

A contact-linguistic view on Finland-Swedish quotatives *vara*, ‘be’, and *att*, ‘that’

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In this paper, results from a comparative study of the copula verb *vara*, ‘to be’, and the connective *att*, ‘that’, as Swedish quotatives will be presented.¹ Whereas these quotatives are conversational resources, which frequently precede quotations in Finland-Swedish youth conversations, the usage of these quotatives is much more limited in the Sweden-Swedish data with no apparent Finnish contact. Whether this difference can be explained by contact-induced change will be discussed further in the present paper. A foundation for this discussion is laid in the previous Swedish language-internal and regional comparisons of *vara* and *att* presented in Henricson, 2009, 2010.

Finnish has been shown to influence strongly the Swedish used in Finland, and this influence is seen on all linguistic levels (Wide & Lyngfelt, 2009). As a zero hypothesis, Finland-Swedish quotatives with the copula verb *vara* and the connective *att* will be considered to be a result of contact-induced change attributable to Finnish. An alternative hypothesis points to an explanation with an English origin. This possibility is worth considering, especially in the case of young informants, who could be assumed to be in intense contact with English, through popular culture, music, television, etc. In the societies of the present conversational contexts, there is nothing that would indicate contact with other languages, besides Finnish and English.

The data consists of moderated Swedish youth conversations, recorded in five cities in Finland with various degrees of contact with Finnish and one

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Sweden-Swedish city, with no apparent Finnish contact.² Thus, the possible similarities with Finnish structures, which appear in both Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish data, cannot be defined as contact-induced features.

In accordance with Clark & Gerrig (1990) I view quotations as being demonstrations that depict rather than describe. This means that quotations demonstrate speech, feelings, attitudes and other features of the original speaker by the words of the quotation, as well as by how the quotation is presented. Seen from this perspective, no clear line can be drawn between quotations of speech or thought and other kinds of illustrations.

1. *Vara*

Even though studies have been conducted of quotations in spoken Swedish, none of these focus on the quotatives with the copula verb *vara* (except Henricson, 2009).³ This suggests that this quotative might be a relatively new feature of spoken Swedish. In the data excerpted for this study, the quotatives with *vara* are predominantly used by female participants. However, female participants produce most of all the quotatives in general. Furthermore, all participants in the current conversations are young people, and among them, *vara* is a frequent quotative. In

2. I am much obliged to researchers and participants for the valuable corpora used for this study. The data is excerpted from three corpora (approximately 30 hours), i.e. GSM (Gothenburg), HUSA (Helsinki), and SPÖK (Kotka, Oulu, Pori, Tampere). In Helsinki, the Swedish-speaking population comprises approximately 6% of the entire population, while the Swedish-speaking only constitutes between 0.2% and 1.1% of the population in the practically monolingual Finnish cities included in the SPÖK corpus. In contrast, the Sweden-Swedish informants in Gothenburg have no intensive contact with Finnish. The Gothenburg data is recorded within the project entitled *Gymnasisters språk- och musikvärldar* (GSM, The Language and Music Worlds of High School Students 1997–1999, c.f. Norrby & Wirdenäs, 1998). The Helsinki data is recorded within the project *Språk och attityder bland helsingforssvenska ungdomar* (HUSA, The language and language attitudes of Swedish-speaking teenagers in Helsinki 1994–1995, c.f. Löfström, 1995). The third corpus *Ungdomssamtal på svenska språköar i Finland* (SPÖK, Youth conversations at Swedish language islands in Finland 2001/2006) is recorded for my on-going doctoral thesis.

3. However, *vara* is mentioned or appears in some articles (e.g. Nordberg, 1984: 20). Fremer (1998), who has analysed quotations in the Helsinki corpus used for the present study, singles out *vara helt*, 'to be all', *vara sådär*, 'to be like that', and *vara helt sådär*, 'to be all like that', as frequent quotatives, but does not discuss the distribution and the structure of the quotatives in further detail. In her analysis of the quotative *bara*, 'only', Jönsson (2005) also mentions *vara*. She includes *vara* within a group of finite verbs, which amount to more than half of all quotatives in her Sweden-Swedish data. The Swedish language-internal and regional comparison of *vara* presented in the following may also be found in Henricson, 2009.

contrast, a search through approximately 6 hours of a variety of Sweden-Swedish adult conversations only resulted in one quotative using *vara*.

In the data I have excerpted, *vara* is one of three most recurrent quotatives in all corpora, amounting to 16% (44/271) in the Gothenburg data, 21% (42/201) in the Helsinki corpus, and as much as 50% (40/80) in the practically monolingual Finnish communities. In these Finnish cities, *vara* is the most frequently used marker of all.

The minimal structure for a quotative including the verb *vara* is a noun followed by the verb *vara* (*han va "nej nej inte nu inte"*, 'he was no no not now not', SPÖK), or in inverted order, *vara* followed by a noun (*så e de vi åker upp å pratar me Refused*, 'then is it we drive up and talk to Refused', GSM).⁴ Often, this minimal structure is followed by a right expansion of the quotative clause.

However, there are considerable regional differences. Most of the quotatives in the Gothenburg corpus (83%) have the existential subject *det*, 'it', as subject of the quotative, while this is much less frequent in the Finland-Swedish corpora (19% in HUSA and 8% in SPÖK). The regional difference is most striking when comparing with the practically monolingual Finnish cities. In both Finland-Swedish corpora, person forms such as *han*, 'he', are preferred as the subject.

As it is a verb, *vara* can and has to be inflected according to tense, and as a quotative, it mostly occurs in present and past tense. Indeed, the Sweden-Swedish speakers strongly favour present tense forms (93%), while *vara* stands in the past tense in more than half of the Finland-Swedish quotatives. Moreover, the dominance of the past tense is strongest in the predominantly Finnish-speaking cities.

These structural differences can also be dependent upon the type of quotation. In the Gothenburg-Swedish data, which has high frequencies of structures consisting of an expletive subject and the verb in the present tense, the quotations that follow typically offer an expressive demonstration of how something usually is (*de e oftast såna här rss- tsch- tsch-*r**, 'it is usually this kind of rss- tsch- tsch-*r*', GSM). In the Finland-Swedish data, *vara* more often appears in those structures consisting of a person subject and the verb in the past tense, marking quotations of how a certain person is demonstrated to have acted at a precise moment (*dom va "åhå nu gjorde dom mål"*, 'they were oh now scored they a goal', SPÖK).

Almost all of the Finland-Swedish *vara*-quotatives mark quotations of speech or thought. On the contrary, in a majority of the Gothenburg-Swedish data, these quotatives are used for illustrations (a similar observation may be found in Jönsson, 2005).

1.1 Finnish and English counterparts

Finnish researchers have shown that the copula verb *olla*, 'to be', tends to be particularly frequent among young women and have interpreted this as a sign of *olla*

4. In all examples, the quotative occurs in bold and the quotation is underlined.

forming a novelty in spoken Finnish (Lappalainen, 2005: 158; Routarinne, 2005: 99). One of the most researched quotatives in the different varieties of English is *be like*, and as a consequence, other combinations with *be* have also been analysed extensively, such as *to be all*, *to be all like*, *to be just*, *to be like that* as well as the simple *to be* (e.g. Romaine & Lange, 1991; Macaulay, 2001; Waksler, 2001; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004; Buchstaller, 2006). Like Finnish, the quotatives including the copula verb, *to be*, appear to be a relatively new phenomenon in English as well. The first instances were observed in the early 1980s and have been particularly frequent in the speech of young females (Romaine & Lange, 1991: 228; Buchstaller, 2006: 8–10).

Table 1 shows a comparison of the common structures of quotatives including *vara/olla/be* in Gothenburg-Swedish, Finland-Swedish, Finnish and English youth conversations.⁵ The quotative is divided into a minimal structure (verb & subject) and the items forming right expansions of this quotative clause.

Table 1. Comparison of common structures in Swedish, Finnish, and English⁶

Variety	Minimal structure		Expansion				Quotation
			Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	
Swe	<i>de</i> , 'it' (<i>hon</i> , 'she')	<i>e</i> , 'is'		<i>liksom</i> , 'like'	<i>såhär</i> , 'like this'	e.g. <i>ba</i> , 'only' <i>typ</i> , 'like' <i>så himla</i> , 'so very'	illustration (speech/thought)
FinSwe	<i>han</i> , 'he' (<i>de</i> , 'it')	<i>va</i> , 'was' (<i>e</i> , 'is')	e.g. <i>nog</i> , 'sure' <i>rikit</i> , 'really' <i>bara</i> , 'only'	<i>helt</i> , 'all'	<i>sådär</i> , 'like that'	<i>att</i> , 'that'	speech/thought (illustration)
Fin	<i>hän</i> , 'he/she' <i>se</i> , 'it'	<i>oli</i> , 'was'	<i>silleen</i> , 'like that'	<i>ihan</i> , 'all'	<i>niinku</i> , 'like'	<i>et(tä)</i> , 'that'	speech/thought (illustration)
Eng	<i>she/he/I</i>	<i>was</i> <i>is</i>		<i>all</i>	<i>like</i>	<i>that</i>	speech/thought (illustration)

5. As a rule, only the prominent patterns and elements are included in Table 1. In such cases, where there is more than one general pattern, the less dominant one is marked by brackets. Naturally, when it comes to single lexical elements, the variety of different components and their combinations can be enormous. This is the case for particles or adverbial elements that can be included in the Swedish quotative expansions in both the Finland-Swedish and the Gothenburg-Swedish conversations.

6. The comparison is based on the examples found in the Swedish data and on the results presented in previous Finnish and English studies (Romaine & Lange, 1991; Macaulay, 2001; Waksler, 2001; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004; Lappalainen, 2005; Routarinne, 2005; Buchstaller, 2006).

Concerning the *minimal structure*, Finland-Swedish is more similar to Finnish than to the varieties of Sweden-Swedish. Regarding both the choice of subject and verbal tense, the Sweden-Swedish and the Finnish structures differ most, while the Finland-Swedish structure takes a position in between these two extremes, although it is closer to the Finnish one.⁷

A wide variety of particles and adverbial elements can constitute the expansion of the minimal structure in Swedish. Nevertheless, the similarity between the frequent Finland-Swedish and Finnish expansions is striking. For instance, the elements *helt* and *ihan*, 'all', *sådär* and *silleen*, 'like that', and *att* and *et(tä)*, 'that', can be seen as lexical equivalents of each other, and they also tend to appear in a similar order. The Gothenburg-Swedish expansions differ from both of these, although some elements are as frequent in both Swedish variants (e.g. *liksom*, 'like').⁸

The Sweden-Swedish quotations that are marked by a structure including *vara* are usually illustrations rather than quotations of speech or thought. However, the opposite pattern emerges in the Finland-Swedish and the Finnish data (c.f. Lappalainen, 2005: 162).

The verb *vara* is clearly a resource for marking quotations in all of the included Swedish youth conversations, but it is a resource that has extended its functional capacity and, perhaps as a result, different structural features and greater frequency occur in the Finland-Swedish data. Concerning these differences in function, structure, and frequency, the Finland-Swedish *vara*-quotatives correspond remarkably well to their Finnish counterparts.

The English pattern looks very similar to both the Finland-Swedish and the Finnish one. The forms with *be* occur more often in the past tense, but there is also a large proportion of present-tense forms (e.g. Macaulay, 2001: 10). This comes close to the Finland-Swedish choice of tense. The subject refers to a specific person; usually the 3rd or the 1st person forms (e.g. Macaulay, 2001: 10). Furthermore, some *be*-quotatives can also occur with the existential *it* (Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004: 504).

7. In Finnish, the subject does not constitute an obligatory element of a sentence, and there is also no existential subject. Hence, the comparison is not that clear. However, previous studies in Finnish indicate that the referent is usually a specific person, not a type of person in a more general sense.

8. As a counter signal, there is a difference between Finnish and Swedish in general; *et(tä)* appears to be an obligatory element in Finnish, whereas it is optional in Swedish. However, *att* is much more frequent in the Finland-Swedish data than in the Sweden-Swedish, where only single instances can be found of *att* preceding the quotation.

The possible expansions of the minimal structure in English are strikingly similar in both the Finland-Swedish and the Finnish prototypical models. Judging by previous English studies, the quotatives containing the copula *to be* are mostly used for marking speech or thought, but also mark illustrations, just as in the Finland-Swedish and the Finnish data (e.g. Romaine & Lange, 1991: 227, 238, 241; Macaulay, 2001: 13–15; Waksler, 2001: 132–134).

The Gothenburg-Swedish structure appears to follow a different pattern, where the *be*-quotatives are used with an existential subject and the copula in the present tense form (*de e liksom lite yeah yeah*, 'it is like quite yeah yeah', GSM). The minimal structures are typically expanded by other kinds of elements than in the Finland-Swedish, Finnish, and English versions, which all show almost identical expansion patterns.⁹ In Gothenburg-Swedish, the *vara*-quotatives usually mark illustrations (*så e de typ aaaahhh*, 'then is it like oooohhh', GSM), not speech or thought as in Finland-Swedish, Finnish and English.

As this brief overview suggests, the Finland-Swedish *vara*, the Finnish *olla*, and the English *be*, all share many structural and functional features, while the Sweden-Swedish *vara* follows a slightly different pattern. Therefore, the claim that both the Finland-Swedish and the Finnish quotatives with the copula *vara/olla* are the result of a contact-induced change with English origin might have some validity. Of course, another option is that the Finland-Swedish structures receive reinforcement from the Finnish quotatives, and are not directly or exclusively derived from the English ones.

1.2 Internal explanations

Using *vara* as a quotative is a resource in Sweden-Swedish as well. Nevertheless, in Finland-Swedish, the functional scope is broadened and the structure is slightly different and it is more similar to the Finnish and English pattern. An internally motivated explanation for this difference could be the use of *ba*, 'only', as an innovative quotative in Sweden-Swedish youth conversations, which has not yet reached the Finland-Swedish spoken language. The quotative *ba* covers the same kind of quotative set as *vara*, being a quotative that does not distinguish between speech, thought or illustration and this has often been seen as a parallel to the *be*-quotatives in English (Kotsinas 1994; Eriksson 1997; Jönsson 2005). Before this use of *ba* becomes more frequent in Finland-Swedish, this gap might be filled by an extended use of *vara*. This would follow a typical development for Finland-Swedish divergence from Sweden-Swedish, where an all-Swedish

9. Although the variation appears to be much greater in the Finland-Swedish data, the most common structures follow the same model as those found in Finnish and English.

resource is used more frequently and in expanded functions and contexts in Finland-Swedish. Usually there is Finnish support for such a development, and the Finnish supporting structures may also favour the use of those elements in Swedish which correspond to the Finnish ones (see Lindström, 2007: 56 for similar argumentation regarding initial clause negation).

2. *Att*

In written Swedish, *att* mostly occurs as a subordinating conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause (SAG 2: 733–741). However, as Lindström & Londen (2008: 109) stress, in spoken language *att* can rather be characterised as a conjunction that co-ordinates more than it subordinates. Syntactically, this kind of spoken Swedish *att* appears as an incremented element, marking the relations between the surrounding utterances and functioning as a sequential connective (Lehti-Eklund, 2001: 82; Lindström & Londen, 2008: 109).

The quotative contexts found in written Swedish contain the subordinating conjunction *att* and it introduces a narrative subordinate clause consisting of an indirect quotation, e.g. *hon sa att du ringde*, 'she said that you called' (SAG 4: 536, 850). However, in spoken Swedish, and especially in Finland-Swedish, *att* can also project direct quotations (Bergroth, 1928: 130–131; Londen, 1991: 123). Even if the *att* preceding a direct quotation is typical of spoken Finland-Swedish, this phenomenon can also occasionally occur in Sweden-Swedish (Löfström, 1993: 133; Eriksson 1997: 155; SAG 4: 547, 846–847; Anward, 2003: 77).

In the Sweden-Swedish quotations studied in this paper, *att* appears to have a relatively stable position as a subordinating conjunction between a quotative clause and a quotation, where it is interpreted as an introduction of a subordinate clause, i.e. as an indirect quotation.¹⁰ As for the Finland-Swedish data, the position and function of *att* is less clear. It is not automatically interpreted as an introduction of a subordinate clause, and thus cannot be called a subordinate conjunction, but rather a connective element that can be used for both co-ordination and subordination.

There is a significant difference in how frequently *att* precedes a direct quotation in the Sweden-Swedish and the Finland-Swedish data. For example, only 6% of the Gothenburg-Swedish quotatives include *att* while about 65% of the Finland-Swedish quotatives contain *att*.

10. The Swedish language-internal and regional comparison of *att* presented in the following may also be found in Henricson, 2010.

When a quotative clause is completed with *att* in Finland-Swedish conversations, these expansions can consist of the single element *att* (*alla tänkte att "nej va dom gör bra gärning"*, 'everyone thought that oh what a good deed they do', HUSA), or of larger expansions of the quotative clause, of which *att* only constitutes one part (*ja e helt liksom sådä: att "jee"*, 'I am all like that that yeah', SPÖK). In almost all cases, *att* forms the last element of the expansion. For larger expansions containing *att* the following patterns occur:

1. Specification + *att*, e.g. *sen sådär att*, 'then like that that'
2. *att* + interjection + *att*, e.g. *att ja att*, 'that yes that'
3. combinations of 1. and 2., e.g. *såhä: att huj att*, 'like this that yuck that'

All three of these patterns appear in the Finland-Swedish data, while only the first pattern is found in the Gothenburg-Swedish data. In the Finland-Swedish examples, the same structures can also be found for the verbless *att*-quotatives, with the exception of the third pattern, which is only attested as an expansion to a quotative clause. However, this does not occur in the Sweden-Swedish data.¹¹

In the Finland-Swedish corpora, even the verbless *att*-quotatives can sufficiently mark a direct quotation, and in its context be the only lexical signal of a quotation (e.g. *att hu gå de*, 'that how's life', SPÖK). Nevertheless, the use of such a minimal quotative usually requires a sequence in which the practice of quoting has already been established. Sometimes a remote but possibly connected quotative clause can also be detected in the previous stretch of talk. These contextual restrictions considered, *att* is the most frequently occurring verbless quotative in Finland-Swedish. Moreover, *att* can function as a divider of different quotations that is attributed to the same or to different speakers. By contrast, the Sweden-Swedish *ba* is the dominant verbless quotative, while *att* does not function as a quotative without the support of a quotative clause.

2.1 Finnish and English counterparts

A parallel structure in spoken Finnish is the conjunction *et(tä)*, 'that', e.g. in *ne oli heti et aij jaa teill_oj jo joulupukki käyny*, 'they were immediately that oh your place has already Santa Claus visited' (example from Lappalainen, 2005: 162, simplified). On a more general level, a possible connection to the Finnish-Swedish language contact has, as far as the Helsinki area is concerned, already been pointed out by Saari (1975: 196) and Lehti-Eklund (2001: 113).

11. Only one instance of a verbless *att*-quotative is found in the Gothenburg-Swedish data.

who note the similarity in frequency and function between the Swedish discourse marker *att* and Finnish *et(tä)*. The Finland-Swedish usage of a quotative *att* confirms that there are many similarities with the Finnish quotative *et(tä)*. As shown in the *Iso suomen kielioppi* (ISK, 'The Comprehensive Grammar of Finnish') (§ 1465), as well as in several quotative studies in spoken Finnish (e.g. Lappalainen, 2005: 156; Routarinne, 2005: 90; Shore, 2005: 68), *et(tä)* is not necessarily a sign that a quotation is indirect, even though *että* does not precede a direct quotation in Finnish standard language, where it marks syntactic subordination. Above, the same pattern has been described for the Finland-Swedish *att*.

As in Finland-Swedish, *et(tä)* can also be used as a quotative without the support of a quotative clause (Lappalainen, 2005: 156; Routarinne, 2005: 90). Likewise in Finnish, *et(tä)* forms the last element of the quotative expansion. Besides simple *et(tä)*, *et(tä)* can occur in combination with other elements, in correspondence with the Finland-Swedish patterns presented above.

Whereas English could be a possible source of the contact-induced phenomena in the current contexts, the equivalent to *att* is the complementizer *that*, i.e. an element that can only occur with indirect quotations (Li, 1986: 35). As a result, *that* offers a clear distinction between a direct and an indirect quotation. This means that the English pattern seems to be comparable to the Sweden-Swedish examples found in the Gothenburg conversations. Even so, this is obviously not the case for the Finland-Swedish *att* which apparently does not make a distinction between subordination and co-ordination. The result is that no true English equivalent can be found to match the Finland-Swedish usage of *att* in a quotative context.

2.2 Internal explanations

The *att* in spoken Finland-Swedish has been generalised from a marker of indirect quotation to a marker of both indirect and direct quotation. This could be caused by a language internal change of direct quotation in analogy with structures used for indirect quotation. In other words, the internal explanation would therefore be a generalisation based on a language-internal loan (Campbell, 1998: 89–90). This could be a reasonable claim, as the two forms of quotation only differ slightly in spoken Swedish, and the distinction can be clarified by other, e.g. prosodic, means. This interpretation would also be based on structural internal support from the use of *att* in other contexts of spoken Swedish overall, where *att* is interpreted as a conjunction that co-ordinates more than it subordinates (Lindström & Londen, 2008: 109). However, as for the quotative *att*, the same process has not occurred in Sweden-Swedish.

3. Conclusions

All things considered, I propose a development where the Finland-Swedish usage pattern of the *vara*-quotatives arises from an internal possibility within the Swedish language. As a contact-induced change, this Swedish resource has then been expanded to cover more functions, contexts and situations, resulting in an increasing frequency of this particular quotative. Simultaneously, the preferred structural pattern becomes the one showing clearest resemblance to the language(s) in contact. The possibility that Finnish and Finland-Swedish have both been influenced by the similar quotative in English youth conversations is also feasible. Even so, this would not preclude Finland-Swedish from gaining support for this development from the intensive, daily contact with Finnish.

As for the quotative contexts, the Finland-Swedish usage of *att* differs from both the Sweden-Swedish and the English patterns. On the other hand, a parallel can be found in spoken Finnish. In both Finland-Swedish and Finnish, but in opposition to Sweden-Swedish and English, *et(tä)/att*, does not constitute a clear sign of whether the quotation can be interpreted as direct or indirect. *Et(tä)/att* has been generalised in both Finland-Swedish and Finnish to project all kinds of quotations, and has additionally expanded its frequency and potential to also be used without the support of a quotative clause.

Although a language-internal change is plausible, it does not explain why the Finland-Swedish spoken language would undergo this change, while the Sweden-Swedish spoken language maintains the differentiation between the structural features of direct and indirect quotation. In the light of previous studies of language divergence between Finland-Swedish and Sweden-Swedish, a more probable route of differentiation would be that innovations first appear in Sweden-Swedish, while Finland-Swedish has been characterised by archaic forms and structures.

However, a generalisation can be seen as a kind of simplification, which would also be typical of Finland-Swedish, particularly in those instances where a supportive structure can be found in Finnish. As these supportive structures exist and show striking similarity, I would prefer to consider both processes as part of the entire interpretation of how the quotative *att* has developed in Finland-Swedish. As this development has led to a divergence from Sweden-Swedish and a convergence with Finnish, it could be reasonable to consider both the pulling and pushing potentials of the process, instead of choosing one of them as the primary force.

Thus, multiple explanations are proposed for both *vara* and *att*. For both cases, the language change is an internal possibility within the Swedish language itself. The motivation for this language change to occur, however, can be perceived as

being contact-induced. The primary contact language would be Finnish, although as regards *vara*, the possibility of English as one of the source languages (or the primary source language) cannot be excluded.

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