology, historical linguistics, colonial linguistics, early theories of bilingualism, or even contemporary sociolinguistics (see Heller & McElhinny, 2017; Jaspers, 2016; McElvenny, 2021 for a discussion of modern linguistics). But although contemporary visions of semilingualism clearly have a prehistory, listing historical similarities does not reveal much about the origins of Hansegård's theory, nor about the interests, ideas and aims bound up with it. Hansegård's work on semilingualism was not influenced by Bloomfield, or Bruni, or the Bible, but by notions and theories handed down from Nazi linguistics.

Hansegård's appreciation of Nazi scholars like Schmidt-Rohr, Kainz and Weisgerber is by no means unique. The relationship of Nazi linguistics to central developments in post-war socio- and applied linguistics is a complicated matter. Several early scholars of bilingualism and minority language sociolinguistics—notably Uriel Weinreich (1953) and Joshua Fishman (1964)—read and referenced works by Nazi linguists (see Hutton, 1999, 2022; Wiley, 2002).[6] The proliferation of Nazi linguistic thought in post-war language sciences, thus, is far from a trivial matter. As Hutton (1999, 2022) maintains, the presence of Nazi sources in post-war language sciences pose 'a challenge to the disciplinary narrative of linguistics, and, in particular, that of sociolinguistics' (Hutton, 2022). It troubles and partially invalidates attempts to confine all concepts and ideas emanating from Nazi linguistics to a dark disciplinary past, exposing conceptual links across apparent temporal divides. Hansegård—who would go on to become chair professor of Sámi—was, in a similar vein, by no means a peripheral or crankish scholar. His theorization of semilingualism impacted on linguistic thought and practice far beyond Swedish academia. It reached Anglophone applied linguistics in the late-1970s, much due to the mediating work of Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976), influencing North American research on bilingualism and academic performance (see Cummins, 2021; Flores, 2019). This reception is still a matter of contention in contemporary debates on bilingual proficiency. A historical analysis of the origins of semilingualism places this legacy under a new critical lens, offering a deepened understanding of why non-normative bilingualism, for so long, has been theorized as a pathology. The root of the issue, we argue, lies in Hansegård's conceptual sources.

Critical scholars have rightly noted a conceptual overlap between semilingualism and racist visions of bi- and multilingual individuals (Edelsky et al., 1983; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Flores, 2019). Semilingualism, these critics note, is a linguistic theory of racial and ethnic inferiority, which frames minoritized speakers as cognitively and linguistically deficient. Our clarification of Hansegård's intellectual affinity with Nazi linguistics places this line of critique in a clearer historical light, linking it not only to a deeper history of linguistic thought, but specifically to the history of scientific racism and its political inflections. Hansegård adopted his concepts, models and theoretical notions from scholars who, to a varying degree, had been implicated in the science and politics of language, ethnicity and race in Nazi Germany and its occupied territories. Through Hansegård's uptake of Kainz's *Psychologie* and Schmidt-Rohr's monoglot, *völkisch* nationalist fetishization of the mother tongue, the origin of semilingualism is intertwined with racist linguistics and linguistically inflected racism. This conceptual legacy is manifested in the rigid, pathological view of non-normative bilingual speakers and non-standard minority languages upon which the notion of semilingualism rests (see Hansegård, 1961c, 1962b, 1966, 1968, 1990).

While Hansegård derived the bearing elements in his theorization of semilingualism from this linguistic–ideological nexus, his views of bilingualism were ridden with contradictions. Disavowing the nationalism and totalitarianism of his predecessors, he supported far-reaching provisions for autochthonous minority languages, regarding them as integral to the democratic welfare state. The theorization of semilingualism played an important part in Hansegård's critique of Sweden's assimilatory minority language policies. Semilingual speakers, in Hansegård's view, had fallen victim to the

[6] Unlike Fishman and Weinreich, Hansegård likely had a personal history with far-right politics. In 1935, his name appeared in the membership records of Sweden's main fascist organization of the interwar years, the relatively insignificant National Socialist Workers Party (NSAP/SSS) (Swedish National Archives, Stockholm: SE/RA/730173, vol. 3). He appears to have been a less active party member than his mother Hilma Hansegård, who stood on NSAP/SSS election lists and wrote for the party press. It is not impossible that she enrolled her son as a — effectively passive — member; neither is it unlikely that Hansegård dedicated some part of his erratic youth to the NSAP/SSS. We are grateful to Tobias Hübinette for providing us with information on these matters.

ideological turpitude of the Swedish state and its oppressive institutions. Sweden's assimilatory minority language policies had both severed them from their linguistic communities and barred them from participating in the monoglot public sphere (Hansegård, 1962a, 1962b, 1966, 1968).

It goes without saying that Hansegård never subjected his own work to equally acute scrutiny. He never questioned his received ideas of deficient speakers and pathological bilingualism, uncritically accepting Nazi visions of bilingualism as a psycholinguistic peril. As a result, his attempts at opposing the sociolinguistic subordination of Finnish speakers effectively classified these very speakers as cognitively and linguistically inferior. His attempts to distance himself from the monoglot position he ascribed to Kainz, Schmidt-Rohr and likeminded scholars were similarly ambivalent. Already at Vienna in 1961, Hansegård had noted that Kainz and Kranzmayer were no 'supporters of bilingualism' (Hansegård, 1961b) and—wrongly—that Schmidt-Rohr had regarded 'all bilingualism as destructive' (Hansegård, 1961a, p. 8). Contra the standpoints he ascribed to his predecessors, Hansegård sought to construe bilingualism as an advantage, pointing to a growing body of research on the positive effects of bilingualism on cognition, general intelligence and additional language learning (e.g. Haugen, 1956; Weinreich, 1953; see Hansegård, 1968, pp. 80–81, 127–133). Presenting Switzerland and Wales as forerunners of institutionalized bi- and multilingualism, he advocated an increased presence of Finnish in the classrooms of North Bothnia, either as a taught subject or as the medium of instruction for Finnish students, envisioning parallel and sequential uses of Swedish and standard Finnish as possible models (Hansegård, 1962b, 1966, 1968, pp. 124–133, 1990, pp. 143–150). Unlike Schmidt-Rohr and Kainz, Hansegård viewed bilingualism as a desirable resource, provided that bilingual speakers conformed to the rules and norms of both languages.

By defining and theorizing semilingualism, Hansegård was able to mount an effective attack on Sweden's monoglot order, contributing to its downfall in the 1970s (Salö & Karlander, 2018, 2022). He used semilingualism as a scientific argument in his advocacy for minority language rights in education, framing the assimilatory policies of the Swedish state as psychological abuse. Much like Fishman (1964), he was enticed by Schmidt-Rohr's vision of the mother tongue as the primary source and supreme manifestation of minority identity (see Hutton, 1999, pp. 289–293, 2022), treating it as a cornerstone for any pluralistic and inclusive linguistic regime (see Hansegård, 1962b, 1966, 1968, 1990).

But despite its efforts to convey a sense of epistemic renewal, Hansegård's theorization of semilingualism remained firmly grounded in Schmidt-Rohr's and Kainz's linguistic thought. His assertion that bilingualism could be normal and desirable hardly harmonized with his pathological interpretation of actual bilingualism. After all, Hansegård's theorization of semilingualism cast doubt on the linguistic and psychological dispositions of *all* minoritized bilinguals, framing them as prone to communicative defectiveness and cognitive abnormality (see Hansegård, 1962a, 1966, 1968, 1990). In the light of this history, it is far from surprising that Hansegård regarded 'semilingual' Finnish speakers as linguistically and cognitively inferior to monolinguals and 'advanced' bilinguals, construing them as 'linguistic cripples' (Hansegård, 1966, p. 180) with 'insufficient' capacities to think, feel and desire (Hansegård, 1968, p. 110). His theoretical labour blocked his capacity to formulate an alternative to this vision.

6 | CONCLUSION

The origins of semilingualism are far more complex and far more sinister than previously has been acknowledged. Hansegård's theorization of semilingualism was rooted in a cult of the mother tongue. It drew decisively on a Nazi linguistic fetishization of ethnolinguistic borders and essences, manifested in

visions of mother-tongues as fountainheads of collective identity, spiritual vitality, authentic perception and true belonging.

Hansegård's theorical work was first and foremost inspired by Kainz' and Schmidt-Rohr's linguistic thought. Hansegård (1968) drew on Schmidt-Rohr's (1933) vision of the *mother tongue* as an ingenious system of meaning, construing crosslinguistic differences as manifestations and evidence of the different *worldviews* inculcated in speakers of different mother tongues. He fortified this vision by emphasizing the *isomorphism* between *inner* and *outer languages*, treating linguistic forms as direct reflections of psycholinguistic states. By subscribing to this doctrine, which he adopted from Kainz (1954a, pp. 148–156, 1954b, pp. 21–22, 1954c, pp. 351–358), Hansegård could treat linguistic idiosyncrasies, whichever he took them to be, as hard proof of psychological or psycholinguistic abnormality (Hansegård, 1968, pp. 60–113). This outlook aligned with Schmidt-Rohr's vision of bilingualism as a spiritual, cultural and political threat to the existence of minoritized speech communities: Hansegård *fully* subscribed to Schmidt-Rohr's construal of unchecked bilingualism as a *pathological condition* and a cause of *pathology* (Schmidt-Rohr, 1933, pp. 172–192; Hansegård, 1962b, 1966, 1968).

But while Hansegård's work was politically pliable (Salö & Karlander, 2018, 2022), its take on linguistic theory was dogmatic. His theorization of semilingualism left no room for alternative explanations and could not easily be aligned with a non-pathological view of non-normative bilingualism. Hansegård was convinced that the students he had taught in Kiruna between 1953 and 1966 were forever semilingual, dismissing counterarguments and ignoring alternative analytical models beyond the end of his career (Hansegård, 1990, pp. 55–93, 111–150). And while he insisted that his commitment to semilingualism was motivated by his sympathies for linguistic minorities in Sweden's far North, he never questioned his own deterministic ideas about the linguistic, cognitive and spiritual inferiority of large sections of this population. The theory of semilingualism was a compelling worldview, from which Hansegård never broke free.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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