

English on the Streets of Sweden: An Ecolinguistic View of Two Cities and a Language Policy*

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The position of English vis-à-vis Swedish in Sweden is gaining attention because of a growing concern that the encroachment of English in certain Swedish domains will result in Swedish simultaneously losing ground. A current language policy proposal, entitled *Mål i mun*, commissioned by the Swedish government addresses this concern, in part, by outlining recommendations for the respective roles of Swedish and English (a) in primary, secondary, and higher education and (b) in public, commercial, and governmental settings with the aim of strengthening Swedish. The present paper uses an ecolinguistic framework to offer a glimpse of the complex ways in which English is integrated with daily life in the two Swedish cities of Lund and Malmö in order to illuminate the efficacy with which *Mål i mun* might impact the relationship among the teaching, learning, and use of English in Sweden.

Introduction

English has long been a part of Swedish education and society, beginning even before the Second World War (Haugen 1990). Fergusson (1994) noted anecdotally the great English proficiency of the Swedish speakers he encountered in daily interactions. In fact, it has been suggested that English is developing as a second, rather than a foreign, language in Sweden as well as other Scandinavian nations and is thus gaining status there (Phillipson 1992). The position of English vis-à-vis Swedish is increasingly receiving attention in the literature because of concern that the encroachment of English in certain Swedish domains may result in Swedish simultaneously losing ground (e.g., Berg, Hult, & King 2001; Hollqvist 1984; Hyltenstam 1999; Westman 1996). A current language policy proposal, entitled *Mål i mun*, commissioned by the Swedish government addresses this concern, in part, by outlining recommendations for the respective roles of Swedish and English (a) in pri-

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mary, secondary, and higher education and (b) in public, commercial, and governmental settings (Kommittén för svenska språket 2002a). The success of such a policy depends heavily upon continuity between the reality policymakers imagine and people's actual experiences (Schiffman 1996). Keeping this in mind, this pilot study offers a glimpse of the complex ways in which English is integrated into daily life in two Swedish cities in order to explore the possible relationships among Swedish, English, and the language policy proposal *Mål i mun*.

English in Sweden

The growth of English around the world has received extensive attention in the (socio)linguistic literature (Brutt-Griffler 2002; Crystal 1997; Kachru 1992/1983; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992; Ricento 2000). The widespread use of English in Europe continues to be documented as it becomes evident that English is emerging as the de facto *lingua franca* of the European Union (Loonen 1996; James 2000; Smith 1996). In Sweden the use of English is described as quite pervasive, being commonly employed in "the mass media, 'popular' culture and entertainment, education (on all levels but especially at higher stages), science and research, the business world, to name a few evident examples" (Melander 2001: 13).

The prevalent use of English in Sweden has led many linguists to become concerned about the position of Swedish in relation to English (Ljung 1986; Mannberg 1986; Teleman 1992; Westman 1996). Indeed, empirical studies have found substantial use of English for instruction, reading, and research at major universities (Gunnarsson & Öhman 1997; Teleman 1992) and for corporate communication in the banking, engineering, and transportation industries (Hollqvist 1984).

In terms of language status, it has been suggested that English and Swedish in Sweden is beginning to settle into an asymmetrical relationship. According to Hyltenstam (1999), with the prominence of English in higher status domains like higher education, commerce, and industry, the position of Swedish becomes threatened to the point where there is a risk of a two-tiered society developing in which English is used for high status interaction and Swedish for lower status, common daily interactions. Moreover, Hyltenstam holds that the strong position of English internationally, especially in the European Union, is a potential threat to the strength of Swedish as a national language because Swedish may cease to be used for governmental purposes. This leaves Swedish to be used only in unofficial domains. Similarly, Westman (1996) and Teleman (1992) express concern for the future of Swedish. Both see a strong potential for a diglossic situation arising between English and Swedish in Sweden: "The position of Swedish as the standard language in Sweden would

weaken or cease if we let English force it out of certain domains" (Westman 1996: 187, translation mine). Taken to an extreme, some believe this could lead to an elite Euro-identity centered on English while Swedish becomes reduced to a low status, private language (Teleman 1992). Yet it is not clear that the situation is, in fact, so dire.

Melander (2001) explains that while English use does, indeed, seem to be growing in Sweden, more research is needed to understand the nature and implications of its growth.¹ As Boyd (1999) points out, more English use in certain domains like education, research, politics, and popular culture does not necessarily imply a threat to Swedish. Rather, there is room for both English and Swedish in Sweden:

English is the main vehicle for Swedes to communicate with people outside of Sweden, both in speech, writing, and via all the new means of communications from radio through TV and the internet. Clearly this must be seen as being of enormous value to a large segment, indeed all of the population. Its role implies not only "transatlantic connections," but global ones. The position of Swedish, and the loyalty of its speakers, including those of us who speak it as a second language, guarantees a relatively secure future for the language, at least during the next hundred years. (Boyd 1999: 246)

Still, Melander believes that the position of Swedish in relation to English should not be ignored. He notes that there is cause for concern; for example, there is the potential for social inequality arising between those with high English proficiency, and concomitant access to high status social positions, and those without. In addition, it is possible that Swedish will lose prestige if English becomes associated more and more with high status as well as intellectual pursuits. So while both Swedish and English have their place in Swedish society, Melander sees it as important to ensure that they remain at least on equal footing. In sum, he states, "It is an important task to try to make sure that Swedish can be used in as many domains as possible, even if one does not believe that the present reduction of the use of the language may easily spread to other areas" (Melander 2001: 28).

Mål i mun

The concern over the position of Swedish in Sweden led Teleman and

¹Melander contends that diglossia is not an appropriate concept for explaining and understanding the relationship between Swedish and English in Sweden. Rather than using concepts like diglossia, Melander proclaims the need for new conceptual frameworks to explain new sociolinguistic phenomena. In contrast, Swedish has been characterized as a minority language in relation to English within the EU and elsewhere (Hyllenstam 1999).

Westman (1997) to call for an overt national language policy for Sweden. They note that the position of Swedish as a national language has been taken for granted both by legislature and the population in general. Further, they contend, though it has historically been a strong national language with a rich literary and cultural tradition, English now threatens that position. The ongoing use of English in numerous areas of life, they state, endangers the status of Swedish as a "complete language," that is to say as a language for use in all public and private domains. In the absence of an overt national language policy they believe that this threat is not likely to disappear. Thus, Teleman and Westman advocate an explicit national language policy, stating,

[T]he global and European integration makes it necessary that we decide which way we want the national language and society to move in the future...it is now the right time politically to lay the language policy groundwork that will guide future political decisions so that the nation does not find itself in a language situation that nobody truly desires. (Teleman & Westman 1997: 21, translation mine)

This is a sentiment echoed by Gunnarsson, who writes,

Swedish speakers should not be afraid of the Anglo-American influence on the Swedish of tomorrow but we must ensure that it occurs on our terms...unwelcome external influences on our language should be resisted. Completely preventing external influence is impossible, and probably undesirable. Language policies should instead aim at adapting changes to the Swedish context, to incorporate them into traditional Swedish patterns and structures. (2001: 65)

Championing Swedish as the one and only language of the Swedish nation is both pointless and futile. Indeed, despite the mounting concerns among researchers about the relative positions of English and Swedish in Sweden, none of these researchers are advocating Swedish-only. Rather the hope seems to be for an overt language policy that might serve to create a climate for balanced multilingualism in Sweden.

As a first step towards creating such an overt national policy, the Swedish government in 1997 commissioned the Swedish Language Council (Svenska språknämnden) to construct a draft action program for the promotion and protection of Swedish in light of multilingualism in Sweden. The Swedish Language Council published its program, with the primary recommendation that the position of Swedish be established by law, in a 1998 issue of its publication *Språkvård*. In 2000, the Swedish parliament created the Committee for the Swedish Language (Kommittén för svenska språket) to review the Swedish Language Council's program and to craft a language policy proposal. The committee's report was published in 2002 as *Speech: Draft Action Programme for the Swedish Language*

² The translation of the title is that of the committee which published a brief English summary of the document which is available online (Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b)).

(*Mål i mun: Förslag till handlingsprogram för svenska språket*)² and designated SOU 2002:27.³ This report is currently under review by the Swedish government and expected to go before Parliament in the spring of 2004 (Leena Huss, personal communication, March 21, 2003).

Mål i mun was crafted as a comprehensive⁴ language policy proposal for Sweden such that,

[(a)] Swedish shall be a complete language, serving and uniting our society, [(b)] Swedish in official and public use shall be correct and shall function well, and [(c)] everyone shall have a right to language: Swedish, their mother tongue, and foreign languages (Kommittén för svenska språket 2002a: 22)⁵

In all, the report includes eighty recommendations⁶ for the treatment of Swedish in relation to other languages in Sweden. English has a particularly prominent place in the proposal, which states explicitly that "English has won an increasingly strong position internationally, thereby also becoming a more and more important language in our country" (Kommittén för svenska språket 2002a: 21).⁷ Accordingly, a number of the policy proposal recommendations reflect an attempt to strengthen the position of Swedish in domains which have been identified as areas where English is increasingly being used.

The rise of English in education and research is noted as a particular threat to Swedish since this is believed by the policymakers to mean that Swedish is being used less and less for academic/research purposes which may ultimately lead to a loss of higher level Swedish. Several other thematic areas in which the policymakers contend that Swedish needs to be strengthened are also noted in the report, including politics and government, commerce, healthcare, media, and information technology (IT).

While the need to strengthen Swedish is central to the proposal, the importance of English is also acknowledged in the proposal. For instance the proposal states that, "...it is obvious that in many contexts it is necessary to employ English and that more and more people need increasing proficiency in English" (Kommittén för svenska språket 2002a: 21).⁸

³ The first stage of creating legislation in Sweden is often a report which is then reviewed and acted upon by a parliamentary committee. Each year, the Swedish government publishes the reports, designating them as such (SOU) followed by the year in which they are published and the order in which they appear. *Mål i mun* is the twenty-seventh government report in the year 2002.

⁴ The policy does address concerns of multilingualism in Sweden in general, including issues of language rights. However, the focus of this paper is the relationship between English and Swedish and the implications of this policy proposal on that relationship. The myriad issues of overall multilingualism in Sweden will be left for another forum.

⁵ As translated in Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b).

⁶ See Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b) for a complete listing of the recommendations in English in pdf format.

⁷ As translated in Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b).

⁸ As translated in Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b).

Accordingly, many of the eighty recommendations serve to answer the question: "What can we do to ensure that Swedish continues to develop as an all-round language, while not hindering the employment of English in all the connections in which its use is required, and making sure that everyone acquires the knowledge of English they need?" (Kommittén för svenska språket 2002a: 21).⁹ The proposal's objective with respect to English, then, is not to create Swedish monolingualism but to foster a climate for multilingualism, to keep Swedish strong but encourage proficiency in English (and other languages) as well.

Language Policy, Society, and Linguistic Culture

Schiffman (1996) explains that effective language policy formation and evaluation must include close attention to the complete social context of language use and then consider a policy in relation to that context. In order for an overt language policy to be successful it must fit the sociolinguistic reality of the people it is designed to influence:

The closer the representation of policy comes to the representation of users' competencies, and allowing for differing proficiency and gradient-ranking of ability, as well as gradience in the expectations the policy makes of the citizenry, the better the 'fit' of the policy to the linguistic reality, and the less tension there will be between the two. (Schiffman 1996: 49)

The language policy analyst must be concerned with the relationship between language policy and what Schiffman (1996) terms linguistic culture, which includes the complex relations of "...behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language" (5).

Schiffman (1996) explains that in examining linguistic culture one must attend to the different functions to which languages are put in a society. He identifies three basic functions of language: language as code, language as text or discourse, and language as culture. This is an important distinction because there is often a tendency by researchers to focus on only one of these functions, ignoring the others. This is a mistake because, as Schiffman comments, these functions are in "*nested* relationships":

Language as code is nested in language-as-text; there can be no texts without code after all. Language-as-text is nested in linguistic culture, but not identical to it—the ideas, beliefs, myths, attitudes, and prejudices found in a text, though seen as inherent in the text, may have been current in the culture before that text was ever composed. (Schiffman 1996: 58)

Sweden, like nearly all polities of the world, has a complex system of linguistic registers and repertoires in which these nested relationships are

⁹ As translated in Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b).

deployed for specific functions. As my findings will suggest, English may have an important role to play in the repertoires and registers of a number of settings in Sweden, something that should be accounted for in an effective language policy. *Mål i mun* was drafted based on available sociolinguistic research so there was an attempt to address actual language use in the proposal. As noted earlier, though, this research has tended to focus on specific high status domains so it is unclear what the full impact of *Mål i mun* might be.

Methodology

This study is a preliminary examination of English in the linguistic milieux of two Swedish cities. The aim here is to make an initial attempt to map the sociolinguistic reality with which the proposed language policy *Mål i mun* must contend. Following Schiffman, it is theorized that the position of a language in a particular area is heavily related to how it is used and perceived in daily interaction as well as to macro-level societal pressures. In this way, the position of English in Sweden might not come only from an increasing need for high status international communication but also from the use of English in daily social interaction. It is in this vein that the present paper explores the topography of English in the two Swedish cities of Lund and Malmö in order to attempt to do justice to the nested relationships of language function by highlighting the complexity of English in Swedish linguistic culture. Haugen's (1972) ecology of language concept is used here to guide this study towards revealing the multiple inter-related factors that contribute to the current position of English in Sweden as reflected in Lund and Malmö.

Conceptual Framework

Haugen (1972) introduced the ecology of language as a way to "[cover] a broad range of interests within which linguists can cooperate significantly with all kinds of social scientists toward an understanding of the interaction of languages and their users" (328-29). Haugen traces his ecology of language idea back to an earlier paper by Voegelin and Voegelin (1964) who state that "in linguistic ecology, one begins not with a particular language but with a particular area..." (cited in Haugen 1972: 328). More recently, Haugen's idea sparked by the Voegelins' work has been expanded:

Pragmatics and discourse analysis, anthropological linguistics, theoretical linguistics, language teaching and research and several other branches of linguistics discovered the usefulness of ecological parameters such as interrelationships, environment and diversity...in the early 1990s, all the different approaches which some way link the study of language with ecology were brought together, and a unified—though still diverse—

branch of linguistics was established which was called ecolinguistics. (Fill & Mühlhäusler 2001: 1)

The ecology of language, or ecolinguistics, provides a lens through which to investigate a language's "interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers..." together with "its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication" (Haugen 1972: 325). Its focus on examining holistically all factors that contribute to the position of languages in the social environment makes an ecolinguistic framework ideally suited for illuminating linguistic culture. Through an understanding of linguistic culture one can begin to view insightfully the relationships among a nation, its communities, and language policies. This is especially salient in a social environment where an influential second language, like English, features prominently in a linguistic ecology. The impact of that second language cannot be addressed until it is fully comprehended and appreciated (Mühlhäusler 1994, 1996). When policies are created and evaluated, it must be in light of the social circumstances in which both language education and target language use occurs (Spolsky 1978). It is in this sense of interconnectedness that an ecolinguistic framework serves as the foundation for the exploration of the linguistic environments of Lund and Malmö with the aim of exploring (a) the relationship among Swedish, English, and language policy and, (b) by extension, the social context in which English language teaching and learning takes place in Sweden.

Context

Lund and Malmö are located in the south of Sweden in the Skåne region. Malmö is a port city that has evolved as a center for commerce and industry. With the construction of the Öresund Bridge joining Malmö with Denmark, the city is increasingly being marketed as a hub for international trade. Indeed, many major companies have offices in Malmö and it is a popular destination for shopping and tourism. The city is home to a diverse population, ranging from Middle Eastern, African, and Eastern European immigrants (among others) to young people attending local colleges and universities to families that have lived in the area for several generations. Malmö is among Sweden's largest cities like Göteborg and Stockholm. Like any other major city in the world, it is not without occasional occurrences of major crimes, protests, and violent acts of racism, though these are not daily concerns.¹⁰

Situated about twenty minutes away from Malmö by train, Lund is best known as a university town. It is the home of Lund University founded in 1666 to serve as an institution to "Swedify" southern Sweden

¹⁰ See Pred (2000) for an account of racism in Sweden.

after the region was ceded to Sweden by Denmark. Today Lund University is among the most well respected institutions of higher learning in Sweden. As a result, scholars and students from throughout Sweden, Europe, and the rest of the world come to the university to teach, study, and conduct research. For this reason, Lund, too, is a city with some diversity though there are fewer immigrant communities here than in Malmö. City dwellers in Lund include students, faculty, and longtime residents. Like Malmö, it is also a popular destination for shopping and tourism.

In the summer of 2002, I taught at Lund University during which time I lived in a small town between Lund and Malmö, providing me easy access to both cities via bicycle and bus. Throughout the summer I spent many hours on the streets of both cities as well as in the company of my students, other university faculty, family, and (new) friends collecting data for this study.

Research Methods

This study took place over the three-month period from June through August 2002. During this time, field data were gathered in Lund and Malmö using photography, field observations/notes, and informal interviewing of a variety of people with whom I had contact during the three months. Data collection resulted in contextual examples of both spoken and written public English use in the two cities. In addition, online archives of the Swedish newspapers *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Metro* (Skåne) were mined for articles and editorials related to the issue of English use.

Data collected through the different media described above were integrated to form a multifaceted picture of the ecolinguistic position of English in the two cities. Field observations and photography were triangulated through informal interviews/conversations as well as by examining the ideas expressed in Swedish newspapers, which offered a wider societal perspective on how English was represented in the media. The language policy proposal *Mål i mun* was then analyzed in light of these findings in order to establish a preliminary sense of what, if any, continuity exists between the contexts of language use imagined by policymakers on the one hand and on the other hand the ecolinguistic environments people experience, as reflected in Lund and Malmö.

Findings and Discussion

Over the course of the summer it became evident that the role of English in the lives of the people living in these cities was quite complex. English appears to be emerging as an influential element in Swedish lin-

guistic culture. My findings suggest that English serves diverse functions in each of Schiffman's nested relationships of language as code, language as text/discourse, and language as culture. The policy proposal *Mål i mun* appears to be an attempt to address the role of English in Sweden's linguistic culture, taking into account many, but not all, of the complexities revealed in these relationships.

English on the Streets

Perhaps the most striking impression of English in Sweden, in these cities in particular, is related to language as code. As many travelers to Sweden have reported, it does not take long to find that English proficiency is quite good. Nearly everybody one meets, from ticket salespersons, train conductors, and bus drivers to people standing on the street corner will be able to answer questions in English with relatively little difficulty. Beyond this, most people with post secondary education will be able to hold their own in conversations using English.

Indeed, as I found on more than one occasion, the need to communicate using English presented itself in common daily interactions. Tourists would frequently stop and ask me for directions, assuming that I would be able to answer them in English. Several service encounters, particularly in fast food establishments, also required the use of English. These jobs are increasingly being filled by newly arrived immigrants whose English proficiency is far stronger than their Swedish as they have only begun to take government Swedish courses. Many a time when beginning my order in Swedish I was asked if I knew how to speak English.

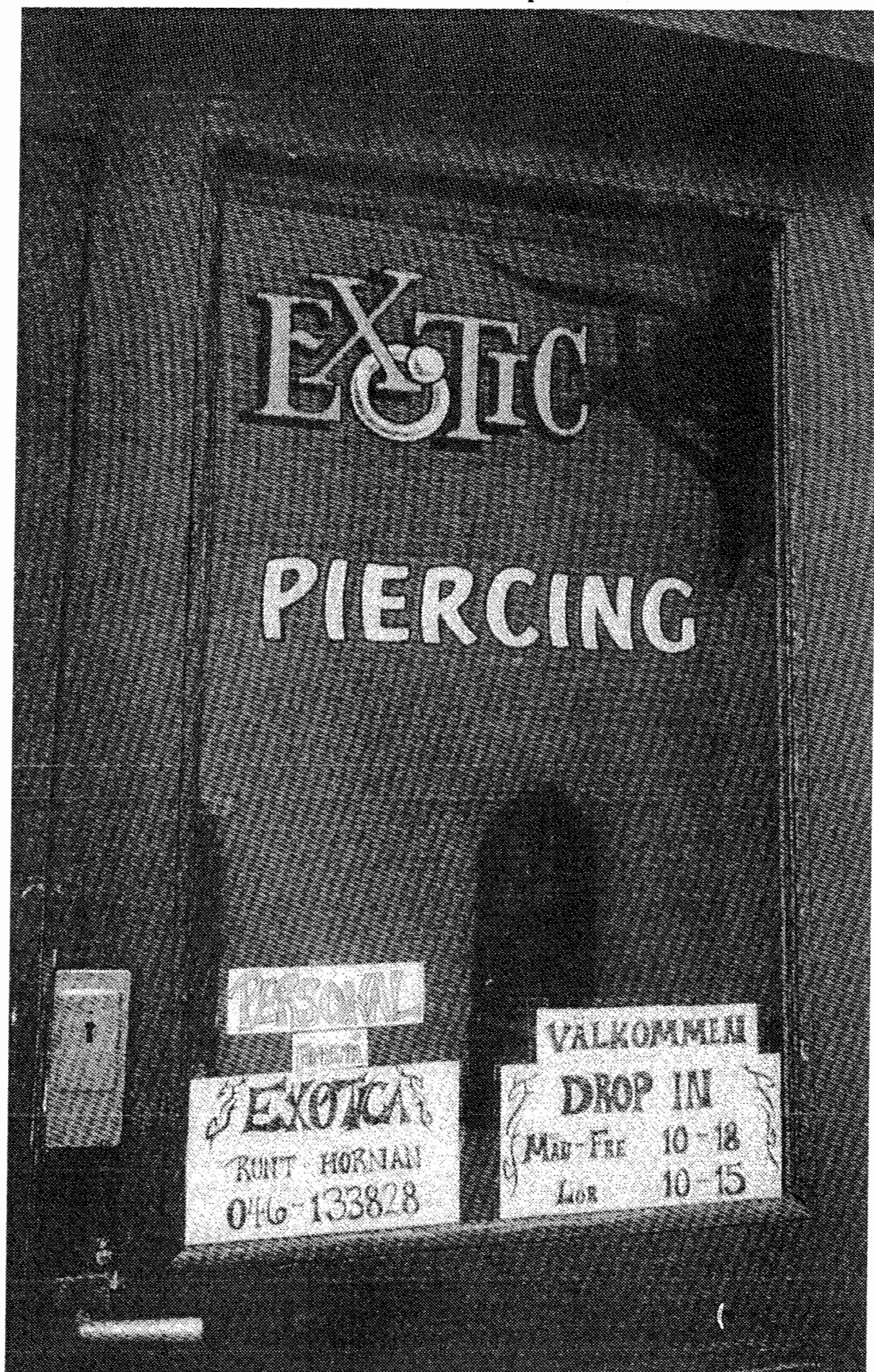
Apart from spoken English, English in the print environment is also rather striking. While one is strolling down the streets of both Lund and Malmö the eye is drawn to English words and expressions on storefronts and signs. English appears in some store names to communicate what goods or services a merchant provides. There are shops like "Rising Sun Solarium," "Malmö's Military Shop," and "The Krogen."¹¹ The "Scandinavian Metal Foundation" is a "specialist in Metal hardrock and subculture," you are "*välkommen* to drop in" at "Exotic Body Piercing," and the "Levi's Store" has a "sale up to 50% off now on."

English appears prominently in unsanctioned "print" environments in the two cities as well. English graffiti, including both single words and longer expressions, is common on streets and buildings. Likewise protesters' signs are sometimes written in English, communicating their thoughts about impending war, human rights, and homelessness. In addition, street performers often employ English signs to request compensation for their open-air routines.

In all, English seems to have a daily role as a medium of communica-

¹¹ This example is particularly interesting. Definiteness is redundantly expressed by the English "the" and the Swedish morpheme *-en*.

Figure 1
Välkommen to drop in



tion in these two cities. Whether to provide directions, order food, resist the establishment, sell products, or ask for money, English seems to fill a need. Recalling Schiffman's nested relationships, where language as code is intimately related to both language as text and language as culture, let us consider why communicating in English might be important for people in these everyday contexts.

First, there seems to be a sense of English as a *lingua franca* for some. Several of the people I encountered expressed the feeling that with internationalization, including more immigrants coming to Sweden and more Swedes having dealings abroad, they can reach a wider audience using English. As one of my informants put it, "That's the way it is in modern life. You need English because not everyone knows Swedish" (SJ, interview, August 4, 2002, translation mine). This sort of "practical" motive seemed to be behind the language choice of one protester with whom I spoke. When I inquired as to why he chose English for his posters he responded, "I want people that come here to see my message. If I write in Swedish, tourists would not understand" (Anonymous, interview, July 15, 2002, in English).

It is possible that similar thoughts were behind choices to compose the words "monkey see, monkey do" in English on the side of a building directly across from Lund University's administration building as well as to write other graffiti throughout both cities. Like the protester and my informant, perhaps the author of the words "monkey see, monkey do" believed that choosing English would ensure that almost everyone who passed the words would understand them. Likewise, street performers on busy squares frequented by tourists would certainly want as many people as possible to comprehend their pleas for compensation so they might choose to use English with similar reasoning. So these kinds of practical concerns could lie behind some daily English use to a certain extent.

There is another set of beliefs that people seem to have about English, however, in terms of what it represents as a cultural symbol. One of my informants expressed the sentiment clearly. When I asked her about the presence of English in Malmö she stated,

I think it's a good thing. I've lived all over Sweden and most places are just dives. People are stuck in their small town ways—backwards. Malmö feels like a real city, like New York. It has an international feel to it, like it's connected to the rest of the world somehow. It's the only place in Sweden where I want to live. Otherwise I would probably live out of the country. (KL, interview, July 26, 2002, translation mine)

English, then, appears to represent for some more than just the ability to communicate with a wider audience; it emerges as a symbol of international connectedness, modernity, and progress. This informant compared Malmö with smaller towns that she believed were not progressive

or open to change. Malmö, where people from all over the world live together and where commerce and industry thrive, was painted in a positive light, and the presence of English for her stood as a sign of this. The use of English in storefronts and other public communication is perhaps a way to index this meaning of English as well. English, in this way, might be seen by some as a symbol of reaching out, not just to non-Swedish speakers but also to change and progress. Continuing further, by looking at how language as text or discourse is nested with both language as code and language as culture, the embedded position of English in Swedish linguistic culture begins to emerge even further.

English is becoming an integral part of the Swedish language itself, especially among young people. Just as in many other countries around the world where the addition of English elements to the local or national language is the bane of many purists, complaints about *Svengelska* (Swenglish) are present in Sweden (Melander 2001). English words or expressions are frequently overheard to be spoken by adults and children alike in their daily speech. I frequently heard English expressions or words used in conversations while I was sitting at cafés, waiting for trains and busses, or shopping in stores. The words "yes" and "no" were quite common as was the tendency to answer questions with quips like "Good idea," "I don't know" or "It doesn't fit." Profanity, of course, was regularly employed together with Swedish discourse, most often the word "fuck." This word in particular seems to be so prevalent that it was the subject of a letter to the editor:

[T]here are plenty of English people who do not use the word 'fuck' in everyday situations. There are some who only use the word when a computer crashes, when a car gets a flat and in other frustrating situations...so everyone who does not have English as a mother tongue does not have to feel the need to use the word every five minutes to sound English, thank you very much. (Språktomten 2002, translation mine)

The writer's comment suggests that not only is this word in particular problematic but so is the "Englishness" that it, and perhaps other English words, indexes. Some, as shown in another letter to the editor, see the presence of English words and expressions in everyday Swedish discourse as positive: "We move ahead in international situations and we get more ways of expressing ourselves. Some examples from recent weeks: 'Det här projektet är alldeles för *risky*'¹² ... 'Det är lite *heavy* att jobba så sent'¹³ ... In print these word choice strategies cause problems but in speech they can be helpful and increase understanding" (Josephson 2001). Though sometimes an English word or expression is used when there is no Swedish equivalent, as in computer terminology, more frequently English words come in places where there is a choice between

¹² This project is far too risky.

¹³ It is a little heavy to work so late.

Swedish and English. One can easily use Swedish to communicate that something does not fit or that someone has a good idea. Swedish certainly does not lack profanity in its lexicon. Why then, is the choice to use English words in these places so common?

Considering language as discourse being nested with language as code and language as culture, the decision to pepper Swedish with English in discourse might become clearer. Rampton (1995) explores the complexity of speakers' use of multiple languages in social interaction and the sociolinguistic implications of language choices. Specifically, he introduces the concept of crossing:

[It] focuses on code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language they employ... This kind of switching, in which there is a distinct sense of movement across social or ethnic boundaries, raises issues of social legitimacy that participants need to negotiate, and that analysts could usefully devote more time to. (Rampton 1995: 280)

"Prestige languages," he continues, "become the object of intensive play, remodeling and transvaluation, their meaning reshaped in ways that ultimately... consolidate group solidarity" (Rampton 1995: 288). It is quite possible that using English words and phrases in Swedish discourse is a way to draw upon the nested relationship between language as code and language as discourse in order to negotiate the place of English in Swedish linguistic culture. To use English words and expressions is to evoke ideas and beliefs about English and to appropriate them as part of the Swedish linguistic culture. In so doing, the English words cease to be exclusively English and to a certain extent they become reshaped as Swedish.

By using English expressions in discourse, on signs, or on storefronts, people are perhaps indexing beliefs and ideas about what English represents for them, including progressiveness and international connections. As a cultural process this is certainly nothing new. Symbols and ideas transgress national borders all the time, becoming reinvented for local purposes (O'Dell 1997). As O'Dell describes, language "...is an aspect of culture, and linguistic change must obviously be recognized as a part of cultural change..." (1997: 24). Cultural change that includes indexing English with development is problematic, however. As Pennycook explains, "[I]f we allow English to continue to be viewed as the language of modernity, development, and progress, while other languages are viewed as the purveyors of tradition, history, and culture, we fail to grasp the opportunity to shift the cultural politics of language" (Pennycook 2001: 216).

It is this very concern that the language policy proposal *Mål i mun* purports to address. But does the policy proposal take into account the complex role of English, which seems to contribute to the potentially

emerging position of English in Swedish society?

Mål i mun and Linguistic Culture

In all, *Mål i mun* should be commended for its valiant attempt to incorporate the complexities of English use in Sweden. It is clear that a concerted effort was made to consider Swedish linguistic culture when crafting the policy proposal. Indeed, current research on the use of English in Sweden is cited throughout the proposal. Further, as a whole, the proposal is not reactionary. Nowhere does the proposal champion a return to an imagined but non-existent state of Swedish monolingualism, nor does it suggest that the only way to strengthen the position of Swedish is to weaken the position of English. Rather the policy proposal is quite explicit about the need for both English and Swedish in Swedish society.

The section of the proposal where English appears the most prominently is in some of the recommendations for education and research¹⁴:

Recommendation 3: The regulatory framework for upper secondary school shall be amended to require schools to teach Swedish in all years of upper secondary education.

Recommendation 4: Universities and other institutes of higher education should augment elements in their students' programmes that promote better oral and written skills in both Swedish and English, and should also, in certain cases, require a more advanced previous knowledge of Swedish.

Recommendation 5: Measures should be taken to promote parallel employment of English and Swedish in research and scholarship.

Recommendation 6: One objective of educational programmes at Swedish universities and other institutes of higher education shall be that the students acquire a capacity to exchange knowledge in their areas of specialization in both national and international connections, both orally and in writing, and for diverse target groups.

There is recognition here of the reality of students, teachers, and researchers with respect to the need and expectation for English proficiency. The proposal recommends strengthening programs that develop the requisite high-level English skills that are needed while at the same time acknowledging that English alone will not be sufficient; high-level Swedish proficiency needs to be strengthened within all levels of education as well.

These measures are in line with current linguistic practices in these domains as shown by sociolinguistic research. Thus these measures do

¹⁴ All translations of the recommendations in *Mål i mun* are those of the committee as presented in the English summary (Kommittén för svenska språket (2002b)).

not represent a radical change in linguistic practice but a codification of what is already taking place, with an eye towards keeping Swedish strong. This kind of continuity is especially important for educational settings since, as Gupta (2001) explains, a policy can only be successful if it advocates language education that prepares students for the reality they will experience outside of the classroom.

Particularly worth noting is what is not included in the policy proposal. As I have attempted to show, the place of English in daily informal interpersonal interaction is likely quite complex and shaped by multiple beliefs and ideas about what English represents in the Swedish context. These practices, it seems, are left to the pervue of the existing implicit, unstated policies about how and when to use English. Daily individual language use is notoriously difficult, and perhaps undesirable, to legislate. Nonetheless, the policy proposal makes little attempt at all to manage the position of English beyond certain official or high-status domains. This is not surprising given that the proposal was laudably crafted drawing upon available sociolinguistic research, and such research has tended to focus on high status domains. Some areas in which studies have been carried out are mentioned, however. The proposal suggests, for example, that the use of Swedish should be strengthened in mass media and consumer product areas. Still, if the position of English with respect to Swedish is influenced by how English is used in daily interactions, as the present study has suggested, more sociolinguistic studies are needed upon which to base sound policy recommendations for strengthening the position of Swedish.

The proposal does acknowledge the complexity of multilingualism in Sweden, however. In fact, some recommendations expressly describe the need to increase understanding and awareness of linguistic diversity:

Recommendation 20: Measures shall be taken to bring about a positive change in attitudes towards the Swedish language and different linguistic varieties.

Recommendation 43: Continuing professional development for teachers shall include issues relating to language variation.

Recommendation 45: Efforts shall be made to promote a more open attitude towards and tolerance of linguistic variation.

Furthermore, the proposal takes into account the evolving nature of multilingualism in Sweden by recommending on-going research in language planning and continued review of the efficacy of language policies that are enacted:

Recommendation 62: A special initiative shall be taken to promote research on language planning.

Recommendation 66: Language policy shall constitute a separate policy area.

Recommendation 68: A single ministry should be given overall responsibility for language policy.

Recommendation 75: The Committees Ordinance shall be amended to require mandatory assessment of the language consequences of proposals made in Committee reports.

So while "[language] policies are usually designed to minimize many complex aspects of societal multilingualism because such complexity is inconvenient for the workings of the modern post-industrial state" (Schiffman 1996: 28), *Mål i mun* does make an attempt to build the complex nature of multilingualism into the policy proposal. In this way, the proposal seems to take into account the sociolinguistic reality with respect to English in Sweden to a great extent.

Whether any of the language policy recommendations will prove to be fruitful depends on a number of important factors. First, it is important to consider whether there is a mandate among people in Sweden for a language policy in the first place. This is already being discussed in the popular press in Sweden (e.g., Elgh 2002; Josephson 2002; Lindblom 2002). In addition, more sociolinguistic research on precisely how English is used everyday, by whom, and for what purposes is certainly needed to reveal the specific language use issues on which policy is most usefully focused.

Moreover, the feasibility of language policy recommendations must also be taken into account. Are there resources available and infrastructure in place to execute the recommendations for which a mandate may present itself? These are essential factors for policy implementation; more research clearly needs to be conducted in these areas in order to determine the potential for *Mål i mun*, or any parts of it, to be successfully implemented.

Summary and Conclusion

A number of studies (e.g., Gunnarsson & Öhman 1997; Hollqvist 1984; Teleman 1992) have shown that high-level English proficiency and communication is part of the register and expectations for domains like higher education as well as international trade and commerce. In these domains English is perceived as vital to international interests and it is expected that those who choose to work in these domains will have learned, and so be able to use, English at a high level.

My account of English in the Swedish linguistic culture of these two cities suggests that English is in the process of being appropriated and

integrated with daily interaction in public and interpersonal domains as well. In these domains it is often expected that individuals will have at least basic conversational skills in order to communicate with non-Swedish speakers. Beyond this, however, there seems to be a sense that English can be appropriated for use together with Swedish for expressive purposes. In this way, the choice to use English in daily life and its concomitant importance for Swedes is perhaps, at least in part, a bottom-up process. This is potentially a crucial point in understanding the nature of English in Sweden, and surely in other areas of the world as well, because to view the growing use of English in all its forms as the exclusive result of top-down pressures ignores "a sense of agency, resistance, or appropriation" of English by its users (Pennycook 2000: 114).

The point of concern, though, is what the appropriation of English represents to people who use it and how this potentially serves to position English as related to progress and social development. In this way, the place of English in Swedish linguistic culture is related to how people use and think about English, which involves both locally/nationally situated beliefs (Schiffman 1996) and transnationally situated ideologies (Phillipson 1992). Language policies can serve to condition social circumstances in a way that brings agency and resistance to the fore (Cooper 1989). With regard to explicit language policies about English, Pennycook (2001) proclaims that, "Unless we can find ways to step out of the English-versus-other-languages dichotomy to appropriate English to serve different ends, to reclaim English to become a language through which other cultures can find expression, and to appropriate other languages for non-traditional purposes, we will have failed..." (216). This is, perhaps, what Gunnarsson (2001) means when she writes,

Swedes should stick up for the Swedish model, both linguistically and communicatively. We should help to ensure that English becomes more Swedified...If the Swedish of tomorrow is not to be a product of the linguistic dominance of English I therefore believe that Swedes must retain their cultural individuality even in international contexts and even when they are speaking English. (65-66)

The present study has suggested that the nature and position of English in Sweden is quite complex. Rather than being imposed only from above, it is seemingly developing from the ground up as an integral part of Swedish linguistic culture as well. A language policy that is designed for this complex sociolinguistic situation should take into account the complexity of the linguistic culture. *Mål i mun* appears to be a sound attempt to draw upon available sociolinguistic research to put forth ways to maintain the strength of Swedish while at the same time recognizing the importance of English to the Swedish context.

The question remains, however: Is English a potential problem for Sweden to the point where a language policy is needed to strengthen

Swedish in the face of English? The position of English in relation to strong national languages, like Swedish, is only beginning to be studied carefully and there is much more we still have to learn. English is certainly capable of coexisting with other national languages without being a threat (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 1996) but more research is needed which examines the role of English in all facets of the linguistic culture of Sweden, and similar polities, in order to determine if the most effective way to achieve thriving societal bilingualism with English is via overt, official language policies like *Mål i mun*.

My exploration of the linguistic culture of Sweden here is but a small step towards understanding the complex relationship between English and Swedish in Sweden. It is clear, though, that English is and will remain an articulated component of Swedish life and, as Boyd (1999) suggests, both English and Swedish have their places in Swedish society. An overt policy that takes into account what is currently known about Swedish linguistic culture may be a welcome codification of certain current linguistic practices while also serving to ensure that everyone receives access to the linguistic resources required for success in many domains of society. Still, much too little is known at this point about the relationship between English and Swedish in Sweden's linguistic ecology. We must forge ahead with more research that addresses the ecological factors that contribute to the nature and implications of English in Sweden's linguistic culture if any overt language policy is to be truly comprehensive and constructive.

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