

SOME ASPECTS OF STYLE IN THE SOURCE AND THE TARGET LANGUAGE

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1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

One obvious point of difference between performance in the native language (source language) and the language being learned (target language) is the greater quantity of errors in the target language. There are other more subtle differences between the learner's performance in the target language and that of a native speaker of that language. They can be described as differences in style. Can we explain these differences contrastively, by saying that typical stylistic features of Swedish are present in the student's attempt at the target language, or are they due to gaps in the knowledge of the learner, which he fills with whatever means he has at his disposal? In that case they are basically due to under-representation of constructions which the learner finds difficult (Levenston 1971:115 ff.).

An attempt is made in this investigation to see how much or how little the style of a writer varies in written work in the source and the target language. Two fields have been examined in particular:

- a) Lexis.
- b) Sentence Connection.

There is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) Does the student who has a limited vocabulary in Swedish also have a limited vocabulary in English, measured in terms of lexical density?
- 2) Do the means used for sentence connection vary in the two languages as used by these students?
- 3) How do the means of sentence connection used affect the evaluator of the written work?

- 4) Is there a correlation between the ability to write well in Swedish and in English, or more correctly between the evaluation given to the same student's work in Swedish and in English?

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. MATERIAL

The material investigated is Swedish students' free production in Swedish and in English, written by pupils in their second year at high school. They are, on average, seventeen years of age. English is introduced into the school curriculum at an early stage in Sweden. These pupils are now in their eighth year of English studies, having started in their fourth year of compulsory school. At present pupils start English in their third year of compulsory school, at the age of nine. This means that a relatively high standard has been reached by the pupils examined here.

The essays in both languages were written at official examinations. They were limited by time and not to any specific number of words. Twenty-five essays were obtained in each of the two languages.

The subjects given were as follows:

Swedish: *My childhood school.*

Young people and their spare-time.

English: *The view from my window.*

A journey I should like to make.

A prominent statesman of our time.

A film I enjoyed.

There should ideally have been no choice of subject, as variations in style can be due to variations in the subject matter. For the purposes of this investigation, however, the subjects are similar enough to be acceptable.

2.2. METHODS

2.2.1. Lexical Density

The method used to measure the vocabulary of the students is that of counting the lexical density of the texts. Lexical density (LD) is a term which describes the percentage of lexical words in the total number of words in any given text, either written or spoken. The total number of orthographic words and the total number of lexical words are put into relation to each other to establish lexical density:

$$\frac{LW}{OW} \times \frac{100}{1} = LD$$

In this investigation, the basis for the distinction between lexical and function words is the discussion in Quirk et al (1972:44 - 47) on closed-system and open-class items. Nouns, adjectives and verbs, apart from auxiliaries, have been counted as lexical words. Verbs with a double function such as BE and HAVE have been included in the count when they appear in their lexical function. Adverbs such as EASILY, ending in -ly and corresponding to adjectives, have also been regarded as lexical words. One lexical item such as TURN UP is regarded as two words, TURN a lexical word and UP a function word. Contracted forms such as HAVEN'T and hyphenated forms such as BABY-SITTER are regarded as one word.

There are several investigations of LD in English. The important factor for determining the density of a text appears to be the presence or absence of feedback, that is, interruptions of any kind in the form of questions, comments or gestures which cause the speaker or writer to adjust their language. All texts with an LD of 36% or under have feedback. This includes the vast majority of spoken English and written texts of the type "Problem Page" in magazines, where readers' questions are answered. Other written texts have an LD of 40% or more (Ure 1971: 445 - 449).

A small scale investigation of Swedish university students' written work showed that they had a lower LD than native speakers writing on the same subject (Linnarud 1975:12ff).

This difference was shown to be due to various inter-related factors. Non-native speakers use fewer nouns due to shortcomings in their vocabulary. They also write shorter sentences with a resultant increase in the number of auxiliary verbs used. Their lack of vocabulary also gives rise to the addition of words and phrases which a native speaker might well prune, such as the use of NOT IMPORTANT instead of UNIMPORTANT. This is in no way an error but can account for stylistic differences between the native and the non-native writer (Arabski 1975).

The phenomenon of LD has not been investigated in this way in Swedish and we have therefore no idea of what to expect as a normal LD for the type of written work investigated here. The fact that the definite article is incorporated with the noun in Swedish gives rise to an inherent difference between the two languages. We can compare the following two sentences:

	Orthographic Words	Lexical Words	LD
SWEDISH: "Ge mig boken" sade mannen.	5	4	80%
ENGLISH: 'Give me the book', said the man.	7	4	57.1%

Both sentences express exactly the same thought but have completely different values for LD. It is also clear that results in Polish and other inflected languages

with their wealth of cases would bear very little similarity to the results obtained in English.

The results of the LD counts in the two languages can therefore not be compared. What can be compared is the student's LD in each language compared to the average for the whole class.

2.2.2. Sentence Connection

Eight of the students were chosen for more detailed investigation. Their essays were examined from the point of view of sentence connection and type and quantity of error.

The means of sentence connection have been classified according to the GCE (Quirk et al 1972:649ff).

a) Implications in the Semantic Content.

b) Lexical Equivalence.

c) Syntactic Devices. (In detail in Table 3).

These factors can all interact to give unity to a text. Implications in the semantic content are not discussed further here.

The reason for choosing sentence connection for special study is the oft-heard comment among native speakers of English teaching in Sweden, that Swedes are all right at putting a sentence together, but fall down badly in connected discourse. If this is true, it could be due to the lack of creativity in written form in language teaching. Most pupils spend a major part of their time filling in missing words in already completed sentences, and therefore get a fairly good grasp of how to construct the bits of a jig-saw puzzle, but almost none of how to fit them together. Even more unfortunately, they have very little idea of how to convey in English something they really want to say in contrast to what the teacher wants them to say.

3. RESULTS

3.1. RESULTS OF THE LD COUNT

The only assumptions made in advance about the expected LDs in this study, was that the essays in English would have had an LD of 40% or over, with a few between 36% and 40%, if they had been written by native speakers. The expected results for Swedes writing in English would be somewhat lower.

The actual results show that nine of twenty-five had an LD under 40%, but of these five had over 39%. Only two had below 36%. The results given for university students are from the investigation by the present author (Linnarud 1975:14). If we accept the figures for LD as a meas-

Table 1

Language	Lowest	Highest	Average LD
Swedish	36.69%	52.10%	43.48%
English	35.33%	51.48%	41.81%
University students in English	30.40%	46.96%	39.33%

ure of how near the writer has come to the standard of a native speaker, the fact that university students have a lower standard than school pupils may seem surprising. One explanation may be that the particular students investigated were not representative. Another may be found in the present employment situation in Sweden, which is such that language studies at university level are not a very attractive field for the more ambitious students. There are large numbers of unemployed language teachers as it is. The standard of proficiency may well be higher on average among the pupils of the second and third year at high school than among university students of English starting their first term. A look at the results on the whole shows that the figures for Swedish and English are strikingly similar, although the score for Swedish is somewhat higher than that for English.

A closer look at individual performances shows that in eight of the twenty-five cases the LDs in Swedish and in English lie within decimal points of each other. Of the remaining seventeen, thirteen had a higher figure in English than in Swedish.

It is of greater interest to compare the individual student's performance with the average result in both languages as a more realistic measure of their comparative ability in each.

Table 2

	English above average	English below average	Total
Swedish above average	7	3	10
Swedish below average	3	9	12
Total	10	12	22

The remaining three of the twenty-five were within decimal points of the average in both languages. This means that nineteen of the twenty-five kept on the same side of the average line in both the source and the target language. The answer to the first question posed in the introduction, "Does a student with a limited vocabulary in Swedish also have a limited vocabulary in English, measured in terms of lexical density?", must be as follows:

This and the converse appear to be true of the students in this investigation.

It is of course exceedingly presumptuous to assume that LD measures all aspects of the students' lexis. This is obviously not the case. Other important aspects are:

1) The measure of lexical variety known as the type/token ratio (Kučera and Francis 1970:356) or lexical variation (LV) (Linnarud 1975:8). These counts measure the variation in the vocabulary used by the writer and may well be a more important factor in influencing the evaluator favourably than LD. A high LD may be achieved with a large amount of repetition of a small vocabulary.

2) The degree of appropriateness and difficulty of the vocabulary used. This is to a certain extent the explanation of a high count in lexical variation. A grasp of words of above average difficulty allows a greater variation of vocabulary.

Another point which has been raised in discussion is, "Does LD decrease in proportion to the length of the text?" There seems to be no logical reason why it should and there is no evidence in these fifty essays that it does. On the contrary it varies freely throughout each text and is totally independent of length.

3.2. RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION OF SENTENCE CONNECTION

The most frequently used method was by lexical equivalence, where the connecting link between sentences was either a repetition of a lexical word from the previous sentence or the use of a synonym or hyponym for that word. Next in frequency was substitution by pro-forms, where a pro-form such as HE was substituted for a noun in the previous sentence. Of syntactic devices, the most frequently used were logical connectors, but of them certain sub-sections such as reformulation or replacement were not used at all. The most frequently used logical connector was BUT and its equivalent in Swedish. Sentences beginning with AND or BUT are often regarded as unacceptable in prescriptive teaching but are to be found in written English, and have been regarded as acceptable here. For details of the students' use of sentence connectors see Table 3.

The question, "Do the means of sentence connection vary in the two languages as used by these students?", can be answered as follows: The essays in Swedish were shorter than those in English. The figures can therefore not be compared directly. However, the students showed a similarity in their patterns of sentence connection in both languages. Those who used logical connectors in the source language also used them in the target language.

Table 3

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	S	En	S	En	S	En	S	En
<i>Lexical equivalence</i>	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+-
<i>Time relaters</i>	++	++		+-		++	+-	++
<i>Place relaters</i>	-+	-+	-+			-+	-+	+-
<i>Logical connectors</i>								
and	-+	+-	-+				-+	
but	-+	-+	++	++		++	++	++
enumeration	++	+-			-+	-+	++	
addition	-+	+-				-+		
summation	++				+-		-+	
apposition		-+						
result	-+	-+	+-					
inference		++	++				+-	
or								
reformulation								
replacement								
contrast	+-			+-	++	+-	+-	
concession	-+	-+	-+			-+		
for								
<i>Substitution pro-forms</i>								
noun phrases/adverbials	+-	++	++	+-		-+	++	++
predicate								
<i>Discourse reference</i>								
sentence/clause	++	++	-+	-+	++	++	++	++
nounphrase								
<i>Comparison</i>								
<i>Ellipsis</i>								
dialogue								
same speaker	-+	+-			+-			+-
<i>Structural parallelism</i>						-+		-+

A - H = 8 students

S = Swedish

En = English.

The question, "How do the means of sentence connection used affect the evaluator of the written work?", can be answered as follows: Only one of the students, four in all, given the mark 4, judged by a 5 point scale (that is, judged good) did not have a high rate of usage of logical connectors. Her method was primarily by means of lexical equivalents and she used a large and varied vocabulary. The students who had the highest number of logical connec-

ters had also the greatest variety in their means of sentence connection due to obvious reasons. This variety would appear to impress the evaluator favourably. The four essays judged to be good are B, D, F and G in Table 3.

3.3 CORRELATION BETWEEN THE EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' WORK IN SWEDISH AND IN ENGLISH

The marks given for the work in Swedish were not for the essay alone. The examination included a summary and the evaluation is given for the two together. According to the evaluator the mark given for the essay alone would be identical with the mark for the two together, in all but one case, where a poor summary had brought down the mark well below the student's usual level. This is the case where the marks given in Swedish and in English differ most: 2 in Swedish and 4 in English.

Table 4

Same in Swedish and in English	
Mark 4	3
Mark 3	6
Mark 2	3
Total	12
Higher in Swedish than in English	
Marks 4 and 3	3
Marks 3 and 2	4
Marks 2 and 1	2
Total	9
Higher in English than in Swedish	
Marks 4 and 5	1
Marks 3 and 4	1
Marks 2 and 3	1
Marks 2 and 4	1
Total	4

This would seem to suggest that the result in Swedish is the basic one. Very few pupils achieve a better result in English than in Swedish, in fact only four out of twenty-five.

The correlation between students' performance in the source and the target language was investigated in Gothenburg, where the conclusion was reached that those who achieved poor results in their native language also achieved poor results in the target language. It was also evident that the source language interfered with the target language to a greater extent for pupils who had a poor performance in the source language (Stendahl 1972: 117 - 123).

The fourth and final question from the introduction, "Is there a correlation between the ability to write well in Swedish and in English, or more correctly between the evaluation given to the same student's work in Swedish and in English?", can be answered in the affirmative. In only one case was there a difference of more than one mark between the evaluations in the two languages, and that case has already been pointed out as being of doubtful value for this investigation. The conclusion must be that all who write well in Swedish do not necessarily write well in English, but nearly all who write well in English also write well in Swedish.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Deficiencies in the source language are mirrored in the target language. A below average LD in Swedish is usually accompanied by a below average LD in English, suggesting that a limited vocabulary in Swedish is usually accompanied by a limited vocabulary in English.

As far as sentence connection is concerned, much needs to be done to emphasise its importance for advanced learners. Particularly the use of logical connectors should be given greater attention in teaching, as they appear to be of importance in influencing the reader to judge the text favourably. A good variety in means of sentence connection gives an impression of fluency usually found in the native speaker but all too seldom in the foreign learner. We must challenge the fact that all those years of English studies simply mean a chance to go through the rules for the simple as opposed to the progressive or the use of DO in questions and negation etc. every year in the same way for nine years instead of for six or seven. The students are most certainly capable of responding to increased demands for creativity.

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