

Angela Hoffman* and Merja Kytö

Varying social roles and networks on a family farm: Evidence from Swedish immigrant letters, 1880s to 1930s

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsl-2018-0031>

Abstract: The present study investigates patterns of language use in the ego documents written by three Swedish immigrants: Nils Blomberg (born in 1839), Mathilda Blomberg, (b. 1863), and Anton Blomberg (b. 1885), their eldest son. The empirical foundation of the investigation is a set of 32 family letters sent over a period of nearly fifty years (1885–1934) from the rural Smoky Valley in Kansas to Mathilda’s home village in Östergötland, Sweden. We analyze the writers’ lexis, discourse patterning (*formulaic* versus *free-flowing*), and re-current topics, and the social roles and networks that are manifest in their correspondence. The three writers continued to correspond in the Swedish language over the years. Our diachronic analysis of their lexis and discourse patterning reveals individual variation across the authors’ production. For example, Mathilda’s correspondence contains some evidence of heritage Swedish (i.e. Swedish that has diverged from the home country, due to geographical separation and language contact with English). Across her lifespan, Mathilda integrates some vocabulary for plants, places, and jobs that diverges from the lexis she recalls from her early years in Sweden, and she draws attention to this lexical divergence for the sake of her readers. Anton, a childhood bilingual in Swedish and English, systematically translates English lexis to Swedish in letters, presumably with the goal to bring his Kansas experiences closer to his Swedish relatives. In particular, the letters, especially those by Mathilda, reveal not only how the individuals communicate information about their social roles in rural Kansas, but also their desires to maintain the networks connecting their family farm in the U.S. to Mathilda’s home village in Sweden.

Keywords: social roles, heritage Swedish, discourse, immigrant letters, ego-documents

*Corresponding author: Angela Hoffman, Department of English, Uppsala Universitet, Box 527, Uppsala 751 20, Sweden, E-mail: angela.hoffman@engelska.uu.se
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9687-3284>

Merja Kytö, Department of English, Uppsala Universitet, Box 527, Uppsala 751 20, Sweden, E-mail: Merja.Kyto@engelska.uu.se

1 Introduction

The present study examines the linguistic means through which Swedish immigrants convey their social roles and strive to maintain their networks in ego-documents, namely in letters written to family members in the home country. Ego-documents are personal texts, e.g. letters, diaries, and journals, which purportedly reflect not only spoken language (Elspaß 2012, Elspaß 2015); see also the other articles in this issue), but in the case of letters, likely the language forms used with family members. Scholars can read immigrant letters as ego-documents¹ that display a range of the writers' social roles: (1) personae from their home of origin, such as daughter, sister, son-in-law, nephew, and childhood friend, and (2) personae in their adopted community, such as their roles as land- and homeowners, farmers, employers, neighbors, and parishioners. Our method of analyzing the idiolectal patterns of the writers resonates with a recent school of the study of individual authors and their discourse patterns (see Nurmi and Pahta 2010; Fitzmaurice 2010). Such a linguistic approach has yet to be applied to the correspondence of Swedish immigrants. By focusing on the idiolectal and discourse patterns in the letters of an immigrant family, we trace how the writers formulated their correspondence in response to their new socio-economic situation. Further, we scrutinize immigrant letters for evidence of how heritage language forms emerge in the correspondence.

The study of ego-documents has gained momentum over the past two decades likely with the advent of electronic correspondence corpora and the availability of other sources containing ego-documents (e.g. the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* [Nevalainen et al. 1998]; the *Letters of Artisans and the Labouring Poor* collection [Auer et al. forthcoming]; Sokoll 2001; Fairman 2006, Fairman 2009). Further, historical sociolinguists have surveyed speech communities of various kinds. In immigrant communities, ego-documents played an important role in describing everyday life, allowing continued contacts with the homeland, where the tradition of receiving and reading aloud family letters was well-established (see; Persson 2005, Persson 2008, regarding the Swedish letter-writing culture). When the letter-writing tradition was transplanted to the United States in Swedish-American settlements, it took on a new resonance, stimulated by the American circumstances and social challenges. The contents of many family letters described the new conditions and social roles in letters to readers back in Sweden (Barton 1975; Attebery 2007).

¹ Ego-documents in their historical contexts have received careful attention by, e.g. scholars working in the network presented at www.egodocument.net/egodocument.

Our investigation surveys patterns of language use and social roles of individuals in letters, written in Swedish and with some varying traces of English, by two Swedish immigrants in America: a husband (Nils Blomberg, 1839–1907), a wife (Mathilda Blomberg, 1863–1948), and their eldest child (Anton Blomberg, 1885–1956), to the wife’s close relatives in Sweden. The empirical foundation of the investigation is a set of 32 extant letters, most of them written by Mathilda,² sent from the Smoky Valley in Kansas over a period of nearly fifty years (1885–1934) to family members in the province of Östergötland, Sweden.

More specifically, our study explores how the individual letter writers express their social roles using a range of linguistic and discursive patterns across time (Hymes 1972, Hymes 1996; Gumperz 1982, Gumperz 2015 [2001]; Sherzer 1987; Elspaß 2012, Elspaß 2015). By social roles, we refer to ways “in which writers used their linguistic resources to position themselves in relation to their interlocutors in the texts” (Pahta et al. 2010: vii).³ Our diachronic investigation is limited to examining some of the language patterns written in a rural, bilingual settlement of Swedes. Further, we circumscribe the scope of our study to the correspondence of three persons.⁴ Yet by studying the letters and in turn surveying the number of individuals the writers mention in their letters over the years, we gain insights into how the writers were using the ego-documents. They were endeavoring to sustain their social networks in Sweden just as they were describing how their roles and networks were expanding in their adopted home in rural Kansas. We examine roles and networks as these entities exist in relationship with one another.

The Blomberg correspondents and their addressees were indeed separated by vast geographical space: the province of Östergötland is located in the southeast portion of Sweden (south of Stockholm), and Kansas is in the middle

2 The spelling of the family members’ names varies in the extant materials. The letter writers use variant spellings for given names and their surname (*Blomberg/Bloomberg*). For example, Mathilda spells her name in the correspondence alternately as *Matilda* and *Mathilda*. *Mathilda* is the version she uses most often when she signs her name, which is why we have decided to use this spelling throughout in the article. The digital catalogue of Riksarkivet (the National Archive of Sweden) lists her as *Matilda Blomberg Flöhr*, *Flöhr* being Mathilda’s surname when she remarried. The spelling of place names also varies in the letters, e.g. *Wårdslunda/Vårdslunda*, *Svirge/Sviden/Sweden*.

3 Readers are interlocutors, especially when there are expectations that the recipients are to write a reply.

4 Our approach in focusing on three writers stands in contrast to macro-level analyses in which the correspondence of hundreds of persons is conflated and classified according to extralinguistic parameters such as gender and social class (see, e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2017 [2003]).

of the prairielands of the United States. Nils and Mathilda carried social roles from their home villages to their adopted community, but they also took on new roles as evidenced through their linguistic and discursive patterns, adjusting and adapting (Kroskrity 2000; Nurmi and Nevala 2010: 163, 165; Nurmi and Pahta 2010: 136; Turner et al. 2012 [1981]) to a new settlement in Kansas. When we use the phrase *social roles*, we observe that Nils and Mathilda actively created their identities in relation to others (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 586, 607–608; Baert 2006: 525) who comprised the social networks revealed in the correspondence: the persons they mentioned and the persons in Sweden who would read the letters. The Blombergs' eldest son, Anton, who was born and raised in Kansas and presumably never met his addressees in Sweden, can also be said to have taken on a role of transmitting interesting news from Kansas when he wrote to his Swedish relatives. It is our view that the writers regularly performed identities linguistically in their correspondence and that these identities can be perceived in discourse and to some extent in the lexis (Jacobs and Jucker 1995; see especially Haugen 1969 [1953]; Pavlenko 2004). As apparent below, we note that Mathilda self-consciously uses some heritage Swedish lexis in her letters, even though she herself was Swedish-born.

We organize our article as follows: after introducing the aims of our study, we present our research questions and describe our methodology. Section 3 provides biographical details on the three writers, illustrates the material with a sample of Mathilda's correspondence, and shows how we apply the concept of 'author roles'. Analysis of the correspondents' letters appears in Section 4. In Section 5, we make systematic comparisons of the writers' discourse in our discussion and concluding remarks.

2 Aims, research questions, and methods

The aim of our investigation is to identify the linguistic means by which three members of a family express their roles in the Swedish-American immigrant community. Our central research question is: how do the writers convey their social roles in the letters? One expects the social roles and networks to change over time across the lifespan, and we explore how, linguistically, such changes are perceptible. We aim to show, especially in the case of Mathilda, who corresponded to her parents and siblings for almost fifty years, that her self-value and "agent-centered view of performance" (DeHaan 2010: 124; see also Taavitsainen 2016) expanded over time. One obvious way that her identity was conveyed in writing is in her self-conscious use of Swedish lexis that diverges

semantically from the Swedish of her parents and siblings.⁵ We therefore find it important to place extra focus on the language patterns used by Mathilda, a woman whose letters included mention of at least 200 individuals living in the United States and in Sweden (see Sub-Section 4.2.3). With such an extensive social network of persons on both sides of the Atlantic, nearly all of whom spoke Swedish, we have reason to believe that Mathilda was particularly adept at noticing and commenting on linguistic patterns.

In view of the relatively small dataset to which we currently have access, that is, transcribed letters containing approximately 11,000 words, our methodology is mainly qualitative. It involves close reading of the letters, surveying the content of the correspondence, and noting where and, if so, the authors move between formulaic expressions and free-flowing text (Taavitsainen 2016; see also Barton 1975; Attebery 2007). In the data, we observe that Mathilda and Nils rarely use paragraph breaks to signal movement to a new topic. Further, punctuation between sentences is rare. Instead topics, akin to discourse ‘episodes’ (cf. van Dijk [see Dijk] 1981), are juxtaposed in the letters.⁶ Despite the paucity of paragraph breaks and punctuation clues, it is, however, possible to note where a correspondent describes something (e.g. the interior of a church) and where the writer turns to instructing the recipients on what to do (e.g. in order to collect a package). In addition to stretches of text that are descriptive and instruct the readers about life in Kansas, we note that Mathilda and Nils use their correspondence to advise and bless their readers; quote family members and neighbors in Kansas; list items, report briefly on events, and even state when they sent packages to Sweden. As one important function of the letters we examine is to request that relatives in Sweden perform certain actions, we examine how the authors give instructions to achieve desired results. In doing so, we examine the expressions of agency that are the ones most open to inspection in letters.⁷ Exemplification of the form of these various discourse functions is provided in

5 Exemplification, analysis, and discussion of this patterning appear in Sections 4.2 and 5. A major study examining “micro-patterns” in historical documents is Ågren (2017). To gain insights into the (gendered) distribution of work roles in European societies, the authors employ a “verb-oriented method” as part of their methodology to pinpoint instances of social convergence and differentiation.

6 Their son, Anton, uses paragraph breaks and systematic punctuation. His discourse style receives further attention in 4.3.

7 We view agency as “causal power,” i.e. “the capacity ... to choose between options and to affect outcomes, whether physical or social” (Jary 2006: 8). Our view is further inspired by Eckert’s perspective of “the speaker as a linguistic agent” who builds meaning within a community (Eckert 2000: 4). The individuals in our study are building meaning in a community that is on the other side of the Atlantic.

Section 4 (cf. Mey 2001 [1993]: 117–124, on speech acts and speech act verbs; Bischoff and Jamy 2013: 2–6; Harder 2013: 72, on the functions of language approach).

Our close-reading approach mentioned above is also used to identify points in the letters where the correspondents use hybridized language forms (here defined as word-internal language contact phenomena; see, e.g. Extract 4, *tigns*), code-mixing (two languages used phrase-internally; see, e.g. Extract 11), and code-switching (longer stretches of text in which one language alternates with another; see Figure 3 and Extract 12), and where they add meta-commentary on their patterns of language use. Further, we read the letters with an eye to understanding the social context of the correspondence and identify the names of persons in the U.S., in Sweden, and those traveling back and forth between the countries, whom the writers mention. The names of such individuals provide clues about the social networks in Kansas whom the writers wanted to make relevant for their readers as well as the networks they recalled and endeavored to maintain in Sweden. We cannot rely upon such a list to provide a full picture of the Blombergs' social contacts across time, but it does give us a sense of the social worlds the correspondents tried to unite in writing these ego-documents. We also assume that the writers varied their language, presumably so that the language forms communicating the contents would seem relevant to the readers.

3 The authors, their letters, and their roles

In our analysis, we view the correspondence of the writers in terms of their expression as individuals, rather than as serving as the proxy for the entire Blomberg family farm. Accordingly, we devote a sub-section to each author below. We begin with Nils, the first person in the family to emigrate to the Smoky Valley of Kansas, the adopted home of thousands of other Swedish-born and Swedish-speaking persons (Nelson 1943; Carman 1962, Carman 1974; Karstadt 2003). We later turn to Mathilda, and finally to Anton, a member of the Kansas-born generation.

Nils Blomberg was born on December 26, 1839 in the parish of Gladhammar, Sweden.⁸ He immigrated twice to the United States. The first time was in 1866,

⁸ Biographical information about Nils, Mathilda, and Anton Blomberg has been located in Riksarkivet and in an oral history interview with Alvida Larson, one of the daughters of Nils and Mathilda, recorded on October 13, 1985, by Elston Flohr and William Underwood on behalf of the Smoky Valley Historical Association. We have also consulted dates on tombstones in

when he was 27 years old. By 1868, he was homesteading land southwest of Lindsborg, Kansas, living in an earthen dugout and working for a brief time as a laborer for a railroad company near the town of Ellsworth, Kansas. At some point (year unknown to us), he sold his land and returned to Sweden, where he married Clara Mathilda Ulriksson, 24 years his junior. Together, they immigrated to the U. S. in late November 1884, returning to the Lindsborg area, where two of his brothers and a maternal uncle also lived. Nils and Mathilda set up a temporary household in Lindsborg in December before they bought farmland near the village of Bridgeport, located seven miles north and east of Lindsborg. Blomberg continued farming until his death in 1907, when he was 68.

Clara Mathilda Ulriksson was born in 1863 in the village of Wårdslunda, Hycklinge parish, in the province of Östergötland, in Sweden. She was the daughter of Kristina Maria Lovisa Jakobsdotter and Ulrik Reinhold Fredriksson, who both remained in Sweden. As mentioned above, the couple married when Nils had returned to Sweden after his first sojourn to Kansas. Mathilda was 21 years old when the couple immigrated to Kansas. They established a farm and raised a large family; eight of their children survived to adulthood. Their eldest child, Anton, was born in 1885. Mathilda was 44 when Nils died in 1907. In 1913, she moved from the farm to a house in Lindsborg. According to her letters, the five youngest children—Hanna Sofia, Edward Alvin, Ellen Alvida, Vendla Olivia, and Stella Myrtle Maria—lived with her in Lindsborg while they completed their education at the local grade school, high school, and college. Meanwhile, the older children, Anton, Amanda, and Verner, had established their own households.

Mathilda remarried in 1922, when she was 59. Her second husband, Carl Gustaf Flöhr, was also Swedish-born. In a letter to her brother (1932) she explained that Carl was born in Uckna parish in Småland and had immigrated with his family to Kansas when he was twelve. Flöhr, like Mathilda's first husband, had a network of family and friends living in Lindsborg and elsewhere in Kansas, according to letters she wrote to her siblings in Sweden. Mathilda's correspondence provides strong evidence that Swedish was spoken in her Kansas home throughout her lifespan. For example, her letters occasionally include quotations of clever and amusing observations made by the children. She also quotes some of Carl Gustaf's speech in Swedish (see Extract 5).⁹

Elmwood Cemetery, Lindsborg, Kansas, in Assaria Lutheran Church Cemetery, and located church membership information for some of the Blombergs (Bergin 1919).

⁹ An oral history interview filmed with one of the daughters of Mathilda and Nils, Alvida Larson, contains Swedish when she quotes family members, providing evidence that she was proficient in Swedish.

According to the biographical information about Mathilda available in Riksarkivet, she returned to Sweden for a visit in 1937. Mathilda died in Lindsborg in 1948.

Anton Blomberg, the eldest child, was born on March 23, 1885, a few months after his parents had settled in Kansas. Like his younger siblings, he attended the local schools with children of other Swedish immigrants. In fact, his early childhood corresponds to a time point when the highest number of Swedish-born persons resided in McPherson County, Kansas, according to the Census records (Hoffman and Kytö 2018). This demographic information, combined with the quoted speech recorded in Mathilda's letters, gives good reason to believe that the Blomberg family had many opportunities to speak Swedish in their social networks (Karstadt 2003; cf. Wilkerson and Salmons 2008). The Swedish language was taught in a Lutheran-affiliated summer school (Bergin 1909, Bergin 1919), and as the Blombergs were members of Bethany Lutheran Church, it is very likely that the children would have attended Swedish lessons and would have used a series of Swedish-language readers that were published by the Chicago-based Engberg-Holmberg Publishing Company.¹⁰

We exemplify various roles expressed in the discourse of a letter in (1) below.¹¹ The letter, written in a variety of Swedish showing influence from

10 According to Lenora Lynam, archivist at the Old Mill Museum in Lindsborg, families in Lindsborg have saved the copies of the Swedish-language *läsebok* ('reader'), published by Engberg-Holmberg (e.g. Olson 1910), that the elder generations used.

11 Extracts from the letters that are longer than three lines in our transcripts are presented with a two-column layout, with the original Swedish in the left-hand side and our English renderings on the right. Short extracts, such as (3) below, present the transcriptions of the original Swedish on the top lines and the English translation below. In such short extracts, we indicate the line breaks in the letters by slashes [/]. In preparing the transcriptions of the Swedish in the letters, we preserved the writers' line breaks, orthography, and capitalization patterns. We also retained such textual features as underlining and marks where the writer ~~crossed out~~ words. We use the caret symbol [^lagar^] to indicate points where a writer has made additions to a line of a letter. We use square brackets, e.g. [det är bön], to indicate points where we had some uncertainties with our readings. Parentheses, e.g. i gar (i går), enclose our interpretations of words. Where possible, our English translations preserve the line breaks in the Swedish originals; our translations follow Present-day American English spelling and capitalization patterns. When the lexis in the heritage Swedish cannot be rendered with certainty in English, we give the conjectured reading in square brackets. While we aimed to use idiomatic English as much as possible in our translations, we sometimes use literal translations to help retain the line breaks. Some punctuation marks in the English translations have been added to disambiguate juxtaposed numerals and clausal junctures. Notes indicated by superscript letters are used to clarify concepts.

contact with English, was penned by Mathilda, at the time aged 41, who had been living in Kansas for nearly two decades.

Extract (1). Letter by Mathilda Blomberg to her parents, 29 November 1904, portions of pages 2 and 3 (of 4). ^a*rent*, clear, not soggy or muddy.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 5 | förleden lördag var Blomberg
till Lindsborg och då [sjende
han 25 kroner till eder till
jul Gåfva och desa peningar
får ni på påst afisen i Hycklinge | last Saturday Blomberg went
to Lindsborg and then he sent
25 crowns to you as a
Christmas present and this money
you can get at the post office in Hycklinge |
| 10 | och vi önskar att ni får den
innan jul even får vi önska
eder alla en God jul och ett
Godt nytt år med Gledje
lycka och velsingnelse af Gud | and we hope that you will get it
before Christmas we also want to wish
you all a Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year with joy
happiness and a blessing from God |
| 15 | förleden somer var Mycket
rengnig och våt så att det
var Mycket besverlig men
vetsjörden blef God hafvre
fick vi ingen vatnet först[ö]rde | last summer was very
rainy and wet so it
was very difficult but
the wheat harvest was good we
did not get any oats the water destroyed |
| 20 | den her omkring Majsen er
temerligen bra Majs plockningen
har vi slutat på 2 dagar Mera
vi har haft en vaker Höst vakert
veder enaru tort och rent ^a det | it around here the corn is
pretty good the corn harvest
we finished in two days more
we have had a beautiful fall beautiful
weather it is still dry and clear there |
| 25 | har varit litet is sindes på vatnet | has been a little ice visible on the water |

Page 3 (of 4)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | i hoarna några gånger men
November blomer heller vinter
eken som Ni kallar dem der hema
Står ute och blommar enu | in the watering troughs a few times but
November flowers or the winter
oak as you call them at home
are outdoors and are still blooming |
|---|---|--|

In a space of approximately twenty-five lines, Mathilda manages numerous topic shifts and communicative aims in maintaining connections to her parents and siblings (Attebery 2007: 14). Overall, the passage in (1) reveals how Mathilda introduces numerous episodes in a dense text, including, being instructive (telling her parents how to collect their Christmas money [page 2, line 5]), beneficent (page 2, line 14), and a reporter (describing the Kansas harvests and weather, page 2, lines 23–25; page 3, lines 1–4). These and other discourse episodes evident elsewhere in her letters help construct her role (cf. Pahta et al. 2010: 3) as an intermediary between Kansas and Wårdslunda. The various ways in which roles

are conveyed via language and discursive patterns in Mathilda's, her first husband's, and their eldest son's correspondence are developed further below.

4 Linguistic analysis of the correspondence

4.1 Letters by Nils Blomberg: Knowledgeable agri-businessman

Extract (2) is from a letter by Nils, addressed to his parents-in-law. The beginning of the letter reported some details on the couple's cross-Atlantic passage and their train trip from New York to Kansas in November 1884. The extract contains Blomberg's description of the welcome the couple received from persons in Lindsborg in December 1884 (see Figure 1).

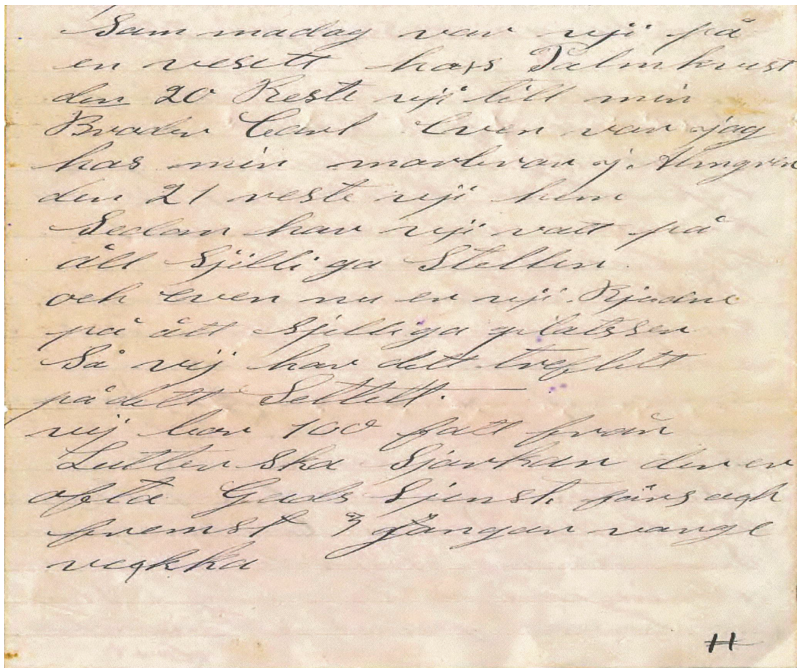


Figure 1: Extract from letter by Nils Blomberg to parents-in-law, January 3, 1885, page 4 (of 8). The images in this article are from Riksarkivet. Permission to reproduce these scanned images and the transcribed contents of the Blomberg letters has been given by *Kinda kommun* (the Municipality of Kinda, Sweden).

Extract (2). Letter by Nils Blomberg to parents-in-law, 3 January 1885, pages 4 through 5 (of 8):

	[...]	[...]
	Sammadag var vji på	Same day we were on
	en vesett hos Palmkvist	a visit at Palmquist's
	<u>den</u> 20 Reste vji till min	the 20 th (of December) we traveled to my
	Broder Carl Even var jag	brother Carl's I also was
10	hos min morbror J. Almgren	at my maternal uncle J. Almgren
	<u>den</u> 21 reste vji hem	the 21 st we traveled home
	Sedan har vji vatt på	Later we have been to
	ått Sjilliga (åtskilliga) Stellen	a great many places
	och even nu er vji Bjudne	and now too we are invited
15	på ått Sjelliga platsser	to a great many places
	Så vij har dett treflitt	So we are having a good time
	på dett Settett.	in this way.
	vij bor 100 f[o]tt från	we live 100 feet from
	Lutherska Sjorkan der er	the Lutheran church there is
20	ofta Guds Stjenst förs (först) och	often worship services first and
	fremst 3 gånger varge	foremost 3 times every
	veckka	week

Page 5 (of 8)

	her har varitt kallt	here (it) has been cold
	och ruskitt alltt sedan	and unpleasant (weather) since
	vij kom hitt. litett Snö	we arrived. little snow
	Spanmålls prisarna	the prices of grain
5	ero låga Hvetett betales	are low the wheat is paid
	med 35 Sent. per Busell	at 35 cent. per bushel
	eller 1-75 sent per tunnan	or one (dollar) 75 cents per barrel
	kaffe er nu Som får	coffee is now for
	7 Skalpun (skålpund) för en Daller	7 skålpund for a dollar
10	Säckert er flera Sårter	Surely are many kinds
	dett får man från 10 till 16	that one gets from 10 to 16
	Skallpun för en Däller	skålpund for a dollar
	vij var i gar (i går) i en handlings	we were yesterday in a general
	bod och Sjopte 150 Alner	store and bought 150 alner of
15	Lentt Som en 36 tum brett	cloth which is (a) 36 inches wide
	dett kostade 8 D[a]ller	it cost 8 dollars

Blomberg focuses on details relating to persons, places, and agricultural commodities, using a factual letter-writing style characteristic of many Swedish

immigrants in the nineteenth century (Attebery 2007). Extract (2) is a portion of a long chronological account that Nils wrote to his parents-in-law, in which he informs them of some of the social contacts Nils and Mathilda have made in Lindsborg (page 4, lines 6–17). Nils also reports that their temporary living quarters are close to the Lutheran church (page 4, lines 18–22). Nils' account, as visible in this extract, is succinct and factual in that he reports grain and coffee prices in Kansas and the couples' visit to a general store (page 5, lines 13–16). The correspondence by Nils in the coming years is also dominated by reports on the agricultural markets in Kansas and lists of the livestock and acreage that he and Mathilda owned. In some of his letters, he advises his brother-in-law Gottfrid (letters sent in 1887 and 1888) on the best route to take when traveling to America, what items to bring from Sweden, and what items to buy en route to Kansas.

The sample transcription from Nils' correspondence (Extract 2), contrasts with the style of the letter by Mathilda (Extract 1). In Nils' letter from 1885 there is no explicit mention of language contrasts between expressions used in Lindsborg and those used in Sweden (cf. Mathilda's letter, Extract 1, page 3, lines 2–4), nor are there explicit comparisons between life in Kansas and in Sweden.¹² Nils' letter gives the clear impression that the immigrant couple was intent on establishing their new life in Lindsborg. The way to do this, as implied by the contents of Extract (2), was for the couple to re-kindle Nils' social ties in the town. Nils' letter written in 1885 is not the only one in which he gives details on his social network. For example, in a letter written on December 4, 1891, addressed to Mathilda's parents, Nils explains that his nephew, Anton Johansson, was returning to Sweden and would be the courier of some packages to be placed in the safe-keeping of a schoolteacher, from whom the parents-in-law were to retrieve the gifts.

Extract (3). Letter by Nils to parents-in-law, 4 December 1891, pages 2 and 3 (of 8):

med Anton Sende/ min Hustru en/ klenning till Sin /moder even Sende/ jag en liten pakett/ till min Svåger johan/ detta Skal Anton/ lemna hos/ Skollerinnan/ Bernadina Bengtson/ i Gamleby.

'with Anton, my wife sent a dress to her mother. I also sent a little package to my brother-in-law Johan, Anton is to leave this [these items] with the school teacher Bernadina Bengtson in Gamleby.'

¹² It is possible that the information reported by Nils would invite the addressees to infer the contrasts with the prices of the same items in Sweden, but we cannot be sure of this.

As visible in (3), Nils shows his skills in mobilizing social networks in Kansas *and* in Sweden. He seizes an opportunity to send presents to his in-laws when his nephew returns to Sweden. He expresses agency, writing how he will activate the help of a trusted person in Gamleby, the school teacher Bernadina Bengtson, to make the delivery possible. In explaining where the package will be delivered, he links together two worlds: his networks in Kansas and in Sweden.

In the time period (1885 to 1897) covered by the extant correspondence of Nils, he mentions 37 persons: 28 living in Kansas, 5 in Sweden, and 4 persons in transit, i.e. traveling to/from Sweden. The persons mentioned in the correspondence to his parents-in-law were likely a portion of all persons with whom Nils had regular contact, and likely also those who might have had some ties to the in-laws. It is, however, of interest to know the numbers of persons he mentioned who lived in the two countries in order to gain a deeper understanding of the social networks with which he had contact and to compare the description of his networks with those mentioned by his wife and eldest son.

4.2 Letters by Mathilda Blomberg: Intermediary between Lindsborg and Wårdslunda

In the sections below, we bring up some of the subject matter presented by Mathilda (Sub-Section 4.2.1), evidence of two contrastive styles in her letters: a formulaic vs. a free-flowing personal style (Sub-Section 4.2.2), and how letters show her interest in maintaining social ties to individuals in Sweden and in the U.S. (Sub-Section 4.2.3).

4.2.1 Subject matter in Mathilda's letters

Mathilda regularly included news about weather conditions in Kansas and the successes and failures of recent harvests (see Extract 1). When the Blomberg children were young, she reported on their growth and development and on their progress in school. Other prominent subjects in Mathilda's letters were Bethany Lutheran Church, its pastors, and the related topics of weddings and funerals. Her interest in Bethany Lutheran Church appears as early as in the first letter to her parents, posted within a month of her arrival in Lindsborg. Extract (4) shows the attention she devoted to describing the sanctuary during the Christmas services:

Extract (4). Letter by Mathilda to parents, 3 January 1885, page 6 (of 8):

<p>efter som jag har till felle så vill jag tälla om för eder huru dan jul vi har haft här i linsborg Gudskänsten började klockan 5 5 på Morgonen och då vi inträde i kyrkan var hon prajd med fyra 4 kronor och 6 lamper i vardera i fönstra var flera jus ock på vägarna var flera Stycken större lamper dem kan 10 jag ej rekna på aftonen nar der [det är bön] och samma lampor begagnades Annan dag jul var Gudskänst klockan 10 och på Aftonen klockan 6 var det barnfest och kyrkan var packad med åhörare och 15 der var ej mindre en 100 80 stycken barn och pastor Svänsån hade till r[ee]jdt en platform heller en uppbyggnad Wid Altaret sa hög som bänka hvarpå barnen uppställes så att all 20 kunde dem både höra och se då de leste och sjöng. Och en Gran som var 10 fot hög hade de pryt med vackra tigns och full med jus.</p>	<p>as I have the opportunity I want to tell you what kind of Christmas we have had here in Lindsborg The church service began at 5 o'clock in the morning and when we entered in the church she was decorated with four chandeliers and 6 lamps in each window were many candles and on the walls were many bigger lamps those I could not count in the evening when it [is prayer] and the same lamps were used. The day after Christmas when there was a service at 10:00 and in the evening at 6:00 there was a children's festival and the church was packed with listeners and there were no fewer than 100; 80 children and Pastor Svenson had arranged a platform or a raised construction near the altar as high as the pews on which the children were lined up so that all could both hear and see when they read and sang. And a fir tree that was 10 feet tall they had decorated with beautiful things and covered with lights.</p>
---	--

Mathilda gives the impression of being a careful observer of the Christmas services, mentioning when each began and how the lights and candles were arranged in the sanctuary (lines 6–12), and the practical arrangements the pastor made so that children could be seen when reading texts and singing at the service held on December 26 (lines 13–21). She also describes a Christmas tree, 10-feet high, and decorated with *med vackra tigns*, ‘with beautiful things,’ *tigns* being a hybrid lexical item composed of the lexeme *ting* (Swedish for ‘object, thing’), which she spells as *tign*, and the plural morpheme from English, *-s*.

Another letter in which Mathilda shows her observational powers appears as Extract (5) below, written 49 years after the lines about Christmas services in Extract (4). In the letter dated December 8, 1934, Mathilda reports the news that Carl Gustaf Flöhr suffered illness and died during the fall. She explains that in the last weeks of her second husband’s life, many friends came to visit, bringing flowers and eight large bouquets (page 2, lines 1–8). Mathilda recollects what Carl had said to his visitors: “Si ett sådant Blomrum jag har” (line 8, ‘see such a

flower room I have’) and recalls his last words, said to her and the pastor (page 2, lines 12–14). Slightly later in the letter, Mathilda describes a custom in America in which funeral guests are invited to come to the home of the immediate family after the funeral. She explains that 100 persons visited her home, of whom 30 guests stayed for the meal she prepared.

Extract (5). Letter by Mathilda to brother and sister-in-law, 8 December 1934, pages 2 and 3 (of 4):

Page 2 (of 4)

	han hade så många venner som kom o helsade på honom hela tiden han var i Bed o tog så många Blommor till hans sjuk rum	he had so many friends who came and visited him the whole time he was in bed and (they) brought so many flowers to his sick room
5	så han hade ej mindre en 8 stora Buckles allt jemt i sitt rum så han bruckade sega till sitt fremmat Si ett sådant Blomrum jag har våran Pastor Bergin var [?] her	so he had no fewer than 8 large bouquets all the time in his room so he used to say to his visitors see such a flower room I have our Pastor Bergin was here
10	o talade vid honom 3 timmar innan han dog o slutade sina dagar o ner han tog farvel sade min man om vi ej får treffas her mera så får vi treffas hemma i Himmelen	and talked with him for 3 hours before he died and ended his days and when he said farewell, my husband said if we would not meet here anymore then we would meet at home in Heaven
15	ja han gick lycklig hem han var redig [...]	yes he went happily home he was ready [...]

Page 3 (of 4)

	Det er mycket Brucklit her att ner Di kommer från graf[j]orden så Bjuder man [Då] qvelsmat i hemmet o det jorde jag så her var 100, 30 till	It is very customary here that when they come from the graveyard then one offers an evening meal in the home and I did that so here there were 100, 30 for supper and all the children took a little food and it was served cold food
5	qvelsmat o Alla Barnen tog bit mat o den serverades kall mat så det går hendigt så all maten gick ej åt [...]	so it was handy so not all of the food was eaten [...]

The contents of the letter as excerpted in (5) are arranged in a chronological sequence. She describes the setting where Carl Gustaf spent his last weeks, recalls what he said to his friends, the pastoral care by Bergin, and quotes the husband’s final words. The letter provides an eyewitness account of his death,

and is truly a personal ego-document that Mathilda writes to bring her readers closer to her experience in Kansas.

4.2.2 Discourse patterning: Formulaic expressions and free-flowing personal style

One of the most prominent ways Mathilda expresses connections with her family members is through her use of formulaic, religious discourse consisting of quotations and allusions from the Bible.¹³ The formulaic expressions are often placed at the beginning of her letters. The expressions are relatively brief, comprising one or two lines, but range across the decades of her correspondence. For example, a prototypical greeting in one of her letters appears as in Extract (6) in a letter addressed to Hilma, Mathilda's sister.

Extract (6). Letter by Mathilda to sister, 24 May 1915, page 1 (of 8):

Elskade Syster Hilma/Guds nåd o frid o velsignelse vile/öfver oss alla.

'Beloved Sister Hilma/May God's grace and peace and blessing rest/over us all.'

We are fairly sure that the blessing Mathilda wrote in the greeting, appearing as (6), has been strongly influenced by lines appearing in several Pauline epistles in the New Testament of the Bible.¹⁴ She also interjects Christian sentiments in the body portion of her letters. See for example, Extract (7), in which Mathilda reports to her parents that Blomberg's earnings from his first sojourn to Kansas had been deposited in the Lindsborg bank. She positions the Christian discourse (starting in line 10), quoted nearly verbatim from the *First Epistle of John*,¹⁵ between the information about her husband's savings and the greetings to Amanda back home. Mathilda juxtaposes biblical quotations with worldly contents in a style that her husband does not use in the letters. We interpret her pious expressions as being used to build connections to her readers in the formulations that they would readily recognize from the Bible translation also used in their home parish in Sweden.

¹³ The latter portion of the nineteenth century in Sweden was a period of widespread pietism, evident in the Lutheran church (the state church) as well as in the other protestant denominations (see, e.g. Bexell 2003). We would expect ego-documents to mirror this religious expression.

¹⁴ The blessing that Mathilda uses in (6) may be found, for example, in *1 Corinthians* 1:3, *Romans* 1:7, and *2 Corinthians* 1:2. We thank Cecilia Wejryd for helping us locate these verses in the Karl XII translation of the Swedish Bible.

¹⁵ The quotation likely comes from *1 John*, chapter 1:7 in the Karl XII translation of the Swedish Bible.

Extract (7). Letter by Mathilda to parents, 3 January 1885, page 8 (of 8):

[...] Men de ero nu på banken	[...] But it (=the money) is now in the bank
vi kan få dem [n]er vi behöfver	we can have it when we need it
10 jesu Cristi Guds såns blod renar oss	the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us
af alla synder Helsa Amanda och bekanta	from all sins greet Amanda and acquaintances
vener	friends

Biblical quotations comprise, however, a portion of her correspondence. Mathilda's expressions of self-directed agency, articulated through imperatives and instructions as exemplified above, which we associate with an individual style, gain prominence in her letters. In 1888, a few years after immigrating to the Lindsborg area, Mathilda makes specific requests of family members. Notably, she instructs her brother Gottfrid to bring specific stalks of plants, roots, and seeds from Vårdslunda when he comes to live on the Blomberg farm in Kansas. The discourse is rich in detail, suggesting the clarity with which she remembers the plants from her childhood home, including a reference to a villager, Lovisa Callandersa, who had cultivated a variety of beans (page 2, lines 16–21). Mathilda explains her intentions to transplant the Swedish flora in her Kansas garden (page 3, lines 4–5).

Extract (8). Letter by Mathilda to parents and siblings, 24 January 1888, pages 2 and 3 (of 4):

[...]	[...]
Go[t]frid emnar sig att koma	Gottfrid plans to come
hit till oss och han er mycket	here to us and he is very
10 velkommen till oss jag tycker	welcome to us I think
att det skall vara roligt att få	it will be fun to get to
se honom komma	see him come
broder Gotfrid om du kan	brother Gottfrid if you can
så var god och tag med ett	please bring with (you) a
15 Greslöke stånd och en	stalk of chives and a
lavendel rot tag Med	lavender root Bring along
efven några stång böner	also some stalks of beans
som er röda blommor på	which have red flowers
ner de vexer Lovisa	when they grow Lovisa
20 Callandersa hade dem ner	Callandersa had them when
jag var i Vårdslunda	I was in Vårdslunda
tag med några socker erter	bring along some sugar peas
och böner och bonböner	and farmer beans [=fava beans]

Page 3 (of 4)

rot kar kårs frö [=kålrotsfrö]	turnip seeds
och blom fro vad sorter ni har	and flower seeds whatever sorts you have
men tag bara litet af var	but bring along only a little of each
sort jag vill för söka om	kind I want to try if
5 det vexer her	it grows here

Other evidence of Mathilda's agency involves her use of dual lexis in Swedish: a variant she uses is immediately followed by the expression she believes her family in Sweden uses. One example of such dual lexis appears in Extract (9). She first uses the Swedish word *Hospitalet*, almost identical to the English term, before writing *Lasarettet* for the benefit of her readers. From the word that she strikes out in the letter (~~*Hospitalet*~~), we conclude that Mathilda self-edits the Swedish lexis she uses in Kansas.

Extract (9). Letter by Mathilda to brother and sister-in-law, 4 December 1928, page 1 (of 4) (age 65):

Ner jag fick edert Bref/ var jag i Hospitalet heller som/ ni seger ~~Hospitalet~~ Lasarettet.

'When I received your letter/ I was in the hospital or what/ you say, the [general] hospital.'

Mathilda's self-correction and meta-commentary (in [9]) would have been highly salient for her readers, for the meaning of the word *hospitalet* in Swedish referred to a 'mental hospital', rather than to a general hospital.¹⁶ Other dual lexis in the body of Mathilda's letters pertains to names of plants. For example, in numerous letters, she describes how *November blomer* ('November flowers', sometimes spelled by Mathilda as *Novemberblommorna*) are still flowering in the late fall, and she provides the name *vinter ecken* as the equivalent her Swedish family would recognize. The most personal of all the dual forms in Mathilda's letters is the way she refers to her youngest daughter, Stella Myrtle Maria, called *Myrtle*. Mathilda actually recasts the name as *Mörtel* in her correspondence, likely so that the grandparents could more easily pronounce the child's name (letter dated November 29, 1904, page 3).

¹⁶ *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok*, available at <https://saob.se/artikel/?seek=hospital&pz=1> (accessed April 4, 2019).

4.2.3 Indication of social networks and roles in the immigrant community

Mathilda's letters mention numerous persons back home in Wårdslunda. She sends greetings to and/or inquiries about the health of 36 persons in Sweden. Table 1 below presents an overview of the more than 200 persons Mathilda

Table 1: Persons mentioned in Mathilda's letters, 1885–1934.

People in the U.S.

- Immediate family: first husband *Blomberg*, sons *Anton*, *Oskar* (who died in childhood), *Werner*, *Edward*, *Alvin*; daughters *Amanda*, *Hanna*, *Alvida*, *Stella Mörtel* (Myrtle), *Vendla*; second husband *Carl Gustaf Flöhr*; 14 *barnbarn* (grandchildren); Anton's daughter.
- Mathilda's relatives: brother *Gättfrid* (Gottfrid), his wife (Ida) and their two children *Klerens* and *Helena*; sister *Hulda* and *Montén* (sister's husband) and their two children *Ernst* and *Linnéa*; paternal uncle and his wife in Clifton, Kansas: *Farbro Carlsån* and *Faster*.
- First husband's relatives: maternal uncle *Johan Almgren*, the sons of Johan Almgren, *Edvard Almgren* household; Blomberg's brother (unnamed).
- Second husband's relatives: brother (living elsewhere in Kansas), sister living in Lindsborg.
- Mathilda's friends and acquaintances: *Pastor Svänsån* (Swenson); *Amanda i Strömserum* and Amanda's husband *Carl Wistran[d]* and their two daughters; *Flods* (the Flod family); neighbor *Linken* (Lincoln) and his wife; *Ragnar* (fiancé of niece Linnéa); *Pastor Bergin*.
- Persons mentioned in a group and/or by their role: 80 children in church; *piga* (a maid); a doctor; seamstresses in America; new pastor and family; *dreng* (hired hand); second husband's many friends; 3 pastors who officiate at the second husband's funeral; approximately 100 funeral guests, including children.

People in Sweden

- Mathilda's relatives: *pappa*, *mor* (mother), brothers *Johan* and *Ernst*; sisters *Hulda* and *Hilma*; Johan's daughter; *Farbro* (paternal uncle), *Moster Flod* (maternal aunt Flod), *Gamla Flods* (the old Flod couple), *Flods barn* (the Flod children), *Emil Flod* and his sister *Hulda Fina*; *Emil Flods fru* (Emil Flod's wife); *mormor i byget* (a grandmother in the village); first husband's relative *Samel Almgren*; second husband's grandfather *farfar från Småland* (paternal grandfather from the province of Småland).
- Friends, neighbors, and acquaintances: *Amanda i Talsebo*; *Lovisa Callendersa*; *Cristin i Udetorp med sin pojke* (Cristin in Udetorp with her boy); *Gamla Greta i Udetorp* (Old Greta in Udetorp); *Pattrik* who farms *Gustaf Anderssons gård* (farm); *CalJohans flickor* (Carl Johan's girls); *Agust Persas barn* (August Person's children); *bekanta vener* (acquaintances, friends), *bekanta i Wårdslunda och i trakten* (acquaintances in Wårdslunda and in the area)
- School teacher in Gamleby: *Berhardina Bengtson*; the maid's (*pigas*) parents in Frödinge socken (Frödinge parish).

People in Transit

- returning to Sweden: Nils' nephew *Anton Johan Son*
 - leaving for America: Mathilda's sister *Hulda* and brother *Gottfrid*.
-

mentions in her letters in the time-period 1885–1934. Italics in the figure designate the spelling of the names as used by Mathilda; contents in the parentheses contain our clarification.

We present the detailed list to illustrate the complexity and multi-faceted nature of Mathilda's networks, as revealed in her correspondence. By mentioning so many individuals in her letters, Mathilda knits together two different Swedish-speaking worlds: the one she remembers from her home village and the other in the Kansas farm community where she is raising her family. The contents of her correspondence show that she is keen to maintain her social roles in both worlds, roles which she endeavors to maintain in her letters over many decades.

Extract (10) below provides a glimpse of how Mathilda's letters inform the Swedish relatives of family matters in the U.S. and in so doing, shows attention to the preservation of social networks. Mathilda's letter actually reports contents in *another* set of correspondence, namely letters from Minnesota to Kansas, written by Mathilda's sister-in-law, who is the wife of Gottfrid. To the relatives in Sweden, Mathilda reports that Gottfrid's children are working (the boy repairs automobiles and the girl is a bookkeeper; see lines 16–19).

Extract (10). Letter by Mathilda to brother and sister-in-law, 25 November 1929, page 2 (of 4), age 66:

	[...]		[...]
	Men hans hustru skriver		But his wife writes
	till oss i Blan o di mår bra ner jag		to us sometimes and they are well when I
	hörde sist han har en pojke och		last heard he had a boy and
15	en Flicka men di er bada ute och		a girl but they are both out and
	Arbeter pojken han arbetar ^lagar^o reperer		working the boy he works ^fixes^ and repairs
	Atomobiler ner jag hörde om honom		automobiles when I heard about him
	sist o flickan hon arbetar i ett		last and the girl she works in an
	kåntor o er Bock Förare jag minnas		office and is bookkeeper I don't
20	ej vad ni kaller sådant arbete		remember what you call such work
	men du får vel tencke ut vad		but you will just have to figure out what
	det er		it is

In (10), Mathilda shows her role as an intermediary, conveying information about the Minnesota branch of the family to siblings and other relatives in Wårdslunda. Her social networks are perceptible in these lines, just as is her instinct to comment on language forms. See, for example, lines 19–22, in which she signals with meta-commentary that a *Bock Förare* ('bookkeeper') may be called something else in the Swedish spoken by her family in Wårdslunda. This

meta-commentary displays self-awareness that her Swedish lexis has drifted from the lexis of her siblings in Sweden. Further, without apologizing for any possible semantic shift, she states that her Swedish readers “får vel tencke ut vad det er” (‘just have to figure out what it is’, lines 21–22), placing the interpretive burden on the readers.

4.3 Letters by Anton Blomberg: Second-generation agri-businessman

Figure 2 shows a portion of a letter written by Anton to his maternal uncle. Transcription of the passage appears below as (11). Similar to the letter-writing style of his parents, Anton reports information about the latest harvests. He mentions the yield from the wheat harvest and some of the current market prices. Here, the volume of the harvest is expressed in terms of liters (*liter*, page 1, line 16 of the transcription). By way of contrast, we mention that his father had expressed the comparative unit of measurement in terms of *bussel* (‘bushel’) in a letter written in 1885.¹⁷ It may be the case that the units of measurement that Anton used were those learned in the Swedish courses in Kansas, and not transmitted from his father’s lexis. Whichever was the case, Anton takes on a reporting mode, itemizing the number of cattle and horses on the family farm before he elaborates on the poultry and swine.

Anton provides translations for English lexical items that he clearly thinks will be of interest to the recipient, e.g. in the fifth line from the bottom of the page as shown in Figure 2: “kalkoner eller turkeys såm vi kallar den” (‘kalkoner or turkeys as we call it’) and in lines 17–18 in (11). He takes on a pedagogical role in a way that bears similarly to patterns exhibited in some of his mother’s letters (in Extract 1; see above in Section 3). In all likelihood, Anton would have had access to at least one comprehensive Swedish-English/English-Swedish dictionary, perhaps Lönnkvist (1901), which would have helped him with lexis as well as templates for writing various types of letters.

¹⁷ Units of measure expressed in the metric system were adopted in Sweden by the Swedish parliament in 1875, with a period of transition during the years 1879–1888. Source: *Nationalencyclopedia, svenska mått* (‘Swedish measurement systems’) <https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lång/svenska-mått> (accessed April 8, 2019).

2378 2(4)

Och för 10 månader var det endast
värt omkring \$5. dollar tonnet.

Vi hava 60 fäbretur
och vi mjölka 4 kor. Och hava
7 hästar 7 arbets hästar och
3 hästar som vi icke kan köra,
Jag har en liten häst som
Jag kan både köra och rida
Jag har fått en kärva af
papa och en sele af mama,
min häst är en arabin och
är icke Jäm grå eller Jusgrå
utan mit i mella de färgen, och
heter Fylli och är snart 4 år
gammal.

Vi har omkring 175
höns och 14 kalkoner eller
turkeys såm vi kallar den,
Och en 7 svin.

Svinen äro värda \$5.50 cent
per hundra pund.

Figure 2: Letter by Anton Blomberg to uncle, 17 January 1902, page 2 (of 4).

Extract (11). Letter by Anton to maternal uncle, 17 January 1902, pages 1 and 2 (of 4).

<p>[...] Vår skörd for lidet år 15 var melmätig. Vi feck omkring 54,000 liter hvete. Magsen slog felt, Höet var dåligt det ar nu värdt \$11 dollar tonnet</p>	<p>[...] Our harvest in the past year was mediocre. We got about 54,000 liters of wheat. The corn didn't turn out, The hay was bad it is now worth \$11 dollars a ton</p>
---	---

Page 2 (of 4)

	Och för 10 månader var det endast	And ten months ago it was only
	vårt omkring \$5. dollar tonnet.	worth about \$5 dollars a ton
	Vi hava 60 fäkretur	We have 60 head of cattle
	och vi mjölka 4 kor. Ock hava	and we milk 4 cows. And have
5	7 hästar 7 arbetshästar ock	7 horses 7 workhorses and
	3 hästar såm vi i[j] kan köra.	3 horses that we cannot drive
	Jag har en liten hast såm	I have a little horse that
	Jag kan b[å]de köra ock rida	I can both drive and ride
	Jag har fått en kärra af	I have gotten a cart from
10	papa och en sele af mama,	pappa and a harness from mamma
	min häst är en Arabin och	my horse is an Arabian and
	äre icke Järn grå eller Jusgrå	is not iron grey or light grey
	utan mit i mella de färger ock	but is an in-between color and
	heter Filli, ock är snart 4 år	is named Filly [=Filly], and is soon 4 years
15	gammal.	old.
	Vi har omkring 175	Vi have about 175
	höns och 14 kalkoner eller	hens and 14 kalkoner or
	turkeys såm vi kallar den,	turkeys as we call it,
	Och en 7 svin,	And 7 swine
20	Svinen äro värda \$5.50 cent	The swine are worth \$5.50 cents
	per hundra pund.	per one hundred pounds

An overall impression of Anton's letter as presented as in Figure 2 and transcribed as Extract (11) is one of standardization and suggests that he had literacy training in Swedish, as well as in English (see Figure 3 below). The penmanship is easier to decipher, punctuation is often used to separate sentences, and capitalization patterns are more systematic than those used by his parents. Anton's orthography is more uniform; when he speaks of a *dollar*, he writes *dollar* (page 1, line 18 and page 2, line 2), whereas his father had spelled the currency in various ways, including *Daller* and *Dåller* as in Extract (2).

Most interesting for our purposes is noting the self-awareness with which Anton uses his dual vocabulary in the letter. As mentioned above, Anton uses to some extent dual vocabulary (*kalkoner* and *turkeys*). Anton makes even more explicit use of his dual vocabulary in a postcard sent in 1907. Figure 3 shows the front and back images of a postcard written by Anton to his grandfather in Sweden. Anton sends greetings in English and Swedish, obviously fully aware of the importance of language choice.



Figure 3: Postcard by Anton to maternal grandfather, 14 December 1907.

Extract (12). Message by Anton to grandfather on the correspondence side of the postcard:

With a merry	Herr U. R. Fredricksån.
Christmas to Granpa	Vårdslunda.
God Jul till	Hycklinge Socken.

Morfar.	Sweden
Från	of
Anton B.	Europe

The front image of the postcard:

CORN GROWS BIG IN KANSAS.
Mags växer Stor i Kansas.

The correspondence of the teenager Anton is characterized by bilingualism. He uses para-textual space, creating separate fields for Swedish and English, signaling clearly when he moves from one language to the other. The message side of the postcard contains a dual greeting, first in English and then in Swedish. Even though his letters were addressed to readers who were likely monolingual in Swedish, Anton nevertheless uses English lexis, systematically translating his English to Swedish, presumably with the goal to bring his Kansas experience closer to his Swedish relatives. Another way that Anton tries to link his experiences to the relatives in Wårdslunda is through a person he mentions in his correspondence: he reports that the Swedish bishop von Scheelé visited Lindsborg in the fall of 1901. The persons mentioned elsewhere in Anton's letter are limited to his parents and siblings.

5 Discussion and concluding remarks

In this section, we discuss the patterns in the subject matter and language use in the letters with the aim to understand the social roles and networks perceptible in the correspondence written by the members of the Blomberg family. As we now know in detail how Mathilda structured her letters, we can point to the convergences/divergences from her letters and her role compared to Nils and to some extent compared to Anton.

Both Nils and Mathilda maintained their use of Swedish in the correspondence over time, even if they occasionally used some English words and English-influenced constructions. Anton, a childhood bilingual, provided dual forms for every line in the later piece of correspondence; see Figure 3, the postcard written to his maternal grandfather. Regular topics in the letters by all three family members were the agricultural conditions and markets in Kansas and the plants, crops, and livestock on the Blomberg family farm. To varying extents, the letter writers used lexis from English in communicating this information. Nils' letters contained some English (*farm, farmare* [for

‘farmer’], *bussel* [for ‘bushel’] etc.). Anton wrote about *kalkoner eller turkeys* (Extract 11). Mathilda described plants that bloomed well into the late fall, mentioning over the years some dual names in Swedish for the plants: *November blomer* or *vinter ecken* (see Sub-Section 4.2.2.). Typically, she wrote the name of a plant, place, or profession in her variety of Swedish before explaining what the name would be in her family’s variety of Swedish. We identified some lexical evidence for this change as well as some of her occasional meta-commentary pertaining to her word choices in the letters (see Extract 9). In the later years in Mathilda’s correspondence, some evidence emerges that she expends slightly less energy in providing dual names for a concept; see Extract (10). One interpretation can be that she shows more confidence in her American Swedish lexis.

The social roles and networks of Nils and Mathilda can be traced over portions of their lives, thanks to some degree to the quantity of their letters. Even if the extant correspondence by Nils is limited to approximately a span of 12 years, it is possible to see that he maintains the role of the knowledgeable agri-businessman who keeps a close watch on the market values of the crops and livestock on the family farm. Further, his letters signal that he has plans for how and when travels and transactions should happen. He shows such agency, for example, when he instructs his brother-in-law Gottfrid on the best way to travel from Wårdslunda to the middle of Kansas (letters written in 1887 and 1888) and when he explains to his parents-in-law where they will receive packages he has sent with his nephew who is returning to Sweden. He thus builds bridges between the Swedish-American community in Lindsborg and the Swedish village of Wårdslunda. The persons he mentioned in the letters to his in-laws give strong indication that he was closely linked to Swedish-speaking social networks in rural Kansas (see 4.1). All of the individuals mentioned by Nils, with the possible exception of a doctor, were speakers of Swedish. His letters provide clear evidence that he was surrounded by the Swedish language in Kansas.

Diachronic analysis of Mathilda’s letters shows a correspondent whose roles were simultaneously “fixed” and “fluid and subtle” (Pahta et al. 2010: 2–3). In terms of Mathilda’s “fixed” roles, we find strong evidence that she was keen to maintain her familial roles as loving daughter and sibling, and as a childhood friend. In every letter of the correspondence spanning 49 years, Mathilda opens and closes the correspondence with extended warm and affectionate greetings and closings (cf. Attebery 2007). In nearly all cases, the greetings and closings are formulaic in that they were based on Bible verses her family in Sweden would have recognized (see Sub-Section 4.2.2).

Another way that she tries to maintain her role as a family member, friend, and acquaintance is by inquiring regularly about relatives, friends, and villagers back home. She urges them to write, frequently mentioning how long she has waited for a letter. For example, Mathilda writes to her parents: “var er syster Hulda nu [...] / jag skref till/hene för ett år sedan men/sedan har jag ej hört något” (‘Where is sister Hulda now? [...] I wrote to her a year ago but since I have not heard anything’, letter dated January 24, 1888, pages 1 and 2 [of 4]). Indeed, Mathilda’s complaints about not receiving letters in return demonstrate her wish to maintain her social networks in Sweden, despite the space and time that separated her from her relatives and friends. In letters she wrote when she was in her 60s and 70s, she reminds the readers of the number of years that she has been away from Sweden, and she entreats them to send greetings to anybody in the village who might remember her from childhood.

Mathilda expresses her wish to maintain her close relationships with friends and family in Sweden, and the same correspondence provides evidence of her role as an intermediary between Lindsborg and Wårdslunda. In time, however, her linguistic style subtly changes and gravitates toward a new identity as a Kansas Swede (cf. Blanck 1997) in her choice of Swedish lexis. Her adopted identity becomes visible when she comments on some semantic differences between the Swedish in Kansas and the Swedish back home. As she was one of thousands of Swedish-speaking persons of many different ages living in Kansas at the time (see, e.g. Nelson 1943), she witnessed the sociolinguistic processes that were turning Swedish into a heritage language (cf. Hasselmo 1974; Rothman 2009). Her meta-commentary on lexis provides some spectator views of how semantic differences were emerging.

Over many decades of writing letters, Mathilda brought her Kansas experience closer to the Swedish relatives. Meanwhile, her social roles and networks expanded perceptively over time. The contents of her letters give a strong indication of a woman with a large social network, over 200 persons with whom she had contact of varying regularity and strength. As was the case with Nils’ social networks that were perceptible in letters, Mathilda’s networks were also obviously dominated by Swedish-speaking persons.

Our study surveyed the meaning-making processes (Gumperz 1982: 38–99) and discourse (Hymes 1972: 65) visible in the correspondence of three letter writers as they preserved their roles as members of Mathilda’s family in Sweden. Mathilda also pointed out differences between the Swedish used in Kansas and the Swedish used by family members at home. Anton expressed his two roles, as an American and as Swedish, by writing lines in English and in Swedish. Thus, in the correspondence, we saw how the individuals balanced old and new

language and discourse forms. In so doing, the writers display social roles that were achieved in written interaction on one family farm across time and space.

Acknowledgements: We gratefully acknowledge the insightful feedback we received on this paper from the editor of this special issue and from the other editors and reviewers. For various kinds of help with the historical materials, we thank Marla Elmquist, Gunilla Grügiel, Barbara Hoffman, Lenora Lynam, Sheila Malm, Mats Thelander, and Cecilia Wejryd. Renée Lund Danielson shared insights on family correspondence in Sweden in the 1800s. She and Elin Isberg and helped us interpret and translate numerous passages in the Blomberg letters. We also wish to thank Berit Åhlander, Ulla Åkesson, Lars Åstrand, Gudmund Danielson, Åke Eriksson, Birgitta Grape, Christina Karlberg, Kerstin Nilsson, Maj Reinhammar, Mats Rydén, Harriet Sundström, and Karen Williams for help in deciphering and translating some of the phrases in the letters.

References

Primary sources

Letter collection used for data sampling: Kinda kommunarkiv, Emigrantbrev. KLA_801–1.

Secondary sources

- Ågren, Maria. 2017. Introduction. In Maria Ågren (ed.), *Gender and work in Early Modern European Society*. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190240615.001.0001 (accessed 2 April 2019).
- Attebery, Jennifer Eastman. 2007. *Up in the Rocky Mountains: Writing the Swedish immigrant experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Auer, Anita, Tony Fairman, Moragh Gordon, Marije van Hattum & Mikko Laitinen. In preparation, forthcoming. *Letters of Artisans and the Labouring Poor*. Lausanne: Université de Lausanne. <https://lalpcorpus.wordpress.com> (accessed 26 November 2018).
- Baert, Patrick. 2006. Role. In Austin Harrington, Barbara I. Marshall & Hans-Peter Müller (eds.), *Encyclopedia of social theory*, 524–526. London & New York: Routledge.
- Barton, H. Arnold. 1975. *Letters from the promised land: Swedes in America, 1840–1914*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bergin, Alfred. 1909. *Lindsborg. Bidrag till svenskarnas och den lutherska kyrkans historia i Smoky Hill River Dalen* [Lindsborg. A contribution to the history of the Lutheran church in

- the Smoky Hill River Valley]. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concerns Tryckeri och Bokbinderi.
- Bergin, Alfred. 1919. *Lindsborg efter femtio år. Bidrag till vår lutherska kyrkas och svenskarnas historia i Kansas och sydvästern* [Lindsborg after fifty years: A contribution to the history of our Lutheran church and of the Swedes in Kansas and in the Southwest]. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concerns Tryckeri och Bokbinderi.
- Bexell, Oloph. 2003. *Sveriges kyrkohistoria. 7. Folkväckelsens och kyrkoförnyelsens tid* [Swedish church history 7: Times of popular revival and church renewal]. Stockholm: Verbum and Svenska kyrkans forskningsråd.
- Bischoff, Shannon T. & Carmen Jamy (eds.). 2013. *Functional approaches to language*. (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs TiLSM 248). Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Blanck, Dag. 1997. *Becoming Swedish-American: The construction of an ethnic identity in the Augustana Synod, 1860–1917* (Studia Historica Upsaliensia 182). Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Bucholtz, Mary & Kira Hall. 2005. Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies* 7(4–5). 585–614.
- Carman, J. Neale. 1962. *Foreign language units of Kansas. Volume 1: Historical atlas and statistics*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, Department of German Languages and Literatures.
- Carman, J. Neale. 1974. *Foreign language units of Kansas. Volume 2: Account of settlement and settlements in Kansas* (unpublished microfiche). Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, Department of German Languages and Literatures.
- DeHaan, Kathleen A. 2010. Negotiating the transnational moment: Immigrant letters as performance of diasporic identity. *National Identities* 12(2). 107–131.
- Dijk, Teun van. 1981. Episodes as units of discourse analysis. In Deborah Tannen (ed.), *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk*, 177–195. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.
- Eckert, Penelope. 2000. *Linguistic variation as social practice. The linguistic construction of identity in Belten High*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Elsaß, Stephan. 2012. The use of private letters and diaries in sociolinguistic investigation. In Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy & Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (eds.), *The handbook of historical sociolinguistics*, 156–169. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Elsaß, Stephan. 2015. Private letters as a source for an alternative history of Middle New High German. In Anita Auer, Daniel Schreier & Richard J. Watts (eds.), *Letter writing and language change*, 35–52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fairman, Tony. 2006. Words in English Record Office documents of the early 1800s. In Merja Kytö, Mats Rydén & Erik Smitterberg (eds.), *Nineteenth-century English: Stability and change* (Studies in English Language), 56–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fairman, Tony. 2009. “She has four and big agane”: Ellipses and prostheses in mechanically-schooled writing in England, 1795–1834. In Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Wim van der Wurff (eds.), *Current issues in Late Modern English* (Linguistic Insights. Studies in Language and Communication 77), 409–429. Bern, etc.: Peter Lang.
- Fitzmaurice, Susan M. 2010. Mr Spectator, identity and social roles in an early eighteenth-century community of practice and the periodical discourse community. In Päivi Pahta, Minna Nevala, Arja Nurmi & Minna Palander-Collin (eds.), *Social roles and language practices in Late Modern English*, 29–53. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Gumperz, John J. 1982. *Discourse strategies* (Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics 1). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gumperz, John J. 2015 [2001]. Interactional sociolinguistics. A personal perspective. In Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton & Deborah Schiffrin (eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis*, 2nd edn. 309–323 Malden, MA: John Wiley.
- Harder, Peter. 2013. Structure and function: A niche-construction approach. In Shannon T. Bishoff & Carmen Jamy (eds.), *Functional approaches to language*, 71–106. Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Hasselmo, Nils. 1974. *Amerikasvenska. En bok om språkutvecklingen i Svensk-Amerika* [American Swedish. A book on the language development in Swedish-America]. Stockholm: Esselte.
- Haugen, Einar. 1969 [1953]. *The Norwegian language in America: A study in bilingual behavior*, 2nd edn. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hoffman, Angela & Merja Kytö. 2018. Heritage Swedish, English, and textual space in rural communities of practice. In Jan Heegård Petersen & Karoline Kühl (eds.), *Selected proceedings of the 8th workshop on immigrant languages in the Americas (WILA 8)*, 44–54. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Hymes, Dell. 1972. Models of the interaction of language and social life. In John J. Gumperz & Dell Hymes (eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*, 35–71. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hymes, Dell. 1996. *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality. Toward an understanding of voice*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Jacobs, Andreas & Andreas H. Jucker. 1995. The historical perspective in pragmatics. In Andreas H. Jucker (ed.), *Historical pragmatics. Pragmatic developments in the history of English*, 3–33. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Jary, David. 2006. Agency. In Austin Harrington, Barbara I. Marshall & Hans-Peter Müller (eds.), *Encyclopedia of social theory*, 8–10. London & New York: Routledge.
- Karstadt, Angela Hoffman. 2003. *Tracking Swedish-American English. A longitudinal study of linguistic variation and identity* (Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia 16). Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Kroskrity, Paul V. 2000. Identity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9(1/2). 111–114.
- Lönnkvist, Fred. 1901. *Engelsk-svensk och svensk-engelsk ordbok med fullständig uttalsbe-teckning. Ordlista öfver amerikanska ord, fraser, förkortningar, samtalsöfningar och ordspråk, tillsammans med utförliga underrättelser rörande brefskrifning omfattande affärsbref, umgängesbref, rekommendationsbref, o.s.v., med formulär både på svenska och engelska* [English-Swedish and Swedish-English dictionary with a comprehensive description of pronunciation. Word lists of American words, phrases, abbreviations, conversational exercises and proverbs, together with exhaustive accounts regarding letter writing, covering business letters, personal letters, letters of recommendation, and so forth, with templates both for Swedish and English]. The Project Gutenberg at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/51613/51613-h/51613-h.htm> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- Mey, Jacob L. 2001 [1993]. *Pragmatics. An introduction*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Nelson, Helge. 1943. *The Swedes and the Swedish settlements in North America. Volume I: Text; Volume II: Atlas*. Lund: Gleerup.
- Nevalainen, Terttu & Helena Raumolin-Brunberg. 2017 [2003]. *Historical sociolinguistics: Language change in Tudor and Stuart England*, 2nd edn. London: Longman.
- Nevalainen, Terttu, Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, Jukka Keränen, Minna Nevala, Arja Nurmi & Minna Palander-Collin. 1998. *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC). University of

- Helsinki. <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/varieng/corpus-of-early-english-correspondence> (accessed 26 November 2018).
- Nurmi, Arja & Minna Nevala. 2010. The social space of an eighteenth-century governess: Modality and reference in the private letters and journals of Agnes Porter. In Päivi Pahta, Minna Nevala, Arja Nurmi & Minna Palander-Collin (eds.), *Social roles and language practices in Late Modern English*, 163–189. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Nurmi, Arja & Päivi Pahta. 2010. Preacher, scholar, brother, friend: Social roles and code-switching in the writings of Thomas Twining. In Päivi Pahta, Minna Nevala, Arja Nurmi & Minna Palander-Collin (eds.), *Social roles and language practices in Late Modern English*, 135–162. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Olson, Ernst Wilhelm. 1910. *Min andra läsebok. Fortsättning av "Min första läsebok." Nystavning med hänvisning till det äldre stavsättet* [My second reader. A continuation of "My first reader." New reformed spelling with cross-reference to the older spelling system]. Chicago: Engberg-Holmberg Publishing Company.
- Pahta, Päivi, Minna Palander-Collin, Minna Nevala & Arja Nurmi. 2010. Language practices in the construction of social roles in Late Modern English. In Päivi Pahta, Minna Nevala, Arja Nurmi & Minna Palander-Collin (eds.), *Social roles and language practices in Late Modern English*, 1–27. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Pavlenko, Aneta. 2004. "The making of an American": Negotiation of identities at the turn of the Twentieth century. In Aneta Pavlenko & Adrian Blackledge (eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (Multilingual Education and Bilingualism 45), 34–67. Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto & Sydney: Multilingual Matters, Ltd.
- Persson, Kristina. 2005. *Svensk brevkultur på 1800-talet. Språklig och kommunikationsetnografisk analys av en familjebrevväxling* [Swedish letter-writing culture in the 1800s. Linguistic and communication-ethnographic analysis of the correspondence of a family] (Skrifter utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet 68). Uppsala: Institutionen för nordiska språk.
- Persson, Kristina. 2008. "Äfven i dag några rader!" *Familjebrevskrivning på 1800-talet* ["A few lines today as well!" Family correspondence in the 1800s] (Ord och Stil. Språkvärdssamfundets skrifter 39). Stockholm: Hallgren & Fallgren.
- Rothman, Jason. 2009. Understanding the nature and outcomes of early bilingualism: Romance languages as heritage languages. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 13(2). 155–163.
- Sherzer, Joel. 1987. A discourse-centered approach to language and culture. *American Anthropologist* 89(2). 295–309.
- Sokull, Thomas (ed.). 2001. *Essex pauper letters, 1731–1837*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy.
- Taavitsainen, Irma. 2016. Genre dynamics in the history of English. In Merja Kytö & Päivi Pahta (eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of English historical linguistics*, 271–285. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, Jonathan H., Leonard Beeghley & Charles H. Powers. 2012 [1981]. *The emergence of sociological theory*, 7th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wilkerson, Miranda E. & Joseph Salmons. 2008. "Good old immigrants of yesteryear" who didn't learn English: Germans in Wisconsin. *American Speech* 83(3). 259–283.