

Heritage Swedish, English, and Textual Space in Rural Communities of Practice

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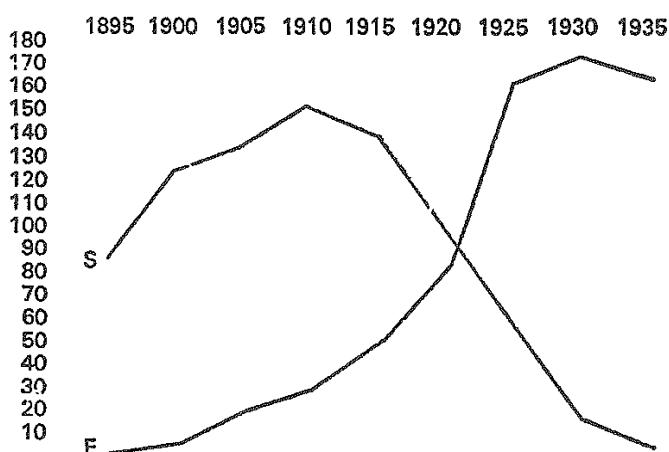
1. Introduction

One of the organizations that supported the use of Swedish in American Midwestern communities over many decades was the Lutheran church (Nelson 1943; Carman 1962 & 1974; Hasselmo 1974 & 1976; Hedblom 1982 & 1983; Hoffman & Kytö 2017). The Lutheran church body formerly known as the Augustana Synod was founded in 1860 in the early phase of large-scale Swedish migration to North America (Blanck 1997). Parallel to the extensive support for the Swedish language in Lutheran congregations was exposure to English that children of Swedish immigrants received in the American public schools. Further, it was also the case that there was steady contact between Swedish Americans and members of their parishes back home in Sweden, thanks to regular correspondence and occasional visits of family members (Karstadt 2003). Thus the sociolinguistic conditions in Swedish-American settlements allowed American English and Heritage Swedish to cohabitate for many decades. Our investigation tracks the shifting proportions of Swedish and English in local Lutheran parishes. In the present study, we analyze patterns of language maintenance and shift detectable in official minutes of annual meetings, anniversary albums (i.e. printed books containing various short texts, photos, and other illustrations to celebrate milestones in the history of a parish), and their congregational cookbooks.

Hasselmo's archival research on language patterns in the Augustana Synod, which led the Swedish-American Lutheran church at the national level, provides a departure point for our historical sociolinguistic study. Hasselmo (1974) traced trends in the Synod, finding that 85% of sermons delivered from its pulpits were being preached in the Swedish language as late as 1921. By 1925, with the publication of the first complete order of service in English, national church leaders created the possibility for worship services to be led in English in Swedish-American Lutheran sanctuaries (Blanck 1997; Hasselmo 1974, 1976). Hasselmo examined other publication trends in the Augustana Synod, noting the language of the titles printed and distributed by its publishing house. The Augustana Book Concern published Lutheran materials in both Swedish and English. By 1920, the number of titles published in English and in Swedish was equal. From that point onward, however, the number of English titles rapidly increased, and the number of publications printed in Swedish sharply declined (Hasselmo 1974: 65, 1976: 42).

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Figure 1: The number of Swedish- and English-language titles published by the Augustana Book Concern, 1891–1935 (Hasselmo 1976: 42).



The publication trends Hasselmo detected in the movement from Swedish to English were shifts in the bilingual textual spaces in the Synod throughout the U. S. With Hasselmo’s important historical survey as a backdrop, we now focus on local Swedish-American congregations to track patterns of language maintenance and shift in four rural communities in the Midwest. We suspect that the language shift in these prairie towns moved at a slower pace due to the stability of the parish infrastructure in the smaller localities occupied by the Swedish-American Lutheran church (cf. verticalization model Salmons 2005a, 2005b; Frey 2013; Bousquette 2017).

The aim of our study is to trace the dynamism of language shift in the use of Heritage Swedish and English in textual space over approximately 150 years (1850 through 2005). By adopting the expression *textual space*, rather than merely *texts*, we signal that our investigation also takes into account the visual placement and interplay of two languages in documents with specific purposes in the local congregations. As will become visible in section 3, the bilingual writers in the communities have exploited the space in texts in systematic ways. However, we do not assume that all contemporaneous readers of the documents were equally proficient in English and Swedish. We also need to acknowledge that the linguistic competence of the parishioners played a role in language choices. We mention these important departure points as we launch our exploration of the use of Swedish and English in *official* as well as *domestic* spheres in the textual space of the selected congregations. We use the term *official* to refer to documents providing a record of the governance and history of the churches (see subsection 2.3 for exemplification of such documents). We use the term *domestic* to refer to the sense of “belonging to the home, house, or household” and “of or relating to one’s own country or nation; not foreign, internal, inland, ‘home’” (OED, s.v. *domestic*, 2 and 3a). The overarching research question of our investigation is: To what extent have Swedish and English inhabited the same textual space and in what proportions?

Our historical sociolinguistic study employs the Communities of Practice framework to understand some of the social forces associated with patterns of language shift. We carry out a pragma-philological investigation of texts produced by group members in selected heritage communities (Jacobs & Jucker 1995: 11 ff.). We look at dimensions of time, localities, and demographics in observing writers’ proficiencies in dual languages, and their production of texts, genres, and sub-genres.

2. Background

2.1. Congregations in focus

Four Midwestern communities are the localities in focus for the present investigation: Sandwich and Andover, Illinois; and Lindsborg and Marquette, Kansas. The towns share a key historical dimension

in that Swedish immigrants were among the first settlers in the communities. Table 1 displays the chronology of the founding of the towns and of the selected congregations.

Table 1: Overview of towns and congregations.

Name of town	Year town was founded	Name of congregation in focus	Year congregation was founded
Andover, Illinois	1835	Augustana Lutheran Church, also known as Andover Lutheran Church	1850
Sandwich, Illinois	1853	Salem Lutheran Church	1904
Lindsborg, Kansas	1869	Bethany Lutheran Church	1869
Marquette, Kansas	1874	Elim Lutheran Church	1878

In 1881, members of Bethany Lutheran Church in Lindsborg founded Bethany Academy (later to be named Bethany College) in order to offer pre-seminary education.

2.2. Communities of Practice in congregations

Within our approach, parishioners of the churches form Communities of Practice (hereafter CoP). To borrow from Meyerhoff's (2002) observations about CoPs, they are typified by *mutual engagement*. Further, it is not merely the case that the parishioners form social ties in one or more settings but that they also participate in *jointly-negotiated enterprises*, activities for which they develop a *shared language repertoire*. The CoPs share their activities with additional persons, ensuring new generations of members. New members, as noted by Jucker & Kopaczyk, "...become part of the joint enterprise and they learn to handle the full repertoire of resources. And in the process they become full members of the community" (Jucker & Kopaczyk 2013: 8).

The integration of new members into a CoP has been a crucial factor in the maintenance of Heritage Swedish in the communities we investigated. Without the re-generation of heritage speakers who can participate in the shared language repertoire, language shift to English would undoubtedly have taken place more rapidly in these localities.

We illustrate the gender composition of a parish council from the early 1900s in Figure 2 and a women's group in Figure 3.

While each Lutheran congregation has historically had a wide range of constituent volunteer groups, such as the membership of *Kvinnornas Missionsförening* ('The Women's Mission Society'; Figure 3), we limit our study in the present investigation to the textual practices of two groups found in every congregation. These are parish councils (in Swedish, *kyrkoråd*) and cookbook committees. The gender roles in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rural Midwestern communities, with men serving on parish councils and women leading kitchen-related activities in the congregations, have the consequence that the CoPs we investigate were sharply stratified by gender.

Figure 2: Parish Council, Andover Lutheran Church (*Minnes-Album* 1910: 91).

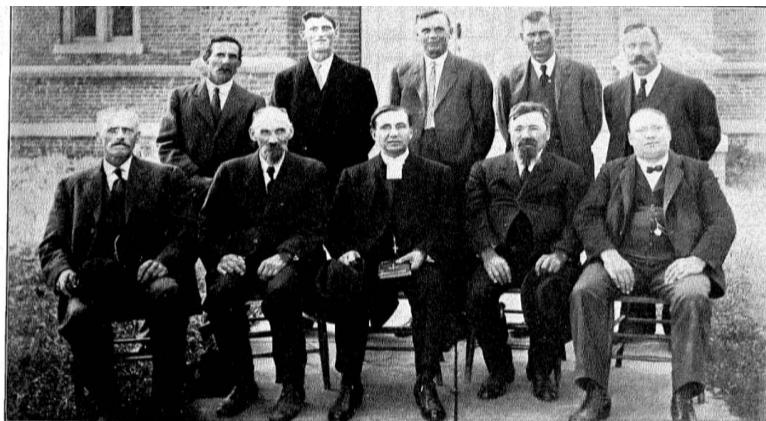


Figure 3: *Kvinnornas Missionsförening* (Bergin 1909: 296).



2.3. Genre representation

Written genres in Swedish-American Lutheran congregations follow a “genre map,” to apply a term used by Taavitsainen (2016: 272), meaning that “[g]enres are seen as abstractions in which texts are grouped to form ‘classes’, ‘kinds’, or ‘families’” (ibid.). Our historical surveys of the local Lutheran congregations reveal that the groups in the local congregations produce texts that correspond to certain genres, some of the chief classes being minutes of annual parish council meetings, anniversary albums, and cookbooks. Our surveys of these archival materials suggest that the materials from the congregations are stable across time and across the localities. The similarity of the materials produced by each congregation under investigation offers an important analytical advantage in that the units of analysis are comparable (Taavitsainen 2016: 275–276), even while the proportion of Swedish and English in the textual spaces fluctuates over time, as will be apparent in section 3.

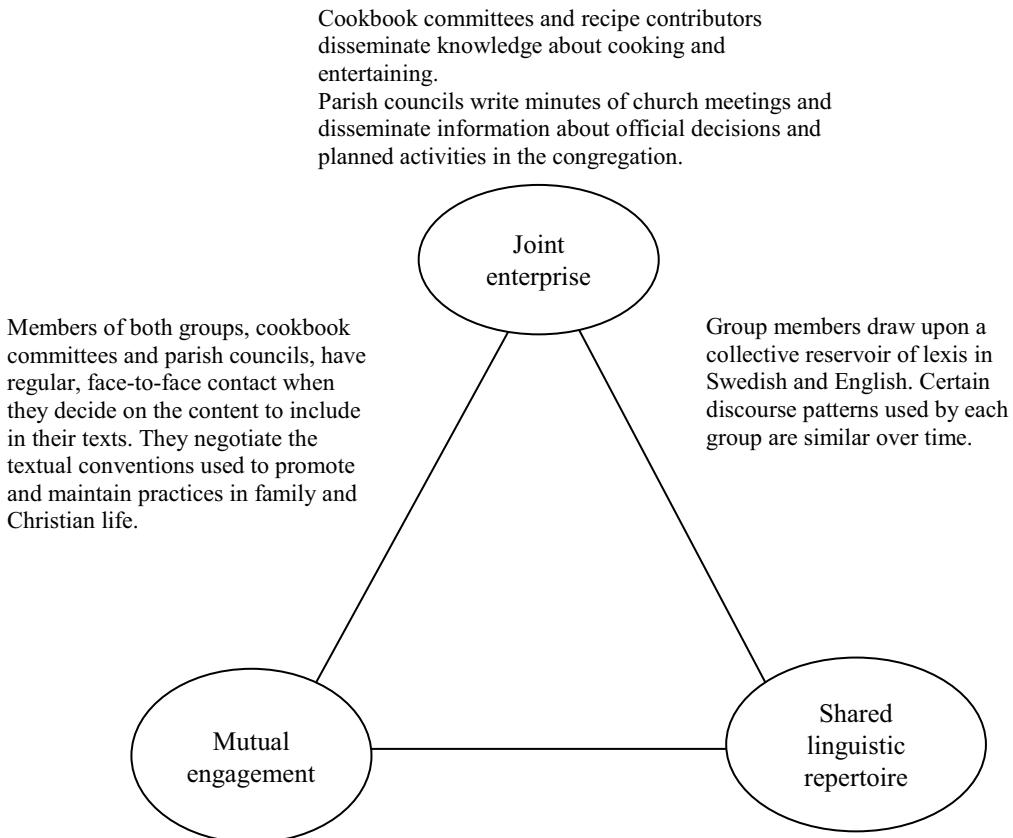
Texts produced in a congregation are compiled by constituent CoPs. Parish councils produce texts communicating information about the official sphere of the congregation. These are texts pertaining to the governance and the historical record of a congregation, including the minutes of annual meetings, prepared by clergy and lay members of the parish. Sub-genres of the annual minutes include, e.g., secretary’s minutes, pastor’s reports, treasurer’s reports, cemetery association reports, and Sunday School reports. Additional texts communicating information in the official sphere are anniversary albums in observance of, e.g., 50th, 75th, and 100th anniversaries, presenting the history of a congregation and containing portraits of pastors, deacons, members of parish councils, and photos of key

congregational groups. The pictures in Figures 2 and 3 were reproduced from such albums. Additional texts communicating information about the official sphere are, e.g., the college catalogues of Bethany College, the church-affiliated educational institution mentioned above in 2.1.

Other CoPs in congregations produce texts pertaining to activities in the domestic sphere. Such texts relate to hospitality and serving family members and guests at the dinner table. Each of the churches presented in Table 1 has had active volunteer cookbook committees who have collected and collated favorite recipes from parishioners in order to sell cookbooks, raising funds for their local parishes over a period of many decades. Typically, the self-published cookbooks contain hundreds of recipes organized in such sections as appetizers, breads, cakes, cookies, fish, fowl, meat, salads, and vegetables. Further common features of the cookbooks produced by the committees include a presentation of table prayers in Swedish and in English as well as a prominent section devoted to suggested menus and recipes for a Swedish *smörgåsbord* (Hoffman & Kytö 2017). By analyzing the proportion of Swedish and English used in the recipe names and *smörgåsbord* menus in the multiple editions of the parish cookbooks printed across a span of many decades, we observe that the cookbook committees preserve Swedish lexis in their respective communities. In the discussion section (see section 4), we compare some of the lexical trends in the cookbooks to the overall trends in the documents examined from the official sphere in the congregations.

Figure 4 presents specific dimensions of practice accompanying CoPs. For each of the specific dimensions of CoPs, namely *joint enterprise*, *mutual engagement*, and *shared repertoire*, we provide descriptions of activities linked to the CoPs in the congregations (cf. Jucker & Kopaczyk 2013: 9).

Figure 4: Specific dimensions of practice accompanying CoPs. Adapted from Jucker & Kopaczyk (2013: 9, patterned after Wenger 1998).

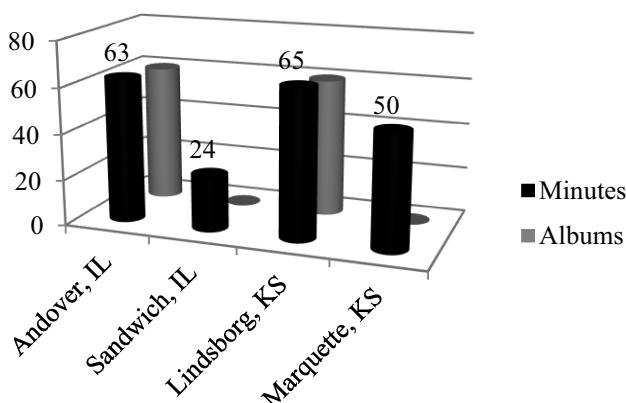


3. Data, analysis, and results

3.1. The official sphere

To what extent do Swedish and English inhabit the textual spaces in the official and domestic spheres of the congregational materials? We approach this question by first examining the number of years that the four congregations used the Swedish language in producing texts in the official sphere. As indicated previously, texts produced in the official sphere include minutes of the annual meetings of the parish council (designated hereafter as “minutes”) and anniversary albums (“albums”). Figure 5 reports the number of years each church used Swedish in the selected documents.

Figure 5: Number of years that texts were written in Swedish in the official sphere. By location and by genres.

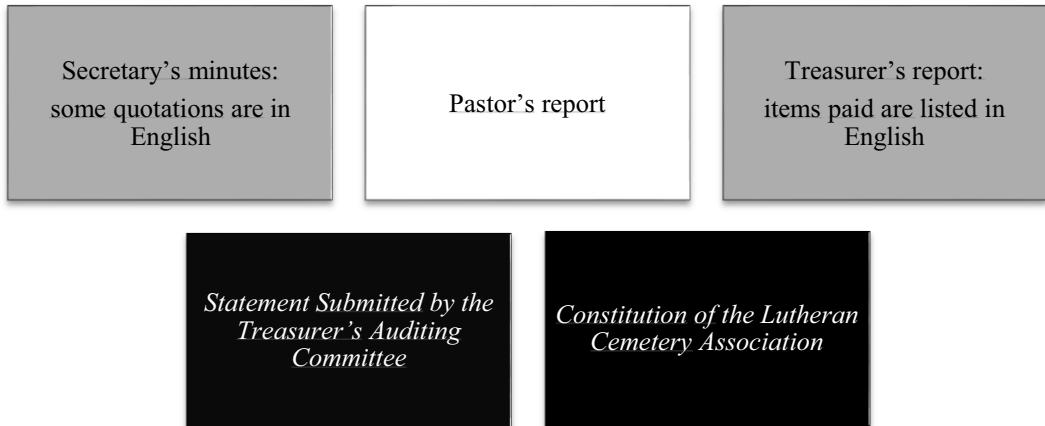


The official parish documents in Andover and Lindsborg display similar patterning in terms of the use of Swedish. As seen in Figure 5, both congregations produced annual meeting minutes in the Swedish language for more than sixty years. In addition, anniversary albums in Swedish were also published in Andover and Lindsborg over the same sixty-year period. Swedish thus maintained a prominent role in the official sphere of these congregations and probably had symbolic importance as a vehicle that enabled the members of the congregation to cherish their cultural heritage. Figure 5 also shows that the other parishes, Sandwich in Illinois and Marquette in Kansas, produced annual meeting minutes in Swedish for decades; even so, evidence has not surfaced that the two parishes produced commemorative anniversary volumes in Swedish.

We next track the ways in which English began to appear in texts produced in the official sphere. We select two of the congregations, Augustana Lutheran Church (in Andover) and Bethany Lutheran Church (in Lindsborg), for detailed study. We begin with Andover, the oldest congregation among the localities we investigated. Swedish was used in Andover to produce the church records until 1913, after which point some sub-genres in the minutes of the annual meetings began to be written in English. Figure 6 below displays names of various portions of the annual meeting minutes in 1914.

The black tiles used in Figure 6 indicate the names of sub-genres written in English, namely the “Statement Submitted by the Treasurer’s Auditing Committee” and the “Constitution of the Lutheran Cemetery Association.” The white tile indicates the exclusive use of the Swedish language. In 1914, the pastor’s report was still being written in Swedish and continued to be filed in the Swedish language until 1926, when all sub-genres of the minutes from the annual meeting in Andover were produced in English. The grey tiles used in Figure 6 indicate that two of the sub-genres of the meeting minutes contained a combination of Swedish and English. The matrix language of the Secretary’s minutes and the Treasurer’s report was Swedish, but some of the contents were recorded in English, as indicated in the figure.

Figure 6: Overview of language use in the minutes of the 1914 annual meeting of Augustana Lutheran Church. Use of italics indicates the verbatim names of the sub-genres in the minutes.



Similar to the situation in Andover as reported above, the minutes of the annual meetings of Bethany Lutheran Church were entirely in the Swedish language for more than six decades. A portion of the minutes appeared in English, however, in 1923 when the youth group known as the Luther League filed its report in English. Meanwhile, the other sub-genres in the minutes of the annual meeting were written in Swedish. English and Swedish then cohabitated in the official sphere of the minutes of annual report of the congregation for at least a decade. The use of the two languages in the textual space, however, did not necessarily mean that all parishioners were fully bilingual. It is more likely that the members of the congregation were bilingual to varying degrees, depending on their family background and the use of English and Swedish at home.

Figure 7 shows an extract of the pastor's report detailing the activities of 1933. In the report, still in Swedish, Pastor Alfred Bergin mentions the number of persons in the congregation who were baptized, confirmed, married, and buried in 1933.

Figure 7: Extract from Pastor Bergin's pastor's report, January 1, 1934.

*aför nyårpa
Nyår äret ha 18 barn döpta, 26 barn
konfirmerats, 5 par vigta, 9 personer
inlagit, 46 personer utflyttat, 33 personer
dött, medlemsantalet är nu ungefär
1168 kommunikatör, och 180 medlemmar.*

Lindsborg, Kansas Nyårsdagen 1934

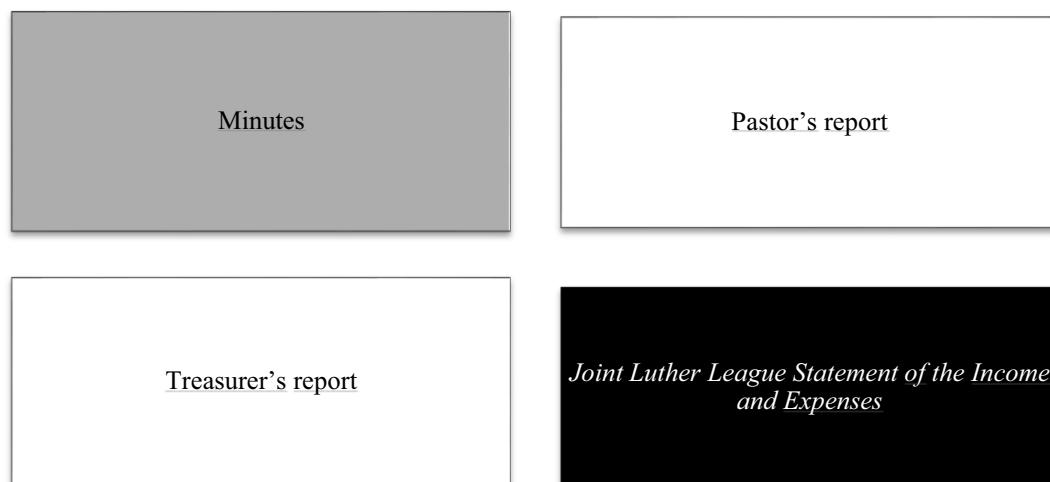
*Eder i Kristus
Alf. Bergin*

*Löreslag att pastoralrapporten möttages
och antages för att införas i protokollboken
var beslutat.*

*Omedelbart härpå upplästes Kansans-
rapporten över förhandlingarna för år 1933
av församlingsskassören Elmer S. Peterson.*

Figure 8 provides an overview of the languages appearing in the minutes of the 1934 annual meeting. The pastor and the treasurer filed their reports in Swedish. Note that we shaded the "Minutes" of the meeting in grey to indicate that both Swedish and English were used. The gradient shading is needed because mid-way during the annual meeting, a motion was made that the parish council of Bethany Lutheran Church shift the language of its congregational minutes from Swedish to English.

Figure 8: Overview of language use in the 1934 annual meeting minutes of Bethany Lutheran Church.



Of the four communities investigated, Andover switched to English earlier than the other three congregations, but note also that the parish council in Andover had recorded the minutes of the annual meetings in Swedish for 63 years. Sandwich and Marquette switched from Swedish to English in 1929. As indicated above, Lindsborg did not make the switch until 1934.

Concerning texts from the official sphere of the congregations, we have presented evidence for the following trends:

- The dual languages cohabitate before English ultimately supersedes Swedish.
- Certain reports, such as those filed by the youth groups, shift earlier to English than do the reports from other groups.
- The language-shift timeline varies slightly from one community to another, and individual pastors are likely to have played a decisive role in which language is used. For example, the pastor in Sandwich, Illinois, filed his annual report one year in English (1929) before returning to using Swedish the following year.

3.2. *The domestic sphere*

We now turn to historical materials from the domestic sphere, namely the parish cookbooks, to track how cookbook committees and recipe contributors have used Swedish and English in textual spaces.¹ Language users represent varying degrees of competence in the mastery of the native language of their ancestral home country. Therefore, as in the treatment of materials from the official sphere, we are not able to presuppose that the bilingual texts from the domestic sphere can be considered proof that all members of the CoP shared an identical productive level of fluency in Swedish. Instead, by having analyzed evidence from the extant cookbooks, we observe that the cookbook committees make use of Swedish in their communities, which were increasingly dominated by English, to achieve symbolic value. The names of recipes and the names of dishes appearing on menus represent fora offering textual space for the use of English and Swedish in certain characteristic ways, which we describe below.

As mentioned previously, the parish cookbooks have been self-published by women's groups and sold to raise money for congregational and charitable projects. Parish cookbooks are clearly organized with an instrumental purpose in mind as they guide readers in preparing meals. We note also, however, that the cookbooks have symbolic value as numerous recipe names and lists of suggested menus for Swedish *smörgåsbord* are presented bilingually. That is, recipes presented with a Swedish name are accompanied with an English translation or rendering, either in parentheses on the same line or appearing

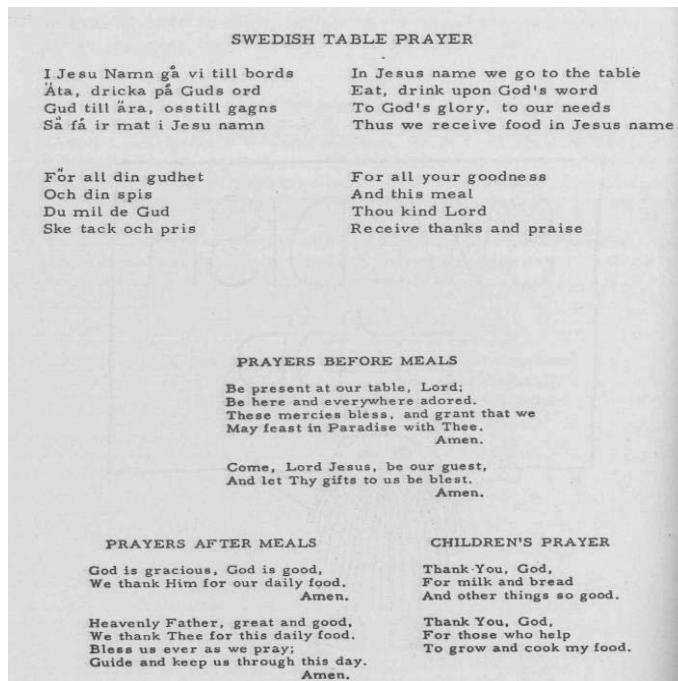
¹ In Hoffman & Kytö (forthcoming), we expand our investigation of texts produced in the bilingual domestic sphere by analyzing family letters written by members of Bethany Lutheran Church and sent to close relatives in Sweden.

in the line below (Hoffman & Kytö 2017). Readers whose heritage language is Swedish will readily spot the Swedish lexis signaling culinary ties to Sweden. Cookbook readers with no previous knowledge of Swedish lexis would nonetheless understand that the textual space of the cookbooks has been designed to showcase Heritage Swedish.

Our research on the cookbooks produced in the congregations in focus for this investigation surveyed approximately 5000 recipe names (see also Hoffman & Kytö 2017). The earliest cookbook we located in the communities was published in 1910 by Elim Lutheran Church in Marquette. The matrix language of the 1910 cookbook (and subsequent cookbooks) is English, though there are numerous recipe names in Heritage Swedish. We note two major patterns in the cookbook data in the communities, namely that the names of recipes rendered in Heritage Swedish vacillate in their frequency over time, and that the Swedish lexis displays a surge in orthographic standardization starting in the early 1990s. In other words, the Swedish lexis in the cookbooks converges toward the orthographic patterns of Standard Swedish. For example, a Heritage Swedish term for rye bread, *Ragbröd*, printed in the first and second editions of a series of cookbooks produced in Lindsborg, Kansas, is replaced with the standard spelling *Rågbröd* starting in the third edition (*Measure for Pleasure*, 1991). Another example of such orthographic standardization is that a Heritage Swedish term for cabbage salad, *Kål Salad*, has been recast in Standard Swedish spelling as *Kålsallad* in the third edition (*Measure for Pleasure*, 1991). We suspect that the increased use of Standard Swedish orthography in the names of recipes printed in the early 1990s (prior to the general accessibility of the Internet) is linked to the use of computerized word processing programs and the ease with which cookbook committee members could edit their texts.

Cookbook committees are comprised of women, as mentioned above (see sub-section 2.3), and this CoP has played a significant role in nurturing cultural ties to Sweden. In addition to disseminating information about Swedish cooking and practices relating to hospitality, the cookbook committees have also featured Swedish mealtime prayers, typically printed in Swedish and accompanied by English renderings. Figure 9 below provides an example of such a Swedish table prayer, as found in the preface of the 1974 Andover cookbook.

Figure 9: Prayers presented in *Jenny Lind Cook Book* (1974: xi).



4. Discussion and conclusions

Our investigation of language shift from Heritage Swedish into English reveals distinct patterns. For example, when the 1910 cookbook in Marquette was written almost entirely in English, other CoPs in the parish were still producing official texts in Swedish. We note that while the records in the official sphere were produced by men, cookbooks were produced by women in charge of raising funds for church projects, and the women sold cookbooks in order to do so (see Hoffman & Kytö 2017). Importantly, the CoPs we examine align by gender, reflecting, of course, the social structures of the time; this social patterning was an influential factor in when and how the language shift took place.

We return to Hasselmo's (1974, 1976) timeline, as based on the publication data for the Augustana Book Concern, which distributed materials to Swedish-American Lutheran homes and congregations across the U.S. Hasselmo found that the watershed years for the shift from Swedish into English in the publications were in the 1920s. In our data, we see some departures from this timeframe, dependent on the CoPs, genre, and locality.

- On the one hand, cookbooks printed in Swedish-American communities antedate the national (synod) shift to English by more than a decade, yet on the other hand, all cookbook committees promote the use of Swedish lexis in recipe names in the second half of the 1900s. The cookbook committees thus preserve components of Heritage Swedish.
- Some parish councils in the prairie towns appear to lag behind the national switch to English by a decade, compared to the timeframe identified by Hasselmo concerning the Augustana Book Concern.

From the beginning, documents in the official sphere were rendered in Swedish, but authors switched to English to ensure transparency in communication to an audience that no longer was using Swedish in such domains. In fact, as early as the 1882–1883 academic year, the catalogue of Bethany Academy (later Bethany College) was written in English. Regarding evidence from personal letters in the domestic sphere (Hoffman & Kytö, forthcoming), textual space allowed for bilingual language users to communicate English lexis from everyday life to distant family members in the home county. Even late in the 1900s and into the early 2000s, cookbook committees continued using Heritage Swedish in recipe names and in lists of suggested menu items; further, the committees also made use of such features as folkloristic illustrations and borders, and other para-textual clues, signaling to readers that the textual space of the cookbooks was designed to bring together Swedish-American and Swedish domestic experiences. In sum, our study shows the importance of considering the textual space and CoPs in understanding language shift in heritage communities.

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