

19-20/4 2018

Abstracts for workshop on

**Language and ideas among
Nordic migrants in North and South America**

Emigration from the Nordic countries to Brazil 1880-1914

Dag Retsö

Stockholm University

A demographical and socio-economic analysis of emigration from the Nordic countries to Brazil in the period 1880-1914 has been carried out, based on Brazilian immigration sources and against the background of the Brazilian agrarian structure. It shows that 1) it was dominated by young Swedish families who arrived in two major waves, in 1890-1891 and 1910-1911, 2) the immigrants were predominantly agrarian, more specifically farmers (*agricultores*) who migrated to southern Brazil to establish family farms within the domestic sector, 3) that a surprisingly large proportion of total migration, including a great number of families, went to the export sector in the coffee zone in São Paulo.

From an economic theoretical perspective, most migration originates in labor market conditions, i.e. scarcity vs abundance, and labor market conditions should be evened out in the long run, i.e. raised real wages in the countries of origin and lowered real wages in the receiving countries. Suggestions for further research is to see whether this labor market equilibrium was achieved by Nordic immigrants in Brazil, especially among the wage-earning laborers in São

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Paulo, and whether it occurred to the same degree in Latin America as in North America, given the different initial conditions in these regions. Further, it would be possible to shed light on the issue of female migrants, especially single women, through a prosopographic approach.

The Making of Swedish Cultural Heritage in Argentina: Swedish Emigration as Part of Settler Colonialism

Jenny Ingridsson
Södertörn University

Much has been written about Swedish emigration to the U.S. and the making of cultural heritage in North American Swedish communities. This project, however, seeks to explore Swedish emigration to Latin America in the 19th and 20th century and the making of Swedish heritage in contemporary Argentina. Through qualitative ethnographic methods, primarily in-depth interviews and observations, it will examine the particular case of the Swedish community in Oberá, a town located in northern Argentina. The aim is to investigate the making of Swedish heritage in the everyday life of contemporary Oberá with a particular focus on how the history of settler colonialism affects this process. The study rests upon a theoretical framework of political discourse analysis and centers around the concepts cultural heritage and settler colonialism.

Swedish Female Settlers on Reservation Lands in South Dakota

Johanna Andersson-Raeder
Stockholm University

In the summer of 1904, the US government held a land lottery in South Dakota. Vast acres of land from the Rosebud reservation had been labeled by the government as “surplus land” and were now up for sale to prospective settlers. The interest from the public was immense, more than 100 000 men and women filed applications to enter the lottery, hoping to win the

opportunity to buy 160 acres of fertile land at an affordable price to build their future on. Only a handful of lucky people, 2 500, were drawn as winners in this raffle. The majority of these people were West European immigrants, which was not a coincidence. It was an important part of the Government's project aimed at populating and the nation's western territories to attract West European immigrants. The vast array of weekly newspapers directed towards different immigration groups informed about the availability of land and upcoming land lotteries, how to participate and the requirements and the costs for buying government-owned land. In these newspapers, companies of land brokers offered their services such as scouting and estimating the value of land coming up for sale. West European settlers were expected to form west European styled communities, implementing western ideas and way of life in the area, marginalizing the indigenous people, the Lakotas, their communities and their way of life.

In this project the interactions and coexistence of female homesteaders of Swedish descent and the indigenous Lakota people on the Rosebud reservation land will be studied. Some of these homestead women were lottery winners i.e. they had applied for the lottery in their own name, as head of their household, and some of them were part of a male headed household. Either way, they had to provide for themselves and their dependents in new and unfamiliar environment. And the indigenous people were forced to live on much reduced areas, thus abandoning their traditional way of life.

At this seminar I will present the proposed project, the available source materials and discuss the research questions that can be identified.

Nordic language ideologies in colonial space

Eeva Sippola

University of Helsinki

This presentation studies Finnish migrant communities' language use and language ideologies in Latin American contexts. After an overview of the project's general structure and first results, it will focus on a case study about discursive place making in the migrant experience.

Nordic settler communities have sometimes been described as colonies without colonialism (cf. Lüthi & al. 2016). However, the early Finnish communities show some prototypical features of colonialism, as described by Osterhammel (1995), in that they often

remained insular in the first generations, showing ethnocentric arrogance and a refusal to adapt to their new societies. I will zoom in on these spaces of late settler colonialism and address their specific involvement in colonial endeavors (cf. Vuorela 2009). I will use the example of how “place” is discursively construed and enacted in Colonia Finlandesa (Argentina) and Villa Alborada (Paraguay) to study colonial ideologies in these utopian communities. The analysis is based on archival materials, such as interviews, letters, and travel accounts from first and second generation migrants.

Salient place discourses enacted by the migrants can be divided into two main themes linked to real and imaginary places in the migrant experience. The first theme is especially noticeable in private correspondence and consists of Spanish loanwords in Finnish describing the migrants’ new everyday life and environment. These include, for example, *kaasa* ‘home, house’ (< Spa. *casa*), *potreero* ‘pastureland’ (< Spa. *potrero*), and *rancho* ‘farm’ (< Spa. *rancho*). Their function was to construct a new identity by marking differences from their original land and culture in Finland. The second theme contains place discourses related to utopian ideals, including frequent use of keywords, such as *paratiisi* ‘paradise’ and *tropiikki* ‘tropics’, which reflect a desire to return to nature and a clear exoticization of the Latin American landscape. These keywords were often used to promote the migration projects in Finland and to paint a positive image of the destinations, but they also appeared much later in the discourse of the migrants themselves.

The results of this study offer insights into colonial discourses of place and broaden our view of the ways in which colonial heritage is constructed in non-prototypical settings.

The Corpus of South American Danish and main features of Argentine Danish

Karoline Kühl and Jan Heegård Petersen
University of Copenhagen

In our talk we will give an introduction to the ‘Corpus of South American Danish’ (CoSAmDa) and present some of the more prominent features of Danish as spoken by descendants of Danish immigrants to Argentina. CoSAmDa contains sociolinguistic interviews recorded in different

areas of Argentina in 2014 and 2015: The corpus includes approx. 100 speakers with a total language production of ca. 900,000 tokens.

In the presentation of the CoSAmDa, we will focus on transcription principles and the annotations that allow us to extract exact information about linguistic as well as extra-linguistic features such as vocabulary size, degree of code-switching, clause size, syntactic complexity, hesitation, self-interruption and others. Further, we will characterize different speaker types in the CoSAmDa and link prototypical speaker types to different forms of heritage Danish language production. Lastly, we will provide an overview over what appears to be the main features of Argentine Danish (taking into account that this presents work in progress), i.e. features where Argentine Danish differs from Denmark Danish on all levels, from pragmatics and information structure over syntax and morphology to segmental phonology and prosody. The talk is also meant to be an invitation to discuss whether the observed phenomena are due to influence from Spanish or whether they are consequences of ‘attrition’, i.e. relaxification of linguistic structure due to decreased language use, or to the absence of a standardizing norm.

Is that English or Danish? Concerning methodology and theory in research on heritage Nordic languages

Elizabeth Peterson

University of Helsinki

Within the context of the United States, large-scale immigration of Nordic people is situated solidly in the past, in most cases occurring more than one century ago. In addition, in most locations the Nordic migrants assimilated rapidly into US culture, compared to other ethnic groups (see, e.g., Grøngaard Jeppesen, 2010; Nielsen, 1981), taking their language with them. For scholars who study Nordic heritage languages and language contact phenomena, these circumstances leave us with dubious options for investigating and making general claims or even sound linguistic judgments based on the data available to us. With this presentation, I would like to address some methodological concerns that apply to Nordic languages in general, but my specific examples stem from my joint research on Danish people in the USA, especially the Utah, a state in the Intermountain West. Key questions to be addressed include: What are

the best practices for working on languages that have postvernacular status? (see Reershemius, 2009)? How do we elicit linguistic material among populations where the heritage language was spoken only (ie, no knowledge of writing systems)? How do we elicit linguistic material among populations where heritage language items are fused into the local dialect/idiolects? That is, the speakers themselves are not aware of what is, for example, Danish, and what is English. Which linguistic features are most promising areas of investigation in such contact situations? And a related question: do we best characterize such features as heritage remnants or language borrowing?

Lexical items and discourse features that have emerged through our work in Utah (see, e.g., Kühl & Peterson, 2018) are used as examples in the presentation. With these examples, questions relating to structural issues (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988), cognitive issues (Matras, 2009) and social processes (Winford 2013) are presented. The aim of the presentation is not to instruct others, but rather to share experiences and open up discussion about some of the challenges and realities we face as we explore Nordic languages in the Americas.

Language Change in American Swedish

Ida Larsson

University of Oslo

The study of heritage languages can give important insights into the nature of linguistic change. In this talk, I will illustrate this by comparing older recordings of American Swedish (by Torsten Ordéus and Folke Hedblom) with present-day data from the Corpus of American Nordic Speech (CANS). Firstly, I will give examples of change that have sociolinguistic explanations. At the turn of the 20th century, the mix of dialects in the Swedish immigrant settlements in America led to koinéisation and rapid dialect leveling. The American Swedish lexicon is also extended with English loans, in order to accommodate to the new social context – the words for phenomena like *sidewalk*, (*iron*) *stove* and so on were not established in the language that the Swedish emigrants brought with them from Sweden. Secondly, I discuss changes that have most likely occurred between generations, and appear to be due to the limited and inconsistent input of the heritage learners. In a different way than koinéisation and language mixing, the

particular context of acquisition can lead to true innovation within the grammatical system, and to features appearing in the heritage language that are not previously present in any of the languages (or varieties) in the community. Finally, I consider changes in the language of the individual heritage speakers throughout their lifetime. Specifically, the heritage language can become attrited if it is not used. Attrited speakers sometimes seem to relearn the language (perhaps in a classroom), and this can make them pattern more with L2 learners than other heritage learners.