

Styling street credibility on the public byways: When the standard becomes ‘the dialect’

Jan-Ola Östman

*University of Helsinki
Finland*

AIM AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND¹

Certain genres of audiovisual media – news reading in particular – have of tradition been strictly regulated in the Nordic countries²: the idea that certain radio and TV genres can be trusted to (re)present ‘the best’ language has been generally accepted throughout most of the 20th century. With the advent of what has become known as late modernity, with an appeal to democratization, this view has been challenged in many subfields of broadcast media, but variably so in the different Nordic countries. (For an overview, see Kristiansen and Coupland 2011.) Thus, in Nordic communities like Swedish-language Finland, the idea that especially the news media represent the standard is still a very viable view.

According to the findings of the MIN Project (see e.g. the articles in Kristiansen and Sandøy 2010), the different speech communities in the Nordic countries have very different understandings of the importance of standard languages, and of how standards are expressed. Attitude studies within the MIN Project showed the importance of distinguishing between explicit, conscious opinions, and implicit, subconscious attitudes: people may explicitly express one opinion, but implicitly entertain even the opposite attitude towards standards, and towards language contact and language change. Thus, Mattfolk (2011a, 2011b; Mattfolk and Kristiansen 2006) shows that in a matched-guise test on Finland Swedes’ subconscious attitudes, the informants consider English words in a Swedish context to have a positive effect, whereas when informants were asked directly in an opinion poll or in an interview,

¹ I am hugely indebted to the participants at the Copenhagen Round Table meeting on *Socio-linguistics and the Talking Media* in June 2014 for extremely interesting discussions on the topic of this study, and specifically to Jacob Thøgersen, Nik Coupland and Janus Mortensen for lucid, intriguing and inspiring comments on earlier versions of the study.

² With the general term ‘Nordic countries’ I here refer to what is generally known as Norden – Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland plus the semiautonomous Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Åland Islands, and additionally Sápmi. The ‘strict regulation’ here refers both to the expectations of the public, and to the internal manuals produced by the broadcasting companies for their journalists in the Nordic speech communities.

they explicitly responded that they would like English words that come into Swedish to be replaced by Swedish words.

Despite the large number of language planning organizations and language policy decisions in the Nordic countries and elsewhere, it remains unclear to what extent these have (had) a direct influence on the direction in which languages move, and on language change generally. But it is becoming more and more commonly accepted that much of language change takes place on a subconscious, implicit level – on the level of attitudes and ideology. (For discussions, see Kristiansen 2010; Östman and Thøgersen 2010.)

When people in the broadcast media express themselves in public, the knowledge that there is an audience ‘out there’ will influence their language. In the sociolinguistic literature, these modes and ‘audience-designed’ ways of doing and speaking are typically talked about in terms of styles and of processes of styling (cf., e.g. Bell 1984; Coupland 2007; Eckert and Rickford 2002). Such styling can naturally be done very explicitly and strategically, in attempts to present oneself as a particular kind of person with a particular kind of authority. The expression of one’s style can, for example, be done explicitly by choosing particular lexical items or by making conscious pronunciation efforts. At the same time, elements of subconscious styling can be either a residue of characteristics of one’s own variety (elements one has not managed to do away with in attempts to change one’s persona), or as characteristic features that one subconsciously starts using when taking on the role of a particular persona, accommodating towards a holistic picture of that persona. Often these two facets of implicit styling converge, (re)presenting a particular identity or a relationship. Whether styling has a role to play in language change is also a matter of debate, as well as a matter of definition.

The present study takes these three fields of study – the public media, styling, and ideology – as three perspectives on (social and linguistic) change. This is done through an analysis of dialects in public space, in particular, of the way dialects and dialectal characteristics are represented publicly by people other than language scholars. The dialect data come from different Ostrobothnian dialects of Swedish, spoken on the west coast of Finland. The material analysed is dialect writing in song texts on the respective artists’ CD-covers and homepages, and patterns of verbal expression in homemade videos on sites like YouTube. The time period investigated spans the last 30-plus years. The study falls within the general realm of media discourse, based on a definition of ‘media’ as any publicly or semi-publicly available communication. As performers, the artists can be expected to present themselves in certain ways – in order to remain artists, i.e. in order to be successful in communities with very few members (and thus with very few concert-goers and record buyers). In particular, the artists have to make a point of claiming to be authentic representatives of – in this case – the Ostrobothnian communities, distancing

themselves from Others (cf. Coupland 1999). Who the Others are will, however, change from one time period to the next.

The study argues that dialect writing and the actual performances of the dialect have changed in consonance with social changes in society. The characteristics of written dialect are styled in order to speak to, and thus be credible and express authenticity with respect to, the general sentiment of the (youth of the) particular period in which the songs are made public. Detailed linguistic analyses reveal that a distinction can be made between the strategic (explicit, conscious) and the implicit (subconscious) styling that is to be found in the texts. It is further suggested that it is the subconscious expression that is in consonance with the linguistic change in the respective speech communities to which the artists belong.

On a more general note, the study seeks to understand the *sociolinguistic change* that is realized as a gradual shift in what social values are ascribed to dialects; and more concretely to comprehend what is happening in the Ostrobothnian communities, and thereby project an understanding onto what is happening in other similar ‘minority’ communities with respect to standardization, levelling, and regionalization.

SWEDISH IN FINLAND

According to its constitution, Finland has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. I will talk about Swedish-language Finland (‘Svenskfinland’) to refer to the traditional areas where Swedish has been used throughout the centuries. ‘Standard Finland Swedish’ officially does not exist, since Swedish in Finland is to follow the norms of Swedish in Sweden, especially so in writing. But differences in pronunciation, in prosody, and in the lexicon (e.g. due to differences in the differing bureaucracies in Finland and Sweden) are long-standing and well known. Still, a standard of Swedish in Finland has been codified, as a common variety, with a fairly high prestige³; this variety is also often referred to as, precisely, ‘Standard Finland Swedish’ (cf. Östman and Mattfolk 2011; on criteria for a ‘standard’, see Auer 2005.). The standard for spoken Finland Swedish is the common, codified, prestigious variety heard in the public service broadcast media (i.e. especially in news readings on radio and TV; for a recent discussion, see Stenberg-Sirén 2014). This standard is very much a reading-of-the-writing variety.

According to traditional dialect classifications, there are over 80 (rural) dialects of Swedish⁴ in Finland. These have of tradition been grouped into four major dialect

³ Its prestige has also grown in Sweden during the last decade.

⁴ Dialectologists in the north of Europe see the dialects of North Germanic, a.k.a. Scandinavian, as a dialect continuum stretching all over Norden. Calling a North-Germanic dialect a

areas: Ostrobothnia (Sw. *Österbotten*), Åland, Åboland, and Nyland. The Ostrobothnian dialects are the focus of this study. Dialect identity is of tradition very strong in Swedish-language Finland, both in relation to one's own specific dialect, and with respect to belonging to, say, Ostrobothnia rather than to any of the other three areas. The relations with respect to both dialect-specific, and dialect-area varieties are typical 'us' vs. 'them' relations, in the understanding of Larsen's (1917) concept of *naboopposition*, 'neighbour opposition'.

The social change that has taken place on the Ostrobothnian countryside is that virtually all dialect users were farmers up until the 1960s. The child boom in the aftermath of WWII saw a new generation growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, with other ambitions than staying farmers. Even though industrialization in the form of strong entrepreneurship also evolved in the rural communities, it did not affect the communities at large, where all types of work had been equally respected. After Finland joined the European Union in 1995, 'globalization' hit the Ostrobothnian countryside forcefully. For ordinary farmers this meant that their possibilities to make a living in their home communities in the countryside diminished severely. In the 2000s, the Ostrobothnian countryside was part of the general global media boom (both in terms of getting access to the 'new' media and because satellite TV became a concrete possibility⁵). An additional important aspect of social change in the (Swedish-language) Ostrobothnian countryside is that the beginning of the present millennium has seen a growing social conscience against the extreme-right movement in Finland, which supports a nationalistic one-language-one-nation view, with Finnish being the 'one language'.

DIALECT WRITING IN SONG TEXTS

Dialect writing has been actively practised in Ostrobothnia since the early 20th century, mostly in the form of poems, (usually fictive) newspaper stories and ads, and short stories⁶. Local theatrical performances in dialect have been around at least as long: traditionally, these theatre performances included songs, where a tune popular at the time was used as the music, and local, dialectal texts replaced the original

dialect of Swedish or a dialect of Norwegian may thus very often be irrelevant and even inappropriate. Nowadays, town varieties ('stadsmål') are also considered on a par with the traditional dialects, thus making the number of 'traditional' varieties of Swedish in Finland close to 100.

⁵ 'Glocally', many rural communities and municipalities started their own TV broadcasts, but despite a huge initial interest, their function has remained at a symbolic level.

⁶ The most famous dialect-story writers include A. J. Nygren, at the beginning of the 20th century, and Lars Huldén, who is still active.

texts; today we would call these ‘covers’. The dialectal texts to these songs were not written down for posterity, and they could change from one performance to the next. At the end of the 20th century, CD-manufacturers and singer-songwriters started enclosing texts of their songs with the music. This practice was also taken up by those dialect performers who were encouraged (and financially supported by, for example, the local bank) to produce MC-cassettes, and later CD-records. That is, dialectal texts to songs were not publicly available before the last decades of the 20th century, and not many of them have been preserved. The issue of whether the texts discussed in this study are representative of song texts in Ostrobothnian dialects is to a large extent a *nonce* issue until the 2010s. Before that, the ones I discuss are the only ones there are.⁷ But because they are so few, ‘everyone’ in Ostrobothnia would listen to them and get acquainted with them, and would possibly get influenced by them.

The test-hypothesis for this study is that the development and change we see in dialect writing over time mirror – or, as we shall see, partly constitute – changes in the Ostrobothnian community, and can be (directly) related to developments and changes in the Finland-Swedish, Finnish, and European communities at large. On the basis of what we know about the cultural history of Ostrobothnia, a further hypothesis is that any form of dialectal manifestation, such as public dialect texts, helps support and create identities that keep dialect ideologies alive. Thus, being authentic is at the heart of this identity-building process and of the relationship between the community and its artists.

In order to get a practical hold on language change in dialectal writing in the Ostrobothnian community, I will talk about the development in relation to three ‘stages’, mirroring to some extent the changing ideals – and ideologies – of the youth in the community and how these ideals have changed. Rather than actually being separate sequential ‘stages’, the three stages of development are of course more like three parallel perspectives that characterize different generations and their views on life.

In search of ‘the genuine’

At the first stage (covering the late 1900s), a ‘genuine’ dialect is aimed for, continuing the *Ursprache* idea that dialects are old, and that we will know who we really are if we go as far back as possible. I see two sets of artists as representing this stage: (1) Lasse Eriksson and Anders Teir, and (2) Håkan Streng. On the basis of

⁷ Obviously, I do not discuss all the texts that exist, but rather representative examples by the artists who have produced texts in dialect.

their dialectal song texts⁸, coupled with the actual songs and the artists' pronunciations of the dialect in the songs, we can say that Eriksson and Teir attempt to produce (and thereby preserve) a conservative Närpes dialect (sÖB)⁹, with special emphasis on more or less exotic sounds, e.g. the voiceless [h], which is written as <hl> in their song texts. But Eriksson and Teir represent other characteristic Närpes features very unsystematically (e.g. vowel/syllable length) or not at all (the retroflex l, [ɫ]), and especially high frequency words are written as in standard Swedish. Dialect poetry in Ostrobothnia has a long tradition (cf. Wiik and Östman 1983), and there thus exists a format that is fairly well-known in every village. This format is also used by youngsters in Närpes today (cf. Greggas Bäckström 2011), but the manner of writing can vary considerably.

Extract 1 shows both the overuse of words containing <hl>, and the use of standard Swedish ways of writing, e.g. <stor> [stu:r] for e.g. <stoor>. In this short extract, the word *jähle* would possibly be pronounced with a voiceless [h] by older speakers of the Närpes dialect, but most of the other instances of <hl> in the extract would typically today be pronounced with [s] – mirroring the standard Swedish way of writing. The more unusual, seemingly exotic pronunciation with [h] is thus used as a symbolic identity marker of the Närpes way of speaking by the artists who in this manner stylize a presumed conservative version of the Närpes dialect. (For a general discussion of [h] in Närpes, see Ivars 2015: 135).¹⁰

Extract 1: Parts of the song *Jähle*¹¹ ('The Fence') in the Närpes dialect (sÖB) by Anders Teir and Lasse Eriksson.

Interpretation-translation by J.-O.Ö.

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jähle, han läitar jähle | Fences, he's looking for fence parts |
| ti jäl runt foärän | to put up a fence around the sheep |
| så di halls ilag. | so they stay together. |
| Nählor, | Nettles |
| he vex pipnählor | there grow pipe-nettles |

⁸ Eriksson and Teir's texts are available online at their own, official website at <http://www.niesbycity.fi/betan.html>.

⁹ The Ostrobothnian dialect area is traditionally cut up into three, northern Ostrobothnian (nÖB), middle Ostrobothnian (mÖB), and southern Ostrobothnian (sÖB). The names of the specific dialects – here, 'Närpes' – are given in the text in the way they are traditionally referred to in Finland-Swedish dialectology. There are also Ostrobothnian dialects of Finnish (to the east of the Swedish-language areas); these are not considered in this study.

¹⁰ All the transcripts are given in the form the texts were written on the CDs, etc. Thus, not only the spelling, but also commas, quotation marks, etc. are original.

¹¹ The song is set to the tune of *Pour Toi*, composed by Louis Gasté and made famous as *Feelings* with lyrics by Morris Albert.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| å stor brännhåhlor | and big stinging [literally: burning] nettles |
| åv alla di hlag. | of all kinds and types. |
| ... | |
| ”Ja hlitär an i hlmsor”, | ‘I will tear him to pieces’, |
| säir Birger ti hlut. | says Birger finally. |

Let us focus on the rendering of [e] and [æ] in the song texts, since there is variability in how written standard Swedish <e> and <ä> are pronounced in different varieties of Swedish. /e/ and /æ/ are phonemes in standard Finland Swedish (since there are minimal pairs like [le:ra] ~ [læ:ra]). It is more difficult to find minimal pairs in the Ostrobothnian dialects, but the two are phonetically quite distinct, and the general Swedish morphophonemic rule of having [æ] before [r] holds true. Thus Teir and Eriksson write <-är> (phonetically [ær]) in <hlitär> [sli:tær/li:tær] where the standard spelling would be *sliter*. But they also use <ä> [æ] in order to indicate the stereotypical ‘broadness’ of the pronunciation of the Närpes dialect, as we see in <nåhlor>, written *nässlor* in the standard, but pronounced [ˈnes:lor], and in <foårän> (also with the non-Old Norse, ‘secondary’ diphthong [-uo-] typical of sÖB¹²), *fåren*, standard [fo:ren].

At this time period there was very little social engagement in the dialect texts. As in traditional theatrical performances, comedy, humour and entertainment were in focus. It is, however, important to note that humour and comedy are the traditional tools for expressing social criticism in this area (cf. also Östman 2011, 2016).

We see more or less the same thing¹³ in Håkan Streng’s way of writing dialect – exemplified in Extract 2.

¹² In North-Germanic dialect studies, secondary diphthongs refer to innovations that were not diphthongs in Old Norse. However, since many of the secondary diphthongs in Närpes diverge markedly from the standard, it is commonly believed that such diphthongs indicate that the dialect is a very old dialect. This conception, in turn, can be used as a basis for exoticizing the secondary-diphthong feature.

¹³ To be sure, it is not at all ‘the same thing’ that takes place, since what we see in Streng’s writing is a realization of levelling, where the standard writing system has a stronger influence than in the texts of Eriksson and Teir. This distinction between Eriksson and Teir on the one hand and Streng on the other is dealt with in Östman 2011, and on a more general level with respect to the distinction between regionalization and levelling in Östman 2008. Non-linguistic support for saying that Streng uses a more levelled, standard-influenced form comes from the fact that Streng had an earlier career as a musician in the fairly famous band *Trio Saludo*, which was established outside of the dialect community (and which did not sing in dialect), and with members from other parts of Swedish-language Finland.

Extract 2: Parts of the song *I Grööngräsi på Heimbacka*¹⁴ ('In the Green Grass on the Home Yard'), rendered in the Pedersöre dialect (nÖB) by Håkan Streng.

Interpretation-translation by J.-O.Ö.

| | |
|--|---|
| Gambä heimstaan e noo sä liik, tilåme Haldins busstrafik. | The old hometown looks the same Even the bus company Haldin's. |
| Ja stiger åå bussn å mamm å papp kåmber imoot mä. | I get off the bus and Mom and Dad approach me |
| Ja skådar neer et gato, tä springer Ulla, me kassn full ååv Snellmans bulla, he e gullot i grööngräsi på Heim- backa. | I look down the street, there runs Ulla with her shopping bag filled with bak- ery-products from Snellman it's lovely in the green grass in the Home yard [literally, 'hill'] |

Whereas Eriksson and Teir give a dialectal phonetic rendering of present tense endings in accordance with the pronunciation in the dialect (cf. <hlitär>), Håkan Streng¹⁵ uses a more levelled variant in his representation of the Pedersöre dialect (nÖB), a rendering close to the standard: <kåmber> for ['kom:ˌbær], standard Swedish *kommer* [kom:æ(r)].¹⁶ Thus, Streng seemingly sometimes uses <ä> as eye-dialect for [e]; cf. <mä> in Extract 2 as compared to his pronunciation, which is close to [me]. (On eye dialect, see e.g. Shorrocks 1996.) Streng does not represent palatalization in writing (cf. his standard-Swedish writing <känn> for [ʃenn]). By mostly rendering stereotypical exceptions to the standard in the texts, Streng also exoticizes the dialect.

The kind of dialect writing we find exemplified in Extracts 1 and 2 illustrates a strategic attempt by the artists to connect to the ordinary farmer-listener in the village, using the resources available, i.e. styling for the purpose of maintaining a particular village identity. But although both Eriksson and Teir, and Streng are part of their respective communities, they have higher community ranks (as teachers-performers-administrators, and as a national singer, respectively) in their respective communities than the ordinary farmer in the field. So while the performances are instances of strategic styling towards the 'genuine', the way texts are written is also influenced by subconscious choices – with a mixture of the standard (cf. frequent function words like <alla> 'all', dialect [all]; <han> 'he', dialectal [an] in Extract 1

¹⁴ *Green Green Grass of Home* by Claude Putman Jr.

¹⁵ Cf. his own website at <http://strengsong.com>.

¹⁶ The comparison is, however, not as simple as this since the distinction between [e] and [æ] is not as clearly phonemic in the northern parts of ÖB as it is further to the south, in sÖB.

by Eriksson and Teir) and the traditional dialect writing systems as default¹⁷ starting points. And even though Streng makes conscious attempts in Extract 2 (e.g. using dialect features like syncope: <kassn> [kas:n] for (Standard Swedish) *kassen*, ‘the shopping bag’) to tie his song texts to the local community, his subconscious default language is – as we see from the discussion above – (written) Standard Finland Swedish.

Breaking away

We see that authenticity is really a relative notion in what takes place around the turn of the century, when the negative effects of Finland having joined the EU became clear for people in the countryside. Gradually, a need to break free arose: a demand to start trusting yourself came to the fore. In one respect it was a further development of something that had already started in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when large municipality schools were created to cater for the ever-increasing child boom after WWII, that is, when people started believing that there is a future for Finland after all. Before this, pupils in Ostrobothnia who wanted to go further in their education than the village school had to either travel (back-and-forth) very long distances (up to 50 km one-way) by public bus every day to the nearest town (e.g. to Vasa), or rent an apartment in the town. In the town schools, the pupils and teachers from the town ruled, and pupils from the countryside had to adapt linguistically – often experiencing less pleasant situations because of not speaking ‘properly’. When the new big schools outside the bigger towns were created in the newly enlarged municipalities in the early 1970s, the municipalities organized bus rides, and pupils from different local villages, with different local dialects, came together. But none of the pupils were higher in rank than pupils from other villages. In these schools, new, regional standards were created (which were different from the town standards), and the pupils received an education on the same terms as their fellow pupils, irrespective of what village or area they came from.

This educational reorganization naturally took time for it to have a lasting effect, but by the turn of the millennium – and coupled with Finland joining the EU – we see as one result that a postmodern, deconstructive, chaotic ‘super-diverse’ manner of expression gradually evolved in dialect writing. Regionalization took over as a kind of anti-levelling.¹⁸ The dialectal song texts had now become an acceptable

¹⁷ I here use ‘default’ as a pre-theoretical notion to refer to speakers’ subconscious, dynamic and ambivalent way-of-speaking resources that lie closest at hand in a particular situation and that speakers (can) fall back on.

¹⁸ That is, from the point of view of dialect writing, texts characteristic of this stage work against the kind of levelling we have seen in Extracts 1 and 2 in the decades before. The phenomenon has elsewhere been described as the emergence of *supra-local varieties* (for an

manner of written communication, and not only for pure entertainment purposes, but also in order to express social engagement (as against the earlier stage described in the previous subsection). Extract 3 is sung by a group called Triio Peeråsetsi.¹⁹

Extract 3: Parts of the song *Pissrennå*²⁰ ('The Pee-Gutter'), rendered in the Karleby (Kokkola) dialect (nÖB) by Sture Långland of Triio Peeråsetsi.

Interpretation-translation by J.-O.Ö.

| | |
|--|---|
| Om man dricker alltfö mytsi, ... | If you drink far too much, ... |
| ... | |
| Ja int ere naa roolit ti gaa jer runt | Well it's not that much fun to walk around here |
| Fö he kan koma i böxunaa, jaa vann e pissrennå | 'cos it can come in the trousers, so where's the pee-gutter |
| Ja hitta int hedi stelle miin | I can't find that place of mine |
| Ja måsta fara bakom buskå diin | I have to go behind your bushes |
| Fö ja hadd drutsi allt fö mytsi, | 'cos I had drunk far too much, |
| ja vaaltså pisstreng | I had a terrible urge |
| ... | |
| Men int va ja eismend ter | But I was not alone there |
| Fö tii va all tömdii aader å | 'cos there were all the others, too |

Some of the most prominent linguistic characteristics in this extract are the phonetic-like (but not exaggerative-exotic) transcription the writer uses as dialect writing. The graphic representation is very unstable, even in the same song. For instance, he uses a variety of means to attempt to capture the very special system of affricates in the dialect (cf. e.g. Wiik 2002); cf. the consonant clusters in <mytsi> and <drutsi> in the extract; in other song texts we find e.g. <steitz>, <ryddji>, <bergji>. He sometimes uses <x>, sometimes <ks> to stand for [ks]; [k:] is sometimes rendered as <kk>, sometimes in standard-Swedish fashion as <ck>. The topics dealt with in the Triio Peeråsetsi songs are chaotic, anti-EU, and anti-establishment. The group clearly strives for social authenticity and street credibility in a postmodern fashion, with a styling that supports a general ideology of vernacularity. This might, at first sight, seem qualitatively different from the more traditionalising ideology we saw in the previous subsection, but the age and lifestyle of the audience is, *mutatis mutandis*, the same; the 'world' has changed.

overview of the literature, see Britain 2010), but in dissonance with other studies I follow Östman 2008 in not characterizing this as a form of levelling.

¹⁹ Cf. the group's official website at http://www.dlc.fi/~stoick/peero_swe/index.htm.

²⁰ *Yellow River* by Jeff Christie.

The postmodernity and deconstructivism comes even more to the fore in the song texts of the band 1G3B (sÖB)²¹. 1G3B goes even further in order to break with traditional dialect representation. In particular, the irregular is given a prominent place, but as such it creates a coherent symbiosis with the contents in their post-modern deconstructive texts. An example is given in Extract 4.

Extract 4: Parts of the song *Korvin Ruular* ('The Sausage Rules'), rendered in the Närpes (sÖB) dialect by 1G3B.

Interpretation-translation by J.-O.Ö.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Di je tåff di je hård | They are tough, they are grim |
| di je pöjkan som grievär e stort hål | they are the boys who dig a big hole |
| rett nier, för ti kom liängär nier | straight down, in order to get further down |
| ... | ... |
| å hon stånkar å hon svättas å hon | and she pants and she sweats and she |
| tjempar | fights |

1G3B use extensive borrowing from other languages (e.g. <ruula> 'rule', <naku-pelle> Finnish 'naked guy'), and they call their hard rock music 'dung metal'. We can almost see a sign of eye-dialect in their rendering of the first, stressed vowel in 'boys' as <pöjkan>, an exaggerated Närpes-manner of pronouncing ['poikan] with a more open and more central, stressed vowel.²² The first, stressed vowels in <svättas> and in <tjempar> are pronounced virtually the same in the dialect, but rendered differently, clearly again with a little leeway for the typical 'broadness' of the Närpes dialect. In <nier> and <liängär> the secondary diphthongs (cf. the discussion of Extract 1) are rendered phonetically, and the [æ] in the present tense suffix is variously rendered phonetically, as in <grievär> (standard Swedish <gräver> [gre:væ(r)]), and variously according to standard Swedish writing, as in <löper> [lø:pæ(r)] ('runs'; not in the extract).

What we see here is a strategy I will call reappropriation as styling. The songs are no longer covers, and the dialect texts are there to create identities within the slogan of 'language and culture always go together'. In their youth culture, anything goes: the dialect culture is taken over by the youngsters (as members of the dialect community themselves) and made into their own thing – through and with the texts (and the music). The traditionally negative view on dialects from the outside is being appropriated, and turned into something positive, into Dialect Power (cf.

²¹ Cf. their official web site at <http://www.1g3b.com>.

²² Cf. the reference to the 'broadness' of the Närpes dialect in the discussion of Extract 1, above.

Black Power, Deaf Power). But in addition, we see in 1G3B's texts a strategy where the view on dialect performance of the earlier 'traditional' style, which is closely related to farming, is being reappropriated.

At this stage in time social engagement also forcefully enters the scene. It is typical of dialect users in Ostrobothnia to be critical, and self-irony has always been relatively strong in dialect pop. As Finland joined the EU, depopulation of the countryside increased drastically, and in the 21st century the status of the farmers and new breeds of cows²³ also became an important topic in dialect pop.

Changes in the countryside created demands to take a stand on socially important questions, but this was all done with what looks like humour. However, what may seem like slapstick to an outsider is not so in the eyes of the farmer; humour is by tradition the dialectal way of expressing one's criticism. The dialectal texts create identities not only through their humour, but also indirectly through the manner in which they are written down for the target community. If language and culture are seen to belong together in a complete symbiosis, dialect-pop texts can be used to help make the dialect and its culture into something that is part of one's 'self', part of one's ideology and identity. With dialect texts, there is (a) the possibility to affect one's concrete listeners via shared knowledge of what can be presupposed in the community; (b) the possibility to be credible and authentic; (c) the possibility to share matters with members of one's in-group; and maybe, through all of this, (d) the possibility to change the world (i.e. the global) by starting small (in the local).

A number of theoretical and methodological implications can be read into this: since changes in dialectal contexts do not take place in a vacuum, we can get a deeper understanding of the essence of standard language ideologies by looking at dialectal realizations in society. The dialects also go through change, and at least on the Ostrobothnian scene, the ideology of the importance of dialects is retained, but the realization (here: in pop texts) of the dialects changes. This echoes Mattheier's (1998) concept of demotisation, *Demotizierung*, referring to situations where what seems like destandardisation are really the emergence of a new – albeit different – standard, at the same time as the ideology of the importance of having a standard is retained – cf. also Kristiansen (2003) in relation to 'high' and 'low' varieties of Copenhagen speech.

²³ Cf. Triio Peerâsetsi's *Svart Håårå Kuddå* 'Black-Haired Cow', sung to the music of Peter Green's *Black Magic Woman*.

Getting glocalized

The discussion in the previous subsection takes us to the end of the first decade of the 21st century. During the last five-or-so years we have seen a move from a ‘super-diverse’²⁴ (i.e. chaotic, very local) manner of expression, to an explicit dialect-identity-creating function of dialects in today’s liquid, ‘sub-diverse’ society. ‘Sub-diverse’ in this context refers to a subsumed, constrained diversity, a dialect identity that is not too bothered with dialect as speech, but more with dialect as (cognitive) place (cf. Auer et al. 2013; Cresswell 2004). This is the age of late-modern liquid modernity (cf. e.g. Bauman 1992). This is the step after postmodern deconstructivism, where chaotic social awareness becomes explicit community involvement. The youth is becoming part of the community, subordinating itself to the standard, to ‘ordinary life’, but by so doing, getting out of self-colonization²⁵. Dialect Power has become *Hurrarpower*²⁶. And on that road, the Ostrobothnians have become more integrated into a worldwide liquidity on their own terms. They have become glocal-ized.²⁷

A Band Aid type of get-together of artists calling themselves *Artister för tolerans och öppenhet*, ‘Artists for tolerance and openness’, made a song called *Vår tid – Vårt Land*, ‘Our time – Our Country’ in 2011.²⁸ The artists, Nina Lassander, Fredrik Furu, André Linman, Paradise Oskar, Redrama, Frida Andersson, Geir Rønning, Ville Pusa, Elin Blom, and Krista Siegfriids were the top young artists in Swedish-language Finland at the time. Parts of the text are given in Extract 5.

Extract 5: Parts of the song *Vår tid – Vårt Land* rendered in Finland Swedish by *Artister för tolerans och öppenhet*.

Interpretation-translation by J.-O.Ö.

| | |
|---|---|
| Jag hamnade tillbaka på mammas gata | I got stuck in my home [literally, Mom’s] street |
| Kan jag samla tankarna som mamma prata | Can I gather my Mom’s thoughts |

²⁴ On superdiversity, see Vertovec (2007), Blommaert and Rampton (2011).

²⁵ Following a suggestion by Helge Sandøy, I use ‘self-colonization’ (or ‘mental colonization’ in Sandøy 2004) to refer to the practice of deciding by oneself and for oneself what (little) one has the right to wish for, what is the most one can achieve.

²⁶ ‘Hurrare’ is the pejorative term used by Others to refer to Finland Swedes generally.

²⁷ Theoretically, I thus see the term ‘postmodernity’ not as an erroneous denomination, but as a transitional stage between modernity and liquid modernity. See, further, the section on *Styling in dialect renderings of songs*, below.

²⁸ Cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwS-WxJN_Ws&feature=endscreen&NR=1.

| | |
|---|--|
| Kan jag byta språk jag babblar samma | Can I change language I speak the same |
| Jag ser int någon ankdamm | I can't see any Duck's Pond |
| Jag ser samma flagga | I see the same flag |
| Samma gamla diskussioner bara sam-lar damm | The same old discussions just gather dust |
| Hur kan det nappa om det kallas pak-koruotsi, joo | How can it work if it's called forced Swedish, yeah |
| Jag ser händer i taket från Karis till Kuopio | I see hands [stretched] to[wards] the ceiling from Karis to Kuopio |
| Sen pohjanmaan kautta | [Finnish:] I drink to that |
| Ei ne vastusta | [Finnish:] They won't mind |
| Vi är här på mammas gata | We are here in our home [=Mom's] street |
| Kanske går i farsans spår | Maybe we'll walk in Dad's footprints |
| Hur länge ska folk orka tjata | For how long are people going to continue nagging |
| Om fadersland och modersmål? | About fatherland and mother tongue? |

Much of the importance of the song is in the contents of what the artists are singing, but if we concentrate on dialect, we will find that each artist uses his/her own variety of Swedish (Finland Swedish or Sweden Swedish), one has a Norwegian background (Rønning/Rönning) and uses Norwegian, one is a Finnish speaker (Pusa) and uses Finnish, the hard-rock singer (Linman) from the band *Sturm und Drang* uses English, the rapper Redrama raps in Finland Swedish.

The text is filled with Finland-Swedish locutions ('Finlandisms') that Finland Swedes are warned against using – since, the argument goes, if we continue using them, speakers of Sweden Swedish might not understand what we are saying. Examples of such Finlandisms in Extract 5 include lexical/phrasal items like *på mammas gata* ('at home', literally 'in mother's street'), *ankdamm* ('Swedish-language Finland', literally 'duck pond'), pronunciations (apocope reduction) like <int> for *inte* ('not'), pragmatic particles like <joo>, and morphosyntactic expressions like <Jag hamnade tillbaka på mammas gata>. Their strategic default language is thus Swedish, but with spoken Finland Swedish as another socioconscious²⁹ default. From the point of view of the song as a whole, i.e. the work of art, the code switching into other 'Nordic' varieties is strategic, but from the point of view of each artist there is no code switching – only knowledge that the primary audience is Finland Swedish.

²⁹ The term 'socioconscious' has been used by Mattfolk (2011a) to indicate the activity of interviewees to respond to questions the way they think somebody from e.g. a university would like them to respond.

What is of particular interest from the point of view of public performances and styling is that an overall language-status change seems to have taken place in and by the performance and release of this particular song and its text: spoken Finland Swedish becomes ‘the dialect’ – from having been the language of expression of ‘the (Finland-Swedish) standard’. I thus want to argue that this process is not dialect levelling or, indeed, dialect death. Rather, my interpretation of ‘dialect’ is one where dialect and culture go hand in hand, where dialect is associated with place (as against space), and where speakers’ (folk) perception of what is a dialect therefore is crucial. Granted this expanded conception of ‘dialect’ (which is e.g. backed up by the increasing use of different varieties of Swedish on the national radio channel X3M), this process is remarkable from a Finland-Swedish point of view and even questions the relevance of keeping up the traditional opposition between ‘the Ostrobothnians’ and Finland Swedes in ‘the South’ of Finland.

Part of this development is clearly due to a conscious and general Finland-Swedish opposition against views expressed by the extreme right (political party) in Finland, who among other things wants an all-Finnish Finland. Thus, Finland Swedish as a means for ‘fighting back’, irrespective of which dialect (area) or standard one represents, becomes a representative of the fight for one’s rights (as a minority).

On a general level, we can say that this is what youngsters are expected to do as the younger generation they are: they need to rebel. The artists thus took their responsibility and spoke out, joining together all of Swedish-language Finland to face its present challenges. Through the text and the way they wrote it, they showed that anybody’s language is just as good as anybody else’s. As it turned out, this song was not just a one-off thing; the kind of singing and text writing has continued, especially so by artists like Fredrik Furu, Frida Andersson, and Alfred Backa.

Although it is perhaps unclear to what extent the styling into Finland Swedish took place subconsciously in Extract 5, this is much more clearly the case in Fredrik Furu’s song *Finlandsbarn*, ‘Children of Finland’³⁰. Here, the text *is* the song³¹, with all its allusions to Finland Swedes fighting in the wars for Finland’s independence. Furu uses a Sweden-Swedish pronunciation with e.g. (post)alveolar fricatives; he uses Finland-Swedish dialectal locutions like <längs med vägen>, ‘along the road’; he uses Finland-Swedish archaic forms or hypercorrections (which is typical of dialect speakers speaking/attempting to speak standard Swedish), as in <en himmel besatt i brand> (*besatt* for *satt*), ‘a heaven set on fire’, and <i kläm emellan en brand och ett stormande hav> (*emellan* for *mellan*), ‘caught between a fire and a storming sea’.

³⁰ Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdo4KKGjwU4>.

³¹ That is, only the text (white text on black background) together with the music were displayed in the YouTube video.

Fredrik Furu is consciously styling into Sweden-Swedish pronunciation when he sings.³² This is particularly interesting, since this is something that Finland-Swedish dance bands used to do in the hope of making it in Sweden – and it was often looked down upon by the more revolutionary youth. But now it is even acceptable to sound Sweden-Swedish if you are a pop singer aiming for street credibility in Finland. This could not have happened without the language and the dialects having first gone through a stage of postmodern chaos. However, in his manner of writing (pop texts), Furu is subconsciously styling in Finland Swedish, with his general default language being simply ‘Swedish’.

A further testimony that a change has taken place over the last five years is the song *Varför lät vi Svenskfinland dö?*, ‘Why did we let Swedish-language Finland die?’, as originally performed by the stand-up comedian Alfred Backa (northern mÖB) in February 2011. In May 2014 he uploaded a revised version of the song on YouTube.

In the 2011 version Backa was simply having fun, probably thinking that he exaggerated what he was singing. He used Sweden-Swedish pronunciation, even dance-band Swedish, coupled with dialectal features (<tystna> (standard Finland Swedish *tystnade*), <fira> (standard Finland Swedish *firade*); he pronounced the <-d-> of *adjö* [adjø:] and *nu* as [ny:]. The vowel in *lät* was pronounced more open than in the standard (the unclarity of the phonemic status of [e] and [æ] in the area easily allows for this variation): *Varför lät* [læ:t] *vi Svenskfinland dö?* And content-wise, he ends by saying that the reason Swedish-language Finland died was the miserable song he just sang. In 2014 he seems to have realized that the 2011 song was not an exaggeration. Much had happened on the political scene, and the extreme right-wing party was receiving ever more support in political elections. The text is orthographically still much the same, but the song is now performed in ordinary standard Finland-Swedish. The standard (Sweden- and Finland-) Swedish <inte> is pronounced as a Finlandism, i.e. as [int]; <slutade> as [slæ:ta]; <adjö> and <nu> more according to the (Sweden- and Finland-Swedish) standard as [ajø:] and as [næ:], respectively. The vowel in *lät* in the title is now more closed, in accordance with the Finland-Swedish standard: *Varför lät* [le:t] *vi Svenskfinland dö?* In addition, there are portions in Finnish and in Russian, and content-wise the song ends with ‘the day we stop making fun of ourselves and our linguistic situation is the day Swedish-language Finland dies’.

³² True, he lives in Sweden at the moment, so some aspects of his Sweden-Swedish pronunciation might be unconscious, but he naturally also has full command of his Ostrobothnian variety.

STYLING IN DIALECT RENDERINGS OF SONGS

In the discussion in the previous section, I have used styling to refer to participants' 'ways of speaking'. That is, through their choices of style, speakers project different social identities and create different social relationships. Style is then, broadly, the repertoire the artists have available to themselves, and through styling they can make ambivalent choices and innovative uses of (elements in) this resource – choices and uses which can be fitted into or, indeed, which can create, contexts.

But repertoires can be of several types. In the analyses above, I have made reference to, primarily, a distinction between strategic and subconscious styling, proposing that the explicit vs. implicit distinction (cf. Östman 1986; 2005) is also a useful distinction to be made in the study of style and styling. We know it is an important distinction generally, since it is primarily in relation to the implicit/subconscious 'level' of communication that language change takes place. This has been shown in many sociolinguistic studies, in pragmatics research, in studies on language change generally, and in the study of (explicit) opinions vs. (implicit/subconscious) attitudes. (For earlier work on opinions and attitudes in Swedish-language Finland, see in particular Mattfolk 2011a, 2011b; Mattfolk and Kristiansen 2006; Östman and Mattfolk 2011.)

I have also argued that since these publicly available texts are instances of media, media discourse generally adds an 'overhearer' to the conscious and the subconscious; this is what Mattfolk (2011a) refers to as the element of the 'socioconscious'. I thus suggest that the most crucial aspect of styling for identity (in the sense of durable, long-term social identification) is likely to be styling in its subconscious shape, since here it has the potential for instigating, partaking in, and resulting in language change.

Applied to the analyses of the texts in the previous section, I have shown that at the end of the 20th century, the dialect performances were instances of strategic styling into the dialect, coupled with instances of eye-dialect; but the subconscious styling rested on the use of standard Finland Swedish as the default. In the first decade of the 2000s, there was a conscious appropriation of Others' negative views of dialects, turning the situation into something positive; and subconsciously, there was a styling, or reappropriation of the view on dialect performances of earlier traditional ways. And in the current 2010s, the strategic default is Swedish, and the subconscious default is the spoken Finland Swedish standard, the 'new dialect'.

It is important to note, though, that all these 'stages' remain viable for different groups in the speech community, creating a positive ambivalence in society at large, and enforcing a liquid modernity that manifests itself as a subsumed (i.e. constrained) diversity in minority communities. Minority communities have always been 'super-diverse' (e.g. they have had to be more ambivalently and amoebically

multilingual than not in order to survive), but superdiversity is not an essentialist end result: variability and adaptability is always at the heart of all languaging. On the basis of the data presented here, if superdiversity is anything, it is a transition stage.

CONCLUDING WORD

This study has shown some of the different ways in which language can be used as a tool for identity creation, and for identification. The dialect writers' particular purposes at the various stages (as discussed in the analyses) have perhaps changed a little over the years, but they have remained more similar than not. Dialects do change, but interrelationships between varieties and social values change even more: the linguistic means for artists to achieve their specific goals have changed, and the ideologies behind the choice of the linguistic means used, I argue, are best seen as sociolinguistic changes, as the process of a set of parallel strategic and sub-conscious choices.

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