How Swedish Do I Sound? – A Qualitative Study of Language Attitudes in L2 Speakers

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Abstract

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Many features of a speaker's language use can incite in a listener the formation of beliefs and attitudes about the speaker's language use as well as the speaker themself. When learning a second language (L2) these are often features, such as an accent, that are transferred from the speaker's first language (L1) and affect not only the individual's language use but their attitudes toward L2 accents. This project investigates the attitudes that L2 speakers of Swedish carry with them about the Swedish language by conducting ethnographic interviews with L2 speakers. The interviews were done with adult L2 speakers of Swedish living in Sweden, and were conducted in Swedish. Participants were asked about their attitudes towards the Swedish language and what potential factors played into those attitudes. Using methods of Grounded Theory and ethnographic fieldwork, the interviews were carried out with the intention of letting the participants' thoughts and beliefs carry the line of inquiry forward. Their answers provided insight into L2 attitudes about the perceived presence of a standard variety of Swedish and their varied experiences with foreign accent perception biases.

Keywords: language attitude, folk linguistics, Swedish, L2, Grounded Theory

Acknowledgements

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Preface

While on a research trip to Uppsala, Sweden to conduct interviews with second language speakers of Swedish about language attitudes, I found myself sitting in my grandparent's kitchen listening to a podcast called *Språket* on Sweden's national public radio, *Sveriges Radio*. This is a popular linguistics podcast about the Swedish language and its impact in Swedish society, hosted by Emmy Rasper and Ylva Byrman. The particular episode I was listening to was about Ortensvenska, a multiethnolect that emerged from accented speech in suburban communities with predominant immigrant populations and has been an area of research since the late 1980s. The word *ort* is an abbreviated form of the word *förort* which translates as *suburb*. However, as the hosts of the podcast explained, over time Ortensvenska has also taken on the role of a sociolect because so many young people speak this variant, or at least use aspects of it, even if they are born in Sweden. The hosts discussing this linguistic phenomenon in the episode raised questions about the position that this variant had in the Swedish speaking community and what attitudes Swedish speakers had about its usage in various contexts. After explaining what the multiethnolect Ortensvenska was, they hosts brought the actor "Big O" onto the show, introducing him as an actor and comedian who stars on the reality show *Invandrare för Svenskar*, (Immigrants for Swedes). The title of the show is a play on the Svenska för Invandrare, Swedish for Immigrants, which is the name of the program immigrants to Sweden go through to learn the Swedish language. This is a gameshow style reality show where celebrities who are Swedes with immigrant backgrounds, most of them non-white, get to ask questions to white Swedes about their stereotypes towards immigrants and also Swedes with immigrant backgrounds. The comedians serve as "immigrant experts". Big O's role on the show is one of these experts. Returning to the *Språket* podcast, the hosts played a clip of a young person speaking what could

be perceived as either Ortensvenska or L2 accented Swedish, for Big O and then asked him to weigh in on whether the person in the clip was speaking Ortensvenska or not. After listening to the clip, the first question Big O asked was: "Is this person Swedish?"[1] (Språket P1 2024, my translation) to which the hosts responded that the speaker was a soccer player born in Sweden to Swedish speaking parents.

  Big O's question is a complicated one given that answering it requires defining what it means to be Swedish. There are many competing accounts of national identity and belonging in Sweden, drawing for instance on politics, history, culture, institutions, public policy, demography, and race. The national department for statistics in Sweden offers an account of Swedishness, in part, as related to immigration. A statement on its website reads:

> Sweden has been a country of immigration since the 1930s. After World War II and up until the middle of the 1970s, Sweden experienced mainly labor immigration. More recently, war and conflicts in the world have had a larger impact on immigration. Immigration peaked in 2016, when 163,000 people immigrated to Sweden[2] (Statistikmyndigheten 2025, my translation).

Much like many other European nations, Sweden has long been a multicultural, multiracial, multilingual society, but particularly so following the period of peak immigration in 2016. Sweden has a total population of about 10.5 million and, as of 2024, about 2 million were born outside of Sweden (Statistikmyndigheten). The fact that 20% of Sweden's population has a background that is not ethnically Swedish, means that there is considerable variation spoken

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[1] "Är personen svensk?" (Språket i P1 2024)
[2] Swedish original "Sverige har varit ett invandringsland sedan 1930-talet. Efter andra världskriget och fram till mitten av 1970-talet hade Sverige främst arbetskraftsinvandring. Under senare år har krig och konflikter i världen haft en större påverkan på invandringen till Sverige. Invandringen var som högst år 2016 då 163 000 personer invandrade till Sverige" (Statistikmyndigheten 2025).

Swedish, and a significant portion of the population that does not speak a perceptually standard Swedish. In 2024, an overwhelming majority of immigrants were born in Ukraine. Looking at the immigration numbers from 2023, the largest number of immigrants living in Sweden come from ten countries: India, Poland, Germany, Syria, China, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey. From 2014-2018 the most common country of birth for immigrants was Syria. Additionally, many people who grow up in communities with high immigrant populations whose family or close friends are immigrants. All of this suggests that there is a great deal of variation in language use and attitudes to study in these multilingual and multicultural spaces.

At the same time, as scholars like Nana Osei-Kofi have demonstrated, the Swedish nation has historically been understood to be homogenously white, and only white. As Osei-Kofi summarizes it:

> In contemporary Swedish society, to be seen as Swedish means being tall and white with blue eyes and blond hair. It means that your biological parents, your grandparents, and those who came before them are white and have been in Sweden for multiple generations. *It means speaking Swedish flawlessly, without a hint of an accent or speech pattern that could create doubt about your place of belonging*. It means being a Christian, even if you are not necessarily a churchgoer, and it means holding what are thought of as modern and progressive values. (Osei-Kofi 2024, 25, my emphasis)

Osei-Kofi includes this description of what might be understood as a "typical Swede" in the context of her work, *AfroSwedish Places of Belonging*, where she traces the coalitional identity "AfroSwedish" that brings together two identity categories (Afro and Swedish) that have historically been constructed as not only as mutually exclusive but oppositional. In other words, Swedish national identity excluded also being African or of African descent. Osei-Kofi's work

helps to understand that part of the complexity underlying Big O's question is related to race and racialization practices in Sweden. In other words, when Big O asks, "Is this person Swedish?" he might implicitly also be asking, "Is this person white?"

This project builds upon Osei-Kofi's research by employing linguistic methods to explore the idea, cited above, that being Swedish also entails "speaking Swedish flawlessly, without a hint of an accent or speech pattern that could create doubt about your place of belonging" (Osei-Kofi 2024, 25). Implicit in this statement is that being Swedish, and being white, can be marked or stereotyped through speech. The way speech *sounds* matters to how Swedish it is considered to be, and this is key to my research. Similarly, perceiving speech as belonging to a place or not is a way of racializing it. Also important to my work, embedded in Osei-Kofi's statement about perceived fluency is the notion that some flawless, or standard variation of Swedish exists in the world and that there are linguistic variables (i.e: accent and speech pattern) that make a speaker perceptually less Swedish, effectively racializing them as less white. The way that language operates in this "typical Swedish" identity that Osei-Kofi outlines is also multi-faceted and complex.

The complexity of Big O's question also goes beyond whether the person speaking is a white Swedish speaker in interesting ways. His question also speaks to the diversity of the people in Sweden as well as the linguistic diversity of Swedish spoken there. Effectively, Big O also asks whether the speaker could be a non-white Swedish speaker of multiethnolect or, particularly relevant to this study, a speaker of Swedish as a second language. Inspired by the complexities of Big O's question, my research explores questions around the attitudes that might have motivated it. Is Big O asking if the person speaks Swedish as a second language or if they are speaking Ortensvenska? What attitudes do speakers of Swedish as a second language (L2 speakers of

Swedish) have about this variation of Swedish, and how do they view their place in the Swedish speaking community in Sweden? When studying the attitudes of L2 speakers, it's important to include references to both L1 speakers of Swedish as well as the Ortensvenska multiethnolect because of their interaction with and comparison to L2 speakers is significant. When studying language attitudes in the Swedish context, Ortensvenska has to be a part of the conversation because the line between Ortensvenska and L2 speech is often blurred, often because their speakers can be racialized in similar ways. There are features of both L2 accented Swedish and Ortensvenska that might index a speaker as being not Swedish in a way that is often intertwined with perceptions about a speaker's race/ethnicity. By studying the attitudes of L2 Swedish speakers, I aim to better understand the racialization that happens within the Swedish speaking community. Since non-white Swedish speakers, both L1 and L2, are more likely to be indexed as L2 speakers, my research takes a closer look at those L2 speakers and considers how their experiences are connected to the attitudes around the perception of the Swedish language.

In *AfroSwedish Places of Belonging,* Osei-Kofi discusses her positionality in her work documenting AfroSwedish experience in Sweden. She discusses growing up in Sweden and identifying as AfroSwedish and being an insider in the community due to her connection to the geographical place. At the same time, she also explains that as a scholar who has worked extensively outside of Sweden, she recognizes that she has not had access to the contemporary AfroSwedish experience as it relates to location. Thus, she sees herself as "both insider and outsider" (Osei-Kofi 2024, 6). Osei-Kofi highlights the importance of both understanding a community and their identity/identities through the place(s) that the community exist in Sweden.

I undertake this research from my own place of belonging, as an insider or member of the Swedish speaking community who has spent significant time in Sweden and attended university

in Sweden. I moved from Sweden 17 years ago and then moved back for my undergraduate studies in 2019 but currently live in the US and where I study at the University of Washington. In addition to speaking English, I speak Swedish with what most people would call a standard accent and identify as a white Swede. As a consequence of all these things, I am also an outsider to the part of the language community that speaks L2 accented Swedish or Ortensvenska. My position is a delicate one, as I do not wish to speak for the people I have interviewed, and it is important to me to acknowledge the limitations that my position and perspective as an outsider, linguistically, ethnically, and physically might bring to the study. In both the community and the space, I position myself as a curious and openminded observer and scholar.

My multiple places of belonging have contributed to my interest in second-language learners and their attitudes toward Swedish. Although I am an L1 speaker of Swedish, I teach Swedish to L2 speakers in the U.S. My teaching grants me a certain perspective about the acquisition experience but my students are also lacking the connection to the location and they are nearly all white-presenting Americans, so their experiences differ greatly from Osei-Kofi's. There are, however, interesting parallels between my students in the U.S. and the L2 speakers that I interviewed for this project who are also white-presenting. Further, since I, like Osei-Kofi, am a Swede living and working outside of Sweden, it felt vital for me to connect with these speakers in the location where they speak their language, which is why I conducted the interviews with my speakers in person and in Sweden apart from two I reached by video call.

Introduction

All speakers of any language speak with some form of an accent which is perceived by the listener who then forms a judgement about it. Through this judgement of language, the listener, in turn, also forms judgements about the speaker. These judgments are often

unconscious. Accented speech is often associated with a perceptual bias from the perspective of the listener. This bias may be attributed to different extralinguistic factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status, that contribute to indexing the speaker in question, where indexing is when we automatically categorize a speaker based on how they speak due to a bias about some aspect of that speaker or their speech (Ball et al. 2023). The podcast referenced above addressed one salient feature of Ortensvenska that is not spoken with a standard dialect pitch accent but rather with "a staccato rhythm" (Språket i P1 2024). A speaker of Swedish who hears speech with this linguistic variable might assume that this person's first language is not Swedish or that they come from a multilingual and multiethnic background. What is noteworthy about the perceiver's indexing is the stereotyping and assumptions that are made about the speaker. Within sociolinguistics, several factors have been shown to contribute to indexicality in language perception including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, cultural community and background, geopolitics, and more (Dragojevic 2017). Many of these indexical markers are often associated with a prestige, for example high status or low status. For example, in research on foreign accented English, speech that is perceived as produced a native speaker tends to carry more prestige, or be regarded as higher status, than speech that is perceived as a non-L1 accent and often other negative factors that are stereotypically associated with that accent (Dragojevic 2016, 2017, 2020).

In his 2012 book *Hur Låter Svenskan, Ejengklien? (How Does Swedish Ackshully Sound?)*, phonologist Olle Engstrand writes, "It is often said that Swedish pronunciation is unusually tricky. That people that have recently come to Sweden have a rather difficult time in developing *reasonable* pronunciation" (Engstrand 2012, 31; my translation, my emphasis).[3] In

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[3] Swedish original text: "Ofta sägs det att svenskans uttal är ovanligt krångligt. Att de som kommer nya till Sverige har det alldeles extra besvärligt med att få till ett *rimligt* uttal." (Engstrand 2012, 31; my emphasis)

phrasing the question this way, Engstrand implicitly raises the question, what kind of pronunciation constitutes reasonable (*rimlig* in Swedish original) pronunciation and how does the language learner's own goals compare to what a L1 Swedish speaker or a more proficient L2 speaker view as reasonable. Engstrand goes on to explain the particularities of Swedish pronunciation that are difficult to become proficient in, namely the vowel system, but at no point does he elaborate on the goals of that acquisition process as they relate to the vowel system, i.e. the pronunciation L2 learners are taught to aspire to. Learning a second language involves a multitude of different goals around skills to master related to listening, reading, writing and speaking. Regarding oral acquisition when learning a second language, to be able to produce intricate distinctions within the Swedish vowel system is not necessary to function in the language or to participate as an active member of the Swedish speaking society.

In English, when someone speaks *broken* English it means that they speak with an L2 accent; in Swedish another name for an L2 accent is *brytning,* literally *breaking* in English. Does calling an accent a *brytning* put some degree of a value judgement on that the accent? In other words, does it make the accent negative? It does create a hierarchy where accented speech becomes the equivalent of the broken version of unaccented, or unbroken, Swedish. Engstrand (2021) discusses the relationship between *brytning* and Ortensvenska which has been widely studied and described as a youth sociolect in more recent years. This multiethnolect was first associated with suburbs with large populations of first- and second-generation immigrants, such as Rinkeby in Stockholm, and the features of this variety of Swedish are a combination of different L2 accents present in these immigrant communities (Kotsinas 1988, Gross et al., Botsis et al., Bijvoet various). Although present and widely spoken in the majority of Sweden,

especially the larger cities in Sweden, this variety is still often regarded as *bad* or *broken* Swedish.

In designing this study, I began thinking about how often both Ortensvenska and L2 accented Swedish are perceived as *broken* and what impact this might have on how various speakers were racialized. Put another way, even if a listener cannot visually perceive the speaker, the linguistic features of Ortensvenska and some L2 accented Swedish might prompt the listener to racialize the speaker as non-white. I predicted that my discussions with the L2 speakers would reveal that the attitude the speakers had towards their own accents, as well as the value statements they make about what good and bad Swedish sounds like, would align with the L1 speaker valuation that Ortensvenska is "bad Swedish." I believe that there is significance in the presence of Ortensvenska in the context of L2 speaker attitudes because it is a variety that L2 learners will interact with just as much as regional dialects while living in Sweden. Ortensvenska is prevalent in Swedish popular culture, and figures prominently on TV, in film, on the radio, and in literature. Further, I hypothesize that the L2 learners will also consider this variety as "bad Swedish" and potentially equate their own L2 accent to this established multiethnolect.

At the heart of my study are a series of questions: With all of Sweden's dialectal, ethnolectal, and sociolectal variation, what does it mean to say that one speaks "Swedish"? Will the L2 speaker perceive a language variety differently from an L1 speaker? And what do L2 speakers regard as salient within Swedish that such that it influences their attitudes towards that language? What experiences and attitudes about different aspects of Swedish are predominant among L2 Swedish speakers?

This study focuses on the perceptual indexicality in speakers of Swedish as a second language. Focusing on Swedish specifically is especially interesting due to the multiethnic L1

speaker variant of Swedish that is often indexed as accented L2 speech. By studying the experiences of L2 speakers of Swedish, I aim to better understand the bias that Swedish speakers carry with them about L2 speech and Ortensvenska and how L2 speakers experience that bias. Through highlighting their experiences, I also aim to illustrate how L2 speakers of Swedish regard their own language use and how their language use plays into their identity as Swedish speakers and Swedes.

In what follows, I first outline the conceptual groundwork for this project, methodologically and theoretically. In the Background section I describe a research approach that Corbin and Strauss (2015) and Charmaz (2014) have labeled, Grounded Theory and discuss how this qualitative research methodology guided my data collection and analysis. Expanding on this approach, I then explain the theoretical background of folk linguistics and the Folk Theory model of language and how this relates to language regard and standardization. In the three main sections treating questions of identity, I apply the Folk Theory model to the societal level and analyze how a speaker might experience liminality of identity between and within a language community. Following this, I further elaborate identity and attitude in Sweden and provide an overview of how prestige and language policy operate in the context of Sweden. After laying the groundwork, I bring in examples from my interviews with the L2 speakers to exemplify the broader identity and attitude phenomena that are outlined in the groundwork, using tangible examples from the speakers' perceptions of their own language use to support my claims.

Background

Next, I outline the most pertinent parts of the groundwork through which to bring the stories of the L2 speakers into the larger context of language attitudes. This section covers Preston's (2017) Folk Theory of language and standardization, liminality and identity as they

relate to language attitudes, language attitude research in Sweden, and concludes by addressing questions of prestige and language policy in Sweden.

Folk linguistics and Standardization

A goal for many subdomains of linguistics is to observe and, to a degree, describe a specific aspect of language. Folk linguistics is a branch of sociolinguistics that is concerned with observing and describing what non-linguists believe about language. The beliefs that people carry about language can inform our understanding about what stereotypes, biases, and attitudes are connected to a certain dialect, accent or linguistic variable. Within this field, beliefs and ideologies are closely related but, as Preston (2017) explains, in typical folk linguistics, as well as the broader subfield sociolinguistics, the idea of what constitutes language is defined differently from the Linguistic Theory model (Preston 2017). Preston contrasts two models of what a language is: the Folk Theory and the Linguistic Theory. In the Linguistic Theory, a language is regarded as a collection term for many different dialects of a given language with variation within each dialect. The Folk Theory model of a given language maintains that there are standard versions of a language, or a "correct" versions of language, and there are lots of varieties that branch from that standard where the standard can be associated with prestige and functionally encompass features of different. Preston (2017) uses the Folk Theory model to explain how speakers of a given language operate with the idea of what is the accepted standard of their language. Although linguists from other fields of linguistics do not believe in this idea of a standard, sometimes it can be functionally useful to refer to a generalized L1 variety as the standard. However, in the mind of non-linguists there is a standard that people seem to feel the need which to adhere. Typically, when non-linguists think of a standard variety we think of written language. The influence of written language standards strongly affects perception of a

standard within a language community. "Our image of Swedish is shaped by the fact that we are

creatures that read and write. Written Swedish takes up a large portion of our language
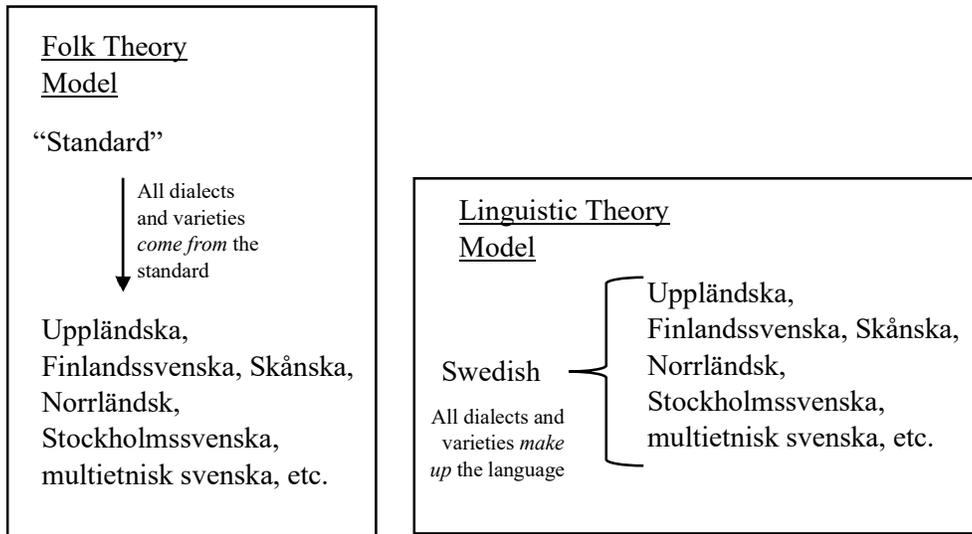

Figure 1 Folk Theory Model and the Linguistics Theory Model. These models are illustrated with different varieties of Swedish as the example language. The key difference between these two models being the "standard" in the Folk Theory which does not exist in the Linguistic Model. (Adapted from Preston 2017)

awareness" (Engstrand 2012, 7; my translation).[4] Within Preston's Folk Theory model of

language, the written forms of the language plays a large role in signaling what the "correct" or

standard variety of the language is. What speakers think of as a standard is apparent in research

on L2 accents because calling speech accented implicitly marks it as deviating from the

perceived standard. This standard is something that is described by people based on a perceived

version of the language.

The field of folk linguistics is centered around the perception of language by non-

linguists and these perceptions come with implications based on extralinguistic variables such as

race, ethnicity, gender, class, and more. Preston (2010) shows that in many of these different folk

linguistic studies each of which uses different methods, extralinguistic factors, meaning

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[4] Original Swedish: "Vår bild av svenskan formas av att vi är läsande och skrivande varelser. I vårt språkmedvetande tar den skrivna svenskan stor plats" (Engstrand 2012, 7)

attributes of the speaker and listener beyond the language, always contribute to the perceptual process and, thus, impact the attitude of the participants in the studies. For example, he cites a Danish matched guise study that showed that speakers of the Modern Copenhagen dialect were perceived as more intelligent and generally of higher prestige than other modern Danish dialects (Kristiansen 2009). These varieties that were perceived as sounding more "intelligent" and having higher prestige tend to align with standard varieties, which dialects branch off of in the Folk Theory model of language. Within this model, the standard language ideology remains central to perceptual work. Similarly, Montgomery and Acheme (2020) position their study on processing fluency and dialect variation around a standard variety, showing that people perceive varieties of English as better the closer they are to what they believe to be the standard variety of the language.

This attitude toward standard varieties is seen in other perceptual studies like Kuiper's 2005 study on French regional dialects, which investigated the context of standardization of French and the question of what is perceived as the French standard. Kuiper states,

> Clearly, a perception of something other than specific linguistic features, that is 'underlying social meanings,' is at work in these findings. Non-linguists can pass judgment on a language variety without justifying that judgment phonologically, syntactically or lexically, or adhering to the precept that all varieties are linguistically equal (Kuiper 2005, 29).

Although Kuiper looks at regional dialects in France, the theorization of *underlying social meanings* seems to be relevant to other examples of extralinguistic variables in other perceptual studies. One example of a self-perception task in second language research can be seen in Shibata (2021) where L2 speakers of English were asked to rate their own perceptions of their

accents in English. Using value statements and a Likert model scale, they showed that Japanese second language learners of English perceived their accents more or less negatively. A key part of their findings concluded that "L2 English speakers have various schemas and stereotypes that are culturally and socially approved of with respect to native and [non-native speaker] English varieties" (Shibata 2021, 128). In this project my goal is to see whether schemas are present in the Swedish context as well.

Folk linguistics can help to identify the extralinguistic factors that contribute to the perception of language varieties and the attitudes people form because of them. These attitudes do not operate on a binary that a variety is either good or bad, but rather there is a hierarchy of prestige between varieties of a language. If we take Preston's Folk Theory model and apply it to a more traditional variationist sociolinguistic and ethnological perspective, the perceptual studies can then be looked at concurrently with both an individual as well as societal lens. Rampton's (1999) paper on liminality and identity explains the relationship between these liminality/identity and linguistics:

> A lot of attention has been given to the ways in which young people transgress and rework dominant orders of race hierarchy and division, and cultural analysts and ethnographers have often focused on language and discourse to illustrate this (Rampton 1999, 355).

Rampton shows how folk linguistics is relevant to understanding the societal context, specifically by studying the language of youths. By studying language attitudes, Rampton demonstrates how hierarchies correlate to attitudes about the conceived standard varieties relate to prestige. Looking specifically at the Swedish context of hierarchy and language attitudes, Bijvoet reports that the arbitrary hierarchy of prestige languages is, from highest to lowest:

Swedish L1 and English L1; more commonly spoken European languages; Nordic neighbor languages, domestic minority languages and sign language; more commonly spoken languages of immigrants, and lastly less commonly spoken languages of immigrant (Bijvoet 2020, 29)[5]. This prestige hierarchy was at the forefront of my mind when considering the experiences of integration which my interview subjects told me about. As I return to later, the L2 speakers I interviewed reported distinct differences in their experiences with native Swedish speakers perceiving their accents, suggesting that the prestige hierarchy also plays into these experiences. While these hierarchies are apparent in everyday language use, it becomes even more important in the context of language acquisition where the goal of learning a language is centered around acquiring the language and reproducing the standard variety as closely as possible (see for example Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam 2009). It is worth highlighting the unrealistic nature of this goal, and that Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam carefully considered this concern where they conducted extensive testing with L2 speakers of Swedish asking them to report on how near "native" their Swedish was. In this study, the term *native speaker* essentially meant standard. Especially given that some of the participants started learning Swedish at one or two years old when mistakes in their Swedish would be expected, attempting to implement the concept of a standard begins to seem faulty and unrealistic.

Liminality and Identity

When moving to a new country as the speakers I interviewed had done, it is common to experience something like a transitional period during which speakers cannot function as active members of Swedish society until they develop Swedish language skills. However, they can be considered incoming members in as much as they are learning to be active members. As they

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[5] Attityder till Spår av Andra Språk i Svenskan: en forskningsöversikt

transition into the group, they are in a liminal space where they are stuck between two positions: insider and outsider. Linguist Rampton (1999) shows that the line between these two positions is not as fixed and that there are multiple ways to mark being a part of a group. Rampton makes this observation about liminality by referencing many different regions of the world. In discussing the Swedish context, he cites Kotsina's work in the late eighties and early nineties in Sweden "on linguistic creolization in multiracial areas" (Rampton 1999, 368), or what is now referred to as Ortensvenska. As mentioned in the previous sections, this variety is not necessarily spoken by L2 speakers of Swedish but the speakers of Ortensvenska often get indexed as L2 speakers. Importantly, Bivjoet documents how native speakers of Swedish who speak a variety that is regarded as higher prestige, demonstrate the attitude that Ortensvenska comes from L2 Swedish and therefore includes non-L1 features/mistakes (Bijvoet 2021).

As Osei-Kofi (2024), Ball et al. (2023), and Coupland et al. (2006) have demonstrated, language plays a crucial role in identity and belonging in relation to a dominant culture. White Swedes maintain a certain social distance to speakers with a foreign accent or foreign influence in their accent. As previously mentioned, perceivers index the speaker based on preconceived notions and stereotypes about that speaker. A listener will index those that do not speak the same variety as them as an outsider. On the topic of this indexicality phenomenon, Engstrand writes, "Are these interactions due to pure thoughtlessness? Or is it about putting the immigrant in their place? To assert the distance – 'you're not one of us?'" (Engstrand 2012, 230; my translation)[6] Engstrand points out this insider/outsider phenomenon in order to compare it to the liminality of L2 speakers in the target language's community of speakers. In applying this description, he tests the boundaries of who is allowed to belong to that language community. Do interactions like the

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[6] Swedish original: "Beror sådana bemötanden på ren tanklöshet? Eller handlar det om att sätta nykomlingen på plats? Att hålla distansen – 'du är inte en av oss'?"

one Engstrand describes not push L2 speakers out of the Swedish speaking community? The liminality of their position neither inside nor outside of the community is due, in part, to the linguistic distance from the standard variety and how speakers of the standard variety perceive this distance.

The liminality of identity, namely the lack of distinction between inside and outside, is also seen in studies on flow and identity. A paper examining the flow of Welsh identity (i.e. non-fixed identity that doesn't rely on categories of inside or outside) in different communities compares how self-perception of identity is conceived in terms of cultural background, language and geographical location. According to the paper, "language was found to be the most important dimension for ethnic group identification among these respondents" (Coupland et al. 2006). The function that the flow of identity plays in their analysis is looking at how people with a connection to Wales, whether on a geographic level or language level, is not structured inside and outside of the Welsh community. Rather, Welsh identity is liminal and can flow or fluctuate depending on place or language. The same partly applies to the Swedish context because the because perceivers index L1 Swedish speakers of color as L2 speakers and L1 speakers of Ortensvenska as L2 speakers, in the same as they index L2 speakers as L2 speakers. Thus, language seems to be perceptually significant for identity, and I speculate that these perceptions of what constitutes an outsider influence self-perceptions of identity, and often negatively.

Identity and Attitude in Sweden

Research on L2 Swedish in Sweden has been a recognized area of study within variationist sociolinguistics since the 1980s when Ulla-Britt Kotsinas produced various publications (Kotsinas 1988a) on the dialect that was emerging in, especially, suburban spaces in Stockholm. This multiethnic suburban variant was often referred to as *Rinkeby Svenska*, named

after a neighborhood in Stockholm. In the 1980s, Kotsinas was the first to write about what has come to be referred to as Ortensvenska, but this variety of Swedish has evolved and today the notable features of multiethnic suburban Swedish are also prevalent in its function as a sociolect of young people in Stockholm and elsewhere. Kotsinas (1988a) makes three generalizations that have since been contested in subsequent research. Especially prevalent to the perceptual study in my project, is the third generalization which states as follows:

> Immigrant children's Swedish fulfills vital linguistic needs, but it deviates in some instances from native Swedish and therefore it is conceived of by native Swedes as 'odd', 'different', 'difficult to understand', etc. (Kotsinas 1988a)

Kotsinas implements clear evident bias in this description with the negative value statements *odd*, *different*, and *difficult*. These adjectives echo the description of what the Swedish language law outlines that language should look like in an official context, but Kotsinas is applying this to colloquial sphere. I will return to the implications and effects of these adjectives in the Prestige and Policy section. This evident bias carries over to modern perceptions of this variant as was seen in Big O's question whether or not a speaker is Swedish (white) due to the features of their spoken Swedish. This concept of *native Swedish,* or "speaking Swedish flawlessly" as Osei-Kofi puts it, also comes with an apparent prestige bias seeing as there are plenty of L1 ('native') speakers who speak this variant, but it is regarded as colloquial and lower prestige. Bijvoet and Fraurud (2012; 2016) investigate the language use of youth in Sweden and find that Ortensvenska has become a marker of an informal and youth social space and not used in a formal sphere as seen in Botsis et al. (2021), and less of a variant specifically spoken only by immigrants and L2 speakers of the language. However, while this variant is spoken by L1 speakers of Swedish, if not always then at least in some spaces, it is still associated and indexed

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to L2 speakers and generally regarded as a lower prestige variant (Gross et al., 2016; Boyd, 2010).

Studies by Kotsinas (1988) and Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2009) perpetuate bias by disregarding variation in L1 speakers and excluding lower prestige variants of the language in the definition of 'native'. Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam's (2009) perceptual study on L2 Swedish and "nativelikeness" focus on the features of the standard Swedish dialect for Stockholm/Uppland and equate that to the *native speaker*. Or as Dragojevic and Giles (2016) state, "standard varieties tend to be associated with dominant socioeconomic groups within a given society" which, in Swedish, means that the white and higher socioeconomic status (SES) group is associated with the standard Swedish variant. Bijvoet and Fraurud (2016) ask what the target is in the use of Swedish when looking at youth in Sweden where in many cases the fluency and proficiency in their language is not questioned until their oral production shows qualities of this multiethnolect. This variant is often perceived as Swedish spoken with a foreign accent, with a *brytning*.

The perception of accented speech is a viable area of study regardless of the L1 of the speakers, but the history of this multiethnolect of Swedish creates an interesting ground for examining accent bias in Swedish as the L1. It is reasonable to say that L1 Swedish speakers are biased in their perception of multiethnolect of Swedish that makes a Stockholm/standard L1 speaker perceive the multiethnolect as less correct, or Kotsinas puts it, *odd* or *different* from the standard variety. Many studies involving English L2 perception in the U.S. revolve around stereotype perception in listener bias of L2 perception namely around status and solidarity (Dragojevic and Giles 2016). Dragojevic and Giles discuss the negative implications of status on a given language being correlated with SES while solidarity is a social marker. The relationship

between status and solidarity is closely tied to the identity of a speaker and the liminality of that identity.

Prestige and Policy

Swedish is the majority as well as the official language in Sweden. The Language Law[7] grants the language its official status and the law also names Finnish, Yiddish, Romani, Sámi, and Meänkieli as established official minority languages with a consideration for Swedish sign language as well. The law states that when used in official contexts, Swedish must be "cultivated, simple and comprehensible"[8] (Språklagen 2009:600, my translation). This list of somewhat ambiguous adjectives is left open to interpretation. For example, listening to proceedings in the Swedish Parliament reveals that the majority of representatives speak a high prestige dialect like Stockholm Swedish. Interpreting the law literally, one could speak with a L2 accent influence marker such as a staccato rhythm and the Swedish produced would certainly still be considered *cultivated*, *simple* and *comprehensible*. However, in keeping with (Bijvoet 2020), this usage of Swedish might likely be regarded as incorrect or at least inappropriate by some, given the attitudes connected to the prestige background of the language influence this marker (Bijvoet 2020). Regardless of the implications of what is understood to be prestigious, having a law that defines what *official* language should look like if only just in written form, sets a standard for what should be seen as "good Swedish" and in turn "bad Swedish". The language law includes a section that addresses each individual's right to have access to language which means that at least on the federal level other languages than Swedish are valued. In the law, access to language means that 1) "Everyone who lives in Sweden should be given the possibility

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[7] Språklagen (2009:600)
[8] Swedish original: "Vårdat, enkelt och begripligt"

to learn, develop and use Swedish"[9], and 2) "Anyone with a different first language than [the national minority languages or Swedish Sign Language] should be given the possibility to develop and use their mother tongue"[10] (Språklagen 2009:600). The first part here shows that learning Swedish is not just a resource but also a right and implicitly also an obligation that those living in Swedish have. The second policy shows that the state (at least officially) values the languages, and in turn the culture, of its multilingual residents and citizens. The development and usage of one's first language is a bit ambiguous and functionally everyone has a right to instruction in their first language, but the equity of access might vary. Further, the law outdatedly refers to an individual's first language as mother tongue, *modersmål,* which has shifted into home-language, *hemspråk,* in recent years. García (2005) addresses terms like these in the U.S. context and how associating these languages with the family and the home isolates them into that domain, functionally keeping these first languages in the home and outside of Swedish society.

Looking back at the first part of the language law with its list of ambiguous adjectives, the choice of the word *cultivated* (vårdat) is a frequent within language policy in Sweden, both cultural and legal. The concept of *language cultivation* (språkvård*)* is a broad cultural and intellectual effort to care for the language. This can take many forms such as updating the dictionary with new words or advising the public on language norms. The state entity responsible for this work in Sweden is called Språkrådet, which translates as the language advisory board. Språkrådet works in conjunction with the Institute for Language and Folk-memory, who have collaborated to organize a language cultivation project that includes, among other projects that promote Swedish culture and history, monitoring and documenting language attitudes like

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[9] "Var och en som är bosatt i Sverige ska ges möjlighet att lära sig, utveckla och använda svenska" (Språklagen 2009:600).
[10] "Den som har ett annat modersmål än *de språk som anges i första stycket* ska ges möjlighet att utveckla och använda sitt modersmål" (Språklagen 2009:600).

Bijvoet's recent report on the presence of other languages in Swedish (Bijvoet 2021). They outline the approach to their policy on language attitude below:

> If and how one decides to speak and write the Swedish language goes hand in hand with one's language attitudes. It is both about how one sees the value of the Swedish language in relation to that of other languages, and how one values different ways of speaking Swedish: dialects, sociolects, accents and other kinds of variation. Språkrådet's cultivation of the Swedish language is intended to spread awareness about which attitude patterns exist about Swedish so they can be discussed. Are they good or bad? For whom are they good, for whom are they bad? Should language politics try to change some of them? These questions are key to conversations about democracy.[11] (Institute for Language and Folk-memory; my translation).

There are many noteworthy points within this policy outline, including the interactional nature of Språkrådet. The purported intention of Språkrådet is not necessarily to tell people how they should speak or write Swedish, but rather to provide information about how Swedish speakers use Swedish. For example, if you are unsure about the what the plural ending is of *avokado* you could send a question to Språkrådet and they would tell you what the *most common* plural ending is, or endings if there is variation. This is a great resource by this group of appointed Swedish linguists, but it raises the question of what standard they adhere to when advising Swedish speakers or standards of the written language. What plural endings of *avokado* are not a part of the standard in spoken Swedish and how is that different from the standard? Crucially, the

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[11] Swedish original: "Om och hur man väljer att tala eller skriva svenska språket hör ihop med ens språkattityder. Det gäller både hur man uppfattar svenskans värde i relation till andra språks värden, och hur man värderar olika sätt att tala svenska: dialekter, sociolekter, brytningar och annan variation. Språkrådets språkvård i svenska syftar till att sprida kunskap om vilka attitydmönster som finns till svenska, så att de kan diskuteras. Är de bra eller dåliga? För vilka är de bra, för vilka är de dåliga? Borde språkpolitiken försöka förändra några av dem? Det är frågor för det demokratiska samtalet" (Institutet för Språk och Folkminne).

officially sanctioned work of Språkrådet and the language law reinforces Swedish as the highest

point in a language hierarchy of status and prestige.

The way Swedish speakers position themselves towards official language will vary with

language background. The language use of L1 Swedish speakers choosing to speak Ortensvenska

is positionally different from L2 speakers of Swedish in their adherence to official language or a

standard, even though they may share some features. The distinction between L2 speakers and

Ortensvenska is clear on a linguistic level, but at a more individualized and perceptual level

distinguishing between these two varieties might be difficult for listeners. Considering the flow

of these speakers within society, the line between insider and outsider blurs. What both these

groups share is that both L1 speakers of Ortensvenska and L2 speakers experience the hierarchy

of prestige, and this experience is strengthened by the presence of the language law that officially

puts a perceived standard Swedish at the highest point in the hierarchy.

With speakers with complex identities, as they relate to language, it is necessary to think

about these communities and individuals in terms of flow between identities as opposed to the

structure of different identities. As Coupland et al. remarks, "A perspective on *flow* rather than

on structure may be better suited to globalizing communities" (Coupland et al. 2006, 354; my

emphasis). Carrying out ethnographic work puts an individual's experience in the center and

leaves space for liminal identities, which is an ethos I employed in carrying out the interviews

for this project. Further, focusing on the flow of the individual's position in the language

community highlights process. Extensive research and attention has been paid to Ortensvenska

and the social position and prestige of this multiethnolect, especially in youth culture (Rampton

1999, Botsis et al. 2021). Individuals that are born in Sweden often can move in and out of the

multiethnolect to adjust to the social situation. In their discussion of the podcast episode

mentioned in the introduction, the hosts [name them?] describe Big O's attitudes toward this speech are made clear in his description of how he opts to avoid employing Ortensvenska in situations where he needs to be perceived as serious or "more Swedish". For instance, he speaks more "correct" Swedish when he has to make calls to the bank (Språket P1 2024). I argue that his choice to speak Swedish that aligns with the variety that is higher prestige and associated with white-Swedes. Botsis et al. (2022) further provides examples of pejorative attitudes that high school age students have about the position of Ortensvenska as colloquial. One student states, for instance, "Well, you can't use Ortiska (short for Ortensvenska) to discuss intellectual [topics]"[12] (Botsis et al. 2022, 75). Another student explains that he spoke "normal Swedish" instead of Ortensvenska during a job interview at grocery store located in a wealthier part of the city. This shows that these speakers perceive that Ortensvenska does not belong in a higher prestige space.

My research, then, explores how attitudes toward prestige/status come into play in the L2 classroom and the L2 acquisition journey. I ask how questions of language standards apply to situations where those who speak Swedish as a second language cannot yet choose to speak otherwise? How does the perception that these speakers have of their own accents as foreign affect their learning? How does it affect their behavior in Swedish society outside of the classroom? Are their self-perceptions guided by a standard of Swedish that is different from/guided by legal designations in Sweden? If so, how does their understanding of a standard differe? I next sections I present the study I conducted to gather the predominant attitudes of L2 speakers of Swedish to see how they align with the attitudes that have been presented previous sections to both a perceived standard and Ortensvenska. If their attitudes and negative bias align,

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[12] Swedish original: "Alltså man kan inte använda Ortiska för att diskutera intellektuella" (Botsis et al. 2022, 75).

what does that mean for the language attitudes teachers and members of Swedish society? Is part of learning Swedish acquiring the negative bias towards non-standard varieties of the language?

The Study

I opted to conduct ethnographic style semi-structured interviews in that this method goes hand in hand with a folk linguistic framework which places a premium on understanding how an individual perceives their language and expresses this perception in their own words. In previous sections I argued that linguistic theories about language attitude as the question of standardization, the flow of identity and prestige in language policy allow for this project to be included as part of this larger scholarly discussion about language attitude. In this next section, I show how standardization, identity and prestige manifest in individual cases. As previously mentioned, this project is grounded in folk linguistics, that aims to show what non-linguists think about language. Other research on language attitudes within folk linguistics has shown that many factors contribute to the formation of these attitudes, including extralinguistic factors and the politics of adhering to standard language ideologies, either consciously or subconsciously (Kuiper, 2005; Montgomery and Acheme, 2022; Gross et al., 2016). These studies all agree that language attitudes are strongly connected to attitudes toward identity, the complexity of identity and the fragile liminality of these identities, as seen in Rampton (1999). The following study investigates the attitudes towards the perceived standard of Swedish and Ortensvenska in relation to L2 Swedish. The findings will help establish the groundwork for understanding the way that language attitudes operate in the Swedish context.

The Participants

Table 1 Demographic data on participants in the study. The names of the speakers are pseudonyms.

Speaker	L1	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Number of years in Sweden	Educational level
Eloise	French	34	Female	White	8	Doctorate
Ben	English (American)	42	Male	White	14	Doctorate
Ahwan	Kurdish	36	Male	Non-white	12	Bachelor
Johanna	German	27	Female	White	4	Master
Khalil	Arabic	Not reported	Male	Non-white	10	Bachelor
Milena	Serbian	55	Female	White	20	Bachelor
Erika	German	30	Female	White	5	Doctorate
Clara	German	27	Female	White	4.5	Master

I conducted ethnographic interviews with eight L2 Swedish speakers who were all adults who had lived in Sweden for anywhere from three to 20 years. They all had earned at least a bachelor's degree. To recruit participants, I posted a call for speakers on social media (Facebook,

Figure 2. This is the graphic I used on social media (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) to recruit participants.

Instagram and LinkedIn), asking broadly for people that had learned Swedish as an L2. I ended up speaking to the majority of those who responded to the online posts. Ten people responded to the post, and I interviewed eight of them. The two individuals that I excluded from the study either did not have the proficiency necessary to carry out a conversation in Swedish or were not living in Sweden at the time of data collection. This level of proficiency was necessary for two reasons: 1) I wished to collect data of unscripted L2 speech that could potentially be used for a closer analysis in a larger dataset in a future study, and 2) I wanted their answers to the metalinguistic questions that I had prepared to be grounded in a more nuanced description of their experience with the language.

Setup and Setbacks of the Interviews

Interviews were set up as informal conversations in order to not control the environment too much. I chose to adopt a qualitative approach to allow for a deeper investigation of attitudes as my preliminary research suggests there were a large number of factors that seemed to be relevant to understanding language attitudes in Sweden. In considering my research questions, it seemed too great a task for a quantitative project to control for the extralinguistic factors mentioned in the theoretical groundwork of this thesis, namely: multiethnic Swedish and its relationship to L2 Swedish, the liminality experienced by members of the language community, and the prestige associated with different L2 accents of Swedish. Consequently, my qualitative approach allowed me to capture the flow of their experiences in society and highlight their individuality.

The interviews lasted around 20 minutes each, with the shortest one being about 15 minutes and the longest being about 30 minutes. I let each participant decide where they wanted to meet in order that it would be a space where they would be comfortable. I met three speakers at cafés. Three interviews were conducted in meeting rooms at various university campuses around Uppsala where the participants worked. Two of the interviews were held on Zoom. All the speakers I met with in Uppsala lived there at the time of the study. One of the speakers I met with on zoom lived in Västerås and the other in Umeå. Uppsala and Västerås a both located in central Sweden where the regional dialects are similar to the perceived standard that is often aligned to Stockholm. Umeå is located in northern Sweden and has a more salient regional dialect. I had prepared initial interview questions, as seen in Table 1, and every participant was asked each in order, unless they addressed the topic related to a question before it was asked.

Table 2. Initial interview questions. My research questions around the attitudes toward standardization and Ortensvenska guided the formulation of my questions. I was also keen to include acquisition experience questions to see what was prominent in their memories of learning Swedish.

English	Swedish
What do you regard as your first language. Why? What other languages do you speak? Tell me about your family and your language environment at home. What language did your grandparents speak? If Swedish, how was their Swedish? What language do you speak the most in your daily life?	Vad anser du att ditt förstaspråk/modersmål är? Varför? Vilka andra språk talar du? Berätta om din språksituation hemma. Vilket språk talar dina förälderar osv? Om svenska, hur är deras svenska? Vilket språk pratar du mest i vardagen?
Can you tell me a bit about why you learned Swedish? What was that process like for you? Did you learn in SFI or from a tutor or in life? - *If negative*: Why do you think that was the case? - What do you remember being difficult? - From what you can remember was there anything that was said to be more important? For example, a grammar or pronunciation rule? - Do you think other people have had similar experiences to yours?	Kan du berätta om varför du lärde dig svenska? Hur var den processen för dig? Gick du i SFI eller liknande? - Om negativt: varför tror du att det var så? - Vad kommer du ihåg var svårt? - Var det något som du minns främjades som viktigare eller viktigast? Till exempel, någon grammatik eller uttalsregel? - Tror du att andra svenskstudenter har liknande upplevelser?
Can I ask you, do people ever comment on your Swedish? - What do they say? Why do you think they say that? - How does it feel?	Får jag fråga, brukar folk kommentera din svenska? - Vad säger de? Varför tror du att de gör det? - Hur känns det?
Do you think of yourself as a Swede? - Why or why not? - What does it mean for you to be Swedish? - How Swedish do you think you sound?	Känner du dig svensk? - Varför eller varför inte? - Vad betyder det för dig att vara svensk? - Hur svensk tycker du att du låter?

What do you think is correct Swedish? Do you think there is a right way to speak Swedish?
- What do you think about how Swedish has changed over time?
    - What sticks out to you?
	Vad anser du är korrekt svenska? Finns det ett rätt sätt att prata svenska på?
	- Vad tycker du om hur svenskan har förändrats över tid?
	    - Vad är det som sticker ut för dig?

Is there anything you'd like to tell me that I haven't asked you about?	Är det något som du vill berätta om som jag inte har tagit upp?

During the semi-structured interviews, conducted in Swedish, each participant was provided with the same questions in the same order, with the option of custom follow-up questions. The answers given by the respondents varied greatly, perhaps not unsurprising considering the diversity of the group. I outline my findings in the same order as I conducted the interviews and present the variation in answers from the participants.

Thankfully, the participants were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences and overall, the series of questions incited interesting comments. That said, I did also experience minor

setbacks in the overall project. The biggest setback was finding speakers who were willing to speak with me. Though my social media recruitment appeared to reach a substantial number of people, it seems likely that people felt hesitant to reach out and participate. Consequently, several interviewees were friends of friends. I think allotting more time to the recruitment process would have allowed me to gather a more diverse group of speakers with different backgrounds. Articulating my positionality and status in the community of Swedish language speakers as I did in my preface has afforded me a chance to reflect on how the lack of ethnic, racial, socio-economic, social diversity in my study as likely related to my positionality.

Analysis and Grounded Theory

The interview process for this project is based on a qualitative research theory and methodology called Grounded Theory which holds that the theoretical lens through which data is being looked at is grounded in the data itself. This adds a level of complexity and flexibility to the study interactions and methodology in order to allow for the collection of richer data (Charmaz 2014, Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. 2015). This method consists of sometimes iterative stages of: collecting the data (in this case recorded and transcribed interviews), coding the data, and writing memos which function as summaries of the takeaways from the codes and the impressions of the interviews. The coding process can take a few different forms at different levels of inductiveness, meaning adherence to rules or norms, like axial coding and theoretical coding. Axial coding is a limited approach where the codes aid in categorizing data, which differs from theoretical coding where the approach is more "direct, analytic and emergent" (Charmaz 2014, 68). For this project I used a theoretical coding approach given that I sought to be open and receptive due to the ethnographic goals of the interviews, which were to focus is mostly on interviewees and the experiences they wanted to convey. Thus, these codes create the

base for the memo-writing and analysis of the data, which for this project involved commentary including but not limited to: language background, metalinguistic statement, value judgement, race or ethnicity, observation of outsider or insider, and more. An example of this more open-ended coding can be seen in Figure 3.

After coding was complete, I summarized the organized observations from all eight interviews in memos with the intention of illuminating how language users had guided the research questions in such a way as to reveal their own priorities. After transcribing and coding with my research questions in mind, I took the codes as well as the overall impression of each interview into consideration when summarizing the thoughts that each speaker expressed into a short paragraph about my findings, i.e. memos. These memos also included my own

Code	Transcript	Timestamp	notes
consent	Då spelar vi inVilken börja med att säga: Har du förstått instruktionerna och liksom det som? Är du med på att vara med frivilligt?		
	Absolut.		
	Då kan jag börja med frågan, vad är lite modersmål? Vad har du som första språk?		
language background	Kurdiska.		
	- Och hur länge, hur länge sen lärde du dig svenska och hur länge har du pratat svenska? - Hur lärde du dig svenska?		
learning swedish on their own; SFI process	Jag lärde mig svenska första gången när jag har 25. Och då bodde jag i Sverige- jag flyttade till sverige 2013. Och då lärde jag mig liksom den enkel via Youtube och såna saker. Med väntan till ska jag få liksom en asså-- Med vänta i kön för att jag ska gå till Sfi.		

Figure 4. This screen grab of an excel spreadsheet shows the coding process that I went through in listening to the interviews.

impressions of each interview. For example, some of the interviewees were quite enthusiastic about certain topics, such as their positive memories of the SFI (Svenska för invandrare/Swedish for Immigrants) classroom experience, and the memos aided in summarizing this enthusiasm in their tone and observations gathered from trends in the coded transcriptions.

A Note on Transcription and Translation

Methodologically, the data analyzed and presented in the following section consists of all transcriptions and translations of relatively informal oral interviews. In transcribing the interviews, I used an artificial intelligence tool (Audacity with the OpenVINO Ai plugin) to generate a rough draft of the transcript of the interviews that I then carefully reviewed and edited

manually. Notably, the artificial intelligence transcription tool struggled to pick up on accented speech and it was unable to distinguish phonemes that the speakers realized with a non-standard vowel quality or palatalization. For example, the Swedish <y> is realized as /ʉ/, but the standard fronting and rounding are often difficult for L2 speakers to produce. In their interview, Ahwan retold a metalinguistic anecdote about learning to perceive and produce this sound in the common name, *Ylva*, and at each mention, the transcription tool realized this name as *Ivla*.

This shows that one should not rely on these large language model set tools completely as they reflect the bias of having been trained on a standardized version of Swedish. As previously mentioned, Swedish is my first language, and I speak a middle Sweden variety similar to the variant that has traditionally dominated L2 textbooks and the news. Aside from occasional instances of mumbling or background noise, the AI tool successfully generated a transcription for my questions and responses with fewer grammatical mistakes or difficulties than speech produced by the L2 speaker participants, leading me to conclude that the AI model is being trained on language samples that reproduce the systemic bias and hierarchies of prestige that I outlined. Additionally, I standardized spelling because, for the purposes of the qualitative analysis that I did for this project, the phonological information that can be gained from broader phonetic transcription was not significant.

My approach to presenting the utterances of the speakers below in English[13] involved translating their speech as closely as possible to the wording they used in the original Swedish. On occasion, where there was an error in their grammar or run-on sentences, I very consciously chose not to change their speech, but rather to try to convey in the English version of their

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[13] The English dialect reflected in the translation aligns with my own dialect (Seattle/West Coast) and I tried to maintain the types of disfluencies (i.e: like, um) with an English equivalent to represent the Swedish. I did this to keep the impression of it being spoken language in the translation.

utterance the tone in which interviewees expressed themselves in Swedish. To have standardized the English translation of their speech into written norms would have gone against the ethos of this project. Botsis et al. employ a similar approach to translating interviews and transcriptions in their paper on youth speaking multiethnic Swedish in the high school setting where they also conducted interviews in Swedish and translated into English in their article (Botsis et al. 2021).

What is your first language?

One of the most pertinent factors that appears to dictate an L2 speaker's experience learning and speaking Swedish in Sweden is their language background. Most of the speakers in this study fall into the two highest prestige categories determined by the Institute for Language and Folk-memory in their research on language attitudes in Sweden, namely, speakers of English (highest) and speakers of more-commonly spoken European languages like German and French (second). My study also included speakers with L1s from the next lowest prestige category which includes larger immigrant languages and in the case of this project namely: Kurdish, Arabic, and Serbian (Bijvoet 2020). No two individuals I spoke with had the exact same language background. While this creates difficulty in generalizing and drawing comparisons, it is also interesting to note that there were experiences that were common among them. The first question I posed to each participant was what their first language was, after which some of them jumped right into discussing what other languages they spoke. For others this information came up throughout the interview when it was relevant to other questions. Almost all of them still spoke their first language regularly, while almost all of them spoke Swedish in their everyday life.

Table 3. Speakers' language backgrounds. Names of the speakers are pseudonyms.

Speaker	First language	What other languages do they speak?

Eloise	French	Swedish, English, German
Ben	English (American)	Swedish
Ahwan	Kurdish	Swedish, English, Arabic, Persian
Johanna	German	Swedish, English, some French
Khalil	Arabic	Swedish, English, Greek, some French
Milena	Serbian	Swedish, English, Russian, Macedonian, Croatian, some German, some French
Erika	German	Swedish, English, Norwegian, some French
Clara	German	Swedish, English

How was your experience learning Swedish?

All the speakers had lived in Sweden for at least three years at the time of the interviews, and they all started their Swedish acquisition journey as older teenagers or adults. Some of the interview subjects took introductory language courses following government integration program for new immigrants called Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)[14]. For those who did not follow the formal SFI program, they either used Duolingo, watched instructional content on YouTube, or used other informal language instruction and study methods.

In the session with Ahwan, we talked about what the process of moving to Sweden and learning Swedish was like and he spent quite a bit of time describing the nature of SFI and the bureaucratic aspects and challenges of moving to Sweden and starting to learn Swedish. During that same part of the conversation, he also told me about his own methods for practicing Swedish outside of the classroom, which included watching TV shows and the news, making Swedish friends and more.

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[14] Original Swedish: Svenska för Invandrare

Table 4 Experiences learning Swedish: Ahwan

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers discussing their experiences learning Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Ahwan	Kurdish	*För då är det ofta liksom skolsystemet i Sverige, är så att om man har en kandidat-examen eller akademiker i princip då hoppar man de hära nivåerna A B från SFI för det SFI består av A, B, C, D nivå, och har man pluggat liksom bara gymnasien med den liksom högskola. Så hoppar man liksom A,B för A,B liksom för analfabet.* And then it's like with the school system in Sweden, it is so that, if you have a Bachelor's degree or an academic degree basically, then you skip these A and B levels of SFI, since SFI consists of A, B, C, D level, and if you've studied like high school or like college. So you skip A, B cause A, B is for like illiterate. *Och då hade jag en teknik liksom att det ska börja låtsas att jag inte kan engelska.* And then I had a method to like start pretending that I don't know English.

The points made by this speaker highlight that learners from highly educated backgrounds have an easier time learning Swedish due to the privilege of having an academic base and the linguistic distance, i.e. languages that have more similar features, of their language background and the target language. These L2 speakers also have access to English and, as Dragojevic and Giles (2020) explain, belong to "dominant socioeconomic groups." The language varieties associated with higher prestige will also be correlated with a more dominant social group.

Another aspect of the initial integration of learning Swedish is the culture of the language classroom which inevitably reflects the Swedish educational culture which strives to treat students and instructors as equals. The classroom can also be a space that reflects social norms around prestige and dominance as seen in the comments made by Milena, whose L1 is Serbian, expressing her surprise that instructors were not seen as superior to their students.

Table 5 Experiences learning Swedish: Milena

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers talking about their experiences learning Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)

| Milena | Serbian | *Sen när jag kom hit, så fokus, SFI-fokus var kommunikation, så att man ska prata med varandra så fort som möjligt. Det var faktiskt jättebra, eftersom vi var från många olika länder och vi var tvungna, så att prata svenska.*
 Then when I came here, then focus, SFI-focus was communication, so that we would speak to each other as soon as possible. It was actually really good, since we were from many different countries and we were forced, so, to speak Swedish.

 Va? Får man få fråga? Det var lite konstiga så att lärarna betraktade oss som lika värdiga.
 What? Can we get to ask? It was a bit weird so that the teachers viewed us as equals. |

Something I found vital in analyzing the conversation with this speaker was the role of culture in the learning process as we see with the relationship to the teacher in the first comment. This culture element of the classroom was not mentioned by any other speakers. Being socially fluent in the classroom goes along with integration and the language acquisition process.

Johanna, an L1 German speaker, worked as an au-pair in the province of Dalarna and initially started learning Swedish by speaking informally with children, a stark contrast to the language classroom experience described by Milena.

Table 6. Experiences learning Swedish: Johanna

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers talking about their experiences learning Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Johanna	German	*Alltså jag hade ganska enkelt att lära mig svenska... Tyskan är så lika.* I had a pretty easy time learning Swedish... German is so similar. *Nej, kommer det inte ihåg [hur jag kommunicerade med barnen], det gick ganska snabbt, liksom, jag förstod vad de ville ha, med äta soppa, vid lunch eller nåt.* No, I don't remember [how I communicated with the kids], it went pretty fast, like, I understood what they wanted, with eating soup, for lunch or something. *Ja, byggde mycket Lego, så lär man sig liksom färger och praktiskt. De fick vara lite lärare för mig.* Yeah, we built a lot of Legos, so you learn like colors and practical. They got to be like teachers for me.

This speaker had the insight that it was easier for them to learn to communicate as a speaker of German, which is linguistically close to Swedish. German is also high up on Bijvoet's prestige hierarchy. Metalinguistically speaking, this speaker is also highly informed about how immersion aids acquisition and makes assimilation into the culture of the target language more efficient. The immersive experiences she had, in which the children became her teachers, is a strategy that cannot easily be simulated in a classroom experience, which will not be as naturally immersive. In an interesting, if anecdotal, confirmation of the link between language privilege hierarchy, race, and assimilation, this speaker also pointed out that her being white and having German as an L1 allowed her to align with both language expectations and the stereotypical image of Swedes as white, which she said allowed her to immerse both in the language and the culture. Erika also expressed frustration that speakers that are not white were not met with the same understanding in their acquisition process.

Additionally, Khalil, whose L1 was Arabic, talked their language background, having learned other languages such as Greek prior to learning Swedish, and the high school and rural environment that they learned Swedish. These factors affected, and continue to affect, their acquisition of Swedish. Khalil moved to a small town in Dalarna, a region whose dialect has salient features that are regarded as less prestigious than the Stockholm dialect.

Table 7 Experiences learning Swedish: Erika

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers talking about their experiences learning Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Khalil	Arabic	*Lite brytande här och där och lite ortenord på det också... Om vi ska säga så. Och sen när jag började gymnasiet fick jag in dalmål på det hela...* A bit of accent here and there and some orten-words on top of that… so we can say that. And then when I started high school, I added the dialect from Dalarna onto it all.

For this speaker, the influence of different varieties of Swedish greatly affected their acquisition process. Seen through the lens of Rampton's connection of liminality in the Swedish speaking community to various inputs in this speaker's response, in this case: classroom Swedish, Ortensvenska, and Dalarna dialect, raises interesting questions about how they influence how speakers position themselves in the language community. Does adhering to many varieties hinder the language acquisition process? In Khalil's case, he did not express any negativity about his different varieties of input, so many varieties do not seem like a hinderance to his acquisition, and he did not seem to be trying to adhere to a standard, as I will show in a later section.

Do people ever comment on your Swedish?

In my interviews, the speakers who spoke German as a first language were the only ones who mentioned that on occasion they could "pass" as Swedes, likely due to the similar phonemic and phonological inventories of German and Swedish. However, each of the participants expressed that they were aware of their accents, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm. I titled this project *How Swedish Do I Sound?* as a kind of intentional questioning of the goals of language acquisition formed by and presented to L2 speakers when acquiring pronunciation of their target language. In each interview we discussed the title of this study and goals of their language learning and most of them stated that they had an accent or that people could tell that they were not from Sweden. An example of this is seen with Eloise below, an L1 French speaker.

Table 8 Experiences of people commenting on their Swedish: Eloise

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers discussing people commenting on their Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Eloise	French	*Jag har upplevt att folk hör att jag tydligen inte har svenska som modersmål. Och det är fine.* I have experienced that people can apparently tell that I don't have Swedish as a first language. And that's fine. (speaker uses *fine* in English)

As seen above, speaker Eloise explained her indifference to whether or not other people in the

language community recognized her L2 status. At a different point in my interview with this

speaker, we also talked about *brytning, or* L2 accent, which is something that came up with

every speaker. All the speakers indicated being made aware of their accents partly due to the

circumstances described by speaker Eloise and above. Other speakers made very similar

remarks, mentioning their awareness of their accent as seen with Ben below whose L1 is

American English. To me this awareness indicates that these speakers are marking the fact that

they do not sound Swedish.

Table 9 Experiences of people commenting on their Swedish: Ben

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers discussing people commenting on their Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Ben	English	*Jag förstår att jag har stark brytning. Om jag pratar framför folk jag alltid börjar med att jag har svenska som andra språk.* I understand that I have a strong accent. If I speak in front of people I start always with that I have Swedish as a second language.

In the interview with Ben, he brought up experiencing imposter syndrome about having a small

vocabulary and using the wrong words, especially considering the fact that his kids speak fluent

Swedish. He refer to feeling self-consciousness about what he viewed as his lacking Swedish

skills. Ben describes the need to explain why that he is not at a certain level in Swedish, which is

apparent in his comment about needing to declare his status to the language community. We also

spoke a great deal about how many people simply switch to English as soon as they hear his

accent, which is a direct reaction to the perception of their accent. Khalil and Ahwan also

mentioned that people would switch to English during their acquisition process, and Ahwan even

mentioned pretending he did not understand English so that he would have more opportunity to

use his Swedish.

Ultimately, the French, English and German speakers I interviewed all had something positive to say about other people perceiving their accent. They all mentioned receiving comments about how good their Swedish was, which they noted as encouraging or nice. These three languages are all high up on the prestige hierarchy and more favorable accents to perceivers, so their positive encouragement be logical with this prestige association. How do comments like this affect the person they are "complimenting"? Put into the wrong context this might not be perceived as a compliment at all, quite the opposite, as seen in this experience related by Ahwan. As this speaker points out, this compliment is a racialized micro-aggression typically presented to Swedes of color who are presumed to not be Swedish, and thus not expected to speak Swedish "flawlessly" (Osei-Kofi 2024).

Table 10 Experiences of people commenting on their Swedish: Ahwan

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers talking people commenting on their Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Ahwan	Kurdish	*Det beror på hur man liksom får den hära att du ska rätta mig lite snällt eller liksom jag förstår att det kommer från ditt hjärta... så ah ja vad roligt. Men det kan ju bli så att man känner sig kränkt. Men jag förstår... Jag har några kompisar som så kollegor är födda här och när någon berättar för dem att "va bra svenska du pratar", de känna sig så där liksom jag är född här va fan, hur kan du säga så?* It depends on how you like do this that you will correct me nicely or like I understand that it comes from your heart… so yeah how fun. But it can turn out that you feel offended. But I understand… I have some friends that, or colleagues, are born here and when someone tells them that "what good Swedish you speak" they feel like I'm born here what the hell, how can you say that.

Taking Rampton (1999) into consideration, we see the blurring of statuses within the Swedish speaking community and the liminal space in which these speakers exist. This comment amounts to a racialization and that also indexes the speaker as an L2 speaker instead of as an L1 Swedish speaker because of their ethnicity. By making these comments the person giving the compliment

is marking that the speaker is not white and draws the conclusion that they must therefore be an immigrant and, in turn, an L2 speaker.

Even speakers who were born in Sweden are repeatedly indexed as L2 speakers because they are not white. If a speaker is a non-white L1 Swedish speaker and have features of Ortensvenska in their speech they might also be indexed as L2 speakers due to Ortensvenska features of their speech that are associated with L2 Swedish, though extralinguistic factors seem to play a bigger role. The extralinguistic factors of race and ethnicity contribute to listener's perceptual bias as Swedish speakers are more likely to index them as L2 speakers if they are not white regardless of the linguistic features of their speech (Ball et al. 2023). This is different from the salient linguistic features of Ortensvenska that also cause racialized indexing of the speaker as seen in Big O's question asking if the person in the sound clip he listened to is Swedish, meaning white, based on the Ortensvenska features of the speaker since he could not see the speaker.

Table 11 Experiences of people commenting on their Swedish: Milena

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers talking people commenting on their Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Milena	Serbian	*Sedan när jag började jobba som lärare fick jag en kommentar. "Men du har brytning, hur tänker du att lära barnen?" Det som jag har i min lilla fingret är enligt kunskap. Det har du inte i hela huvudet, så jag har inte pratat om det. Så min brytning kommer inte att lära fel barnen. Det var jättekonstiga kommentarer.* Then when I started working as a teacher, I got a comment. "But you have an accent, how do you think you're going to teach the kids?"" What I have in my little finger is based on knowledge. This you do not have in your whole head, so I have not talked about it. So, my accent is not going to teach the kids incorrectly. They were very strange comments.

In relating the interaction they had with another Swedish speaker, this speaker expressed frustration and confusion at the way their intellect and professional competence was called into

question because they spoke Swedish with an L2 accent. This association with accented speech and professionalism is consistent with previous research in Denmark (Kristiansen 2009). This interaction, as well as the interaction reported by Ahwan, show how perceptions of language can be the means of "putting the immigrant [or perceived immigrant] in their place" as Engstrand (2012) phrases it. In insider/outsider phenomena, the distinction between identities beyond L2 and perceived standard Swedish is blurred.

What is standard Swedish and who speaks it?

In speaking with the L2 speakers for this project, it was apparent that, based on all their responses, the Folk Theory model is consistent among L2 Swedish speakers. And that their responses are aligned with the notion that a standard of Swedish is spoken in Stockholm. While the Linguistic Theory model treats the standard of a language as a variety that does not actually exist, i.e. nobody actually speaks standard Swedish, it certainly seems to be a concept that is alive and operative for L2 speakers, regardless of how they learned the language. I asked my interviewees a few different questions to assess their thoughts about the idea of a standard Swedish. I was surprised at how present the idea of a standard Swedish was for most of them. Speaker Eloise for example mentions the language on the radio, a domain typically associated with a standard variety in many languages.

Table 12 Addressing Standard Swedish: Eloise

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers addressing Standard Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Eloise	French	*Ja, det finns ett korrekt svenska. Stockholm är det, dem som pratar på Sveriges radio. Många år var det inte så att man skulle ha lite renpolierat viss svenska och nu har det varit flera år att de har försökt anställa folk och låta dem prata som de pratar, därifrån de kommer. Även om det är lite dialekt.* Yes, there is a correct Swedish. It is Stockholm, those that speak on Swedish Radio. Many years it was not so that- it was supposed to be a certain polished Swedish and now it has been so for several years that they have tried to hire

		people and let them speak how they speak from where they come. Even if it is a bit of dialect.

Based on their responses, Stockholm seems to be the standard and anything deviating from that variant is "a dialect", a belief that goes against the Linguistic Theory model. This speaker did go on to comment on how they thought it was good that they were bringing in people that spoke different varieties, but we spoke mostly about regional dialects. When I asked about Ortensvenska as a variant, they were hesitant to put it into the same category as regional dialects. They did not express negativity towards Ortensvenska but rather that it was not the same as regional dialects. Speaker Milena expressed far more hesitation about Ortensvenska, especially in the educational sphere. I asked this speaker whether they thought there was a correct or incorrect way Swedish should be spoken, and they reacted was very adamantly that they regarded Ortensvenska as incorrect.

Table 13 Addressing Standard Swedish: Milena

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers addressing Standard Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Milena	Serbian	*Ja, exempel, gatuspråk, alltså den där gillar jag inte, alltså det är dära, känner, nej, alltså nej... Ja, det är, alltså jag vet inte, jag tycker att det, det hjälper inte till exempel barn att utvecklas i skrivning och i läsning, förstå vad man ska om man säger "vad är det" då ska de skriva "vad är det".* Yes, example, street-language (referring to Ortensvenska), like that one I don't like, like it is like that one, I feel, no, like no… Yeah, it is, like I don't know, I think that it, it doesn't help for example kids to develop in writing and in reading, to understand what you should, if you say "what is it" then they should write "what is it".

This speaker was the only one to express a negative attitude towards Ortensvenska by remarking that it inhibited kids from being able to write and express themselves well in the classroom. As seen in Botsis et al. (2021) students are aware of the inappropriateness of speaking Ortensvenska in academic spaces and higher status spaces and they learn to reserve its use to colloquial spaces.

This leads me to observe how these informal spaces are also racialized as non-white, whereas academic and higher-class spaces are marked as white. Big O choosing to speak closer to a perceived standard when communicating with his bank on the phone, in a higher status space, also marks the racialization of Ortensvenska since this official sphere is also white. Further, this speaker indexes this variety as a "street-language" which implies a lower prestige association. I also argue that this indexation of lower prestige is racialized due to the lower class and racial implication of urban settings evoked by the word "street".

Contributing to this marking of boundaries, this speaker marks Ortensvenska as not being appropriate for the classroom because of how this spoken variety deviates from the written norms of Swedish. Engstrand (2012) talks about how written language is a representative of the standard variety. This means that often, a perceived standard of spoken language is highly informed by the written language that it represents. Thus, teaching kids something that deviates from the standard is perceived as detrimental to their acquisition of the written language. I see an inconsistency with the worry around deviation from the standard with the lack of negative position towards regional dialects, which also deviate from the standard, but without raising the same concerns. Neither this speaker, nor the language policy calling for language cultivation, have employed the same argument to limit speaking regional dialects in schools.

During my interview with Khalil, he mentioned that he uses Ortensvenska words, so, unsurprisingly, this speaker had a more positive mindset towards the multiethnolect.

Table 14 Addressing Standard Swedish: Khalil

Speaker	L1	**Examples of Speakers addressing Standard Swedish.** (***Swedish original in italics*** **and English in common below**)
Khalil	Arabic	*Jag tror att det finns. Jag hörde att det finns. Jag hör att det finns någonstans där i Stockholm.* I think it [standard Swedish] exists. I heard that it exists. I hear that it exists somewhere in Stockholm.

		Det kanske beror på person. Jag känner folk som tycker "jag vill inte prata 'dålig svensk'"att man inte kan. Maybe it depends on the person. I know people that think "I don't want to speak 'bad Swedish'" like you don't know [how to Swedish].

After he had referred to standard Swedish a few times, I asked him what it was and who spoke it. His response was uncertain, but he thought it was spoken somewhere in Stockholm. The lack of clarity and certainty surrounding this standard variety Swedish supports, at least anecdotally, the Folk Theory that there is a standard language variety. Khalil also described not adhering to a standard as speaking "bad Swedish" which supports the argument that prestige and standard varieties are associated with higher socioeconomic status groups such as upper-class residents of central Stockholm (Dragojevic and Giles 2017).

Similarly uncertain comments regarding the existence of standard Swedish were also made by speaker Johanna, as they reflected doubts about the existence of any such variety. This speaker expressed negativity about disparaging attitudes they had heard other Swedish speakers express regarding Ortensvenska.

Table 15 Addressing standard Swedish: Johanna

Speaker	L1	Examples of Speakers addressing Standard Swedish. (*Swedish original in italics* and English in common below)
Johanna	German	*Jag vet ju att det liksom pratas om rikssvenskan och frågan är liksom vem pratar som rikssvenska.* I know that people talk about rikssvenska (standard Swedish) and the question is like who speaks like rikssvenska. *[Ortensvenska] är kanske liksom lite sin egen dialekt. Men det som jag tänker på mest är att jag inte förstår varför folk är så uppröda över att det finns liksom.* Ortensvenska is maybe a bit like its own dialect. But what I think about most is that I don't understand why people are so upset that it like exists.

This speaker's comments address the nature of Ortensvenska and the ways it is similar to regional dialects which fit into Linguistic model of different varieties making up the language.

The frustration they express with other speakers judging the Ortensvenska is partly grounded in a frustration with the broader kinds of discrimination that immigrants can face in Sweden, in which linguistic aspects are only one facet. It is important to discuss language standardization in relation to discrimination as part of working to question the norms that reinforce structures of racism in society. When L2 speakers employ the ideal of standard Swedish, they do so because they've internalized an understanding that speaking Swedish in a certain way affords some measure of national belonging.

Concluding and Continuing Thoughts

With all this variation in Swedish, what does it actually mean to sound Swedish? Looking back to Nana Osei-Kofi's definition of what it means to be Swedish, speaking the language "flawlessly" was one of the factors, along with having blond hair, blue eyes, and being white. Perhaps this project is partly asking what it means to sound white? Big O asked, "Is this person Swedish?" and as this thesis has demonstrated, the racialized implications underlying this question can be seen across Swedish society, from the language attitudes of immigrant language learners to language policy of the national government. The presentation of the speakers' experiences in my study shows that the negatively biased attitudes towards Ortensvenska and the adherence to a perceived standard of Swedish are learned when acquiring the language and integrating in Swedish society.

Speakers of Swedish as a second language offer new perspectives on language attitudes in Sweden today. In this thesis, I have connected questions of standardization and language attitude in Swedish by drawing specifically on the perspectives and experiences of L2 speakers. My study combined folk linguistics approaches to liminality and identity with a discussion of language attitude, prestige, and policy in Sweden. I presented examples from a group of L2

speakers to highlight their experiences in the theoretical context. I began by showing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the speakers and then adding that to the diversity of their acquisition journeys, showing that none of them went through the exact same process to learn the language. I presented their varied experiences alongside the responses of other speakers perceiving and commenting on their Swedish. The speakers who shared the most positive comments from other Swedish speakers were the ones that spoke languages whose accents rate higher on Bijvoet's accent prestige hierarchy, namely English, French and German (Bijvoet 2020). In contrast, the speakers who had negative experiences to share were the ones that spoke languages lower down on Bijvoet's prestige hierarchy, such as Kurdish and Serbian. Finally, by juxtaposing the Folk Theory model and the Linguistic Theory model, I presented my interview subjects' attitudes towards different varieties of Swedish, specifically the difference between perceived standard Swedish and Ortensvenska.

In conclusion, the experiences of the speakers are very much informed by extralinguistic variables. They all shared an understanding that the Stockholm dialect seems to be associated with higher prestige and is the most correct and standard Swedish variant, even when some simultaneously questioned the existence of a standard variety. The speakers in this study live in a region where something close to what most people would call the perceived standard dialect is spoken. These interviews might have yielded different responses if they had been conducted in a different part of Sweden, therefore I would be interested in conducting a wider study of language attitudes in Sweden with respect to L2 accents in the future. As previous research has also been conducted in bigger cities (Bijvoet several, Botsis et al 2020, Gross et al. 2016, etc.), I would like to explore the possibility of replicating these studies or contributing to this work in rural spaces.

A future addition to this project would include further outreach beyond my own nearest circles and more time to reach a more varied group of speakers. Future research using a folk linguistic approach to the language attitudes of L2 speakers could explore what kind of language is being presented to L2 speakers in common educational contexts. How are learners being presented language that aligns with a standard Swedish variant? To what degree is this impossible ideal introduced in the classroom, or does it come from being immersed in normative, white social discourses? How much does the classroom contribute to the formation of negative attitudes towards certain varieties and by extension, contribute to the racialization of these varieties? It would also be worth conducting an ethnolinguistic analysis on identity and liminality in Sweden. The language standard centered policy in Sweden and the cultivation of language use in Sweden are central to well-established cultural efforts to cultivate the Swedish language. I propose that instead of caring for the language and describing the language and its many variations, we highlight the diversity of Swedish in research and in the language classroom to better represent the breadth and diversity of the language varieties and the people that speak them.

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