



**Investigating Swedes' attitudes towards their own  
and other Swedes' English accents**

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## Abstract

Within the sociolinguistic field of accent attitudes, it has often been shown that both native and non-native speakers show preference for certain accents, especially for native varieties. This 'native speakerism' can have a negative impact on second language speakers, as the stigmatisation they may experience can hinder their willingness to speak. The aim of this study was therefore to investigate accent attitudes of an English as a second language speaker group: Swedish L1 speakers of English, focusing on their attitudes towards their own English accents and their attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents. The relationship between these attitudes were also examined. In doing so, the study drew on *Standard Language Ideology* and *Social Identity Theory* as the theoretical frameworks. In order to answer the research questions, data was collected through a questionnaire which collected 612 responses. Respondents' answers were then quantified into descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that most respondents were positive towards their own and other Swedes' English accents. However, there was a strong conformity to the Standard Language Ideology amongst the participating Swedes. The participants generally did not have a strong need to express their Swedish identity through their Swedish accents, which could also be attributed to the strong native norm. The results also showed that native norms were stronger in English L2 settings, while Swedish identity was more important for those living in a native English-speaking country. Finally, those who were positive towards Swedes' English accents were more likely to value their Swedish identity, while those who were negative towards other Swedes' English accents were themselves more likely to conform strongly to native norms.

Keywords: Accent attitudes, Standard Language Ideology, Social Identity Theory

# Chapter 1: Introduction

The study of accent attitudes has intrigued many linguists over the years since it is a field much more complex than merely the study of the sound of speech. Accents are an expression of people's social and geographical identities, and they influence people's attitudes, as "listeners refer to accent when judging whether speakers are native or non-native, educated or uneducated, and whether they are being formal or informal, casual or intimate" (Kang & Rubin, 2014, p. 239). In other words, an individual's speech is not the only facet that is judged based on the accent; linguistic stereotypes are linked with other characteristics such as, for example, ethnicity, intelligence and academic achievements (Kang & Rubin, 2014). Hence, accents can be crucially connected to an individual's social status. On the same token, accent attitudes are affected by people's preconceptions about certain ethnicities, cultures, and social groups. It has even been shown that listeners may assign stereotypical accent features to a speaker even where such accent is not present in the speaker's pronunciation (Kang & Rubin, 2014). Accents are thus closely interlinked with other characteristics of the individual, and these together generate and maintain listener attitudes.

Accent attitudes are also influenced by societal norms, such as *Standard Language Ideology* (Lippi-Green, 1994), which explains the status disparity between standard language and non-standard varieties. Some accents, especially English L2 accents, are stigmatised and have lower status than others, where some groups of speakers experience negative attitudes towards their own L2 English accents. This can make L2 speakers afraid of speaking English (Zarrinabadi & Ensieh, 2017). Given that English is an important language for global communication, it is essential for speakers to feel comfortable with their English L2 accents. Hence, it is vital to better understand the mechanisms involved in the sociolinguistic aspects of accents, particularly L2 accents, and ultimately improve the situation.

To my best knowledge, Swedes' accent attitudes have not yet been thoroughly investigated. Swedes can be an interesting group to study since Swedish L1 speakers have a comparatively high level of English (see, for example, Skolverket, 2012, p. 28), and have been rated positively in terms of their English accent (Lindemann, 2015; Kaur, 2014). At the same time, the native pronunciation norm among Swedes is strong (Eriksson, 2019), indicating that Swedish L1 speakers of English may have a negative attitude towards having a Swedish accent when they themselves and when other Swedes speak English.

The aim of the study is to investigate Swedish L1 speakers' attitudes towards their own English accents and their attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents in relation to native English accents. Further, the potential correlations between these attitudes are also examined. The study draws on theories of *Standard Language Ideology*, and the extent to which the participants conform to the *native norm*. It also considers *Social Identity Theory*, which focuses on the Swedish identity and its level of importance for the respondents. The research questions for accomplishing the study aim are the following:

*RQ1. What are Swedish L1 speakers' attitudes towards their own English accents?*

*RQ2. What attitudes do Swedish L1 speakers have towards other Swedish L1 speakers' English accents in relation to native English accents?*

*RQ3. Are the attitudes towards the Swedes' own English accents and the attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents related to each other? If they are related, how are they related?*

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This essay aims to investigate Swedes' attitudes towards their own and other Swedes' English L2 accents, more specifically in relation to native English accents. Apart from collecting data about Swedes' general attitudes, the study focuses on the aspects of degree of conformity to the native norm and importance of the Swedish identity. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks in focus are *Standard Language Ideology* and *Social Identity Theory*. These will be described in the next sections, followed by a research review of accent attitudes.

### 2.1 Theories

#### 2.1.1 Standard Language Ideology

*Standard Language Ideology*, as explained and developed by Lippi-Green (1994), is “a bias toward an abstracted idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language. The most salient feature is the goal of suppression of variation of all kinds” (p. 166). In other words, the *native norm*, which is what this essay more specifically focuses on, comes from the ideal of a standard language (or standard accents), where all other varieties are considered less prestigious.

Standard Language Ideology relates to Fairclough's theories (as cited in Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 167) about language and power, and more specifically the notion that those in power acquire and practice their power through either *coercion* (i.e., by physical force) or through *consent* (i.e., through psychological manipulation).

Standard Language Ideology has been established by consent, through several societal institutions, including the education system and the media. This means that there is an acceptance amongst speakers of non-standard varieties that their way of speaking is incorrect, making them strive for changing the way they speak in order to

conform to the norms. In other words, the power imbalance between standard and non-standard accents is being upheld by both groups, which is why it is interesting to study the extent to which non-native speakers of English (in this case Swedes) conform and uphold the native norm.

### 2.1.2 Social Identity Theory

In the context of accent attitudes, identity is a relevant aspect because “when people reject an accent, they also reject the identity of the person speaking: his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 165). Hence, accent attitudes are not just based on the phonetic aspects of accents, but also on other factors, such as ethnicity, nationality and social class; accent can be described as “a mirror of social identity” (ibid. p. 166), which *Social Identity Theory* is centrally concerned with.

Social Identity Theory has often been used to describe the interaction between different groups of people. In this context, a person’s *social identity* consists of “those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). Hence, individuals define themselves socially through memberships in certain groups and their characteristics. The theory is based on three main assumptions: 1. people generally seek to sustain and improve their self-esteem; 2. there are positive or negative connotations associated with memberships in social groups and categories, which contribute to a person’s social identity; 3. social groups and categories are evaluated in comparison with other groups’ characteristics, which result in either high prestige (positive discrepancies between the groups) or low prestige (negative discrepancies between groups).

A central notion of social identity theory relevant to this essay is that people generally strive to maintain a positive social identity, and this is mostly achieved when in-group and out-group comparisons are beneficial to the in-group, i.e., the

existence of out-groups are crucial to the social identity. In cases where the social identity is unfavourable, an individual usually strives to either change groups or to improve the existing group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this essay, the main in-group for the participants is 'Swedes' (including subgroups), as opposed to native English speakers and other non-native English speakers. However, the extent to which individuals identify with this in-group is an interesting factor that the study aims to investigate.

## 2.2 Accent attitudes

Research into language attitudes has increased rapidly since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Studies consistently show the discrepancy in power and status between different accents. In general, the consensus is that English L2 varieties are less valued which results in that non-native speakers often strive to achieve nativelike accents (Jenkins, 2007). As is relevant for this study, research regarding speakers' attitudes towards their own accents and attitudes towards other English L2 speakers' accents will be presented in the following sections.

### 2.2.1 Speakers' attitudes towards their own English L2 accents

Research into speakers' attitudes towards their own English L2 accents paint a somewhat ambivalent picture. Jenkins (2007) found that non-native participants strove to sound "native," as the general attitudes are that native accents are considered "better", and that career advancement is easier with native-sounding accents. However, contradicting to themselves and manifesting some sort of "double standards", these participants were also attached to their L1 identity and were reluctant to completely give that up (Jenkins, 2007). Similar results were found by Rindal (2015). Although the overall attitude among his Norwegian informants was to strive for a nativelike accent, some of the respondents expressed an aim for a neutral accent as they wished to not be associated with the negative connotations of certain native English accents. In a Czech study (Brabcová & Skarnitzl, 2018), the

participants stated no significant need to express identity through their non-native accents. Instead, 70% of speakers aimed to acquire a nativelike accent. In addition, those who had a strong Czech accent in self-assessments were less satisfied than those who believed they had a more native-sounding English accent. Also, Dalton-Puffer and Smit (1997) found that advanced Austrian English learners had a negative attitude towards their own English accents. They preferred the English variety with which they were most familiar.

Other studies further confirm that attitudes towards the own L2 accent vary. Even though most participants in Fang's study (2016) from China had native English varieties as their goal, others were trying to resist this norm. Furthermore, in Tokumoto and Shibata's study (2011), the participants from Malaysia expressed positive attitudes towards their own English accents, while the Korean and Japanese speakers had a negative image of their own L1 accented English. This is explained by differing language ideologies in the three countries, where English in Malaysia is considered a second language with strong ELF status, while in Japan and Korea, it is a foreign language, mainly encountered in schools where the native pronunciation norm is still strong.

The general pattern seems to be that speakers of Kachru's Outer Circle of English (Kachru, 1992) have a more positive attitude towards their own accents while speakers in the Expanding Circle view their own accents in a bad light, striving to sound more native. This is further confirmed by Monfared and Khatib (2018) whose participants from India (Outer Circle) held a more positive attitude towards their local English accent than speakers from Iran (Expanding Circle). Even though the native-speakerism is present in both groups, there was still a clear division in attitudes.

### 2.2.2 Attitudes towards others' English accents

Attitudes towards others' English accents can be considered from the perspective of English L2 speakers or from English L1 speakers' point of view. In terms of English



L2 speakers, they generally prefer native English accents. For example, Jenkins' study (2007) from Hong Kong clearly shows the participants' positive attitudes towards native English accents, while non-native accents were considered "wrong" or even "horrible." Several other studies show similar results (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck & Smit, 1997; Kung & Wang, 2019; Kaur, 2014, Zarrinabadi & Ensieh, 2017). However, McKenzie (2008) reveals a somewhat more nuanced picture from Japan; American varieties of English were favoured in terms of competence, while the heavily accented Japanese English was rated higher when it came to solidarity. The results further indicated that awareness and acceptance of regional varieties of Japanese had a positive impact on the attitudes towards non-standard and non-native English speech. However, speakers with extensive exposure to English varieties and those who rated themselves highly in English proficiency significantly favoured native accents.

English L1 speakers' attitudes follow a similar pattern. Lindemann (2005) found that American university students rated English spoken in China, Mexico and Russia negatively, while the most familiar and positively rated varieties of English were some of the native Englishes. However, there were some non-native varieties that were rated positively: those of Western-European countries, such as Italy, France and Sweden, which have had a good relationship with the USA and less immigrants in recent years. On the same token, countries with a negative political history with the US scored lower. Generally, the scores were affected by socio-political factors and the familiarity of the variety. Evaluations of unfamiliar varieties were shown to follow stereotypical images from TV and movies.

Despite the multitude of research into language attitudes around the world, almost no studies can be found from Sweden. Eriksson (2019), however, discovered that students in Sweden generally strive to speak with an American or British accent and very few (2%) desired to have a Swedish accent. Most students believed that a combination of American and British English should be taught in school, but many

also believed that a broader variety of accents should be taught. Attitudes among teachers varied in the study; some emphasised the importance of awareness of different English varieties, while some stayed away from teaching different accents due to lack of knowledge. Overall, it was clear that American and British English are the norm for teaching.

## Chapter 3: Method

As stated in the introduction, the research questions were the following:

*RQ1. What are Swedish L1 speakers' attitudes towards their own English accents?*

*RQ2. What attitudes do Swedish L1 speakers have towards other Swedish L1 speakers' English accents in relation to native English accents?*

*RQ3. Are the attitudes towards the Swedes' own English accents and the attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents related to each other? If they are related, how are they related?*

The study used a questionnaire to compile the data since they are an effective way to “measure people’s attitudes to and perception of languages (or variations of particular languages, such as dialects and accents) or groups of speakers” (Rasinger, 2010, p. 60). In the following section, the work process will be described in detail.

### 3.1 Instrument

The questionnaire was constructed using the research questions as a starting point, but some inspiration was also taken from previous studies (e.g., Brabcová & Skarnitzl, 2018; Kung & Wang, 2019; Timmis, 2002). Centrally, in order to create a clear structure, the questionnaire was divided into three sections: the first section gathered demographic information and information about the participants' relationship with English (10 items); the second section asked questions about people's attitudes towards their own accents (14 items); the final section asked about attitudes towards other people's accents (12 items). **Appendix 1** presents the questionnaire.

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was first tried on a small number of respondents in a pilot-study. After thorough analysis and discussion with my supervisor, a few major changes were made; the second research question was revised from addressing perceived attitudes to instead focus on attitudes towards others' accents. Therefore, items such as "people take me less seriously because of my Swedish accent" were deleted, and items such as "I like when other people speak English with a Swedish accent" were added. The items were also edited to follow a participant-centred first-person perspective, for example "my age is..." and "I think, in general, my English accent is..." This ensured consistency for the participants since the majority of the items were formulated as Likert-scale statements.

In order to find quantified patterns of attitudes from the survey data, most of the items were designed as six-point Likert scales, where '1' meant 'strongly disagree' and '6' meant 'strongly agree'. To have a deeper understanding of the patterns emerging from the quantified data, a few open-ended questions were added. These asked the participants to describe their own and others' English accents and what they would change about their accents if they could. At the end of the survey, participants also had the opportunity to add any additional comments about other Swedes' accents.

## 3.2 Survey distribution

To be distributed for data collection, survey questions were embedded into Google Forms, a free tool that many people are familiar with. To ensure that all questions were answered, and there were no missing values, all the items were all set to be mandatory, except for the last one as it was meant for additional comments only.

After the questionnaire had been carefully constructed, it was distributed through social media (Facebook) to reach a large number of people with efficiency and no cost. The aim was to get many participants with a wide spread of demographic

characteristics, with the only requirement that they were native speakers of Swedish. Since social media has algorithms that filter out posts, I followed the advice from a social media management platform (Hootsuite) on when the best time is to post, which was early in the week in the morning (Tien & Aynsley, 2019).

In my post, I provided a very brief description of the study that could intrigue people to want to find out more. I shared the post on my own personal page and spread it further through asking friends to share it on their pages as well. The questionnaire was also posted in three large community groups for Swedes living abroad, covering almost fifteen thousand people.

The questionnaire collected a total of 634 answers in two days, after which I stopped data collection to make its size manageable. Out of the total respondents, I did a data cleaning process, removing disqualified respondents, such as non-Swedish native speakers or those who provided incomprehensible answers. This resulted in answers of 612 participants for data analysis.

### 3.3 Respondents

As mentioned earlier, respondents were Swedish native speakers living either Sweden or abroad. Tables 1-4 below summarise the demographic information of the respondents.

**Table 1: Gender**

Female	Male
542 (89%)	70 (11%)

**Table 2: Age**

Under 39	40-59	Over 60
247 (40%)	323 (53%)	42 (7%)

**Table 3: Residing countries**

Sweden	English L2 speaking countries	English L1 speaking countries
122 (20%)	118 (19%)	372 (61%)

**Table 4: To whom they speak English**

Mainly native speakers	Mainly non-native speakers	50/50 native and non-native speakers
356 (58%)	87 (14%)	169 (28%)

Table 1 above displays a strong bias towards women among respondents, and table 2 shows that the group of respondents over 60 years old was much smaller than the other two age groups. This was considered in the analysis of the data; the variables of age and gender were analysed with descriptive statistics only. Inferential tests were conducted with 'residing countries' (table 3) and 'to whom they speak' (table 4) as independent variables and various items from the questionnaire as dependent variables. Despite the biases in gender and age, the large number of respondents secured normal data distribution when using the individual variables in tables 3 and 4 as independent variables for understanding accent attitudes. This means that the

results of this study may be reliable when they are applied to understanding Swedes' accent attitudes in general.

## 3.4 Data Processing

### 3.4.1 Initial coding

Google forms generated a spread sheet where data was organised item by item in columns. The data from the Likert-scale items was imported to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and was analysed within the software afterwards. The items sometimes served as single variables; sometimes they were aggregated when they were asking about the same attitudes. For this job, inter-reliability analysis was done, and only the items with reasonable Cronbach's Alpha (0.67-0.87) or higher (Taber, 2017, p. 1278) were aggregated and treated as the same variables.

Meanwhile, open-ended items were quantified into different categories and imported into SPSS. See Table 5 for an example of such a categorisation of open-ended answers.

**Table 5:** *An example of the quantification of open-ended answers.*

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**Q: "If I could change anything about my English accent, it would be..."**

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1 = nothing

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2 = reduce trace of foreign accent and/or sound more native

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3 = focus on pronunciation/intonation - no mention of specific accent

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4 = more consistent/less influenced by others' accents/be able to swap between accents

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5 = more neutral/less accent (non-specific)/improve (non-specific)

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6 = social class: more/less posh/upper/middle class/less lower class

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7 = reduce trace of a native variety and/or acquire different native accent

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8 = more Swedish

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9 = n/a

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### 3.4.2 Descriptive and inferential statistics

After the initial coding, the data was analysed with descriptive statistics and with inferential tests involving both correlation and comparison tests.

#### 3.4.2.1 Analysis for addressing RQ1 and RQ2

RQ1 and RQ2 aimed at investigating Swedes' attitudes towards their own and other Swedes' English L2 accents. First, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics to identify and visualise the overall patterns of attitudes. However, since the Swedes that participated in the study were not a homogenous group, the data was also tested on the individual variables gender, age, residing country and to whom they speak, to get a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. This was done using comparison tests.

Since parametric causation tests can only be used with continuous data and if the data is normally distributed, the first step was to run tests for normal distribution. This was done by generating box plot diagrams. In the majority of cases, the criteria for running parametric ANOVA tests were not met, so therefore the decision was made to only use non-parametric comparison tests (Kruskal-Wallis). Here, the significance values used were the ones which were adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests ( $p < 0.01$ ).

However, as previously explained, for the independent variables with severe biases within the collected data, gender and age, inferential tests were not performed.



Instead, descriptive analysis was carried out, focusing on factual numbers and percentages. Crosstabs were used to compare variance within these groups.

To get a more comprehensive picture of how different attitudes related to each other, for example, whether there was a correlation between being positive about their own accent and considering it to be nativelike, some correlation tests were run between items from the same sections of the questionnaire. This was done using the same correlation tests as will be described in the next section.

#### 3.4.2.2 Analysis for addressing RQ3

The third research question addressed the relationship between the Swedes' attitudes towards their own English accents and the attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents. The data was analysed using non-parametric Spearman correlation tests. This method was chosen to obtain robust, reliable statistics, again in view of the biases in certain individual variables as well as the fact that items were rank-based rather than continuous. Although the convention for statistical significance is checking whether probability value ( $= p$ ) is lower than 0.05 (95% confidence), all correlations generated to address RQ3 achieved  $p$ -values lower than 0.01 (99% confidence), indicating that they were all very highly significant.

### 3.5 Ethical Consideration

Like any other research involving humans, an ethical evaluation was considered in this study. All the respondents were given information about the aim of the study. They were informed that they would remain anonymous, and that no personal data would be collected. They were aware that they could withdraw their participation at any time. The participants had to tick a box to say they agreed to these terms before entering the study. The full description can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports the results that address the three research questions. Section 4.1 presents the results for the first research question; Section 4.2 for the second research question; Section 4.3 for the third research question.

### 4.1 RQ1 - Swedes' attitudes towards their own English accent

#### 4.1.1 Overall attitudes

The Swedes that participated in the study were in general positive towards their own English accents; 80% of respondents reported that they liked their own accent and 90% felt confident about their accent. Only 3% said they were embarrassed to speak English because of their accent.

When asked to describe their accent in general, a fifth of the participants wrote positive adjectives such as 'excellent,' 'very good' or 'awesome'. Very few (3%) wrote negative descriptions such as 'terrible,' 'poor' or 'horrible'. All the different categories of attitudes found can be seen in table 6 below.

**Table 6:** Swedes' attitudes towards their own English accent (N = 612).

Category	Numbers	Q: "I think, in general, my English accent is..."
1	25% (N=152)	positive (e.g. excellent, cute, etc.)/easy to understand
2	3% (N=16)	negative (e.g. ugly, terrible, etc.)/hard to understand

3	13% (N=80)	middling (ok/fine <sup>1</sup> /average, etc.)
4	10% (N=62)	a mix of different accents
5	19% (N=115)	nativelike
6	12% (N=73)	strong/distinct/Swedish/Scandinavian/non-native
7	9% (N=59)	neutral/subtle
8	7% (N=42)	expressing native norm
9	2% (N=13)	changes depending on other speakers' accents

The participants were also asked what they would change about their accents if they could. As presented in table 7, almost 40% responded 'nothing'. The second largest group (21%) stated that they wanted to reduce their foreign accent and/or sound more native. Only one percent stated that they wanted to sound more Swedish.

**Table 7:** *What respondents would like to change about their own accents (N = 612).*

Category	Numbers	Q: "If I could change anything about my English accent, it would be..."
1	39% (N=239)	nothing
2	21% (N=129)	reduce trace of foreign accent and/or sound more native
3	14% (N=86)	focus on pronunciation/intonation - no mention of specific accent

<sup>1</sup> The definition of 'fine' was carefully considered in the analysis; in the context of the survey answers, it was interpreted as being synonymous with 'okay' or 'sufficient'. For example, if someone asks, 'how was the movie?' or 'how was the food?' the answer 'fine' is not the same as 'good' - it just means 'okay', as opposed to 'very fine' which is very positive.

4	6% (N=39)	more consistent/less influenced by others' accents/be able to swap between accents
5	4% (N=27)	more neutral/less accent (non-specific)/improve (non-specific)
6	2% (N=12)	social class: more/less posh/upper/middle class/less lower class
7	4% (N=25)	reduce trace of a native variety and/or acquire different native accent
8	1% (N=7)	more Swedish
9	8% (N=48)	n/a

#### 4.1.2 Degree of conformity to the native norm

Respondents were asked whether they believed they had a nativelike accent, and the results were varied. Slightly more than a half (56%) regarded their own accents as nativelike to some extent. However, when asked if they had a strong Swedish accent in English, 86% disagreed. Hence, participants could very well think they had a weak Swedish accent without necessarily believing they sounded native, i.e., the two aspects do not seem to contradict each other.

When respondents were asked to describe their own accent in general, almost 20% described their accent as sounding nativelike, often specifying a native English accent such as American, Australian, or British, while half as many described their accents as Swedish or non-native (see table 6). Another group of attitudes emerged from the same question, namely those expressing the native norm (see Category 8 in table 6). It included answers where the accent was described as good *but* too Swedish or bad *because* it sounded Swedish. Some respondents stated explicitly that their accent was good *because* it sounded native or that they wanted to sound more native. The percentage of these native norm oriented answers was not very high (7%) against the whole sample size. However, the open-ended question

mentioned above, which addressed whether to want to change their accents, generated a slightly different picture. Around 20% of the answers expressed a wish to sound more nativelike and/or reduce traces of being an L2 speaker.

In fact, when asked explicitly, 51% reported that they wished to sound more nativelike. There was a moderate positive correlation ( $r_s = 0.51, p = 0$ ), between being positive towards their own accents and believing their accents to be nativelike. As a flip side of this tendency, there was a negative correlation between self-evaluation of nativelike accents and whether they like their own accents ( $r_s = -0.47, p = 0$ ). This suggests that those who believed that they have a strong Swedish accent were less likely to like their own accent. Furthermore, a slightly stronger negative correlation was found between wanting to sound more nativelike and being positive about their own accents ( $r_s = -0.55, p = 0$ ). This meant that those who were more negative towards their own accent were more likely to wish that their accents were more nativelike. These correlations all indicate a strong native norm amongst the participants. Again, one clear sign was that those who liked their accents also considered themselves native-sounding and those who did not like their accents wished to sound more native.

#### 4.1.3 Swedish identity

The participants reported that sounding Swedish was not important for preserving their own identity; 60% strongly disagreed on the statement 'Sounding Swedish when speaking English is an important part of my identity,' while only 4% strongly agreed. Overall, 85% disagreed to some extent. More than a half (60%) did not feel proud if recognised as Swedish when speaking English. Only 14% strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel proud when people recognise I am Swedish by listening to me speaking English.' Furthermore, there was a negligible positive correlation between being positive towards their own accents and valuing the Swedish identity ( $r_s = 0.13, p = 0.001$ ), while there was a moderate positive correlation ( $r_s = 0.51, p =$

0) between sounding native and being positive, as presented previously in section 4.1.2.

Interestingly though, to the statement, “if others say I have a strong Swedish accent it would feel like an insult,” respondents’ opinions were divided: a fifth strongly disagreed and another fifth strongly agreed. Overall, 54% agreed to the statement at least to some extent. Thus, although respondents’ opinions were divided sharply, the Swedish L1 respondents were still slightly negative about sounding Swedish when they speak English. This can be related to the statement, “I have tried hard to get rid of my Swedish accent when speaking English,” as there was a weak positive correlation between these two variables ( $r_s = 0.30, p = 0$ ). So even though most respondents had not tried hard to get rid of their Swedish accent in English (70%), the data showed that those who felt insulted by being told they have a strong Swedish accent were more likely to have tried to get rid of their Swedish accent.

On the other hand, 52% reported that they do not care about what others think about their accent. There was a weak negative correlation between caring about what others think and feeling proud when recognised as Swedish ( $r_s = -0.39, p = 0$ ), while a stronger positive correlation was observed between caring about what others think and wanting to sound more native ( $r_s = 0.43, p = 0$ ). A similar correlation was seen between caring what others think and believing that sounding native is important ( $r_s = 0.48, p = 0$ ). This shows that those who said they cared more about what others think were more likely to reject their Swedish identity in favour of nativeness.

#### 4.1.4 Individual variables

##### 4.1.4.1 Gender

There were no significant gender differences apart from that males were slightly less negative towards sounding Swedish when speaking English (see table 8). Females

reported caring slightly more about what others think about their accents (see table 9).

**Table 8:** *Having a strong Swedish accent would feel like an insult – gender differences.*

<b>Q: “If others say I have a strong Swedish accent, it would feel like an insult.”</b>		
	Females (N =542)	Males (N=70)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	55% (N=300)	41% (N=29)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	45% (N=242)	59% (N=41)

**Table 9:** *Care what others think – gender differences.*

<b>Q: “I care about what others think about my English accent.”</b>		
	Females (N =542)	Males (N=70)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	49% (N=265)	41% (N=29)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	51% (N=277)	59% (N=41)

#### 4.1.4.2 Age

In terms of age groups, the trend was that the older the respondents were, the less negative they were towards sounding Swedish. Those aged under 39 years old were the most negative and those over 60 were the least negative (see table 10). The same pattern was seen for having tried hard to get rid of their Swedish accent; the older the respondents were, the less they had tried to get rid of their Swedish accent (see table 11) and the less they cared about what others think about their accents (see table 12).

**Table 10:** *Having a strong Swedish accent would feel like an insult – age differences.*

<b>Q: “If others say I have a strong Swedish accent, it would feel like an insult.”</b>			
	Under 39 (N=246)	40-59 (N=323)	Over 60 (N=42)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	62% (N=152)	49% (N=159)	40% (N=17)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	38% (N=94)	51% (N=164)	60% (N=25)

**Table 11:** *Have tried hard to get rid of their Swedish accent – age differences.*

<b>Q: “I have tried hard to get rid of my Swedish accent when speaking English.”</b>			
	Under 39 (N=246)	40-59 (N=323)	Over 60 (N=42)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	36% (N=89)	27% (N=87)	24% (N=10)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	64% (N=157)	73% (N=236)	76% (N=32)

**Table 12:** *Care what others think – age differences.*

<b>Q: “I care about what others think about my English accent.”</b>			
	Under 39 (N=246)	40-59 (N=323)	Over 60 (N=42)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	55% (N=135)	44% (N=142)	38% (N=16)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	45% (N=111)	56% (N=181)	62% (N=26)



#### 4.1.4.3 Residing countries

Individual differences were also checked in terms of the countries where respondents lived, where G1 represents those living in Sweden, G2 those in English L2 speaking countries besides Sweden (e.g., Germany, Argentina and UAE), and G3 those in English L1 speaking countries (e.g., Australia, Canada and UK). Several non-parametric one-way ANOVA tests (Kruskal-Wallis) with pairwise *post hoc* tests were conducted to compare the effects of residing countries on different dependent variables relating to attitudes towards Swedes' own English L2 accents in G1, G2 and G3. These are covered in the following table. Only significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) are presented. The  $p$ -value for the post-hoc results were adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests (adj. sig.  $< 0.01$ ).

**Table 13:** *The effects of residing countries on different dependent variables relating to attitudes towards Swedes' own English L2 accents in G1, G2 and G3.*

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>ANOVA results (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>)</b>	<b>Post-hoc results (<math>p &lt; 0.01</math>)</b>
Positive attitudes towards their own accent	$H(2) = 19.80, p = 0$	G3 was more positive than G1 ( $p = 0$ ).
Self-assessments of nativelike English accents	$H(2) = 16.04, p = 0$	G3 considered themselves having a more nativelike accent than G1 ( $p = 0.007$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0.003$ ).
Want to sound more native	$H(2) = 35.81, p = 0$	G3 wished the least to sound more like a native speaker compared to both G1 ( $p = 0$ ) and 2 ( $p = 0$ ).
Care about what others think	$H(2) = 12.94, p = 0.002$	G1 cared more than G3 (0.001)
Value the Swedish identity	$H(2) = 49.05, p = 0$	Sounding Swedish was more important for G3's identities than for both G1 ( $p = 0$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0$ ).

Negative about sounding Swedish when speaking English	$H(2) = 17.53, p = 0$	G3 was the least negative compared to G1 ( $p = 0.007$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0.001$ ).
Have tried hard to get rid of their Swedish accents in English	$H(2) = 21.91, p = 0.002$	G1 had worked harder to get rid of their Swedish accents in English compared to G3 ( $p = 0.001$ ).

In summary, those living in an English L1 speaking country were the most positive towards their own accents and considered themselves as having the most native sounding accents. They also had the least desire to sound more like a native speaker. At the same time, they were also the most positive towards the Swedish identity and the least negative towards sounding Swedish when speaking English. Those living in Sweden cared more about what others think about their accents and had worked harder to get rid of their Swedish accent.

#### 4.1.4.4 To whom they speak

Individual differences in Swedes' attitudes towards their own accents in terms of their main English-speaking interlocutors were also checked, where G1 represents those who mostly speak with non-native English speakers, G2 those who speak 50/50 with both native and non-native English speakers and G3 those who mostly speak with native English speakers. Several non-parametric one-way ANOVA tests (Kruskal-Wallis) with pairwise *post hoc* tests were conducted to compare the three groups. Table 14 present significant ANOVA results ( $p < 0.05$ ) and post-hoc results with Bonferroni correction ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 14:** The effects of to whom they speak on different dependent variables relating to attitudes towards Swedes' own English L2 accents in G1, G2 and G3.

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>ANOVA results (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>)</b>	<b>Post-hoc results (<math>p &lt; 0.01</math>)</b>
Positive attitudes towards their own accent	$H(2) = 24.10, p = 0$	G1 was less positive compared to G2 ( $p = 0$ ) and G3 ( $p = 0$ )
Self-assessments of nativelike English accents	$H(2) = 37.28, p = 0$	G1 considered themselves having a less nativelike accent than G3 ( $p = 0.003$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0$ ).
Want to sound more native	$H(2) = 24.94, p = 0$	G1 wanted to sound more native than both G2 ( $p = 0$ ) and G3 ( $p = 0$ ).
Value the Swedish identity	$H(2) = 23.43, p = 0$	G3 was less negative towards the Swedish identity than both G1 ( $p = 0.001$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0$ ).

To summarise, the participants who mainly speak with non-native speakers stood out as being more negative towards their own accents and reported having a less nativelike accent while wanting to sound more native. Those who mainly speak with native speakers were the least negative towards Swedish identity.

## 4.2 RQ2 - Swedes' attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents

### 4.2.1 Overall attitudes

The Swedes' attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents were mixed; opinions were almost completely split on whether or not they like other Swedes' English accents, with a slight bias towards negative (see table 15). A similar result was seen for believing that Swedes with good English skills have very little or no Swedish accent (see table 16).

**Table 15:** *Like when other Swedes speak English with a Swedish accent.*

<b>Q: "I like when other Swedes speak English with a Swedish accent."</b>	
Slightly agree to strongly agree	48% (N=292)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	52% (N=320)

**Table 16:** *Good English skills means less Swedish accent.*

<b>Q: "Swedes with good English skills have very little or no Swedish accent."</b>	
Slightly agree to strongly agree	51% (N=311)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	49% (N=301)

However, a majority (74%) disagreed that Swedes sound silly and dumb when speaking English with a strong accent (see table 17), and only a third believed that

uneducated people have a stronger Swedish accent than educated people (see table 18).

**Table 17:** *Swedes with a strong accent sound silly and dumb.*

<b>Q: “Swedes speaking English with a strong Swedish accent sound silly and dumb.”</b>	
Slightly agree to strongly agree	26% (N=162)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	74% (N=450)

**Table 18:** *Uneducated people have stronger Swedish accents.*

<b>Q: “Uneducated people have a stronger Swedish accent in their English pronunciation than educated people.”</b>	
Slightly agree to strongly agree	33% (N=202)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	67% (N=410)

The participants were also asked whether they feel friendly towards Swedes speaking English with a Swedish accent, to which 78% agreed to some extent. Only 15% reported feeling embarrassed for their friends or family members who speak English with a strong Swedish accent.

When asked to describe other Swedes’ accents in general, 29% of the participants wrote positive adjectives such as ‘cute,’ ‘charming’ or ‘good’. 14% wrote negative descriptions such as ‘ugly,’ ‘terrible’ or ‘bad’. 15% described Swedes’ English accents as ‘strong’, ‘distinct’ or similar. Another fairly large group described the accents in a middling way, for example ‘fine’, ‘okay’ or ‘average’ (13%). All the different categories of attitudes found can be seen below (table 19).

**Table 19: Swedes' attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents (N = 612).**

Category	Numbers	Q: "I think, in general, Swedes' English accents are..."
1	31% (N=194)	positive (cute, charming, good etc.)/easy to understand
2	14% (N=84)	negative (ugly, terrible, bad, etc.)
3	13% (N=82)	Middling (ok/fine/average, etc.)
4	1% (N=9)	mix of different accents
5	4% (N=23)	nativelike
6	15% (N=92)	Strong/distinct/Swedish/Scandinavian/non-native
7	2% (N=10)	neutral/subtle
8	4% (N=27)	both like and dislike
9	2% (N=13)	Swedes are not self-aware
10	3% (N=17)	better/less pronounced compared to other L2 varieties
11	3% (N=21)	depends on the person and how strong
12	5% (N=31)	funny/quirky/dorky
13	1% (N=9)	n/a

#### 4.2.2 Native norm

Respondents were asked which English accent (native or non-native) that was their favourite. Table 20 shows the extreme bias towards native English varieties.

**Table 20: Favourite English accents**

English native accents	Swedish-accented	Other non-native accents	No favourite/don't know
566 (92%)	2 (0.3%)	16 (3%)	28 (5%)

When asked whether they tell other Swedes that they sound like a native speaker as a compliment, the respondents were divided; 48% agreed and 52% disagreed to some extent.

In terms of formal education, the native norm was again more apparent; 59% believed that English education in Sweden should mainly teach standard English accents (such as American or British English) and 70% agreed that an English teacher should not have a strong Swedish accent. Respondents were less strict for students though, as only 15% agreed that a student with a strong Swedish accent should get a lower grade than a student with a more native sounding accent.

### 4.2.3 Individual variables

#### 4.2.3.1 Gender

There were no significant gender differences apart from that males were more negative towards others' Swedish accent in English (see table 21).

**Table 21:** *Negative towards others' Swedish accent in English – gender differences.*

<b>Negative towards others' Swedish accent in English<sup>2</sup></b>		
	Females (N =542)	Males (N=70)
More negative	43% (N=231)	59% (N=41)
Less negative	57% (N=311)	46% (N=32)

#### 4.2.3.2 Age

Variance between age groups could be found in opinions relating to the native norm, and the differences generally increased with the age gap, i.e., the youngest and the oldest groups differed the most in opinions. Those aged under 39 years old were the most prone to compliment other speakers for their nativelike accent (table 22), while those over 60 were much more positive towards mainly teaching standard English varieties in school (see table 23). Together with those between 40-59, they were also less negative towards giving lower grades to students with a strong Swedish accent, compared to the youngest group (see table 24).

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<sup>2</sup> The item “negative towards others' Swedish accent in English” was generated through aggregation of the questions which all measured the degree of negativity towards other Swedes' English accents on Likert-scales between 1-6, where 1 meant strongly disagree and 6 meant strongly agree to negative statements about other Swedes' English accents (see **Appendix 1** for the full questionnaire). Those who answered between 4-6 were deemed more negative and those who responded between 1-3 were less negative.



**Table 22:** Native accent as compliment – age differences.

<b>Q “I tell other Swedes that they sound like a native speaker as a compliment.”</b>			
	Under 39 (N=246)	40-59 (N=323)	Over 60 (N=42)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	54% (N=133)	45% (N=146)	36% (N=15)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	46% (N=113)	55% (N=177)	64% (N=27)

**Table 23:** Schools should teach mainly standard English accents – age differences.

<b>Q: “English education in Sweden should mainly teach standard English accents (such as American or British English).”</b>			
	Under 39 (N=246)	40-59 (N=323)	Over 60 (N=42)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	52% (N=129)	63% (N=203)	71% (N=30)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	48% (N=117)	37% (N=120)	29% (N=29)

**Table 24:** Students with strong Swedish accents should get lower grades – age differences.

<b>Q: “A student with a strong Swedish accent should get a lower grade than a student with a more native sounding accent.”</b>			
	Under 39 (N=246)	40-59 (N=323)	Over 60 (N=42)
Slightly agree to strongly agree	8% (N=20)	19% (N=60)	19% (N=8)
Slightly disagree to strongly disagree	92% (N=226)	81% (N=263)	81% (N=34)

#### 4.2.3.3 Residing countries

Variance between groups was also checked in terms of in which countries they lived, where G1 represents those living in Sweden, G2 those in English L2 speaking countries besides Sweden (e.g. Germany, Argentina and UAE), and G3 those in English L1 speaking countries (e.g. Australia, Canada and UK). Several non-parametric one-way ANOVA tests (Kruskal-Wallis) with pairwise *post hoc* tests were conducted to compare the effects of residing countries on different dependent variables relating to attitudes towards others' Swedish accents in English in G1, G2 and G3. These are covered in the following table. Only significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) are presented. The  $p$ -value for the post-hoc results were adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests (adj. sig.  $< 0.01$ ).

**Table 25:** *The effects of residing countries on attitudes towards others' Swedish accent in English in G1, G2 and G3.*

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>ANOVA results (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>)</b>	<b>Post-hoc results (<math>p &lt; 0.01</math>)</b>
Negative towards others' Swedish accent in English	$H(2) = 40.81, p = 0$	G3 was less negative than G1 ( $p = 0$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0$ ).
Like when others speak English with a Swedish accent	$H(2) = 30.06, p = 0$	G3 more positive compared to both G1 ( $p = 0$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0$ ).
Feel friendly towards others speaking English with a Swedish accent	$H(2) = 20.83, p = 0$	G3 felt more friendly than G2 ( $p = 0$ ).
Native accent as compliment	$H(2) = 13.16, p = 0.001$	G1 was more likely to consider nativelike accent as a compliment than G2 ( $p = 0.002$ ) and G3 ( $p = 0.005$ ).

Schools should teach mainly standard English accents	$H(2) = 28.74, p = 0$	G2 agreed more that schools should teach standard English accents compared to G1 ( $p = 0$ ) and G3 ( $p = 0$ ).
Students with strong Swedish accents should get lower grades	$H(2) = 14.16, p = 0.001$	G2 agreed more that students should get lower grades with a strong Swedish accent G3 ( $p = 0.001$ ).

In summary, those living in an English L1 speaking country were the most positive and least negative towards other Swedes' English L2 accents and felt the most friendly towards other Swedes speaking English with a Swedish accent. Those living in an English L2 speaking country other than Sweden were more positive towards maintaining the native norm in formal education. Those living in Sweden were the most likely to compliment other Swedes on their native-sounding accents.

#### 4.2.3.4 To whom they speak

Individual differences in Swedes' attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents in terms of the respondents' main English-speaking interlocutors were also checked. G1 represents those who mostly speak with non-native English speakers, G2 those who speak 50/50 with both native and non-native English speakers and G3 those who mostly speak with native English speakers. Several non-parametric one-way ANOVA tests (Kruskal-Wallis) with pairwise *post hoc* tests were conducted to compare the three groups. Table 26 show significant ANOVA results ( $p < 0.05$ ) and post-hoc results with Bonferroni correction ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 26:** The effects of to whom they speak on attitudes towards others' Swedish accents in English in G1, G2 and G3.

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>ANOVA results (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>)</b>	<b>Post-hoc results (<math>p &lt; 0.01</math>)</b>
Negative towards others' Swedish accent in English	$H(2) = 20.56, p = 0$	G1 was more negative than G2 ( $p = 0.01$ ) and G3 ( $p = 0$ ).
Like when others speak English with a Swedish accent	$H(2) = 14.84, p = 0.001$	G3 more positive compared to G1 ( $p = 0.002$ ).
Feel friendly towards others speaking English with a Swedish accent	$H(2) = 16.81, p = 0$	G3 felt more friendly than G1 ( $p = 0.009$ ) and G2 ( $p = 0.002$ ).

To summarise, the participants who mainly speak with non-native speakers stood out as being more negative towards other Swedes' English L2 accents. Those who mainly speak with native speakers were more positive towards other Swedes' English L2 accents and felt more friendly towards other Swedes speaking English with a Swedish accent.

### 4.3 RQ3 - The relationship between Swedes' attitudes towards their own accents and attitudes towards others' accents in English

There was only a very weak correlation between being positive about their own accent and liking other Swedes' English accents ( $r_s = 0.24, p = 0$ ), while there was a stronger positive correlation between valuing the Swedish identity and liking other Swedes' English accents ( $r_s = 0.46, p = 0$ ). Surprisingly, there was only a negligible

correlation between valuing the Swedish identity and feeling friendly towards other Swedes speaking English with a Swedish accent ( $r_s = 0.19, p = 0$ ).

In terms of negative attitudes, there was a negligible negative correlation between liking their own accent and being negative about other Swedes' English accents ( $r_s = -0.15, p = 0$ ). However, being negative towards other Swedes' English accents appeared to be correlated with conforming to the native norm in several aspects. For example, being negative towards other Swedes' English accents was positively correlated with: believing it is important to sound native ( $r_s = 0.43, p = 0$ ); wanting to sound more nativelike ( $r_s = 0.30, p = 0$ ); having worked hard to get rid of their own Swedish accent in English ( $r_s = 0.31, p = 0$ ). There was also a positive correlation between being negative towards sounding Swedish and having negative attitudes towards others' Swedish accents in English ( $r_s = 0.43, p = 0$ ).

Overall, there were no direct correlations between either positive or negative attitudes towards Swedes' own and others' accents. Nevertheless, the results still suggest that those who were positive towards Swedes' English accents were more likely to value the Swedish identity, while those who were negative towards other Swedes' English accents were more likely to conform strongly to the native norm.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate Swedish L1 speakers' attitudes towards their own English accents and their attitudes towards Swedish accented English in comparison with native English accents. Further, the relationship between these attitudes was also examined. The first section of this chapter discusses the results in view of the theoretical framework (i.e., Standard Language Ideology and Social Identity Theory) and previous studies. Finally, this is followed by section 5.2 that discusses the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research, and some concluding remarks in section 5.3.

### 5.1 Discussion of the results in view of theoretical framework and previous studies

Overall, the Swedes' attitudes towards their own and other Swedes' English accents give the impression that they are affected by the Standard Language Ideology (Lippi-Green, 1994), meaning that they are biased towards native varieties of English, as opposed to non-standard varieties, such as Swedish accented English. The survey answers contained signs of a relatively strong native norm, which corresponds with the findings of Eriksson (2019), where the Swedish students aimed to acquire nativelike accents while almost none wanted to have a Swedish accent. Aligned with Eriksson, the correlation between positive attitudes towards their own accents and having a nativelike accent suggests that the participants in this study were positive *because* they believed they had a nativelike accent. Those who were more self-conscious about their English accents were more negative about sounding Swedish, while they wanted to sound more nativelike. By the same token, those who did not like their own accent had rated it as more Swedish-sounding while they also wished to sound more like a native speaker. These attitudes of Swedes were similar to the attitudes among Czech speakers of English in Brabcová and Skarnitzl (2018).

In terms of the Swedish identity, the results from this study were again most in line with Brabcová and Skarnitzl (2018), as their Czech participants, like the Swedes, in general stated no significant need to express identity through their non-native accents. This could be explained by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), according to which people generally strive to maintain a positive social identity by, for example, changing groups when an out-group is more favourable to them. In this case, the Swedish accented English was perceived as less prestigious than native varieties, so therefore speakers aimed to leave their in-group (Swedes) in order to join the more prestigious out-group (native English speakers).

Swedes' attitudes towards other Swedes' English accents were varied. However, there was a trend in that the native norm, seemingly underpinned by Standard Language Ideology (Lippi-Green, 1994), was especially strong when it came to opinions about the education system. Similar attitudes were seen in Eriksson's study (2019), where it was clear that in Swedish schools, American and British English are the norm for teaching.

Meanwhile, results indicating positive attitudes towards other Swedes' accents were similar to McKenzie (2008), where Japanese speakers of English rated other Japanese high on solidarity; Swedes mostly felt friendly towards other Swedes speaking English, even though a slight majority disliked other Swedes' English accents. This inconsistency could be explained by what McKenzie (2008) showed; attitudes towards accents can vary between different aspects, such as competence and solidarity.

The relationship between Swedes' attitudes towards their own and other Swedes' English accents showed that respondents were slightly more negative towards other Swedes' accents in some respects and considered their own accents as more nativelike. This can be understood through the lens of Standard Language Ideology (Lippi-Green, 1994), as respondents clearly showed a preference towards native English varieties in favour of Swedish accented English. However, there were no

noteable correlations between either positive or negative attitudes towards Swedes' own and others' accents. What could be concluded though, was that those who were positive towards Swedes' English accents were more likely to value the Swedish identity, while those who were negative towards other Swedes' English accents were themselves more likely to conform strongly to the native norm. In light of Social Identity Theory, this makes sense, as Swedes who were positive towards others' Swedish accents identified stronger with the in-group of Swedes, while those who were negative towards other Swedes' accents were more likely to strive to join the out-group of native English speakers.

An interesting, rather unexpected finding was that those living in a native English-speaking country and those speaking mainly with native English speakers were more positive towards their own and others' accents. The opposite pattern was seen for those living in Sweden and other English L2-speaking countries, and those speaking mainly with non-native speakers. Similar tendencies could be seen in Tokumoto and Shibata (2011) and Monfared and Khatib (2018), where negative accent attitudes and the native norm was stronger amongst their participants from Kachru's Expanding circle. In this study, the Standard Language Ideology had a stronger hold in English L2 speaking contexts like Sweden, while those living in native English-speaking contexts were more positive towards the Swedish identity and towards sounding Swedish. Swedes residing in English L1 speaking countries also felt most positive and friendly towards other Swedes speaking English with a Swedish accent.

It is not surprising that Swedes living abroad value their Swedish identity more than Swedes living in Sweden, as cultural identities tend to become more highlighted in a foreign context. For example, people usually say that they feel more Swedish when they go on holiday abroad. However, this does not explain the difference between Swedes' attitudes in English L1 speaking countries and English L2 speaking countries outside of Sweden. It seems as if the English L2 context has more influence on speakers' attitudes than whether they live in Sweden or abroad. Apart



from the difference in language ideologies in different countries, suggested by Tokumoto and Shibata (2011), a possible explanation could be that English L2 speakers may be more competitive towards other English L2 speakers. Perhaps they have a greater need to compare their own English skills to other L2 speakers when striving for higher social status. Since native English speakers make up the more prestigious group, the L2 speakers cannot compete with them in the same way. Therefore, a more judgemental speaking environment is more likely in an English L2 speaking context.

## 5.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

As mentioned previously in chapter 3, validity was tested through a pilot-study which allowed the questions to be tried and improved. However, the final version of the questionnaire was not tried before being distributed.

In terms of the extent to which the results of this study can be generalised to understand a larger population, it must be acknowledged that the sampling of participants was based on convenience rather than randomisation. Therefore, the population of respondents showed gender, regional and age bias towards female, English L1 countries, especially Australia, and towards people under 60 years old.

Another aspect that may have compromised the generalisability was that my own subjectivity inevitably got involved in interpreting data, although I tried to stay objective and keep consistency in the analysis of the data. For example, the open questions sometimes generated answers that were somewhat ambiguous or unclear and needed to be interpreted. In these cases, the answers were carefully considered in their context, i.e., in reference to the same respondent's other answers. For example, if a respondent just wrote "American" when asked what they would like to change about their accent, this could be interpreted as either that they want to sound more American or less American. Looking at the respondent's other answers, I could see that the same person answered "strongly disagree" with wanting to sound more

like a native speaker, described their own accent as American and wrote that their favourite accent was Australian and South African. Combining all of these answers helped interpreting the answer; the respondent most likely meant that they wanted to sound *less* American. However, some answers were too vague to be reliably disambiguated, so they were simply disregarded.

Finally, the questionnaire did not include participants' education level, which could have provided a valuable contribution to the analysis. It is therefore suggested that this could be included in a future study.

An unexpected finding was the difference in attitudes between English L1 speaking contexts and English L2 speaking contexts. To understand the mechanisms more fully behind these findings, a qualitative investigation into differences in attitudes between English L1 speaking contexts and English L2 speaking context is warranted.

### 5.3 Concluding remarks

The study examined Swedes' attitudes towards their own and other Swedes' English L2 accents through a questionnaire answered by 612 Swedes living all over the world. The collected data showed that there was a strong native norm amongst the participating Swedes, and their positivity towards their own accents was likely a product of them considering them to be nativelike. The native norm most possibly also contributed to the fact that participants generally did not have a strong need to express their Swedish identity through their Swedish accents. The results also showed that the native norm was stronger in English L2 settings, while the Swedish identity was more important for those living in a native English-speaking country. As most speakers in this study showed a positive attitude towards their own accents, it would be simple to conclude that there are no issues with conforming to the Standard Language Ideology – in fact, it seems to empower those who are able to acquire a nativelike English accent or believe that they have. However, when seen in

a larger context, it poses an issue in English education, as not everyone is able, or want to conform to native norms. Therefore, teachers and other educators need to ask themselves what “good” English really means and consider how they can encourage their students to be proud of their English L2 accents, regardless of whether they sound natively like or not.

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## Appendix 1. The Questionnaire

### Swedes' attitudes towards their own and other Swedes' English accents

Dear respondents,

My name is Cornelia Elmelid. This questionnaire is part of my study, within the course English Online 61-90 hp at Högskolan Väst.

The study aims to find out how Swedes think and perceive their own English accents as well as other Swedes' English accents.

The questionnaire has three sections:

Section 1: Your background and relationship with the English language.

Section 2: How you feel about your own English accent.

Section 3: How you feel about other Swedes' English accents.

No personal data will be collected and you can at any time choose to withdraw your participation by closing the window. Answers will only be saved once you click 'submit' at the end of the questionnaire.

For further information or questions, please contact me at [coel0001@student.hv.se](mailto:coel0001@student.hv.se)

Many thanks for your time and help.

\*Required

Do you agree to have your anonymous answers used as data in the study outlined above? \*

Yes

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## Section 1 - Questions about your background and relationship with the English language.

Please note that the questions generally ask about the spoken language, so please try to focus on this aspect when answering the questions.

My age is... \*

- Under 19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- Over 70

When it comes to gender... \*

- I don't want to be identified as male or female
- I am a female
- I am a male



My native language(s) is... \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

The country where I live is... \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

I speak English... \*

- Every day
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

I mainly speak English... (tick all that apply) \*

- At home
- At work
- With friends
- When travelling
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

I speak English... \*

- mainly with native English speakers
- mainly with non-native English speakers
- 50/50 native/non-native English speakers

English is or has previously been my main language for more than 6 months (for example when living abroad) \*

- Yes
- No

My favourite English accent (native or non-native) is... \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

The English accent (native or non-native) I am most familiar with is... \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

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## Section 2 - Questions about how you feel about your own English accent.

In this section, please focus on what YOU think, not what other people say or think.

I think, in general, my English accent is.. \*

Your answer

---

If I could change anything about my English accent, it would be.. \*

Your answer

---

I speak English with a strong Swedish accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I sound like an English native speaker \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I like my English accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel confident about my English accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel proud when people recognize I am Swedish by listening to me speaking English \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Sounding Swedish when speaking English is an important part of my identity \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I care about what others think about my English accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I wish my English accent sounded more like a native speaker's \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

If others say I have a strong Swedish accent it would feel like an insult \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

It is important to sound like an English native speaker \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel embarrassed to speak English because of my Swedish accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I have tried hard to get rid of my Swedish accent when speaking English \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

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### Section 3 - Questions about how you feel about other Swedes' English accents.

In this section you will answer questions about how you feel about other Swedes' English accents.

I think, in general, Swedes' English accents are.. \*

Your answer

---

I like when other Swedes speak English with a Swedish accent. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Swedes with good English skills have very little or no Swedish accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel friendly towards other Swedes speaking English with a Swedish accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Uneducated people have a stronger Swedish accent in their English pronunciation than educated people \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I feel embarrassed for my friends/family members who speak English with a strong Swedish accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I tell other Swedes that they sound like a native speaker as a compliment \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Swedes speaking English with a strong Swedish accent sound silly and dumb \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree



English education in Sweden should mainly teach standard English accents (such as American or British English) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

An English teacher should not have a strong Swedish accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

A student with a strong Swedish accent should get a lower grade than a student with a more native sounding accent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Something I want to say more about other Swedes' English accents is..

Your answer

---

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Submit