



# Språkskap

– Swedish as a Social Language



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Ergonomidesign, Folkuniversitetet, Interactive Institute

Språkskap – Swedish as a Social  
Language

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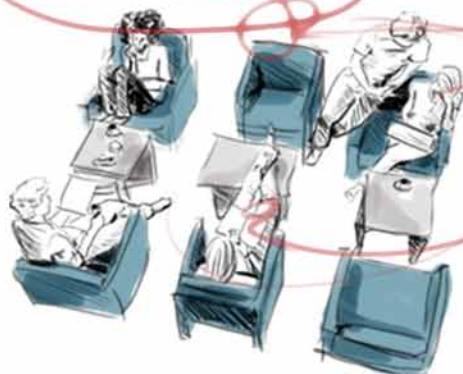


# Introduction

In three sections, this small book introduces: (1) **Welcome to Swedish - The Språkskap project context:** Swedish learning as we encounter it today in Sweden and how the solutions for supporting Swedish create a complex knot where supporting actions are limited; (2) **Swedish as a Social Language:** Refocusing the way that learning should be viewed and new ways of viewing the engagement in learning; and finally, (3) **Supporting Social Swedish: A vision** for how four main players can move into the Swedish learning arena with examples meant to open new possibilities for supporting Swedish learning in everyday contexts.

# THE ARENA

Café



Subway



Office



2

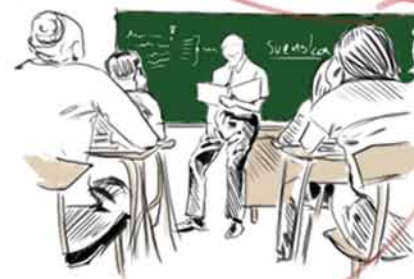
Check-out counter



Store



Class room



Home





The project has focused on new ways of supporting foreigners learning Swedish in informal ways in Sweden. It arose out of the observation that those who are interested in learning Swedish while in Sweden, often struggle to tap into the most powerful learning resource available: everyday interactions with Swedish speakers. With this as the departure point, we created the Språkskap project to explore new ways of supporting language learning in everyday interactions. To do this we brought together Swedish learners, pedagogues, teachers, researchers, designers, and un-trained language coaches. This booklet introduces the resulting vision for supporting Swedish learning.

We see a future in which the responsibility of second language learning is re-distributed from the learner's shoulders alone to those of a whole host of players, as well as physical and digital artifacts.

The Språkskap vision calls into action four main players (see diagram above): Language learners, everyday citizens, language educators and private and public service providers. We seek to provoke each of the potential players to explore new ways of supporting language learning. We give each a visual of their own potential moving along a continuum:

- » **Learners:** From passive student to active learner
- » **Citizens:** From language speaker to language coach
- » **Language Educations:** from teaching language to supporting learners in daily practice
- » **Private and Public Service Providers:** from providing core services to providing an arena for language learning.

In exploring this issue, we are struck by how difficult it can be to break away from the idea that to really learn a language, a student must “study study study.” Language classes, good teachers, good books and dictionaries are the dominant “solutions” that society has to offer eager learners.

At the same time, when we engage people in the “real world,” they have many interesting strategies for attempting to assist language learners. Additionally, learners try a whole host of strategies to learn a language. We feel confident that by re-focusing the traditional model for how language can be taught and learned, we can find a wide variety of resources to support language learning.

## A bit about Språkskap:

The name Språkskap combines the word “språk,” meaning “language,” with the suffix “-skap” creating an abstract noun. It makes reference to words like “landskap” (landscape), as the social and physical landscape of the participants and “medborgarskap” (citizenship) as the social and cultural factors that make individuals social personas in a society. It also refers to words like “båtmanskap” (boatmanship), pointing to the abilities and qualities promoted by the project, such as inclusive attitudes and focus on linguistic communication among people. In the future, it may be possible to ask about a company’s Språkskap policies as it is today possible when talking about nondiscrimination or environmental issues.

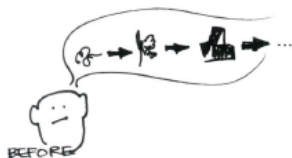
The Språkskap project was a one-year project, which occurred in 2009-2010 based in Stockholm,

Sweden led by three partners: Folkuniversitetet, Ergonomidesign, and the Interactive Institute. Folkuniversitetet has a long history of teaching Swedish as a second language to adult learners; Ergonomidesign AB is a design consultancy; and Interactive Institute conducts critical design research in IT. We put together a multidisciplinary team that sought to use collaborative design methods to explore new possibilities for supporting language learning outside of the classroom. Over the course of the year we involved academic researchers including current language learners, language teachers and pedagogues in the area of second language acquisition.

The project was organized as a design research program<sup>1</sup> consisting of a series of experiments such as “learning interventions.” Exploring new forms of language learning support could not come from theorizing or designing alone, nor were teachers prepared for such a dramatic shift in thinking. Rather it required developing a future-oriented gaze that incorporated a pedagogic, design, and process expertise through creating examples of what could be put into play. In order to stretch the boundaries of conventional teaching and learning practices and citizen participation, learning interventions ranged from very practical activities with teachers and students in a classroom setting to experimental activities in public spaces stimulating the interaction of Swedish speakers and learners. The design research program was organized through short-term activities, often with a small team and a guest organization.

The Språkskap project was funded by Vinnova - a state agency for development and innovation.

## Learning in action – the collage



Kalle is sitting in the courtyard of a hotel in Vientiane, Lao PDR with two other Swedish people and a group of Lao employees of the hotel. They talk about whatever pops into their mind: music, studies, work, family, food and so on, in English. Sometimes there is silence, as people are looking for words or things to say. After twenty minutes they switch to Lao and continue the conversation.



Six learners of Swedish meet up for a breakfast meeting. They are planning a Twitter day. When they leave 45 minutes later they are all hooked up to each other on Twitter. During the day they twitter about things they do and things they think about. They ask each other language questions, which a language coach sometimes answers. They create social bonds by using Swedish online.

Tomas runs a café next to a language school. He is thinking of which photos to put on his wall. He has noticed that people often talk about the photos on his wall, and he has also noticed that a lot of his customers are learners of Swedish. What kind of photos will promote interaction with his customers?



Marta is in the underground. She intently drops her glove. A woman picks it up and she gives it to Marta. Marta thanks her in Swedish and they chat for a while.



It is Tuesday night and 16 people are spread in four groups around a room. Annika sits with two piles of clay in front of her. She explains to the others around the table what the colors and shapes mean to her. The form on the left represents her identity back home in the Netherlands. "I have more elements on which to build my identity, but it is flat; something is missing." On the right is her Swedish identity. It is all one red color, and has high bumps. "Here it is more intense. I am with the person I love. Not so many elements. No job at the moment..."

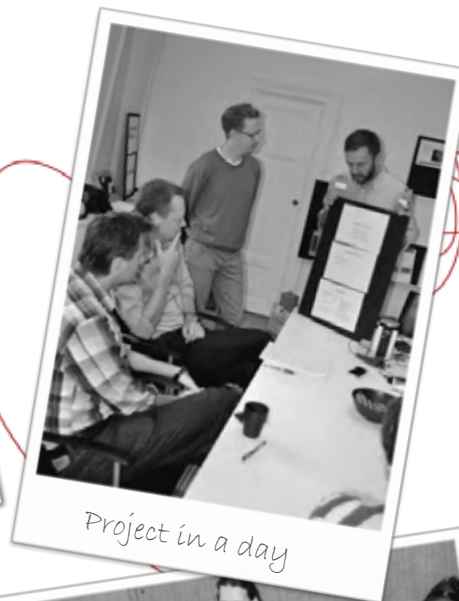


We are on the IKEA bus looking at the advertisements on the back of the seat. Once arriving at IKEA, we find a very common shopping sequence. Walk to an IKEA clerk, ask a question about products and sections, look for things, ask another clerk about more details. In every section of IKEA we find people answering questions about the specifics of different production collections.

Maria works at IKEA in the toy-department. One day a woman comes up to her and asks her about child safety: Are the toys safe for small children? She answers that they are all "klämskyddade" (they are safe in the way that you can't get pinched using them). The woman thanks her and leaves. A minute later she returns with a language passport and asks Maria to write the word klämskyddad down. She does so and also adds an explanation of the word in Swedish.

Andrei from Romania, walks up to the counter and stares into the mp3 player in his hand. He begins speaking Swedish with the man across the table. After the interaction, he joins three others sitting at a table each in front of a computer. He begins struggling with the details of uploading the audio file to the Språkskap blog.

## Activity Overview:



## Research Workshop

The Spráskap team held a workshop with the Second Language Research Center (SELC) group at the University of Southern Denmark. We used data from a research project in Iceland, led by Guðrún Theodórsdóttir, as the basis for a workshop activity of imagining new futures. A learner of Icelandic as a second language, while living in Iceland, recorded her mundane daily interactions for 30 minutes a week for three years. One of her early recordings came from a local bakery.

In the example, Sally, the learner, speaks to the bakery clerk while requesting items to buy and completes the sales transaction, predominantly in her low-level Icelandic. The example shows the cohabitation of the business of the encounter (to buy baked goods) and language learning practices in the same talk:

- » The learner made sure that Icelandic would be used as the language of the talk although shifting to English would have made the transaction faster and smoother.
- » Hereby the learner got leeway to formulate her orders in her own way although it took time and effort.
- » The learner elicited words and formulations to be used in the encounter from the clerk.
- » The learner elicited help to understand and produce new words and concepts.

Around this interaction, we developed a series of design alternatives for how to support the interaction. We asked the questions:

- » How can the learner be supported in her learning endeavor: both during the interaction, and before or afterward?
- » How can the physical layout, artifacts, and employee training provide support to the interaction as a site of learning?

The workshop concretized three design directions: (1) materials and concepts for influencing the structure of the encounter between the learner and bakery worker; (2) technological platforms for the learner to easily document and reproduce the interaction, and; (3) time and places to attend to language matters.



Research workshop



## Workshop with Teachers

Teachers at Folkuniversitetet, participated in a workshop in which possible scenarios of language support and language learning outside the classroom were explored by creating rapid prototypes.



Workshop with teachers



Mockup from workshop





## Drop-in Sessions with Learners

Many of the activities involved participants from a pool of volunteer Swedish learners, a reference group of Swedish teachers, and the core team. We held seven two-hour “drop-in” sessions based at a language school for a total of 22 learners, five project team members, and three language teachers. Nine of the learners participated in three or more sessions. The invitation was initially emailed to 500 learners. Forty learners attended the introduction session. We interviewed 12 of the participants, at least one time. Each session presented new activities and concepts, but also built on previous sessions by asking learners for feedback on what they had done in the “wild” during the week.

## Challenges

A challenge is a proposition to do something that you have not done before in Swedish. It could be a new topic, a new situation or engaging with new people. We created initial challenges and engaged the students with them. The challenges included “Talk to a pensioner” (pensioners being more willing to chat with strangers, and also less ready to switch to English because of lack of proficiency) and “Speak or be silent in Swedish for five minutes” (This challenge grew out of the idea that the learner would actually learn more from being silent in Swedish than from switching to English). Then we invited learners to come up with new ones. The original and new challenges were posted to our Språkskap blog.

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Learners reported that the concept of “challenges” created a new way of looking at everyday life as an arena for speaking: Robert: “Språkskap provides good support and it gives me a bit of structure I think. During the day when I am in a shop, I think about Språkskap. I should speak Swedish. I think more about how one can learn Swedish.”



Here are some challenges that learners came up with during one workshop:

- » Go to a bar or club.
- » Take a guided tour of a museum.
- » If you are with a friend at a café or restaurant, ask or just talk in Swedish.
- » In a museum, ask other visitors about what he or she likes about the work he / she is watching.
- » Apply for a job (without pay) at a kindergarten in order to practice with children (perhaps 5-7 years of age) or at school, leisure.
- » Ask for advice in the ICA store on typical Swedish food. Prepare dinner for some friends and invite them to a traditional Swedish meal. Talk about food during dinner.
- » Babysit and talk to children. They have a simpler language that is suitable for beginners.
- » Go to IKEA. There is a lot to ask there. Ask for advice on interior decorating, price information, where something is, what colors / patterns / sizes are available, etc.
- » Ask for help in Swedish at a gym. One can ask for advice on how to work out if you like running. One might ask how a machine works, etc.
- » Talk with telephone salespeople. They call often and always want to talk.
- » Talk to sales people in the mall, e.g. cell phone sellers who have their own table outside the shops.
- » Go to the movies. Ask a person sitting next to you about the film. What does it mean?
- » Go into libraries, to shops, swimming, into the subway (traffic centers), into a kiosk to buy tickets, to a pharmacist (to buy medicine), to the doctor, or to the bookstore to buy a book.



Among new challenges, we found Maria's glove trick. She noticed that when she dropped her glove, she started to talk to the person who picked it up for her. Consequently, she began intentionally dropping her glove to trigger interaction. Maria: "You can drop things (i.e. a glove) and wait for the result. That is my method. It is really good; it works! A reason to start talking to somebody."

Maria also said: "I thought it was not so easy. I felt I had to participate in situations that were very artificial. Daily life creates several situations for us in which we can try our powers." She pointed out that even though it might be hard and feel unnatural at first, this could be overcome.

### Recommendations?

Talk to the staff in the video store, pocket book shop or the library. Tell them about your favorite movies/books and ask the staff to recommend you something for you.

**Tips!**  
Choose a couple movies/books and prepare yourself on how you could talk about them. Think about what answers you might get.

### Join the club

Find a club or organization for any of your interests (chess, singing in a choir, football, dancing, book club). Call or mail them for more information and join one that you like.

**Tips!**  
Find a couple and contact them, so you get more practice and maybe you'll find one you might like.

### Change of habit

Speak Swedish with a person that you always speak English to, for an hour.

**Tips!**  
Choose a topic and stick to it.  
Don't make it too hard for yourself.  
Begin easy and do another round later on a higher level if you want a greater challenge.

### Talk to a pensioner!

**Tips!**  
Pensioners are great to talk to if you're learning Swedish, because they rarely speak any English. Go to parks, bingo nights, health centers, food stores etc. Think in advance about good conversations to have on these locations.

### *Practice Café*

In Stockholm we developed a relationship with a local espresso bar for the drop-in session participants to engage with. Thomas, the owner of the coffee shop Fikastunden, prides himself on the personal nature of his café. People choose his coffee shop over others, he believes, based on developing a friendly, personal relationship with him and his staff. Minimalist design with clean lines and simple furniture are important to the concept. Fikastunden is located close to a Swedish language school, so Thomas is used to speaking Swedish to learners. "They have trained me never to switch to English with them."

Thomas has three framed photographs on the wall of sites in Peru that he says trigger and sustain conversations with his customers. He speaks so much about these photos, that he is tired of them and would like to refresh them with something new. "I wanted to approach the design school about making something for me, but I never followed through on it."

We created an activity for the drop-in session focusing on the practicalities of using everyday interactions as a basis for Swedish learning. During a session, we created the "practice café," which had a stand-up counter to engage the clerk and various pictures to stimulate discussion. The learners used MP3 players as they entered the café, engaging in a discussion with the clerk, while recording their conversation. They then uploaded them to the drop-in blog to share with others. The sessions were also meant as practice for the learners to enter Fikastunden on their own.



Practice café

The practice café exemplified the value of a venue for language learning practicalities, rather than merely a focus upon the language. In this sense, learning to enter a café and to initiate a conversation is not taken for granted, but rather is seen as worthy of support. This points to a new type of Swedish offer that appreciates the social and situatedness of language development rather than overemphasizing the linguistic characteristics.



*Identity Modeling*

Identity modeling was a task seeking to reinforce the idea that learning a language is about developing an identity, rather than merely mirroring the identity of a home country. Learners were asked to represent their perceived identity in their home country and in Sweden. The aim was to be able to discuss language issues in relation to differences in perceived identity. Sofia made her identity

in Brazil as a big tall healthy tree. It can grow on its own and it does not need extra care or attention. It is also firmly grounded and secure. She made her identity in Sweden as an infant made of blue clay. It does need care and cannot survive or function without help from others.

Adriana made her identity in Romania as one cube with spheres attached to it. The cube represents

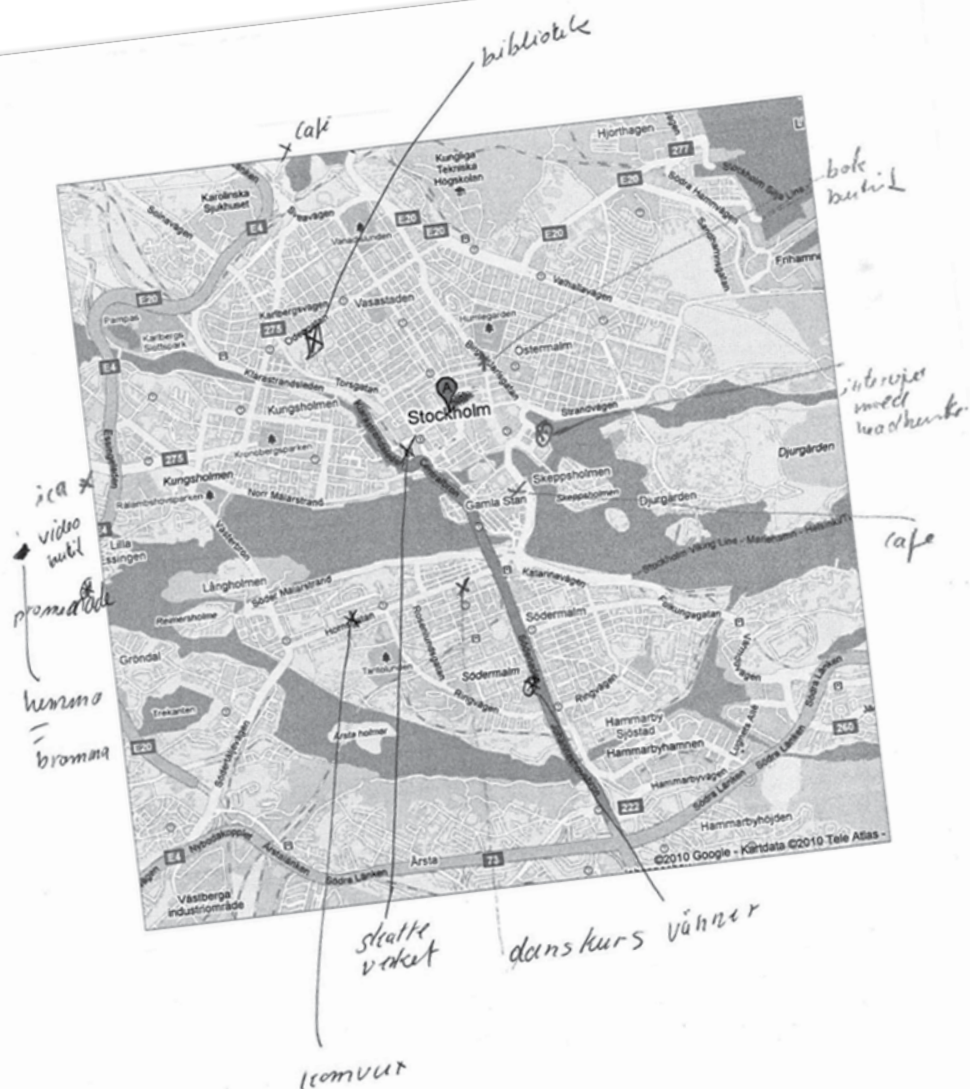
the rigid self that you have to keep up in Rumania. The attached spheres are the people around you that try to influence you and determine who you are. Her Swedish identity is a sphere with other spheres around it but not attached to it. According to her, in Sweden you can be who you want to be and other people do not try to influence you.





*Identity modelling*





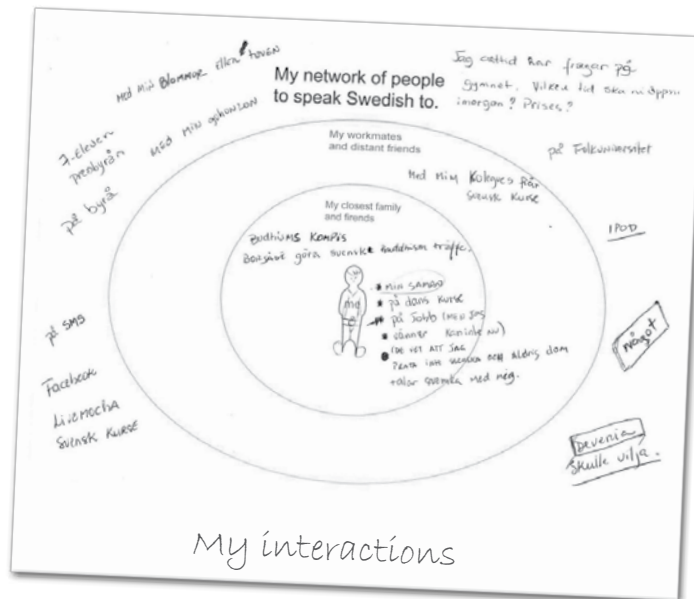
My places

## My Interactions / My Places

As a basis for building a Swedish community, learners were asked to create two maps: One of their social networks in relation to those who they speak to in Swedish now, those they could potentially speak with now, but do not, and those they wish they were able to speak to, and another location-based map identifying where in the city they speak Swedish. Each learner then presented their maps.

For the learners themselves this activity gave them a chance to assess their Swedish and their Swedish networks. Listening to each other presenting their mappings gave them a lot of inspiration on who to possibly talk to and where to possibly practice Swedish.

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## Wearables

Students at design universities in Sweden were invited to create a t-shirt print that would promote communication in Swedish between learners and speakers of Swedish. A common problem in Sweden is that Swedish speakers often use English when speaking to non proficient Swedish speakers. Learners often complain about these difficulties. Three prints were chosen and t-shirts, bags and pins were made. The prints say:

1. Jag talar svenska lite lagom typ. (I speak Swedish like kind of enough)
2. Tala [dalahäst] svenska med mig! (Talk [Dalekarlia horse] to me!)
3. Tala svenska med mig! [tryck av drottning Silvia] (Talk Swedish to me [print of Queen Silvia of Sweden])

Ladan reports on Twitter about her wearing her t-shirt in a pub: "It was fun with the t-shirt. It works WELL! Somebody wanted to buy it... ha ha..."



Textile bag



T-shirt



Pins

## Twitter Day

The team organized a Twitter day to support using Swedish as much as possible throughout one day in the context of each of the participants who live within a real-time community of learners and coaches as support. The team hosted a kick-off breakfast in the morning where learners and coaches created Twitter accounts and tested them (attended by six learners and two coaches) and a meeting in the afternoon for summing up (three learners and three coaches). In addition, the learners and coaches were asked to fill in an online survey (four learners and one coach). Of

the seven learners and six coaches who participated, there were 105 tweets during the day.

We found four main categories of tweets:

1. Commentary about current activity:

“LearnerD: A fox crossed my way when I exited the E4 close to Luleå, I love this landscape”( En räv korsade min väg då jag åkte ut ur E4:an vid Luleå, jag älskar det här landskapet :)

2. New language items with questions and answers about it following:

“L: Today’s word: I am a “sleepyhead”... hehe”( Dagens ord: Jag är “Sju Sovare” .. hehe)

3. Direct language questions:

“learnerM @coachkarllindem What does ‘on the road and on track’ mean?” (vad betyder- iväg och igång?)

4. Building social relations:

“LearnerK Good morning! Don’t like the weather... I really hope that Wednesday is ‘little Friday’ for real!

Have a good day!”(God morgon! Tycker inte om vädret... hoppas att Onsdag verkligen är “Lilla Fredag”! ha en bra dag!)

At the end of the day, the team tweeted that people were welcome to continue. During the following 10 days after the Twitter day, there were an additional 140 tweets by six learners and one coach. Activity varied greatly between learners. One learner only twittered once, while another contributed with 29 tweets. The following six days there were 11 tweets by one coach and

two learners (one being the “active” one mentioned above). While the tweets were consistent with the four categories above, over time the proportion of new language items increased. For instance, there were language items from a novel a learner was reading, and

another learner asked the coach direct language questions. The ebb and flow of Twitter activity raises the fundamental issue of the temporality of new tools, the role of the coach, and puts into question the idea of independent online language learning communities.



## Structuring Daily Business

IKEA home products store provides customers a wide selection of low-price items. They focus upon build-it-your-self products to maintain low prices. Each section of the store has a number of sales clerks attending to the customer questions for advice about their products and creating home solutions with them, as well as where products are located and if they are in stock. We were able to leverage the structure and process of an IKEA store to stimulate language learning Maria, from Poland, walks into IKEA. Her and her language coach sit down on the couch near the entrance and speak about Maria's goals for the visit. Maria needs kitchen ware for her upcoming move to a new apartment and she would like to look at children's toys. With her coach at her side, and a prototype paper booklet to look at for reference, take notes, and to ask others to write on, Maria spends 2 hours engaging with various IKEA sales clerks in the kitchen and toy sections. Lisa works at IKEA in the toy-department. From her position, one day a woman comes up



to her and asks her about child safety: Are the toys safe for small children. She answers that they are all “klämskyddade” (they are safe in the way that you can’t get pinched using them). The woman thanks her and leaves. A minute later, she returns with a language passport and asks Lisa to write the word klämskyddade down. She does so and also adds an explanation of the word in Swedish. We were able to leverage the structure and process of an IKEA store to stimulate language learning. Through a series of visits to IKEA and other businesses, we worked out two important structures suitable for supporting learners engage in such a shopping setting: Sit, Talk, Sit and The Encounter Dial.

It is based on our experiences in these activities that we take the bold step of offering the following vision. We wish to ask you as a reader what could be your part in the second language acquisition challenge and how can you join us to forge a new future?

# The Base Line [Assumptions]



Rethinking how to support the complex area of Swedish learning in Sweden requires suspending some basic assumptions about the goal of language support, those that could be involved and about the innovation process. In the Språkskap project, we had to free ourselves from some very basic assumptions and constraints as we began exploring simple steps for supporting this complex issue.

» **Discrete to explicit solutions:**

We moved from attempting to create hidden personal tools to support Swedish learning in everyday situations, to a much more explicit exploration. For many people learning Swedish and for those speaking to learners, the interaction can be an uncomfortable endeavor full of misunderstandings. The process is inherently disruptive and inconvenient. It puts extra demands on learners, on speakers, and often on

many people waiting in cue for the underground, bus, café, supermarket, or bank, for instance. Rather than seeing this as a problem to be solved by creating discrete support tools, we began looking at this as an opportunity to embrace the disruptiveness in an open and obvious way. We ask, “How can the special circumstances of interactions between Swedish learners and Swedish speakers allow for new material and immaterial support?”

- » **No quick fixes, but simple steps:** There are no easy solutions to language learning. It is a complex endeavor that can benefit from a wide variety of efforts. We do not seek to

develop a single comprehensive goal for supporting language learning; rather we seek to create invitations to further support this area. Solutions do not need to be complex to be good, rather simplicity is often key.

- » **Iterative design:** Research about learning and everyday activities alone does not provide interesting design ideas. We cannot merely research and later design, we must explore through experimenting to find interesting and viable solutions. This is an unexplored area with much promise.
- » **Self-generated strategies:** Swedish learners and Swedish speakers develop their own strategies and techniques over

time for improving their ability to interact, learn and support. This provides an opportunity to provide interesting alternatives to them. Additionally, to learn Swedish often requires the participants to feel as if it is their own technique.

- » **Context matters:** Resources for Swedish learning can take many forms. The physical layout of a place, the things that people see on the wall, floor, doors, the people who occupy the space, the rhythm of activity, and the historical relationships have potential to support Swedish learning.

## Scaffolding Sustained Interaction

To release the “studying of a language” from the confines of the classroom to “the wild” of everyday contexts requires complementing the role of the teacher and the classroom with new roles for other potential actors, activities and places. We look to the *scaffolding* metaphor to help us conceptualize Swedish language-learning support. Scaffolding for construction purposes refers to the material for creating a temporary structure that enables workers to reach places they otherwise are unable to reach. Scaffolding provides a temporary stable platform for workers to stand, hold their materials, and conduct work such as building, painting, or cleaning.

The traditional classroom has, to date, been the dominant “safe place” for learning language. Learners are provided a sheltered or protected environment guided by a trained leader to get introduced to different aspects of the language and to practice with each other. Much less has been done to extend the organizational structures of the classroom to everyday settings.

In relation to supporting language learning *in the wild*, we look to provide material and immaterial (conceptual) structures to enhance the abilities of learners to learn the Swedish language by interacting with Swedish speakers. The idea is for the initiation and structuring not to fall on the shoulders of the learner alone, but rather to allow other actors to initiate and structure the encounter.

Svenskadox Card: Many Swedish learners have a Swedish speaking partner at home. They are commonly challenged to speak Swedish together. As Sib reports, she tries to speak with her boyfriend in Swedish, but it gets

frustrating and they quickly switch back to English. The Svenskadax (“time for Swedish”) card is for scaffolding the interaction between Sib and her boyfriend. On the front of the card, it states “*Time for Swedish*” with a box to write the amount of time. For instance, 10 minutes. On the back it has a set of tips for Swedish speakers when speaking with learners.

This activity can be initiated either by a Swedish learner or a Swedish speaker. It has a physical, visible component as an obvious marker for both learner and speaker. It provides a limited time contract between both that seeks to let the learner do something manageable, while at the same time allowing the speaker to know it will end. The tips are meant to provide basic guidelines and trigger reflections in how a Swedish speaker does speak to a learner.

## Levels for Learners and Coaches

There are many different learners with many different personalities, abilities, histories and stories of how they arrived in Sweden and who they have contact with. Learners can also be placed on different levels of language proficiency. How can we talk about language proficiency in a way that is meaningful for both a learner and those who wish to support language learning?

In everyday life, people talk about language proficiency in terms of experiences. When Kalle is asked if he knows Italian, the answer is – “Yes, I’ve studied Italian both in Sweden and Italy.” When Ali, a medical doctor, is applying for a job in Sweden, employers ask him if he has taken a particular course of Swedish as a second language at high school. This way of looking at language proficiency is straightforward, but misses the real goal of

language learning, communication and participation. The fact that you have studied a language or have a certain diploma does not necessarily tell which communicative skills you have in that language. Nor does it tell in which circumstances you are able to draw on those skills.

The council of Europe has developed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR for short), which takes linguistic communication as its main focus. This tool has become increasingly influential in the language sector in Europe during the last decades. CEFR takes an action-based approach to describe what a learner can do with the language. There are three levels: A = basic, B = independent and C = proficient (see diagram). These levels each have two sublevels thus creating the six levels shown below.

The level descriptors describe what learners can do at different levels. They also, to some extent, imply how proficient interlocutors would have to act while interacting with learners at different levels. For example, at the A2 level the learner is on the upper part of the basic level, but is still not independent in the language. This is to say that she is still dependent on support and help from native speakers. On the B1 level, the learner has gained independence, which here implies that she can function in everyday situations. However, she still needs a sympathetic and somewhat helpful speaker as a counterpart in interactions. It is not until the B2 level that a native speaker can interact with the learner without taking into account (adapting to) that she is actually learning the language.

We seek to redistribute the responsibility of communication and language learning from the shoulders of the learner alone, to other actors involved in interactions. What can the everyday citizen or service providers do to meet

the learner at her actual level? By shifting the focus to the coach or a service provider, for instance, we raise questions of how Swedish speakers actively improve their own ability to engage with people speaking Swedish at various levels. A strong move in this direction suggests that there should be “coach levels” or “service levels” of Swedish language support. How can a Swedish speaker meet the learner at her current language level, by both adapting to the learner’s basic communicative skills, while also allowing enough room for the learner to be challenged to improve?

In the table below we look at what the CEFR levels A2 and B2 could look like if they were to be re-written for coaches.

## C Proficient user

## B Independent user

## A Basic user

*CEFR levels interpreted “in short”*

**C2** Precision, appropriateness and ease with the language

**C1** Wide range of linguistic means, flowing and spontaneous communication

**B2** Speaker is not a burden to mother tongue speaker. Meta linguistic competence (i.e. correct own mistakes)

**B1** Being able to communicate in everyday situations, and handle linguistic problems in everyday life

**A2** Able to conduct basic social functions such as “do errands”.

**A1** Basic practical aspects of everyday functions. Highly dependent on mother tongue speaker



Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express

him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language

flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes

regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language

is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in

simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about

personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

## CEFR descriptors

## Additional CEFR information

B2

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

The first is being able to more than hold your own in social discourse e.g. converse naturally, fluently and effectively; (...) sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker.

The second new focus is a new degree of language awareness: correct mistakes if they have led to misunderstandings; make a note of 'favourite mistakes' and consciously monitor speech for it/them; generally correct slips and errors if he/she becomes conscious of them; plan what is to be said and the means to say it, considering the effect on the recipient/s. In all, this does seem to be a new threshold for a language learner to cross

A2

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Can make him/herself understood and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations, provided the other person helps if necessary communicate successfully on basic themes if he/she can ask for help to express what he wants to  
Can deal with everyday situations with predictable content, though he/she will generally have to compromise the message and search for words; interact with reasonable ease in structured situations, given some help, but participation in open discussion is fairly restricted.

## Interpretation of what CEFR descriptor would mean to a coach

(1) the coach does not normally have to restrict herself to the topic or choice of words, but she would have to bear in mind that a conversation could suddenly move into a topic area that is too technical and/or too unfamiliar to the speaker.

(2) the coach does not have to adapt her language to the speaker. This also means that the coach should not adapt her language to the learner. In fact speaking particularly slowly or clearly to a learner at this level could be quite degrading.

(3) the coach could take a more laidback role than on the lower levels. She does not have to help out the learner and should interact with her on a level of equal standing.

(4) the coach should refrain from correcting the learner. The learner is already monitoring her own language input and is trying her best to avoid mistakes. If the learner asks specifically for corrections or help, the coach can help out.

(1) the coach chooses commonly used words and expressions and sometimes rephrases as a way to introduce concepts that are less common.

(2) the coach avoids abstract and/or complex issues such as elections or carbon dioxide emissions;

(3) the coach expresses herself in a straightforward way. For example instead of saying: "I read about this new film in the paper today and I was wondering if...", she would say "Do you want to go to the cinema

(5) the learner would need help from the coach to find words, patterns and expressions or to modify grammar or pronunciation to resolve misunderstandings.

(6) the learner at this level has difficulties talking to several people at once. If that is necessary, speakers should think about clarity and pace.

## Suggestion for CEFR level for coaches

Does not restrict which topics to talk about and which words to use, but is aware that there are topics that are unfamiliar and thus difficult. Does not adapt her language input to the learner. Does not help the learner and does not correct her unless specifically asked to.

Uses simple and straightforward language. Talks about issues that relate to the learner and her current situation. Lets go of topics or issues if misunderstandings can't be resolved by rephrasing. Tries to help the learner out when problems occur. Is sympathetic and stays calm. Bears in mind that talking to several people at once is hard for the learner at this level.

# Welcome to Swedish!

Every country has its unique traits that both inspire and disappoint those arriving from afar. For those interested in spending time in the country, the contrast from where they come and their intentions when they meet others provides both inspiration and stumbling blocks for daily life.

Coming to Sweden not only means meeting a new language, but also coming in contact with particular ways of interacting with people. Commonly, foreigners arriving to Sweden quickly experience difficulties “breaking the ice” with people or engaging in small talk. Many Swedish learners talk about their difficulties socializing with strangers in public and private. They often contrast Sweden to other countries where talking to strangers in



public places is an intrinsic part of everyday life. For example, Brendon (having learned Spanish as a second language before coming to Sweden) in a moment of slight exaggeration, compares getting on a bus in Bolivia and Sweden. In Sweden as opposed to Bolivia, people do not only “not talk to you, but they do not even talk to each other.”

Swedes also address the pervasive “non-communication”-strategy. It is a common in conversation, in the media and, in its most exaggerated form, in comedy. The televised comedy show *Hip Hip* takes up the issue in a sketch about a course for becoming Swedish (*Bli svensk-kursen*). What do learners need to learn to “become Swedish?” The blond, very enthusiastic teacher

emphasizes that Swedes are, naïve (*naiva*), punctual (*punktliga*), withdrawn (*tillbakadragna*), and afraid of making fools of themselves (*rädda för att göra bort sig*). While naïveté and punctuality do not necessarily hinder interaction, being withdrawn and afraid to engage others, do.

In one scene, the teacher stands with her students inside an apartment door and looks out through the peephole. When seeing a neighbor coming home and opening the door, the teacher instructs the group: “Now the neighbor is entering her apartment. After that we can go out in the stairwell, because we do not want to bump into someone if we don’t have to, right!” (*Nu går grannen in till sig. Sedan kan vi gå ut i trappen,*

för vi vill ju inte riskera att stöta på någon i onödan va!). One comment to this clip on YouTube reads: “Swedish to the extent that it is sad” (*Så svenskt så det är sorgligt*).

The students of the mock *Become Swedish* course also learn how not to talk in elevators. Upon reaching their floor, the teacher comments, “You were great, all of you! No one spoke in the elevator!” (*Ni är jätteduktiga allesammans. Ingen av er pratade i hissen*).

Overall, the Sweden that is depicted shows a society where being on one’s own and being silent is the norm, and where interacting with strangers and socializing are exceptions and transgressions that are best avoided.

In another comedy show, Kvarteret Skatan, a woman is on the way to work on a public bus. She decides to break the usual silence and starts to socialize with people on the bus, people that have been taking the same bus as she has on a daily basis without acknowledging her or each other's existence. The situation quickly gets out of hand as she both creates social discomfort by just talking to "strangers" and then gets into an erratic spin herself, as she tries to have everybody in the bus sing a popular melody from the forties. Here the "typical Swede" is depicted as someone who does not dare to interact with strangers, but at the same time has an underlying urge to do so – a combination that unleashes strange and ridiculous behavior once the invisible borders of "non communication" have been breached.

The scenes of Hip Hip's Bli svensk-kursen and Kvarteret skatan bring to life the very steep learning curve for many foreigners in Sweden. The shows do raise issues commonly discussed among foreigners in Sweden. Obviously, to depict Swedish society as a silent one is to overlook how much people do interact on a daily basis. When we raised the questions to a group of actual teachers of Swedish as a second language, they created a list of situations when it is acceptable to talk to strangers in the public realm.



Scenes from Hípp Hípp



- » Extreme or weird weather: (- Ouch! It's really cold today! - Yeah, really! (- Huuh! Vad kallt det är!? – Ja, verkligen!!!)
- » Complaining: - These trains that are always delayed really suck! - Yeah! I'm going to make a complaint! (- Det är fördjävligt att tågen aldrig kommer i tid!!! – Ja, jag ska ringa och klaga. )
- » When carrying unusual "props" like skis or potted plants: -Wow! Are you taking part in Vasaloppet (skiing competition)? - No, I've just had a short exercise round. (- Wow. Ska du vara med i Vasaloppet?! – Nej, jag har bara varit ute i eljusspåret en sväng. )
- » When somebody has a child or an animal with them: - She's so cute! / - What breed is it? (- Vad söt hon är! / - Vad är det för ras?)
- » On longer journeys: - So what are you going to do in Thailand? - We are going to golf. (- Så vad ska ni göra i Thailand? – Vi ska på golfresa.)

While by no means an exhaustive list, the examples suggest that "Swedes" require powerful external stimuli or objects to break the silence with strangers. However, as a newcomer to Sweden, the equation changes. It is not the same for Swedish speakers to interact with Swedish speakers as it is for those in the early stages of learning the language to engage with Swedish speakers. While similar scenarios may cause a reaction by the Swedish speaker, the interaction may quickly break down, changing the type of interaction. Swedish learners experience many "breakdowns" when approached by a Swedish speaker. In such situations, breakdowns offer both opportunities to speak more, and the ending of any potential conversation.

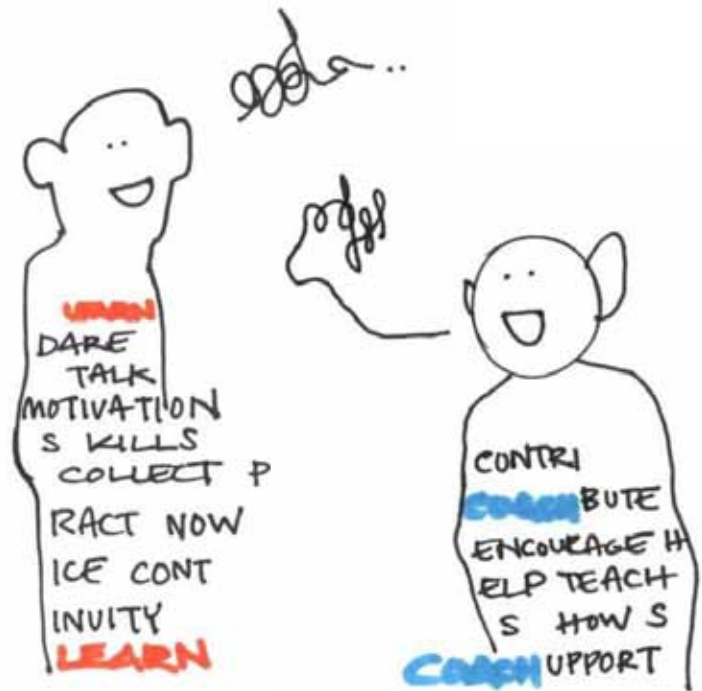


## The English Problem

In a bit of a strange way, the high level of English proficiency in Sweden creates an obstacle to learning for many Swedish learners. When a learner attempts to speak Swedish, the Swedish speaker often seeks to accommodate by switching to English. While this is a desired luxury for many tourists, it takes on ridiculous proportions for the desperate learner. Learners sometimes feel that Swedish people use them to “practice their English” rather than help them learning more Swedish by speaking Swedish to them. One Swedish speaker, Caroline, says that she feels that it is very impolite to take the initiative to speak Swedish to a learner. According to her it has to be the foreigner that initiates speaking Swedish. Others cannot be bothered to struggle through a

poor language when it is possible to communicate in English. For many, the English dilemma postpones

becoming a part of Swedish social circles and makes the learner miss out on chances to use Swedish.



## The Language Switch

Many learners do actually have people to speak with, but do not speak Swedish with them, either by their own choice, the choice of the Swedish person, or the mysterious combination of social, psychological, and circumstantial factors at play.

It is often difficult to switch to a language other than the language people begin speaking together. Trying to do so can create a sort of let down. Basar says, "My partner is Swedish, but we rarely speak Swedish together." He explains, "We got to know each other in English and it is now too tough to switch to Swedish." Rafael, from Brazil, attempted to practice his improving Swedish with some of his old friends. They laughed at him and quickly returned to their familiar "broken-English" instead.

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Why is it hard to switch language of communication with a person you know? It seems like the person you know in English (or Russian, Arabic or Spanish) will suddenly be a stranger when speaking Swedish. As one learner complained: "I am so boring in Swedish." Switching to Swedish may feel like a loss, combined with the insecurity of not knowing if the same level of comfort can be regained in the new language.

In the Swedish context, the fear of "making a fool of yourself" mentioned above may also play an important role. An interaction ridden with misunderstandings, hesitations and stops is often deeply uncomfortable to people who want to stay in control.

Speaking to a language learner often involves discomfort and stress. The speaker is often confronted with long pauses on the part of the learner that the speaker does not know how to interpret. Misunderstandings occur often. Many Swedish speakers get either paralyzed or rely on improvisational tactics that are not often so effective: switching to English, filling in the correct words, correcting or letting things go too easily or insisting too much when misunderstandings occur.

As we dig into the complexities of what appears to be a simple area of language learning, we quickly discover that different learners have different issues at stake in their daily situations. Speaking Swedish as a clerk in a supermarket does not entail the same kind of risks as speaking Swedish as a surgeon in an E.R. And speaking Swedish when buying milk does not entail the same kind of risks as speaking Swedish when presenting the annual report to share holders. As Selma, an Australian living ten years in Sweden states, despite her high level of Swedish, “I always speak English at work to get more respect. That way I don’t lose my power.” These issues similarly apply to Swedish speakers as to a learner of Swedish.

## Learning Swedish in Sweden Today

There are currently a variety of options for studying Swedish in Sweden; universities, municipalities and adult education organizations offer a variety of courses for different levels, both classroom-based and wholly or partially on-line. The majority of these courses promote their adherence to a “communicative language learning approach.” According to Nunan (1) communicative language learning incorporates the following:

- » An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language
- » The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation
- » The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself
- » An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning
- » An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom

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1 Nunan: TESOL Quarterly Vol. 25, No. 2, Summer 1991 279 – 295



The communicative approach, according to Richards (2), has the following implications for language learning:

- » make real communication the focus of learning
- » provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know
- » be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence
- » provide opportunities for the learner to develop both accuracy, and fluency
- » link the different skills such as speaking, reading and listening, together, since they usually occur together in the real world
- » let students induce or discover grammar rules

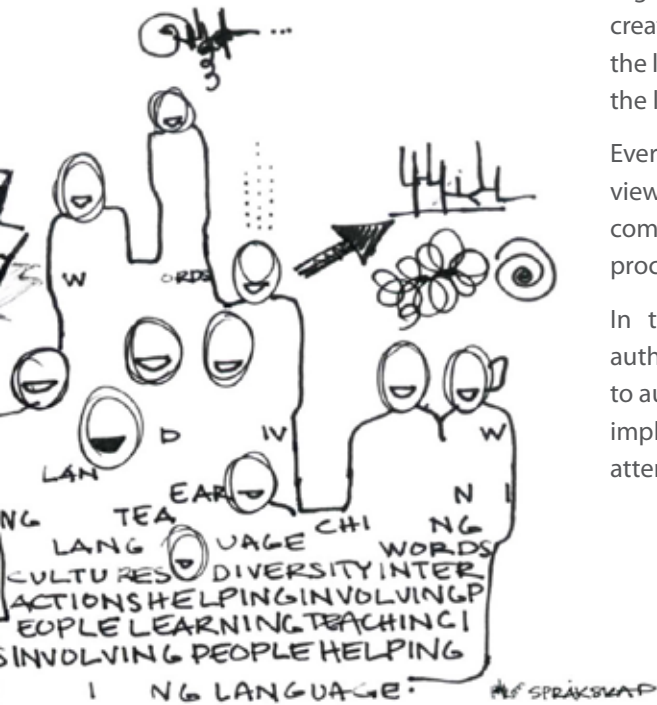
In the communicative classroom, one would expect to see activities such as role-plays, interviews, information gap activities, games and pair work.

Of course, not all learners have the same background and situation. Some learners are illiterate with no or little previous schooling. Others are experts in neuroscience who come to Sweden to do research. Most are somewhere in-between. In the Språkskap project, we focus on literate people with previous schooling. The materials used in most courses are textbooks with exercises focusing on different skills along with exercise books and sometimes e-learning materials such as CD-ROMs or on-line exercises.

2 Richards, "Communicative language teaching today," <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/communicative-language-teaching-today-v2.pdf> (Accessed February 2, 2011)







When we talk to teachers and students at Folkuniversitetet about their experiences in a teacher-mediated classroom, we hear that different teachers put focus on different aspects of the learning process (for example communication tasks vs. study of grammar and vocabulary). For students, their background and previous experiences as well as their learning styles and expectations influence how they experience and perceive the learning situation. This influences how people experience a course. When talking to people who participated in the same class, one student might say: "We just sit around and talk," while somebody else thinks that "We only do grammar."

These views and expectations of language learning are often very different from the concepts of communicative language learning, for instance. The confrontation between learner expectations and the experience of joining a course create a challenge for both the learner and the language instruction organization. In the best case, the organization incorporates activities for creating a dialogue in which the organization learns about the learner and the learner is challenged to re-evaluate what language learning can be, and the learner has a valuable experience.

Everyday citizens, as friends or partners to the learner, may also have strong views about what it means to be taught and how one learns. These ideas come into play in how they support the learners in the language learning process.

In the communicative classroom, emphasis is put on working with authentic-like communicative tasks and situations. However, it is impossible to authenticate a task out of context, however carefully it is worked out and implemented. Real language exists in real life contexts. Many courses do attempt to incorporate real world contexts into the classroom.



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Learners are often encouraged or instructed to be involved with media, by listening to radio podcast, watching news, reading newspapers or books, listening to Swedish pop songs and watching Swedish movies. Tasks could also include interviewing a Swedish person on a specific topic.

There are examples of integrating language learning into real life, such as Livstycket where people learned Swedish while sewing, or SFI in the woods where Swedish teachers take classes out in the forest and learn names of trees and berries.

Arbetsförmedlingen also sent unemployed people to learn Swedish while looking for jobs. This would include

writing job applications, resumes and making phone calls to possible employers.

There are examples of incorporating aspects of the outside-the-classroom world into the learning process. But many educators and education organizations still base their activities on the assumption that once learners have the right tools to communicate, they will be equipped to walk straight out into the real world and use those tools to communicate. The reality is often much different, and the gap between classroom and real-world communication is too large.

There are many things that stop learners from taking the step from the safe environment of the classroom to the chaotic outside world of everyday communication.



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The reality is often much different, and the gap between classroom and real-world communication is too large

How Swedish learning in the Swedish context works is clearly complex and hard to understand. It defies simple explanations. On the other hand, the difficulties and tactics of learning Swedish are common topics of discussion among learners, and between learners and Swedish speakers. Especially during breakdowns in communication between Swedish learners and speakers, the difficulties in learning Swedish often become the topic of discussion. People theorize to one another about why and how it does and does not work, each with their experiences of speaking, trying to, or refusing to speak in different situations, with different people, or at different periods. While there are many Swedish specific norms for interacting both in public

and in private, the norms differ or are broken in many ways when non-Swedish speakers enter the Swedish context.

Overall, when we enter the Swedish context and take a look at the Swedish learning scene, we find many challenges from the learner's perspective, as well as from those who wish to support learning. The challenges are wrapped up in people's histories before coming to Sweden, as well as those starting out in Sweden; it is both the organization of education and the challenges of everyday situations. It is also about what people have been attempting to do to break the traditions of learning and teaching.



## Learning Languages Online

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Online systems for language learning have developed rapidly over the past decades. From an initial focus on how a learner interacts with a computer to learn—interactive grammar or word exercises—the focus has shifted to interpersonal interaction, both in the form of “targeted language learning” offers and in arenas that are not primarily focused on language learning but where learning the language rather is a bi-product of taking part in some other social activity. Let’s have a look at some of the offers available.

Medics move supports medical personal with words and phrases to use in different work-related situations. This is available in Swedish and various other languages.

Language Kompis (language friend) is a web service in which people input the language they speak fluently and the language they wish to learn. The service matches language learners to communicate on-line or to meet in person for a language exchange.

There are several examples of partially or wholly on-line language learning offers. For instance, virtual worlds such as Second life offers opportunities for people to meet and practice in a desired language. Sweden was the first country to open an embassy in Second life and the Swedish institute has held Swedish lessons on-line in this environment.

Of course, in virtual arenas such as Second life the primary focus is to socialize with other people. English is often the lingua franca for Swedish users in Second life. Also in on-line games such as World of War Craft, people consciously or unconsciously take part in informal language learning by interacting with others. In virtual worlds, there is an interesting aspect of using an on-line persona, something that could help people overcome inhibiting factors such as shyness and awkwardness when speaking in a foreign language, in this case, English.

English Out There is a Facebook community in which learners are encouraged to contact English speakers to talk with. Worksheets with suggested topics for discussion are available. The concepts also include lessons in which language training in an informal classroom setting like a café is followed by learners going out actually trying out things in the real world, shadowed by their teacher. One of their slogans is “Get out there and learn!” which emphasizes the real world focus of their approach.

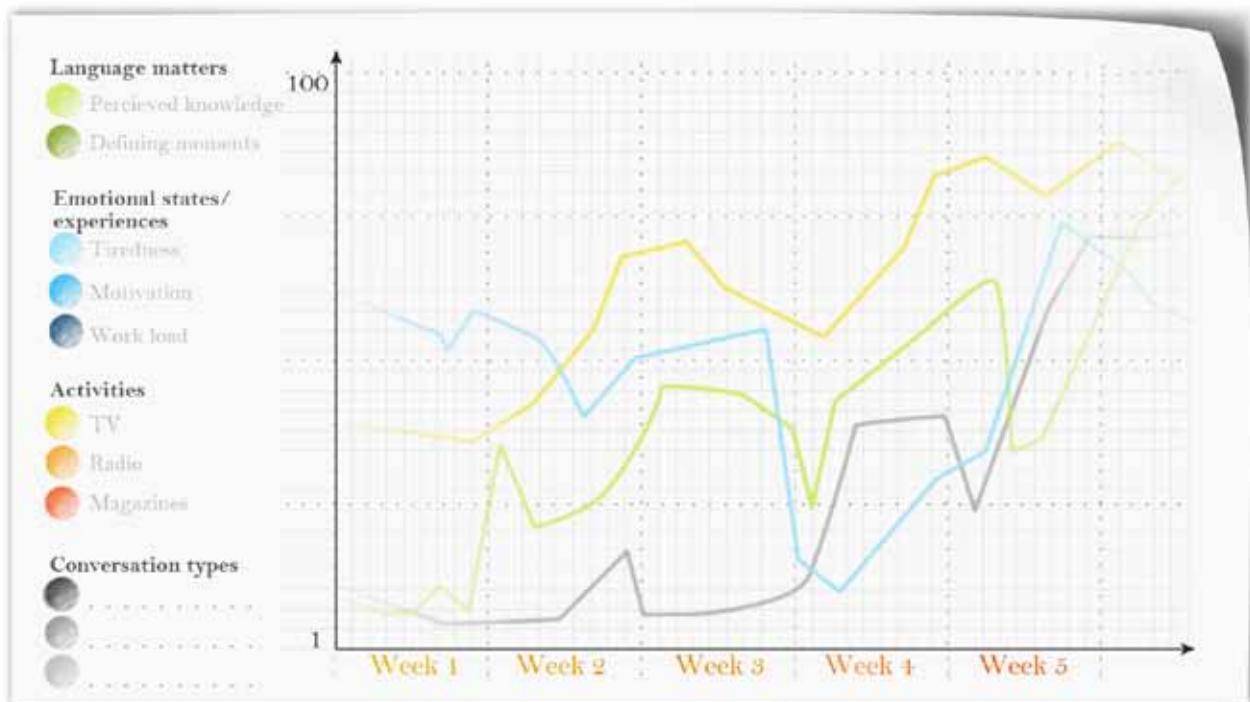
We commend the movement to the real world and the move from digital teaching to supporting interaction. Of course, this is but a small sample of the current online offers for language learning support. The current explosion in the use of smart phones and online services and the pace at which new services become available and adopted, reminds us that by the time you read this, many new possibilities will exist.

## Ups and Downs in Language Learning

There are Swedish learners who learn the language very quickly without many programs. Whether they are eager, outgoing, talkative, and systematic in their approach or not, they often have the ability to structure their interactions with other people and to take advantage of many types of situations to make it a learning situation. At the same time, some learners have the motivation, temperament and opportunity to focus all their attention on learning. David had a firm grasp of the language within six months of moving to Sweden. In many respects, he has demonstrated an extraordinary ability to adapt to the resources available in Sweden. He described his experience as tied to his personality:

*I took five intensive four-week courses at Folkuniversitetet. I focused all my time on learning Swedish. And when I have my goal, I am totally into it. At the beginning it was a lot of time with the textbook. I then started reading the Metro [newspaper], I watched TV in English and read the subtitles in Swedish. The radio came much later. Now I am reading a book. I try to get out with Swedes. Fika is perfect because it is one-to-one, so it is easy to follow the conversation.*

## My Language Stockmarket



For many others, however, learning Swedish does not come so quickly.

There is no one method or tool to “solve” the process of learning a language. Learning a language is not a linear process that evolves smoothly step by step. Rather, language learning is a long lasting process with many starts, stops and restarts. People experience ups and downs in their level of motivation, the amount of attention they focus on improvement and their feelings of progress. It can be stressful and disheartening to the learner who constantly has to find new ways to motivate herself/himself to fight on, and somehow must “trust the process” even if the process, at any given point, may seem pointless and leading nowhere.

In Språkskap, we have mainly looked at language learning as a social process to see how language learners can learn from their daily interactions. This means that the setbacks and frustrations a learner experiences influences the interactions with other people. When we initially began our explorations, we had a vague idea that tools and structures to support learning could help ease the uncomfortable aspects of language learning, such as misunderstandings and the disruptions from breaking social codes. However, we have come to realize that these uncomfortable aspects are so intrinsically intertwined with the social language learning process itself and they provide opportunity, just as they provide obstacles. Just as making language errors in the beginning is part of learning a language, so is the occasional awkward situation from using the wrong words or breaking social rules enhanced by the lack of language proficiency. Instead we look to support and motivate people to employ resources available to them in their everyday lives.

## Pick Up and Put Down - Strategy

Over the span of time of learning a language, the learners try a wide variety of learning techniques. For some learners, the motivation accompanying the discovery of a new technique provides an active period of use. For instance, Leslie spoke about listening to an audio book while reading the book as well. This activity may continue over a few days and then lie dormant for a week, two or even months before the learner is triggered to try again or try a new variation of the same. Learners' moods and modes are in unpredictable flux throughout their long-term learning process, and the discovery of new techniques often provides a motivational boost, with a short-lived intensive use of the technique. Like a diverse portfolio of investments however, the idea is not to find a single solution that alone brings someone into language fluency, but rather that over time picking up and dropping and picking up again a variety of techniques, the learner's language competence increases. The stock-market metaphor is meant to provide support for learners who may lament their lack of consistency in efforts and motivation by demonstrating that picking up and dropping things is actually beneficial, rather than harmful. The concept may also be helpful for learners who tend to stick to individual techniques, reminding them to try out new things and concepts.

# Swedish as a Social Language



# Language Learning through a Social Lens

Språkskap seeks to revamp how people see Swedish language learning in Sweden. This new lens puts focus upon how, when, where and with whom Swedish learners interact, and puts in relief options for including the people learners interact with into the equation. This is fundamentally a collaborative journey involving many people, in contrast with an individual effort involving the learner alone.

We have come to see Språkskap as a lens through which to ask questions about and demonstrate possibilities for how to support language learning.

Early in the Språkskap project, the project goal drew interest from a group of researchers with vast experience and expertise in studying second language acquisition (1). Periodic activities with these researchers have provided validation to our intentions and theoretical input for shaping our explorations (2). From our first meeting with these researchers, a workshop that brought their data and approach into a future-oriented design workshop with our project team, we brought home a challenge to view language learning and the building of social relationships as one and the same.

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1 We thank Johannes Wagner and his colleagues from University of Southern Denmark, Odense for their interest and great support in our project.

2 It is important to note that in drawing on input from these researchers, we have interpreted and adapted what we have learned in ways often unfamiliar to them. This is much different from creating a shared project from the outset with a much more integrated approach.

We have learned that a new paradigm in Second Language Acquisition has emerged over the past decades, which, on the basis of empirical evidence, argues that language learning is essentially formed by social practice, experience, and socialization. This suggests that teaching second languages behind closed classroom doors means to ignore one of the most powerful resources available: language use in everyday social contacts in the surrounding society. They suggest that making this resource available for language teaching promises to enhance language teaching greatly. Surprisingly, language teaching has not in any systematic way drawn on the rich experience that foreigners do in their everyday life with the language of their new society.

Through this view, we can understand language learning and social integration into everyday life practices as depending on each other. While traditionally, language teaching and learning have been seen as a prerequisite for socialization, we can see socialization as the foundation of learning and teaching. In this sense, instead of having to learn language to be social, learners have to be social to learn language. This provides support for radically rethinking the ideology and practice of second language teaching and learning and for understanding the challenge as a social and not solely a linguistic one.

An appreciation of the social aspects of the very complex and challenging area of language learning in Sweden provokes a re-conceptualization of the model for understanding and delivering language learning support. We wish to provoke explorations in this underdeveloped arena with the proposition that language learning should be driven by interactions between learners and speakers. Interactions refer to the wide variety of communication between people in the desired language (Swedish, in this case). The

focus should be upon sustaining communication through back-and-forth interaction in practical and leisure encounters that make up our lives. When Swedish is viewed as a social language, the options for supporting learning increase dramatically.

It obviously involves much more than introducing new theories about language learning, however. We think it involves mobilizing people in a variety of ways and in different constellations to demonstrate new possible ways of supporting learning. This comes with a great many challenges as well:

- » How can we organize language learning support without a formal school or classroom context?
- » How can a language learner get a feeling of autonomy, to learn about different resources, tools and methods to be able to put together a language learning path that suits her needs and her situation?
- » How is it possible to convey to newcomers who wish to learn Swedish, that a traditional language course with a teacher is but one component in learning a language?
- » How can we help learners to socialize as a means for their language learning?
- » How can supporting language learning be viewed as important and interesting to Swedish speakers?
- » What tools or strategies can invite Swedish speakers into valuable interactive with learners?
- » Through our design explorations in relation to this social lens, we have developed the Språkskap Model. After introducing the model, we will introduce various ways we have been working in this direction, combined with seeds for future explorations. Through entering into the forward-looking activities of Språkskap, we have become both humbled by the complexities of understanding language learning and forging new ways of supporting language learning, as becoming tantalized by the great potential that re-focusing the effort of language learning support can bring.



## The Model

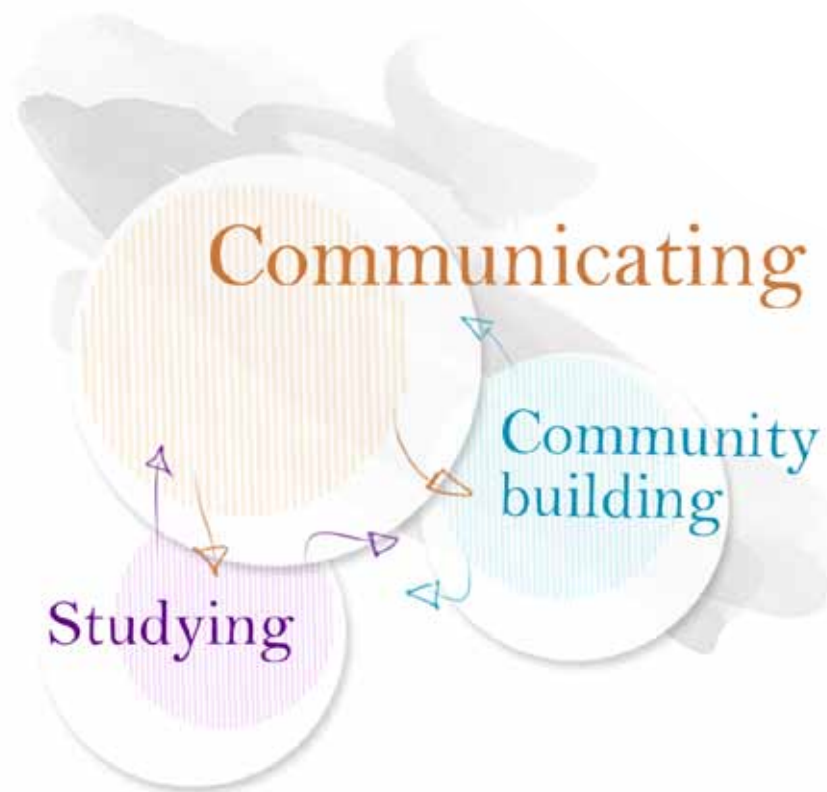
The Språkskap Model has three main pillars for learning: Communicating, Community Building, and Studying. While studying is the common focus of language learning, Språkskap puts the emphasis upon *communicating* and *community building*.

*Communicating:* Språkskap seeks to stimulate all forms of Swedish communication between Swedish learners and Swedish speakers: face-to-face talk between strangers, between friends, one-on-one, and in groups, text-messaging, instant messaging, e-mailing, and phone calls with friends or strangers. The model is based on the idea that a focus on communicating in Swedish (whether “being silent in Swedish” rather than switching to English or carrying through a longer conversation, reading a poster on the wall, or text-based communication), the learner develops a hunger for improving his ability to communicate. The hunger is a motivation to attend to language matters (*studying*) between interactions. Learners seek tools, techniques, and strategies for improving their communication abilities. They seek to understand as a basis for being able to use the language in practice.

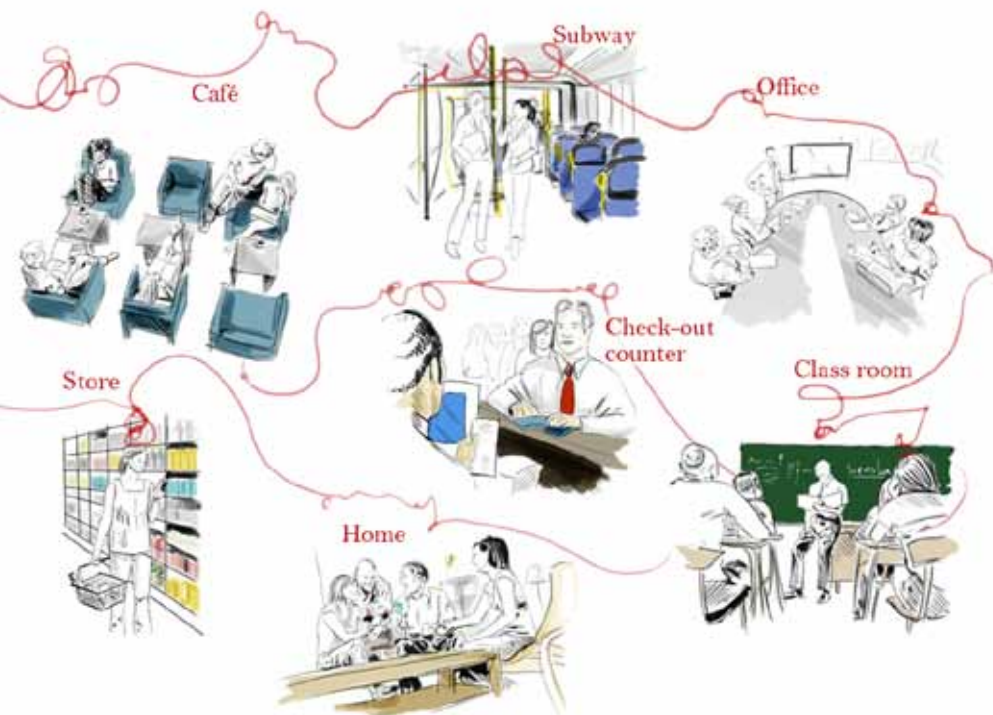
This *studying* includes:

1. Linguistic competence: skill building (listening, reading, speaking, writing), grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation)
2. Sociolinguistic competence (which language is used in different social contexts)
3. Pragmatics (the functional use of different language items such as turn-taking)

*Community building:* Building social relations is about creating and participating in one's Swedish community. When broken down to the basics, *community building* involves two main relationships: (1) initiating interaction with people at the times a learner determines, and (2) other people contacting the learner at times and places the learner does not determine.



# Supporting Social Swedish – A Vision



## The Arena

In this diagram we picture the different stakeholders involved in language learning, and describe how they might develop in the language learning process.

### Student to Learner

Student: studies at a course or on her own, follows directions from teacher, takes tests to see how good her Swedish is, is waiting for her Swedish to

be good enough to interact with speakers, follows goals set by curricula and/or teachers.

Learner: sets up her own long- and short term goals, interacts with environment to learn, makes errors to learn, measures progress by measuring her community building, turns speakers into coaches, is not afraid to be a burden upon her surroundings.

### Speaker to Coach

Speaker: switches to English when problems occur in conversation, switches to English before problems occur in conversation, takes a teaching role when speaking Swedish to learners, speaks super fast or super slow.

Coach: sticks to Swedish, interacts, sticks to business at hand, gives space and time, points to questions rather than fixed answers, suggests activities rather than giving information, uses local references.



## Seller to Scaffolder

**Seller:** Selling/offering; sees customers'/clients' language skills as binary (zero or proficient).

**Scaffolder:** our business is a valid arena for language learning, opens up time and space for language learning, makes local materials available.

## Language Teacher to Scaffolder

**Language teacher:** sees language as a product to be sold, conceives of language as a system separate from real social interaction, leaves students to their own devices outside teaching situation.

**Language scaffolder:** Supports learners in daily practice: sees social interaction outside classroom as base for learning, scaffolds learning outside classroom.



## Communication Tips

The following suggestions seek to help communication between a learner of Swedish and Swedish speakers. We have come to refer to Swedish speakers as untrained “language coaches.” In this sense, a coach is a person who is willing to spend time talking Swedish to a learner. A coach is not a teacher and is not meant to behave as a teacher. Rather, we are interested in viewing coaching as something that people already do and that they can improve in through focus, practice and support. We have developed seven communication tips for coaches interacting with learners.





Explore, evaluate and add to these tips and try them out with others.

1. Give and take extra time to talk. Be patient.
2. If you must use English (or any other language), then change back to Swedish as soon as possible.
3. Focus on communication in Swedish, rather than grammatical explanations or word explanations.
4. Speak naturally, in a normal everyday tone of voice. Do not talk louder or significantly slower.
5. Do not correct in communication unless the learner invites you to.
6. If problems occur in communication, repair only twice.
7. Use short, simple phrases when giving information.

Here we expand on each of those points:

**1. Give and take additional time. Be patient.**

Breaks occur in natural speech. When you are learning a language, these pauses last longer. You're looking for words, alternative expressions, or using the time to interpret what has been said. This is a natural and important part of the learning process. These long pauses can easily become stressful moments for both parties. But do not get stressed. Allow for longer pauses, even if it feels unnatural. Do not propose words to the speaker as that might disturb the learning process.

**2. If you must use English (or any other language), then change back to Swedish as soon as possible.**

In Sweden we often switch to English for the sake of simplicity. Please do not reply in English if a language learner begins the conversation in Swedish. If you for some reason switch to English, this does not necessarily mean that the rest of the conversation must be in English. Once you have solved the temporary communication problem, switch back to Swedish.

**3. Focus on communication, rather than grammatical explanations or word explanations.**

As a language coach, it is your task to provide opportunities for learners to communicate in Swedish in natural situations. As a language learner, it is your mission to communicate in Swedish in an environment outside the classroom. In this situation, it is not the language content and structure that is in focus.



### *Scenario 1*

Learner: I live on Solna. (Jag bor på Solna.)

Coach: We say: in Solna. (Det heter i Solna.)

Learner: Why? (Varför?)

Coach: Well... It's a place. (Eh, det är en plats.)

Learner: But, on the bus, that's a place too? (Men på Kungstensgatan, det är en plats?)

Coach: ...

### *Scenario 2.*

Learner: I live on Solna. (Jag bor på Solna.)

Coach: Ok! I live in Sundbyberg. (Jaha, jag bor i Sundbyberg.)

Learner: Yes, right, you live in Sundbyberg, and I live in Solna. (Ja, okej, du bor i Sundbyberg, och jag bor i Solna.)

Coach: Then, we both take the blue line in the underground to work. (Ja, då åker vi båda blå linje med tunnelbanan till jobbet.)

Learner: Where do you work? (Var jobbar du?)

Coach: I work... (Jag jobbar...)

In scenario 1 the two people get stuck in a small grammatical element that has no relevance to communication, and fall out of their roles as learner and coach.

Moreover, there is a risk of frustration if they cannot sort out the problem.

In scenario 2 the coach ignores the grammatical error, and takes the chance to start a conversation with a communicative aim.

**4. Speak naturally, in normal everyday tone of voice.**

Do not talk louder or significantly slower. Do not raise your voice. Do not talk much slower than normal. Do not use written forms in spoken language.

**5. Do not correct in communication unless the learner invites you to.**

This is a situation outside the classroom and the coach is not a language teacher, just a communications partner. In an ordinary conversation, one does not correct slips of the tongue, and one never points to the quality of the other's language. Instead, focus on the conversation, and above all its communicative content. The learner will easily become insecure if corrected, and embarrassed if praised.

There are instances when learners seemingly invite speakers to approve, add to, or correct utterances. In these instances corrections are part of communication and can be helpful.

**6. If problems occur in communication, repair only twice.**

Repair means finding solutions when communication breaks down, like repeating or asking for clarification. In natural conversation this is only done twice in a row. If problem is not solved at this stage, new strategies need to be employed. Let's look at an example from a café.



//

Focus on the conversation, and  
above all its communicative content

### Scenario 1

Learner: Could I have a ban? (Jag vill ha en bole.)

Coach: Sorry? (Va?)

[repair once]

Learner: Could I have a ban? (Jag vill ha en bole.)

Coach: Sorry, what would you like? (Ursäkta, vad vill du ha?) [repair twice]

Learner: A ban (En bole.)

B. Sorry? (Va?) [repair three times]

Learner [switches to English]: A round thing with cinnamon.

Coach [continues in English]: Aha! A cinnamon bun!

### Scenario 2

Learner: I want a ban. (Jag vill ha en bole.)

Coach: Sorry? (Va?) [repair once]



Learner: I want a ban. (Jag vill ha en bole.)

Coach: Sorry, what do you want? (Ursäkta, vad vill du ha?) [repair twice]

Learner: A ban. (En bole.)

Coach: This one? Or that one? (Den här? Eller den där?) [changes strategy and points to different breads and cookies]

Learner: Yes, this one! (Ja, den där!) [points to a cinnamon roll]

In scenario 1, the learners and the coach feel frustrated and stressed.

If we repair more than twice, both parties feel stupid and there is a high risk of moving to a lingua franca, such as English. In Scenario 2, however, the coach changes the tactics after two repairs by suggesting alternatives, and points to them. It is then easier for learners to communicate their wishes. They also manage to keep to Swedish through the entire conversation without feeling stupid, frustrated or stressed out.





Recommendations:

- » Point
- » Give suggestions (this / that is / a bun / a cake ...)
- » Keep an open mind and think about what could fit into the situation.
- » Use synonyms or explain in a simple manner.

In other instances it might be necessary to just drop the subject for the time being instead of carrying on.

## 7. Use short, simple phrases when giving information.

In order to avoid communication gaps, be aware that it is easier to understand information that is not too complex. For example:

Coach: I would think that that's a rather good idea. (Jag skulle tro att det är en ganska bra idé.) is harder to understand than

Coach: That's a good idea. (Det är en bra idé.)

And in the same way:

There are many ways to get to the library. I would think that the best way is to take the shortcut down the stairs at Kungstensgatan. (Det finns många olika sätt att komma till Stadsbiblioteket. Jag skulle tro att den bästa vägen är att gå nedför trapporna vid Kungstensgatan.)

is harder to understand than:

To the library? Take the stairs at Kungstensgatan. (Till Stadsbiblioteket? Ta trapporna vid Kungstensgatan.)

*A special thanks to Johannes Wagner who created the first version of the Communication tips together with Karl Lindemalm and to Djina Wilk and Sofi Tegsveden who did a great job editing them.*



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In order to avoid communication gaps, be aware that it is easier to understand information that is not too complex

## Språkskap Model in Practice

Putting the Språkskap model into practice puts emphasis upon learners in everyday situations that demand communication in Swedish, or that provide a learner an option for communicating in Swedish. *Community building* includes the actions involved in getting people in these situations. *Studying* includes the actions of learning about the language to support communicating successfully.

- » While *communicating* is the driving force of learning, in practice the three modes of the model *communicating*, *studying* and *community building*, may blur. For example, *communicating* often includes “repairing” misunderstandings, i.e. asking for clarification or asking the other person to rephrase. If done in Swedish it is clearly communicating; if done in another language it might be seen as studying. *Communicating* may be interrupted briefly by corrections or explanations that could be seen as *studying*.

## Scaffolding

We have viewed scaffolding as a valuable metaphor for introducing others to this way of learning and supporting learning. Scaffolding refers to the temporary structures that builders use to create a safe, useful working space in otherwise unreachable areas. Here we refer to scaffolding as the conceptual structures that are intended to create useful spaces for language learning, such as the Svenskadox card introduced earlier.

We developed two main action-models for Swedish learners to turn their communicative situations into learning encounters: (a) *Sit-Talk-Sit* and, (b) *The Encounter Dial*. We also created a note-book-like support material we call a *The Language Passport*.

Språkskap has explored how to scaffold and promote language learning stemming from each individual's motivations. These motivations may be communicative (i.e. I need to speak Swedish in order to work as a doctor in Sweden), social (i.e. I need to be able to chat to my Swedish mother-in-law) or linguistic (i.e. I just love languages). Independent of the learner's motivation, Språkskap has focused on a learning-by-doing-approach in attempting to provoke learners to do things with other real people in the real world. Traditional classroom teaching has been based on the assumption that learning precedes practice in the real world in an orderly and non-frightening way. In the Språkskap sense, this is reversed. Learning-by-doing is often a laborious, sometimes tedious and frightening experience. It is therefore that scaffolding situations are often crucial for success.

In this way Språkskap seeks to provoke and support interests that are triggered through the engagement in the world. That is, when learners walk through the city, see things, hear things, and come in contact with things, we seek to trigger and stimulate their interest through scaffolding. Inherent in reading a sign is the desire to understand what one reads. However, such desire is not always equal. It is also not “acted upon” in the same way every time. Rather than walking on when a learner does not understand, we seek to support sustained engagement with the local material. How can a learner “capture” the word, phrase or whole sign and use it as the basis for engaging others?



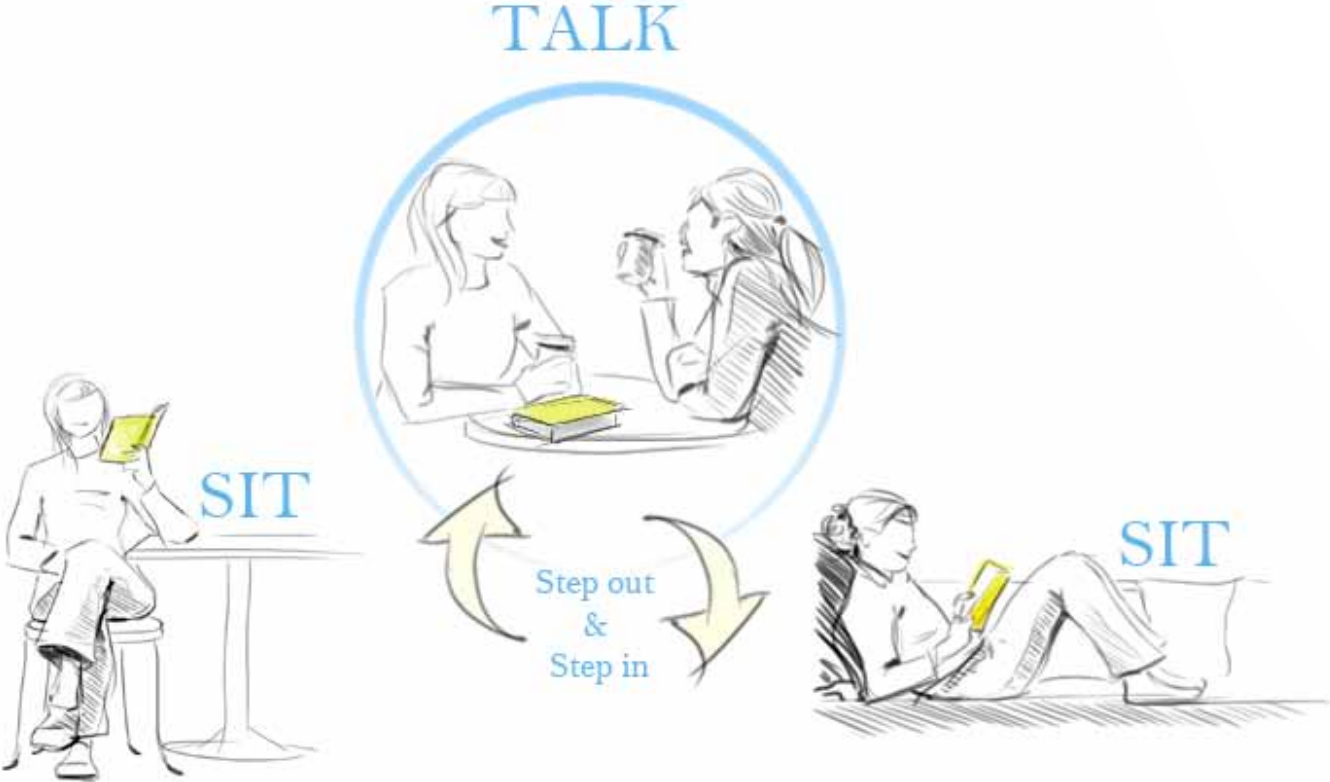
## Sit, Talk, Sit

Sit, Talk, Sit is a simple sequence for Swedish learners to structure their encounters with Swedish speakers during practical activities. The steps for engaging are:

Sit: find a place to sit down, and jot down notes about an upcoming encounter, whether preparing your goals or preparing vocabulary and sentences for an upcoming interaction.

Talk: Engage in a communicative activity by interacting with the Swedish speaker for the purpose of the task, whether looking for safe toys or ordering a pastry.

Sit: After the interaction, sit down, review, write notes and reflect upon the interaction.





## The Encounter Dial

The encounter dial addresses the actions a learner takes when he or she does not understand something in a communicative interaction. The dial has three actions: Easy Out, Step-Out/Step-In and Full Press. *Easy Out*: upon not understanding, the learner takes the “easy way out” of the encounter by ignoring misunderstandings e.g., nods, says thank you and walks away. *Step-out & Step-In* refers to the learner stepping out of the immediate interaction and then returning to clarify misunderstandings. This can either be a very quick sequence of stepping out and stepping in, or can be done over a longer period of time. *Full-press* refers to when a learner stays in the interaction and asks for further clarification until understanding.

This pushes learners, and gives a license to increase the amount of “burden” they put on the people they talk to. However, the learner’s perception of what it is to be a burden, is to a speaker, often exaggerated. When speaking a learner’s fears of being a burden are often not warranted. Rather, people often enjoy supporting a learner during an encounter.

## The Language Passport

Why do we need physical artifacts to mediate encounters between learners and speakers? Physical artifacts have several unique properties that make them powerful tools. We worked out the “Language passport” as but one example of how physical artifacts might help and structure communication.

### Structure

The content of the passport gives instructions and suggestions for structuring real life encounters. The “sit-talk-sit” model gives the learner a basic model to make everyday encounters into learning encounters. Also the physical structure of the passport will interact with the learner’s mental representation and the outside world to shape and structure the learning process.

## **A Room of One's Own**

The 3D layout of the passport transforms it into a kind of room that the learner can inhabit in both a metaphorical and a practical way. Metaphorically it is a room in that it has different things in different spaces. The learner can access and add different types of information in different places of this room. And in a more practical sense the passport creates an actual room in the way it shields its user from the external world. This room can be used for preparing encounters, solving problems or evaluating and documenting encounters. This is a clear statement to the external world that the learner is not available for communicating, but is actually processing things, that is, the attending to language activities we call studying.

Another important part of the room metaphor is the way that a learner would appropriate and “refurbish” her room.

## **Identity Building Outside and Inside**

Ordinary passports show the holder’s national identity on its cover to the world. The inside of the passport gives additional info about the holder. Also the language passport shows others that the holder is a language learner. This in itself might scaffold interactions with others by priming speakers on how to interact with the holder (i.e. by giving extra time). The inside of the language passport is one way the learner builds her language learning identity, both in the ways she organizes its contents and in the way she

**Pedagogic Engine**

"Pure Talk"



"Language"



"Pure Talk"



"Language"



Kan du skriva här?

Mål

Nö

Nya Ord

### Encounter Dial

turn everyday situations into learning situations  
move from A

A  
"Easy Out"

### Reparationsfraser

- Vad sa du? Kan du ta om det? Jag förstod inte riktigt.
- Kan du tala lite långsammare, tror du? Jag förstod inte riktigt
- Jag vet inte om jag har förstått helt och hållet.
- Jag är inte helt säker på [att jag förstår] vad du menar [med det].
- Nu hängde jag [nog tyvärr] inte riktigt med.

adapts, appropriates, changes its contents to fit her own needs (i.e. learning styles, personal likes and dislikes etc). The openness of a physical object and the countless ways of changing it make it different from, for example, digital software, where changes can only be made if they are provided in the software itself.

## **Mediating Object**

The language passport is for mediating the encounter between a learner and a speaker because it has working areas not only for the passport holder but also for the speakers (working area for writing: "Could you please write this here."). It is also used in ways similar to a map (when asking for directions) where speakers look at what the learner has written and this helps negotiate misunderstandings or the like.

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## **Practical Functions**

The practical functions of the language passport are: writing (goals, plans, notes, new words etc.), keeping words (i.e. flashcards and wordlists), different ways of sorting content (different folders), ways of labeling and re-labeling different parts of the passport.

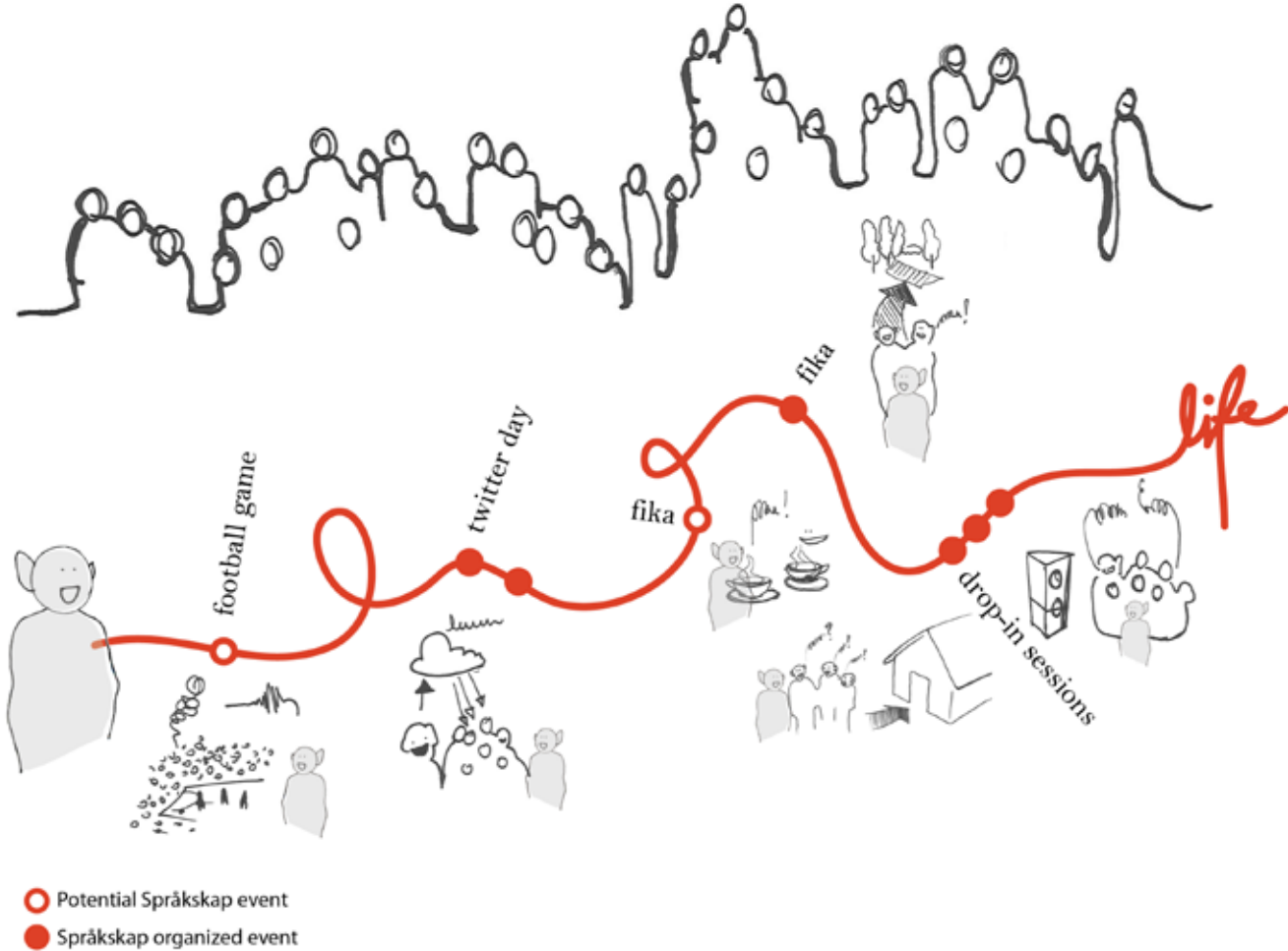
## Community Building – Activity Group to Community

Building social relations challenges how we think about supporting learning. The Svenskadox tool is an example of supporting the interaction between two people in Swedish. Coming to Sweden however, also involves the creation of new social relations on a variety of levels.

Rather than speaking about a community at large to be entered (for instance, all Swedish speaking people), we rather place importance on the continual process of building community. We are asking learners and those interested in supporting learning to take an active role in initiating contact for the purpose of doing things together that allow for interaction in Swedish

We break down the term community into small components that are action-based and we demonstrate how you can initiate community building. This diagram demonstrates how community is built through what we will loosely call “activity groups” that form around a specific activity or set of activities.









## Activity Group

A group is a set of people forming around a specific activity (or set of activities). The way activities together are set into motion and how they manifest when people come together and how they end, vary greatly. For instance, meeting two people for coffee after work may only involve asking the people if they are interested near the end of a shift, while activities at specific times and places often involve more coordination. For some activities the people matter more than the event, while others and for other people, the actual event may be the draw.

- » The group is formed out of an interest or need to do something.
- » It is bound temporally. It is often short-term, but may be longer.
- » The group interacts via face-to-face discussion, telephone, and/or digital tools.
- » The group's members may be members of other partly overlapping or disjointed groups or networks.

We draw our confidence in such activities as a result of our own use of activity groups. Our explorations with learners were voluntary. We held a wide variety of activities that focused on the activity at hand, with Swedish interaction an integrated aspect. For instance, the various activities of the weekly drop-in sessions, taking part in Twitter Day, and going to IKEA all required introducing the activity via mail, supported by discussions with people, negotiating the best times and places. We wish to provide Swedish learners and Swedish speakers the impetus to get together and do things, in Swedish.

Player actions: (1) Identify or create an upcoming activity. (2) Introduce activity, time, place, supporting technology, and simple instructions. (3) participate and enjoy.

## Going Digital – Språkskap App & Web Service?

We created the Prata På concept to put focus on motivating and supporting learners in their everyday interactions. To develop an “Everyday IT” (Vardags IT) concept for supporting language learning in daily interactions, we drew upon inspiration from an online knitting community. We are hesitant to replicate traditional teaching methods in the new digital options available. Flashcards and translation devices are among the most common digital language offers. Instead, we followed a trajectory of supporting people in action and between interactions. During a workshop, we learned of an online service catering to knitters that provides knitting challenges by giving members a specific pattern to knit. The knitters are led along only to find out what they have been knitting once moving along in the knitting process. The idea brought together an individual aspect of action and a community aspect bringing people together with a similar interest. We used this as a starting point for a mobile solution.

## The Prata På Application and its Functions

Prata På is a smart phone application and community website designed to stimulate interaction among Swedish speakers and learners, through challenges. Motivation aspect: based self-generated content rather than pre-programed expert content, the application supports learners both in their free time between interactions and in close connection with an encounter. For instance, on the way to the clothing store, Ilias is able to locate the store on the map service (regular Google maps) and listen to the conversations of previous users when they were interacting with the clerk. They are able to begin orienting to the context specific vocabulary on the way to the shop, record during their own interactions, and upload their content and reflections afterward.

### Web Presence:

Prata På asks for four main actions on its front page:

- » Share a story
- » Create a challenge
- » Suggest and/or review a Språkskap Place
- » Latest challenges, tips & tricks

There are then four personal areas. My Profile, My Network, Challenges, Conversations, in addition to a simple recording function, and a section of Printables, formats for printing and using in paper form.

#### My profile

- » What is my current competence level? A1, B2, C1, etc.
- » Personal upload library
- » Progress tracking

#### My network

- » work
- » home
- » other places

#### Challenges

- » Browse challenges

- » Carry out challenges

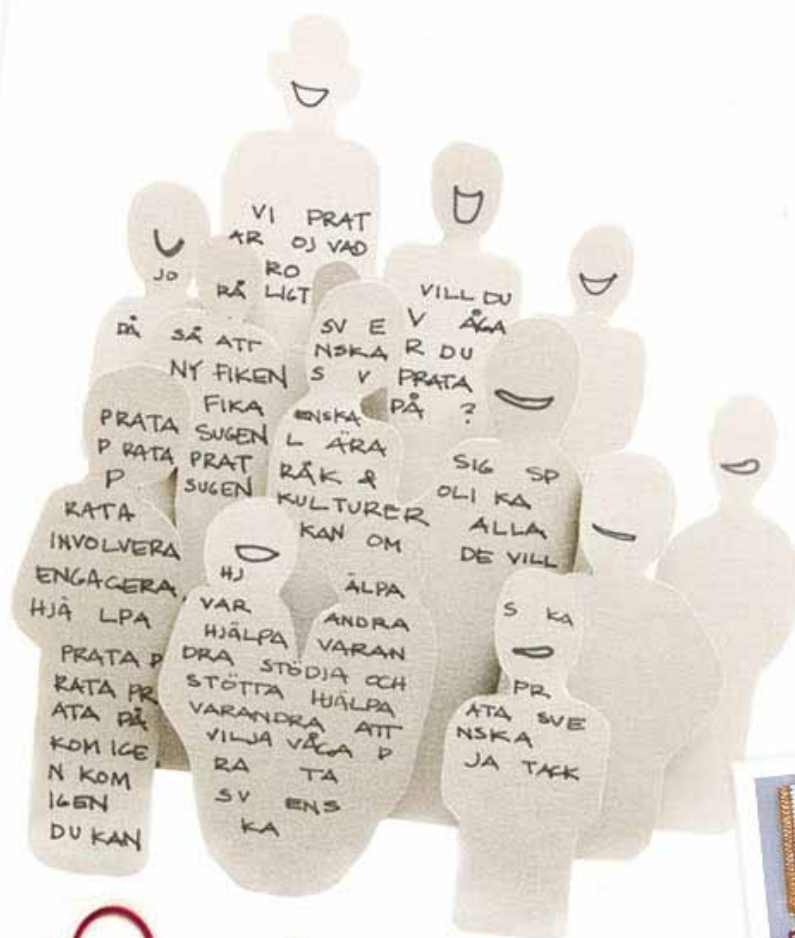
- » Review challenge
- » Submit new challenge

#### Conversations

- » By topic
- » By context

#### Printables

- » Language Passport
- » Svenskadox Cards
- » Challenge Cards



# Prata På

av  
Språkskep









## Drop in as a Pedagogic Offer:

A big part of the Språkskap explorations involved learners joining a Språkskap “Drop-In” session for two hours over six consecutive weeks. The initial idea was to ask learners to stop by our room when they had time (just drop-in) to explore what we had been working on. It was to be a test-bed for different aspects of language learning support, mainly for the important issues for a service with a strong mobile web component. However, the reaction of the volunteer participants and the success of the activities demonstrated that the way the drop-in sessions were organized, provides a strong model for a valuable offer for language learners and language coaches. The success of the activities was supported by the number of people who returned, their enthusiasm during activities, and their comments about what they did.



We held a variety of activities that included:

- » My Interactions & My Places, mapping the people and places learners speak with in Swedish and would like to speak with in the future.
- » Identity Modeling, identifying the similarities and differences between a learners' identity in their home country and language compared to in Sweden in Swedish.
- » Practice Café, mimicking and practicing the interactions from a local café such as walking in, ordering coffee, talking about the pictures on the wall, recording all-the-while.
- » Challenges, identify, try, and share challenges for speaking Swedish in everyday activities.
- » Blogging on Try Out, Document, & Share Blog, the blog station allowed learners to upload their progress and comment on each other's activities.
- » Technical support, how to record and upload using mp3 players, create blog entries, and sign-up for online services.

Although the project team initiated the drop-in sessions as an exploratory space combining generative and evaluative design, the participants became rather engaged in the activities as learning activities in their own right. Swedish was the predominant language in all activities except the individual interviews (conducted in English). The activities succeeded in providing a wide array of activities representing a wide variety of interaction styles. To the surprise of the project team, the periodic comments about Språkskap and the organized evaluation sessions supported the idea that some learners viewed the sessions as part of a completed offer and were formulating statements of what Språkskap was and was not.



For example, Maria arrived later than the rest and joined a group of three and a facilitator after they completed an “identity modeling” activity with clay. She listened as others presented their clay stories. Afterward, she started talking about how much she enjoys Språkskap and how much Swedish she has learned as a result. Sofia and Adriana agreed. Kalle, the facilitator, was surprised by the comments and then asked the learners to explain their views of Språkskap:

Adriana: “Språkskap is better than a course because it is relaxed (no stress) and there is no focus on errors; instead we focus on communication.”

A “normal” language course is apparently seen as too focused on grammar, and there is no time to talk in the course. This surprised Kalle since Folkuniversitetet’s language curricula clearly state that teaching should focus on communicative language skills and introduce grammar points when necessary to fulfill a communicative task. What Andrea here calls “communication” could be seen as the “communicating” of the pedagogic engine.

Maria: “I learned so many new words because I realize I lack words while we speak and then I go home and look them up.”

One could argue that Maria’s engagement in “communicating” during the sessions works as a catalyst for “studying” (attending to language matters). When she realizes she lacks certain words during her communications, she continues focusing on communicating, and leaves the details for later, when she goes home and attends to language details by looking up new words. This interpretation supports the idea of “communicating” as being the base of language learning.

Milena: "I got so much more confident from Språkskap. I dare to speak much more now."

Sofia: "It is about sharing ideas and experiences."

Sofia's quotes focus on the "community" aspect of the pedagogic engine. Here Språkskap is seen as a social situation that encourages action, and promotes the feeling of sharing your language learning experience with others in the same situation.

So how can it be that a "series of unconnected events" is seen as a valuable and valid "method" by the participants?

This suggests that the concept of Drop-in sessions could be offered as a "course" on its own merits. We can also draw on the individual activities and the model of engagement when introducing a lab setting in conjunction with a language course. Or, we can disconnect the supporting function



from the language course and bring it into the public sphere. Instead of focusing on the language learning, learners focus on the physical and intangible relationships in the language learning process. This brings a new relationship to supporting learning in everyday life in places that have a closer vicinity to where people engage with others in Swedish.

### **Supporting the Practicalities of Swedish Communication**

Since the early days of the drop-In sessions, we have developed a much stronger model and set of support tools. What would a “Practicalities of Swedish Learning in Sweden” offer look like? It could be a type of “training center” that trains in all aspects of the actions that bring Swedish learners and speakers together in communication, as well as the tools that support people before and after to turn everyday encounters into learning encounters.

*Swedish Support Lab – Weekdays 8:00–9:00, Weekends 10.00–12.00*

The drop-in lab offers a variety of impromptu activities for learners to prepare for interacting with others in Swedish. Drop-in before your visit to IKEA, trip to the tax office or leading up to a job interview. Services include “sparing practice,” talking while walking practice, or freshen-up on your formalities. Set up a challenge tree with support from our language coaches. Get feedback and support as you tick off your challenges. Buy some disposable tools for guiding you into and out of valuable language encounters.

## Public & Private Service Providers and Language Learning Institutions

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We envision a future where language learning is lifted from the shoulders of the learner alone and where Swedish speakers grow into the role of language coaches and public and private service providers create spaces, times, materials and relationships for their institutions to become language learning arenas. Language learning institutions have a large potential role to play in bringing about such a future.

The motivation for any institution to initiate a language support program is manifold: economic, such as targeting a larger group of consumers or social entrepreneurship programs, public responsibility to reach all citizens, or advancing an agenda of inclusivity for all people to participate in all activities. We would like to extend an invitation to begin exploring the great void in language support between the interests of institutions and the offers available. The basic scaffolding structures we introduce in the project, allow for adapting and further development in relation to any environment.

Here we sketch some examples of such initiatives on a local scale:

### **The Big Corporation with English as a Working Language**

Sweden hosts many internationally-focused businesses that use English as their official working language. English as a working language in the Swedish context possesses many obstacles for the Swedish language learner. The English problem discussed earlier will be accentuated here. Using Swedish at work is hard and often deemed unnecessary in an English speaker workplace. However, non-Swedish speakers are generally quick to notice that while actual work is conducted in English, much of the informal communication in hallways, during coffee and lunch breaks, and in social activities is carried out in Swedish. Missing out on this poses social and professional consequences. Many people take Swedish lessons, but without using it outside the classroom in the work environment, progress is often very limited. It is common to hear that “the more I work, the less Swedish I learn.”

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- » offered drop-in services (described in the earlier section) for all their non-Swedish staff
- » offered all Swedish speakers workshops in how to become Språkskap coaches
- » designate a “super coach” who provides coaching to coaches when they need support
- » let learners have extra coaching with the super coach if they need it
- » had “language policies” in the way companies of today have equal rights policies and environmental policies
- » viewed Swedish learning as an interest for everybody in the company, not just for the learners





## 1000 Meter Club

What could institutions offering Swedish courses do to help learners learn more Swedish in everyday life? A starting point is initiating a 1000-meter club. Invite the public and private service providers within a radius of one kilometer of the language school to participate in supporting language learning clientele – be a “Språkskap friendly” location. In exchange for increased language student clientele, the service providers receive coaching support for their employees and service and layout-specific materials. The learning institution informs its students about the “Språkskap friendly” places through a 1000 meter club map.

Different service providers may do different things to become Språkskap friendly. For instance, just as other targeted campaigns, a service provider may wish to increase business at specific hours on specific days, or guide discussions around specific types of services.

What if

- » a café had a certain spot near the counter where learners can observe the interactions of other customers to prepare their own interaction
- » a bicycle repair shop had pictures with words of bicycle parts and common phrases
- » a bank had a rehearsal spot just inside the entrance where during certain hours learners could rehearse a particular interaction
- » a restaurant had a happy hour when customers could chat with the staff
- » a hair salon offered discounts for language learners between 14:00 and 16:00.

## Coach the Coach

Swedish speakers are often eager to support learners, but do not know what to do to help. Based on the inventory of people to interact within Swedish from the drop-in sessions (my activities), learners can include the people they wish to interact with in the Swedish learning equation. By connecting people and language ability, it is an important way for the learner to monitor their progress by raising their awareness of how much Swedish they already speak and how they could increase their talk time by talking more to the same people or approaching more people in Swedish. Learning organizations have the opportunity to embrace this important ingredient in language learning by incorporating “coaching the coach” activities in their offers.

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What if in language instruction Swedish speakers were actually targeted as possible coaches, and given training?

What if

- » in a classroom setting, each learner gives the teacher a list of people they interact with in Swedish and the teacher or institution invites those people to a workshop or sends out information and communication tips?



# Language Learning in Action - Conclusions

When entering into the very simple task of supporting adults in learning the Swedish language in Sweden, we find many layers and levels of complexity. We started our own journey into this topic with a necessarily naïve goal of simply supporting people to turn their everyday encounters into learning encounters through engaging the topic with design thinking, pedagogic expertise, and processes for user involvement. We were given the mandate by an “everyday IT” grant (Vardags IT) from VINNOVA. As our project developed and we realized both the interest in supporting language learning, from learners themselves to everyone they encounter, and the potential for offering supporting services, we became overwhelmed by the possibilities. Rather than focus on one specific aspect of the puzzle, such as taking the *Prata På* to market by protecting it with confidential business negotiations, we cast a wider net and our organizations agreed to a more open process. We have attracted interest from researchers, learners, teachers, schools, and businesses, and we have developed great ambitions for participating in a major shift in how people approach language learning, first and foremost in Sweden, and ultimately in Europe and around the world. It is with this shift in mindset that we share the progress of our leads wishing to view them as seeds that must be developed by ourselves and others in relation to specific possibilities.

We have come to see supporting language learning as a highly social activity that draws upon resources that are available to everybody. Learners need to put themselves in the paths of Swedish speakers to benefit from this resource. At the same time, all those concerned with newcomers learning Swedish have an opportunity to provide support to the effort, both in helping learners have opportunities to communicate in Swedish, and in the ways they are able to draw on their communications as resources for learning.

We have found that whenever we look at what people are actually doing today, and ask people how they do things, we learn that people everywhere do develop their own tactics to, for instance, support learners, just as learners develop tactics to learn. However, the “support community” must do more to bring about a greater understanding and to normalize effective ways of supporting learning. We suggest that there are opportunities in how people organize activities, the material they can use in practice, even to ask someone to write a word on paper, and the way business, education, and physical spaces are organized.

We have identified four main players in a way that encompasses most people and organizations. With a challenge to explore language learning outside the classroom and starting points for social, physical, digital and relational scaffolding, we are able to look upon

each situation as an opportunity for language learning.

With this document we wish to challenge ourselves and inspire others to take these probes as triggers for either action.

- » Who wishes to challenge us where we are weakest? We accept that much of what we have explored is incomplete. Challenge us on our shortcomings by demonstrating what could work better!
- » Who wishes to take what we have started and go further? We are confident that much of what we have started is strong, and we need help moving forward. Take what you find as triggers for moving further expanding and evolving into something valuable!
- » How can you benefit yourselves and others by embracing Språkskap's message for supporting learning?



## Project Partners

### Folkuniversitetet

Folkuniversitetet, the extramural department of the University of Stockholm, is based on the philosophy of “folkbildning” – supporting groups of citizens in learning subjects of their interest. The institute offers courses in Swedish as a foreign language to 4,000 adult students a year. It offers a range of courses geared toward the special needs of language learners and challenges language teachers to practice in new ways.

### Interactive Institute

The Interactive Institute is a Swedish experimental media research institute that combines expertise in art, design and technology to conduct world leading applied research and innovation. We develop new research areas, concepts, products and services, and provide strategic advice to corporations and public organizations. Our research results are communicated and exhibited worldwide and brought out to society through commissioned work, license agreements and spin-off companies.

### Ergonomidesign

Ergonomidesign specializing in people-driven innovation is one of the top-ranking design firms in the world. Since 1969 the company has helped clients from all over the world to penetrate markets, increase sales and build brands through appealing and innovative designing of products and services. The key success factor is based on deep knowledge about the end users gained over years of multi-disciplinary research into physical-, cognitive- and emotional ergonomics.

We would like to thank all the people who have played a part in making Språkskap possible.



# Språkskap – Swedish as a Social Language

The Språkskap project arises out of the observation that those who are interested in learning Swedish while in Sweden, often struggle to tap into the most powerful learning resource available: everyday interactions with Swedish speakers. The Språkskap project has explored new ways of supporting language learning in everyday interactions. This book introduces the resulting vision for supporting Swedish language learning.

The Språkskap project was a one-year project in 2009-2010 based in Stockholm, Sweden led by three partners: Folkuniversitetet, Ergonomidesign, and the Interactive Institute. The project was funded by Vinnova.