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Questions and answers on multilingualism at the Language Council of Sweden

Abstract (Swedish)

Den svenska språklagen (SFS 2009:600) säger att "var och en som är bosatt i Sverige ska ges möjlighet att lära sig, utveckla och använda svenska" samt att "det allmänna ansvarar för att den enskilde ges tillgång till språk". Språkrådet, Sveriges officiella språkvårdsorgan, arbetar med hur språklagen implementeras och med språkvård i form av såväl policyspråkvård som korpusspråkvård (Josephson 2018).

En stor del av Språkrådets praktiska språkvård i svenska utgörs av rådgivningsverksamheten. Rådgivningsverksamheten är reaktiv, då allmänheten ställer frågor om språk och språkriktighet som Språkrådets språkvårdare i svenska besvarar. Frågorna och svaren, f.n. drygt 6 000 stycken, finns lagrade i en internt sökbar databas.

Dessa frågor och svar har utgjort material för den studie som presenteras här. Studien undersöker vilka frågor som mellan 2002 och 2017 ställts till Språkrådet angående den flerspråkiga situationen i Sverige. Allmänhetens intresse för denna typ av språkfrågor relateras till språkpolitiskt viktiga skeenden.

Också de svar som Språkrådet ger inom flerspråkighetsfältet undersöks i den här studien. Svaren vittnar om en ambivalent hållning hos Språkrådet till frågor om flerspråkighet och svenska som andraspråk. Svaren relateras till Språklagens skrivning om den enskildes rätt till språk och det ansvar Språkrådet har som språkvårdande myndighet. Svaren är också utgångspunkt för några reflektioner om Språkrådets språkideologiska hållning.

1. Introduction

As one way of carrying out language cultivation, the Language Council of Sweden offers an advice service via telephone and email which is open to the public. The advice service is a popular tool for many language workers, mostly working in the field of communication in the public sector. The service is also used for educational purposes. For the Language Council, the advice service serves as a means to survey what linguistic matters are important to the public and where change within language practices or within the linguistic system is about to appear. It also provides a window on the linguistic consequences of ongoing societal change.

One issue worth charting at the moment is the general conception of growing multilingualism and second language (L2) varieties of Swedish with respect to recent immigration waves and the need for language training (in Swedish as well as in other languages, for both new and long-term residents of Sweden) that is associated with immigration. What questions does the advice service at The

Language Council receive in relation to this situation? Are questions on these matters more frequent in times of an increasing awareness of immigration-related issues?

Not only the questions are of importance; surveying the answers given by the advice service at the Council is equally important. To what extent is this traditionally quite monolingual institution prepared to answer questions within the field of multilingualism? In what way does its practice relate to the governing document for the function, the Language Act? Which ideological stances does the practice of the Language Council convey when answering questions related to multilingualism?

2. Multilingualism in Sweden

Despite the fact that many languages have been and still are spoken by national minorities as well as by large immigrant groups, Sweden has long been perceived as a monolingual society. In the 1970s, during a period of mostly European labour immigration, a political quest for multiculturalism embraced immigrant languages and the teaching of heritage languages in Swedish schools (Josephson 2018, 43ff.). Since then, the multilingual situation in Sweden has been quite familiar to the public of majority speakers.

Fig. 1: Immigration to Sweden (2-5) and emigration from Sweden (1) 1875-2015 (SCB 2019)

An awareness of linguistic diversity most likely grew during the immigration waves related to the Balkan wars during the 1990s (SCB 2018) (see Figure 1 above; immigration from the Balkans is indicated by 4). However, the awareness of

Sweden as a multilingual society and as home to many L2 learners was greatly emphasised by the arrival of refugees from Syria in 2015 (indicated by 5 in Figure 1 above), when many swedes went to great lengths to offer language cafés and support structures (SOU 2017:12) etc. outside the regular curriculum of the officially financed and organised courses in Swedish for immigrants, referred to as sfi. Since then, the general enthusiasm has faded somewhat, and critical political voices have been raised in matters regarding schooling, citizenship and financial factors, etc. (see Kowalski et al. 2018).

For reasons of personal privacy, there is no national record of languages spoken in Sweden, but as of the end of 2017, 24% of the Swedish population were immigrants in the first or second generation (SCB 2018), which indicates that approximately the same proportion of the population speaks one or several other languages besides Swedish and that some of them are L2 learners of Swedish.

3.   The Language Council of Sweden and its foundations

The Language Council of Sweden is a relatively new institution but its ideological roots are older. This section briefly presents both.

3.1   The Language Council

Språkrådet, the Language Council of Sweden, is Sweden's official language planning and language policy institute. It is part of a larger governmental authority, *Institutet för språk och folkminnen* (*Institute for Language and Folklore*). The Language Council employs approximately 25 people, working with Swedish and the national minority languages as well as Swedish sign language. At the department for Swedish, five linguists work on language policies and with the language advice service (Språkrådet 2019; for a presentation in English, see The Language Council of Sweden 2019).

Technically, the Language Council of Sweden was established in 2006, when several autonomous language policy agencies merged into one governmental authority. Prior to 2006, the language advice service had been conducted by *Svenska språknämnden*. Hence, the earliest material in this study (see section 4 below) stems from the work of an autonomous agency (Lindgren 2007). This, as well as the establishment of the Language Act, might affect the way in which questions are answered (see section 3.2. below). However, since the two events coincide in time, it will, in practice, be difficult to tease apart the effects of these two events. Since most of the staff from *Svenska språknämnden* were transferred to the Language Council, the practices of the advice service were not abruptly changed with the establishment of the new authority (Lindgren 2007).

3.2   The Language Act

The principal governing document for the function of the Language Council is
The Language Act from 2006 (SFS 2006:900). The Act aims to protect Swedish
and linguistic diversity in Sweden alongside the right of individuals to access
languages, including Swedish and other languages, the languages of the national
minorities, the languages of other minorities and, largely, languages spoken in
Sweden. The language act was adopted after comprehensive preliminary work
(SOU 2002:27; Prop 2008/09:153) on the basis of political consensus and was
consistent with many decades of a multilingual language policy (Josephson 2018,
43, 57).

The act establishes that Swedish is the principal language of Sweden and, as
such, Swedish is a language that "every resident in Sweden is to have access to"
(SFS 2006:900, Sec. 5). Furthermore "The public sector has a particular responsibil-
ity for the use and development of Swedish" and "All residents of Sweden are to be
given the opportunity to learn, develop and use Swedish" (SFS 2006:900, Sec. 14).

Languages other than Swedish and the national minority languages are men-
tioned in the Act, and their speakers are explicitly given the right to support from
the public sector to maintain and develop their languages: "Persons whose mother
tongue is not one of the languages specified in the first paragraph are to be given
the opportunity to develop and use their mother tongue" (SFS 2006:900, Sec. 14)
and "The public sector is responsible for ensuring that the individual is given
access to language in accordance with Section 14" (ibid., Sec. 15).

Offering the advice service is one of several ways for the Language Council
to fulfil its obligations as imposed by the authorities. The advice service caters to
the general public and to professionals in need of language advice. The advice
service is reactive; within this function, the Language Council does not set the
agenda. Instead, the Council answers questions put forth by others. The stock of
questions offers a possibility to identify specific language issues that engage the
language users. The questions mostly concern correctness, and more seldom
matters of language policy. The language counsellors at the Council answer
approximately 7,600 questions via email yearly.

3.3   Theoretical foundations of Swedish language policies

In his book *Språkpolitik* (*Language politics*) of 2018, Olle Josephson presents a
set of three contrasting conceptual pairs that may influence language politics: lin-
guistic essentialism or social constructivism, national language or linguistic rights
and cultural heritage or functional perspectives. Josephson does not view the differ-
ent perspectives as mutually exclusive but suggests they may be used as tools to
probe the perspectives on a given language issue (Josephson 2018, 61ff.).

However, Josephson claims that some perspectives have been prevalent in the practices of language policies in Sweden. One is the essentialist perspective. The practitioners of language cultivation have been occupied with issues concerning what words or structures or varieties "exist" in a language (Josephson 2018, 67). Practitioners of language cultivation have also been inclined to view groups of languages or speakers as fixed and static (Josephson 2018, 64), e.g. first language (L1) speakers vs. L2 speakers.

The other dominant perspective within the practices of language policies in Sweden is the functional one, which has a long tradition in the language cultivation literature. Words and structures that facilitate communication are preferred, and functional arguments have been considered more valid than others, and still are (Josephson 2018, 82).

Present-day language policy makers, Josephson claims, are not eager to come across as essentialists (Josephson 2018, 67). Nevertheless, even the relatively new Language Act comprises essentialist ideological material when establishing named languages as the object of legislation, with Swedish as a (one) principal language for Sweden (SFS 2006:900, Sec. 4).

The Language Act was indeed a product of many years of multicultural and multilingual policy (see section 3.2 above) but despite the fact that heritage language instruction was looked favourably upon, not much interest has actually been shown in multilingual development in individuals or in society. Hyltenstam/ Milani (2012) describes the situation as one of disinterest, but without hostility, in multilingual matters.

4.   Material and method

The e-mail questions and answers provided by the advice service at the Language Council are archived digitally in an internally searchable database; at the moment of writing it comprised 6,343 questions from the period 2002-2017. This timeframe offers material produced during the time several policy questions were debated, such as the first political claim for language testing for citizenship in 2002 (Milani 2008), the legislation of the Language Act (an event stirring language professionals whilst leaving the general public indifferent) and the rise (and fall) of interest in L2 teaching for newly arrived immigrants from Syria in 2015 as well as material from periods when language issues were not at the centre of public attention.

In order to find questions and answers relating to the multilingual situation in Sweden, I searched for questions and/or answers including one or more of the words *invandrare* (*immigrant*), *andraspråk* (*second language*) and *flerspråkgig*(*het*) (*multilingual*(*ism*)). In the database, every question is linked to the answer provided by the Language Council, and hence questions not contain-

ing one of the search words constitute part of the sample if the answer contains a search word and vice versa. Some questions and/or answers contain more than one search word and will thus appear twice (or more on a few occasions) in this sample. I chose not to manually adjust the numbers accordingly. Numerical data are merely used for illustrating proportions.

Thus the questions and answers contain 487 question-answer pairs encompassing (at least) one of the search words. I manually went through the question-answer pairs comprising the search words. In the event of a search word not appearing in the actual question or answer, as in cases where it was used in a signature or byline (*N.N.*, *teacher in Swedish as a second language* is one frequent instance, or the search word *second language* which amounts to almost 90% of the total result for this search word.), I removed the excerpt from the sample.

The questions and answers are all in Swedish in the material; here, I have translated them into English.

5.   Results: the Questions

The questions in the material were categorised as presented in the following sections. The categories are formed from the material according to recurring themes and, in some cases, recurring questions.

5.1   *Immigrant*

The search word *immigrant* appears in a large number of question-answer pairs (274 pairs). The questions revolve around a limited number of themes, predominantly about the word itself and its sociolinguistic connotations, compounds denoting ethnicity (*Swedish-Somalian*), immigration and language learning as an alibi for asking a generic question, people identifying themselves as being immigrants and, finally, questions about the L2 field. Many of the questions including the word *immigrant* seem to originate from professionals outside the L2 field, such as journalists and professionals in the education sector whose training did not include L2 issues.

The most frequent questions are about the word *invandrare (immigrant)* itself and its (near-)synonyms, as in example 1).

1) I work as a copywriter and am currently producing printed material in which we wish to use the phrase *new-Swedish design*. Now, we are not sure about the word *new-Swedish*. Does that have any negative connotations or is it standard for a person who recently got Swedish citizenship?

Related questions concern words, especially compounds, denoting (perceived) ethnic groups, as in example 2).

2) I am writing a dissertation on Somali migrants in Sweden. The dissertation is in English and then I use the compound "Somali-Swedes" or "Somali-Swedish". [...] When writing the Swedish abstract, I found it hard to maintain the English logic. Is it possible to say *somalisk-svenskar* or *somalier-svenskar* or *Somalia-svenskar*?

Many e-mails contain material in which immigrants or immigration is not at the heart of the question but somehow related to it, as in example 3), where immigrants are taken as an alibi for asking an (unrelated) question about the corpus. In example 3), the questioner prefers the verb *tala* ('speak') to the (near-)synonymous *prata* ('talk'), and gives examples from contexts in his/her everyday life when he/she thinks the words are used incorrectly. The reason given for worrying about a perceived linguistic change is that immigrants may not learn the "correct" use of the word pair.

3) I find that people overuse the word *talk*. They *talk weather*. And when calling a logistic company you get to speak with their "talker" (= voice mail). There is a danger in this overuse of the word *talk*. Our immigrants will never learn the correct use of the word *speak*!

The material relating to *invandrare* also contains questions about the corpus asked by individuals who explicitly identify themselves as being immigrants, hence the presence of the word *invandrare*, and legitimise the question as coming from a learner who needs information on their new language, as in example 4):

4) I am an immigrant and I have studied Swedish as a second language, course B, but I want to learn more about the Swedish language. [...] Can you help me?

The e-mails in the material also include some questions on the L2 field in general, e.g. a question from a headmaster asking about whether to teach English alongside Swedish as an L2 and questions on the number of speakers of various languages.

5.2   (Swedish as a) Second language

The search word *second language* is present in 285 e-mails, of which 250 contain the search word in the signature of the writer. This fact alone is noteworthy: teachers of Swedish as a second language contact the advice service but mostly not about issues concerning second language theory, practice or policy. Most questions from this group concern issues relating to the language corpus, most often traditional correctness issues that are equally relevant for Swedish as an L1.

However, about 30 questions concern the field of second language itself. The term *(Swedish as) a second language* seems to be associated with questioners who are familiar with the field of L2 related material and research, which tells us

something about the term's exclusiveness to language for special purposes. More often than not, these questions get down to the core of the research field, concerning issues such as the effects of mother tongue instruction, as in example 5):

5) Can you advise me on articles about the effects of mother tongue instruction on learning an L2?

5.3   *Multilingualism*

E-mails containing the search word *multilingualism* (N=36) mainly relate to questions on multilingual families and raising multilingual children, as in example 6) below:

6) How should we use languages in our family to promote multilingualism in our children?

Some questions concern terminology within the field of multilingualism, as in example 7):

7) I am active in an outdoors association. Many participants in our activities are born abroad, so they are multilingual. Naturally, it is not a problem for us that people are multilingual, but we need to know if someone does not speak Swedish very well so that our guides can be prepared for that. Now to my question: how do we phrase this, without using the word "multilingual". Multilingualism is not the problem, and I am not trying to be negative, but the problem is the lack of knowledge of Swedish. Is there a neutral term for that? We wish to know if someone is a non-speaker of Swedish.

5.4   **A (tentative) summary**

To tentatively sum up this section on the questions on multilingualism before heading to the answers, we may note that the public does address the Language Council with questions concerning the multilingual situation. Many of the questions concern the labelling of the situation or the individuals and groups in it. There are also quite a few questions that, from a linguistic perspective, are rather irrelevant to the multilingual situation, but that somehow address the situation, indicating that the public considers them relevant to multilingualism. Language professionals within the educational system, in turn, ask questions about second languages that concern the core of the multilingual field. Such questions are also asked by multilingual families. Questions on the multilingual situation do not seem to be affected by societal changes or debates on language policies.

6.   Results: the answers

The answers from the Council fall into three major categories. The first one offers advice within the field of L2, on corpus-related questions, learning and language policies. A second category (presented together with the first category in 6.2 below) comprises answers where the question does not concern the L2 field, but where the answer nevertheless offers information within that field. The third category comprises answers where the counsellor claims not to be able to answer questions within the L2 field.

Answers relating to the L2 field are quite common in the material as a whole, making an estimation of tendencies difficult to discern. There may be a tendency towards more answers falling within category one during the latter part of the period. However, answers from all categories are present in the material during the entire time span.

6.1   "*Yes, we answer all kinds of questions …*"

When asked a question in relation to the L2 field, some answers are helpful, almost programmatically stating the Council's interest in and knowledge of the field. Example 8) below is part of an answer to quite an atypical, nevertheless interesting, question from the public about the mission of the Language Council.

8) Yes, we answer all kinds of questions relating to Swedish, regardless of whether they concern Swedish as a first, second or third language.

The answer in example 9) suggests that there is an awareness and perception, among the counsellors at the Council, that the L2 field is relevant but new to them:

9) Previously, the Language Council was concerned with Swedish only, since the linguistic situation was dominated entirely by Swedish. Today, Sweden is multi-lingual and we work with other languages as well, including Swedish as an L2.

In a few cases, awareness of the multilingual situation among language users in Sweden comes across in an answer that does not call for such an angle, as in example 10), which is part of an answer to a question on when to use abbreviations:

10) The comprehensibility is generally lower when using abbreviations, not least in communication with young people and people with Swedish as their L2.

6.2   "*… we are not very good at Swedish as an L2*"

Section 6.1 presents one answer which quite programmatically states that questions on Swedish as an L2 are within the realm of competence of the Council. Interest-ingly, the material also contains an answer which, almost as programmatically, de-nies the competence of the Council within this field, as is the case in example 11):

11) … at the Language Council, we are not very good at Swedish as an L2: our expertise mainly concerns Swedish as an L1.

The question eliciting this answer concerns the correct presentation of valency in Swedish NPs in the context of a lecturer on Swedish as a foreign language wishing to explain the rules for such NPs to her students. The answer focuses entirely on this context (see example 12) below), rather than on the linguistic phenomenon, which is of interest in L1 Swedish as well.

12) … It is possible that an experienced teacher of Swedish as an L2 knows of rules for this kind of NP. I recommend you contact …

Possibly related to a disinterest in answering questions on Swedish as an L2, the attitude towards learner language in example 13) below may be described as less than enthusiastic. It presents an answer to a question on what the Council considers to be "correct language".

13) There are many possible answers to your question. One is that we can draw a clear line between correct and incorrect in very few cases. Those are deviations from standard Swedish produced by those who have not yet fully mastered Swedish, i.e. children and learners of Swedish as an L2. Examples are word orders such as *Igår jag gick* [*Yesterday*, *I went*, violating the Swedish V2-rule]. Such deviations are simply incorrect. They are ungrammatical and no adult native speaker of Swedish would produce them. Even native speakers sometimes produce careless mistakes …

In very few cases, the answers seem to convey irritation with the L2 learner him/ herself. Example 14) below is one such, very rare, case. The question eliciting this answer was asked by a learner with obvious communicative challenges. The question, however, is quite understandable and clear: a learner of Swedish as an L2 wishes to know where he or she can complete his/her language course in Swedish for immigrants after having had to interrupt his/her studies on a previous occasion.

14) We do not teach Swedish as a second language. Kind regards, NN.

The answer in example 14) conveys correct information per se but the answer is unnecessarily short. Some information on where to turn for advice on Swedish for immigrants would have been helpful, considering how difficult it must have been for a person with very limited language proficiency in Swedish to formulate and send this email in the first place.

In summary, the answers suggest that the Council possesses theoretical expertise as well as practically oriented awareness of the societal multilingual situation. At the same time, some answers display very little of this expertise, resulting in a somewhat unclear picture of the practice of the function.

7. Discussion

The questions to as well as the answers from the advice service at the Language Council are discussed in the following sections. The questions on multilingualism originating from people without institutionalised language policy functions are mainly discussed in terms of being so few in a societal context in which we might expect a great interest in multilingual matters.

7.1 Why so few questions?

When going through the e-mails containing questions on the L2 field, one could ask why there are so few of them. Then again, is 10% of the harvest actually few, or is it, on the contrary, quite a few? It is, of course, impossible to judge what an accurate number of questions within the L2 field would be, but the fact that approximately 25% of the Swedish population is likely to have Swedish as an L2 ought to make one wonder about this result as recently, language tests for citizenship and mother tongue instruction in schools have been central issues in the cultural political domain.

Nevertheless most questions relating to the search words concern the corpus and what words to use to denote people from abroad. This makes it conceivable that 1) there is an ongoing discourse on immigration in which people wish to use politically correct language practices and 2) when discussing immigration, language is not at the heart of the discussion, since very few questions on the actual L2 field make their way through to the Language Council. There is, of course, another possibility as well. Questions on immigration and language practices could, in fact, be lively, although people do not contact the Language Council for advice, perhaps not knowing that there is an expert body to consult before drawing conclusions. The fact that multilingualism has been discussed in the media in political contexts in which quite linguistically naïve solutions to multilingual issues have been put forth may suggest that this is the most plausible interpretation of the results.

There is also a possibility that people are aware of the fact that there is expertise available within the field but that they do not turn to the Language Council for that matter. The Language Council may be perceived as an institution that deals with the difficult marginal cases of linguistic correctness, when everything else, in terms of normative sources, has been exhausted. If that is the case, few would turn to the Language Council for questions on more fundamental matters. (See sections 7.2.3-7.2.4 below for a discussion on what the Language Council communicates about their role as an authority within the L2 field.)

7.2   The answers: inconsistency and inexperience

The answers presented in section 6 above are discussed in relation to the governing documents of the Language Council as well as in relation to language policies.

7.2.1   Answers over time

The corpus, being as small as it is, does not reveal tendencies regarding the willingness of the Council to answer questions within the L2 field. It is clear, however, that the counsellors themselves, at some point, are under the impression that questions on language learning and multilingualism are new to the Council (see example 9) above) and that there is an increasing expertise at the council within the field.

7.2.2   Inexperience within the field

While avoiding going into discourse analytical detail, I still wish to comment on a few passages in the answers regarding the L2 field. It seems rather clear to me that the counsellors do possess fundamental knowledge and an interest in the field of language acquisition but that the answers sometimes convey a certain unfamiliarity with the issues or the terminology, or sometimes even clumsiness in communication about L2 matters or with L2 speakers.

The unfamiliarity, this time regarding terminology, comes across in example 9), where the Council states its willingness to answer questions on languages *other* than Swedish, including Swedish as an L2. The counsellor, being under some time pressure, may well have slipped on the keys of the keyboard, but nevertheless, it is quite a fundamental issue for the L2 field not to treat L2 varieties of a language as separate from that language. The advice in example 8) above constitutes yet another example of the counsellor being somewhat unfamiliar with L2 discourse when stating that the Language Council is concerned with Swedish as a first, second or third language. There is indeed research conducted within the field of third language acquisition but the fundamental issue in this case is whether the Council has expertise in Swedish as an L2. The information on the third language interests of the Council, if anything, clouds the message.

An even more fundamental question on the L2 field, perhaps particularly in the context of (post-)native-speakerism (Houghton/Hashimoto (eds.) 2018), is the readiness to make a distinction between "mistakes" and "errors", as in example 13). According to this answer, there is a clear line between errors, which are produced by learners only, and "careless mistakes", which are produced by native speakers. Theoretically, it is difficult to uphold such a distinction. Furthermore, learner language is variant and deviations from a standard may just as well be mistakes (Selinker 1992), even for L2 learners. If there is, indeed, incorrectness in a language, it may well be produced by native speakers as well.

Not only the phrasing suggests that the counsellors are (sometimes) unfamiliar with the L2 field. The general unhelpfulness in example 14) indicates that the counsellor has limited experience when it comes to L1-L2 interaction. Furthermore, in example 12), the questioner is asked to turn to a different institution for advice. Normally, a counsellor who does not know an answer but is familiar enough with the field to know whom to turn to for further information would gather that information him/herself and forward it to the questioner after some mediation of the material. Asking the questioner to go elsewhere for advice is, in that context, unusual, and indicates that there is a perception that the L2 field is or should be deferred from the duties of the Council.

7.2.3   Answers and the mission of the Council

The Language Act places the responsibility for access to Swedish for all residents in Sweden and for the support and development of other languages unambiguously on the public sector. This refers to all of the public sector, to local municipalities as well as to large governmental institutions. The Language Council is thus not the only authority controlled by the Act but it naturally has a great(er) responsibility in striving to implement the Act in its own practices.

The Language Act establishes every Swedish resident's right to access Swedish. This also goes for L1 speakers of Swedish, perhaps with disabilities that may cause obstacles in accessing official language, etc. An even greater need for assistance with accessing Swedish is, one might presuppose, relevant for those with Swedish as their L2. Hence, questions within the field of L2 learning and communication should be of utmost importance to the Language Council and to its advice service since almost 25% of the population may fall into the L2 category, to some extent.

In view of the explicitly stated responsibility of the public sector as well as the multilingual situation in Sweden, answers provided by the Council's advice service, as in example 11) in section 6.2. above, where the council claims not to have any expertise whatsoever within the L2 field, are somewhat surprising. The same holds for answers not referring a client to a relevant organiser of a course in sfi, when supplying access to Swedish is a major point of the Language Act. It thus seems quite clear that there are occasions on which the Council fails to fulfil its mission.

When studying material, one methodological hurdle is to spot what is not present. In this case, we might use the Language Act as a gold standard for what perspectives could be offered within the advice service but simply are not there. One such missing perspective is advice on linguistic rights. Parents in multilingual families are encouraged to speak all their languages with their child, in order to foster multilingualism, but comments on the child's right to heritage language instruction, etc. are not offered.

When it comes to every resident's right to access Swedish, advice in this direction is also scarce. There are many resources available to learners of Swed-

ish, and those could have been recommended alongside information on the individual's right to language development in an attempt to pursue the content of the Language Act. Overall, the multilingual language policy expressed by the Language Act is mostly visible in the recommendations of the Language Council when it comes to languages other than Swedish. They are generally encouraged. Encouraging the use of non-standard varieties of Swedish is, however, not as much a project of the Council.

7.2.4 Theoretical stances

What theoretical perspectives on language policies are present in the answers on multilingualism? One observation that can be made is that the answers draw a picture of a linguistic situation where some are L1 speakers and others L2 speakers, where some structures are "wrong", namely those produced by L2 speakers when deviating from an L1 norm, and some structures, also deviating from an L1 norm, are barely "mistakes" when produced by L1 speakers. This clear categorisation of language, or varieties within a language and its speakers, belongs to an essentialist linguistic paradigm (see section 3.3 above).

   Other perspectives are harder to catch sight of in the material. As in section 7.2.3 above, we may ask ourselves what perspectives are missing, and why? Some perspectives are perhaps not very visible in the present-day language policy discourse. However, one perspective that we might expect to find in the answers of the Language Council is the functional one, this perspective having been favoured by the Swedish language policy tradition since the 1930s at least (Josephson 2018, 82). When it comes to multilingualism, there may be a slight tendency to answer questions from multilingual families in terms of functional perspectives; it is best to start speaking all languages with the child as early as possible since that will facilitate learning. (Note that there are no comments on what this might do to the identity of the family or the child; ultimate attainment of the languages is at heart of this answer.) The answer on abbreviations also adopts a functional perspective: comprehensibility within certain groups is affected. Otherwise, very few functional perspectives are offered when it comes to the L2 field. Especially Swedish as an L2 seems to be viewed as not very functional at all, which may be one reason for avoiding such arguments.

8.   Conclusion and finishing remarks

This article points out some shortcomings in the advice service at the Language Council of Sweden. In no way do I intend to discredit any of the present or past members of staff. On the contrary, the staff of the Council consist of skilled linguists. I also wish to stress that many questions on multilingual matters are

answered correctly, with a great deal of insight and enthusiasm. When that has not been the case, I consider it rather a result of the disinterest in multilingualism, L2 learning and heritage language advancement on a political level as discussed by Hyltenstam/Milani (2012). There are no bad intentions involved.

The study has pointed to some tendencies: the general public asks few questions on multilingualism despite it being one of the most important linguistic matters over the last couple of decades. The Language Council, on its part, does not press the issue. However, the advice service is reactive and the counsellors are focused on delivering satisfactory answers. As part of their working method, they identify the question in the e-mail and aim to answer that and do little more, for reasons of efficiency. Hence, there is little space for elaborate answers on what is not explicitly asked for.

One way of helping the advice service evolve may be to give space to what is not necessarily in the question. The service could then become an arena for implementing and making relevant the intentions of the Language Act. If the answers not only address the question but also offer theoretically motivated material, the advice service would be of further benefit to the public while, at the same time, running the errands of language politics as intended in the Language Act.

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