Swedish

English

(www.visitsweden.com, 2012)
Introduction

Swedish is considered a Scandinavian language which is Indo-European belonging like English to the Germanic branch. It is believed due to considerable contact both in the past and present between English and Scandinavian languages that English is fairly easy for Scandinavians to learn.
In the 9th century Old Norse (Norway and Iceland) began to diverge into Old West Norse (Sweden and Denmark). In the 12th century, the dialects of Denmark and Sweden began to diverge, becoming Old Danish and Old Swedish in the next century.

All were heavily influenced by Middle Low German during the medieval period.

The red = Old West Norse dialect

The peach = Old East Norse dialect

The Swedish Writing System

- The Swedish alphabet is a twenty-eight letter alphabet, much like the English alphabet with the exception of 'W', plus the three additional letters Å / å, Ä / ä, and Ö / ö.

  - **Majuscule Forms** (Uppercase Letters)
    - A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Å Ä Ö

  - **Minusculcule Forms** (Lowercase Letters)
    - a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z å ä ö
Swedish and English phonological systems are broadly similar. Most Swedish speakers do not usually have serious difficulties in pronouncing and recognizing most English sounds.

- Swedish accents in English occur when pronouncing final consonants and having difficulty with preceding vowels. For example: dock for dog, leaf for leave
- A Swedish speaker may have difficulty since the range of intonation is narrower, therefore not being able to reach the same low pitch areas as English.
- The pronunciation of r is also a problem when it occurs in spelling.
Vowels

There are fewer sounds in Swedish than in English (English has 12 vowels, 9 diphthongs and 24 consonants; Swedish has 9 vowels that are long and short, making effectively 17/18 vowels phonemes and 18 consonants, it does not have any diphthongs). In hence, some of the sounds that the Swedish language has do not have an equivalent sound in English.

The vowel sounds that may cause trouble for the Swedish speaker are: /i/, /æ/, /e/, and /u/.

Swedes and Norwegians frequently replace sounds with their more rounded front vowel.

They find it very hard to keep hut apart from hot, and luck from lock.

They may pronounce /ei/ as in take.

It may be hard for them to distinguish between load and loud.

The words here, there, and tour are usually pronounced like r instead of /e/. 
Consonants

- /o/ and /t/ are not typically pronounced causing errors like tank, and sank, for thank, tree, and three.
- /o/ is often pronounced as /d/ for example: den for then, udder for other
- /z/ is often replaced by /s/ as well as mesher for measure
- /j/ and /y/ tend to mix as year for jeer
- /w/ and /v/ wine for vine
- Final word endings can cause confusion with consonants ending in /b/, /d/, and /g/ with /p/, /t/, and /k/. For example: pup for pub; set for said; and dock for dog
- Consonants are pronounced very long after short vowels which may be carried over into English words like coffee, letter, and cuff.
Rhythm and Stress

• Scandinavian compound nouns are usually stressed on the first element. Mistakes are made in English compounds which do not follow that pattern.

• Compound nouns made up of verb and adverb combinations tend to be stressed on the second element:

• For example:
  • break’down
  • come’back
  • hang’over
  • hold’up
Syntax Challenges

- Scandinavian languages have fewer “weak forms” than English so often times the students will use the stressed forms like *and, but, a(n), the, than, as, have, and was*.
- In doing so, this prevents learners from acquiring a natural sentence fluency.
- Attributive adjectives or participles may have sentence elements attached to them. Learners may occasionally try to transfer this type of sentence structure to English.
Syntax Challenges Continued

• Swedish people start their communication by beginning a sentence with something other than the subject, which is then followed by a verb.

• In English, subject-verb inversion does not take place. Instead, English speakers tend to use intonations.

• For example: *That I have not seen.
English Pronunciation Problems

The following is an educational link for Teaching English pronunciation to Swedish speakers.

http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/l1swedish.html

Click on the address below for pronunciation of Swedish vowels sounds

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S93MdjtMI3s
• Swedish speakers will use full relative clauses, while English speakers use far less participles.

• i.e.) A Swedish speaker might say, *the church which was built to accommodate the people... in English it is spoken as, the church built to accommodate the people.*

• Third person verb forms are dropped by Swedish speakers causing confusion with the English verb *are* as they use the form of *to be from their Swedish language.* They can mix the meaning of *am, are, and is.* For example: I don’t know if he are coming yet.
The Swedish Communication Style

- Swedes like to establish relationships on an informal level. In Sweden, people address a person by his/her first name.
- Swedes tend to stay farther apart from the person they are speaking with. Personal space is private so with the exception of the handshake, they are not ones to backslap or embrace.
- Be sure to listen intently to anyone speaking and not to interrupt. Taking turns is important.
Communication

• Be sure to make eye contact
• When greeting someone there is sometimes a slight tilt of the head
• Gestures include nodding and even kissing at times
• It is not in one’s nature to introduce oneself in social situations in Sweden
• Swedes use low tones in conversations. When a Swedish person pauses in conversation, it is not seen by listeners as an opportunity to "insert" a word.

• A silent person is seen as a reflective one.

• "Do rather than speak!" is believed and lived by most Swedes.
The Swedish Culture

Swedes prefer to listen to others as opposed to talking themselves. Your student may not be responding to you right away, as they may take things in and listen first.

Swedish people work hard but not too hard, it is in their culture to not take anything to the extreme. This includes their emotions.

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Bibliography

Books


Internet Sites & Images


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