

PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPING READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN SWEDISH IN AN ONLINE CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT. *Perceptions of Developing Reading and Writing Skills in Swedish in an Online Context.* This paper intends to focus on BA students' reading and writing skills in *Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context*. In addition, the study aims to discuss the difficulties students have encountered when studying Swedish as a foreign language in an online academic context amid Covid-19 pandemic. A survey research comprising closed-ended and open-ended questions was conducted by using a questionnaire as the main instrument for collecting data. The respondents were BA students in Norwegian language and literature, enrolled at the Faculty of Letters at Babeş-Bolyai University, who had already studied Norwegian for four semesters in the frame of this programme and who took the one semester optional course in Swedish. The language distance between Norwegian and Swedish is relatively small because both languages are part of the North-Germanic branch. We considered it relevant to explore the manner in which students tackle these similarities, differences and the cross-linguistic transfer between the two languages and whether their reading and writing practices in Norwegian have influenced in any way the acquisition of Swedish. Nowadays, new technological advances provide additional support to foreign language learning and develop learners' digital literacy. Therefore, the paper aimed at understanding what types of authentic resources are used by students, in order to develop their linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in Swedish. The results showed that students are willing to improve their language skills, as they believe that mastering another Scandinavian language could help them increase their academic and professional opportunities and would constitute an advantage in terms of easiness to develop writing and reading skills in Swedish.

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REZUMAT. *Percepțiile studenților cu privire la dezvoltarea competențelor de citire și scriere în limba suedeză într-un context de predare online.* Acest studiu își propune să ofere detalii despre autoevaluarea abilităților de citire și scriere ale studenților de la nivel licență înscriși la cursul de *Limbă și cultură suedeză în context scandinav*. În plus, studiul își propune să discute dificultățile de învățare a limbii suedeze în contextul predării online, pe fondul pandemiei Covid-19. Instrumentul de colectare a datelor folosit în acest studiu a fost un chestionar care a cuprins întrebări cu răspunsuri deschise și închise. Respondenții sunt studenți înscriși la specializarea limbă și literatură norvegiană, nivel licență, la Facultatea de Litere, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, care au studiat deja limba norvegiană timp de patru semestre în cadrul acestui program și au urmat cursul opțional de suedeză din semestrul cinci. Deoarece fac parte din aceeași grupă nordică a limbilor germanice, distanța lingvistică dintre norvegiană și suedeză este relativ mică. De aceea, am considerat că este relevant să explorăm modul în care studenții abordează aceste asemănări și diferențe precum și modul în care se relaționează la transferul translingvistic între cele două limbi. S-a pus accentul pe abilitățile de citire și de scriere, deoarece am dorit să vedem dacă aceste competențe deja dobândite în limba norvegiană au influențat în vreun fel abilitățile corespondente în limba suedeză. Actualmente, noile progrese tehnologice oferă sprijin suplimentar învățării limbilor străine și dezvoltă competențele digitale ale cursanților. Prin urmare, articolul și-a propus să observe ce tipuri de resurse autentice sunt utilizate de studenți pentru a-și dezvolta competențele lingvistice și sociolingvistice în limba suedeză. Rezultatele au arătat că studenții sunt dispuși să-și îmbunătățească abilitățile lingvistice, deoarece consideră că stăpânirea unei alte limbi scandinave îi poate ajuta să își sporească oportunitățile academice și profesionale și constituie un avantaj în ceea ce privește ușurința de a dezvolta abilități de scriere și citire în suedeză.

Cuvinte-cheie: *norvegiană, suedeză, similitudini și diferențe lingvistice, interferențe lingvistice, învățarea limbilor străine, nivel licență*

Theoretical underpinnings

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic the entire teaching process at the Faculty of Letters, at Babeș-Bolyai University (BBU) embraced an online teaching format that would pose new challenges and demands for both teachers and students. The teaching content needed to be adapted to a technology

mediated communication that integrated diverse digital tools in order to transform the teaching and the learning processes. Therefore, this had direct pedagogical implications for teaching *Swedish as an optional course* to the third-year students, as the new learning environments evolved “into more dynamic, immediate and communicative environments” (Sturm *et al.* 368). On the one hand, online teaching was easy to access, had both a synchronous and an asynchronous component and it was a convenient means of providing learning materials in the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, its limitations were grounded in “lack of community, technical problems, and difficulties in understanding instructional goals” (Song *et al.* 59) or being “boring and unengaging” (Dhawan 8).

An important avenue of inquiry in the field of teaching a foreign language is the concept of ‘language distance’ that raises some didactic implications. Language distance factors refer to the linguistic similarities and differences occurring between two languages (Gamallo *et al.* 2), namely one’s mother tongue or other known languages and a foreign language intended to be acquired. Accordingly, these similarities and differences between languages might support or impede the acquisition of a foreign language.

This paper focuses on teaching Swedish as a foreign language to students who have acquired competences in Norwegian, in the frame of the Norwegian BA-programme. Thus, in this case, language distance is minimal because the two Scandinavian languages have many elements in common with regard to syntax and morphology (Torp 21). In addition, the vocabulary, the phonology, the inflection and the grammar rules usually found in Norwegian and Swedish are not that disparate, which offers to speakers of these languages a basis for mutual intelligibility (Delsing & Åkesson 3-6). Even if inevitably some mental effort is implied, speakers of Scandinavian languages can communicate with each other in their own language (Beijering *et al.* 15).

Given this context characterized by the similarities and differences between the two Scandinavian languages, the survey we distributed to our students required them to self-evaluate their reading and writing skills in Swedish, after studying this language for just one semester.

Lexical and phonological differences between Norwegian and Swedish are moderate and table 1 below provides some common examples. A thorough investigation of these typological differences has been presented extensively in the literature³.

³ See also Bandle Oskar *et al.* *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of North Germanic Languages*, vol. 1, 2002 and Anders Holmberg and Jan Rikshoff. “Word order in the Germanic languages”. *Constituent Order in the Languages of Europe*, edited by Anna Siewierska, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1998, pp. 75-104.

Norwegian	Swedish	English
<i>ikke</i> [iˈk:ə] <i>og</i> [å:], [å:g] <i>kjøre</i> [çø:ˈrə] <i>gjennom</i> [jeˈn:åm]	<i>inte</i> [in:te] <i>och</i> [åk] <i>köra</i> [çö:ra] <i>genom</i> [je:nåm]	<i>no</i> <i>and</i> <i>drive</i> <i>through</i>

Table 1. Lexical and phonological differences between Norwegian and Swedish

Equally important in the context of foreign language teaching is the concept of ‘crosslinguistic influence’. This concept refers to “the influence of a person’s knowledge of one language on that person’s knowledge or use of another language” (Jarvis & Pavlenko 1). In our case, the respondents learn Swedish as their third or fourth language and for only one semester. Therefore, for these multilingual students, an essential aspect for learning a new language revolves around “building on what you know as you learn something new” (Lightbrown 110). Crosslinguistic influence is a twofold phenomenon. On the one hand, it can have a positive effect in the case of learning a foreign language, as similarities and connections made between two or more languages accelerate the language development process. On the other hand, it can have a negative effect as learners might be prone to overapply a rule or to hypothesize that an item of vocabulary has the same meaning in both languages. Table no. 2 below indicates some false friends in Norwegian and Swedish which often tend to mislead students.

Norwegian/ Swedish	English translation of the meaning in Norwegian	English translation of the meaning in Swedish
<i>rolig</i>	calm	funny
<i>semester</i>	semester	holiday
<i>rar</i>	strange	nice
<i>by</i>	village	city
<i>le</i>	laugh	smile

Table 2. False friends in Norwegian and Swedish

In the same line of thought, the effectiveness of acquiring a foreign language is influenced by some variables such as age, aptitude, attitude, personality, learning styles (Harmer 81-88) or motivation (Dörnyei 117).

Our present study intended to investigate students' type of motivation for studying Swedish as a foreign language, in an attempt to adapt the online teaching resources to the learners' needs and interests.

Reading and writing in Swedish as a foreign language

Reading is - according to the simple view of reading - a twofold process that entails word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer 6-10). Therefore, intensive or extensive reading enhances the development of vocabulary and of phonological awareness and provides a meaningful context for understanding syntax. Another aim of our paper is to inquire about students' writing and reading skills in Swedish and see if the fact that they already master a Scandinavian language does indeed help them achieve a higher level of proficiency in Swedish, as it is indicated by Harmer who notes that productive and receptive skills "are seldom separated in real life" (265) and are not encountered in isolation. Since a considerable amount of information is presented in written form at the one semester course *Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context* reading skills become predictors of academic achievement (Pop 2).

Reading is a complex process that involves different subskills, such as being able to read for general understanding or for specific purposes, to infer meaning from a given context etc. In order to improve students' reading techniques in Swedish we explored the development of these subskills by asking them to scan texts for specific elements that could help them put the events in order, to answer comprehension questions related to the items of information presented in the text; to recognize different structures in authentic texts etc.

Writing skills in a foreign language can represent a challenge, not only for the student, but also for the teacher. Teachers need a constant revision of teaching techniques and a variety of exercises that allow students to be creative, but also, at the same time, to demonstrate their knowledge. The student, in exchange, as Gillett *et al.* observe (xix), must understand the task that is given, must make a thorough research, plan the disposition of the text, correct and edit the resulting paper.

In order to improve students' writing techniques in Swedish we asked them to write texts based on specific topics (presentation, family, interests etc); to elaborate a sentence that summarizes a text etc. In an online teaching context, we also used different apps. Some of them required just a word or a short sentence (Mentimeter, Jamboard), some others, like Padlet, allowed students to elaborate complex sentences and develop their writing skills.

In this study we asked respondents to self-evaluate their reading and writing skills. In order to do so, we provided items with a Likert scale that would enable them to choose their level according to the scales provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Foreign Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (238-241).

The writing and reading competences are closely related to motivation. The more the students read in Swedish, the more they understand and have the courage to express themselves in writing. Reading and writing become not just active components of the language learning process, but also interactive elements that help the students connect with each other and with the interlocutors.

A teachers' responsibility is to choose authentic materials at the appropriate level of difficulty. Our main goal was to create meaningful lessons that reflected the needs and the interests of the students. We believe that this is essential to their success if they want to be able make use of the foreign language in diverse contexts. The syllabus of the Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context semester course comprises notions of language (grammar, prepositions and translations), culture (literature, music, film) and everyday vocabulary. After becoming acquainted with the terminology, students find it natural to present themselves in Swedish, to point out what they like to eat, wear or do in their spare time.

Teaching Norwegian and Swedish at Babeş-Bolyai University. Contextualization

The Norwegian language and literature BA study programme was established at BBU, Cluj-Napoca, Romania in 1991. With the creation of the *Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature*, ten years later, the specialization started to attract a lot of students from all over the country which led to a constant increase in the number of students enrolled (Tomescu *et al.*, *Understanding the factors* 253-255). Today, there are more than 300 students at BA level at the department (1st, 2nd and 3rd year). The Norwegian language and literature program, accredited at national level, is the only academic institution in Romania offering a BA in Norwegian language and literature, both as a major and a minor specialization, as well as a doctoral programme that was established in 2010. The only missing link at the moment is a master programme. (Tomescu *et al.*, *Context for Designing* 19-20).

At BA level, the curriculum covers both language (syntax, lexicology, morphology, phonetics, language variation, semantic analysis) and literature (literary epochs, literary genres, literary motives, literature and film), with some specific courses tackling culture and society in Norway, or literary translations. The students enrolled in Norwegian Major have 10 hours of Norwegian per week,

while those enrolled in Norwegian Minor have 8 hours weekly. The Department's offer includes - in the third year - as a part of the curricula, a *Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context* semester class, having a 2-hours course and a 2-hours seminar (per week) for the students in Norwegian Major, and a 1-hour course and a 1-hour seminar (per week), for the students in Norwegian Minor. The purpose of this course is to develop students' language competence in Swedish necessary to manage different academic and professional contexts. Students' previous knowledge in Norwegian represents a solid background in the understanding of the linguistic differences and similarities between the two languages. Therefore, they can comprehend basic elements of Swedish language without any previous academic training in this direction. But developing reading and writing skills requires an in depth study of Swedish.

Learning a foreign language in an online context, as for instance, the Covid-19 pandemic, can constitute a challenge both for the student and for the teacher. We had to adapt and pace the learning process and the teaching techniques so that they accommodate both previous knowledge of Norwegian and digital competences the students had prior to their academic studies. In addition to language competence skills, the students enrolled in the Swedish elective course had to acquire a socio-linguistic and a discourse competence, so much needed when using the language in diverse online and offline communicative contexts. With the help of different apps (learningapps.org, wordwall.net, Mentimeter, Jamboard, Padlet, Kahoot), digital and authentic materials, we were able to provide additional support to Swedish language learning and develop the students' digital literacy by offering them alternative and creative exercises (as evaluation techniques/as teaching devices). Learning Swedish for the third-year students enrolled in Norwegian BA programme is a life-long learning experience that incorporates digital and intercultural communicative competence, linguistic differences and similarities between Swedish and Norwegian.

Research methodology and design

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of students enrolled in the *Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context*, regarding their writing and reading skills. An initial step in getting a useful evaluation of these skills was to ask the students to identify themselves their writing and reading level, their type of motivation and the difficulties they encountered during the learning process. Our research instrument was a questionnaire that consisted of a mix of seventeen close-ended (multiple choice, check boxes or Likert scale) and five open-ended questions, aiming to collect and analyse the students' perceptions of the challenges of learning a new Scandinavian language. For data analysis, the quantitative data were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics and

the qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. The survey was formulated in Romanian and sent to respondents via Google forms. The advantage of using a survey research instrument in a digital teaching context was that we could reach a large number of students in a short period of time.

The present study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the different types of motivation exhibited by students who want to improve their language level in Swedish?
2. What are the difficulties students have encountered when studying Swedish?
3. Has previous knowledge of Norwegian made the acquisition of basic Swedish more accessible?

Participants

A total of 43 respondents were included in this study and selected using convenience sampling. A link with the online questionnaire was sent to the students enrolled in *Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context*, via Microsoft Teams. The time limit for collecting the data was set for two weeks, at the beginning of December 2020. The respondents provided answers on a voluntary basis.

A total of 132 students are enrolled at the Swedish as a foreign language course, 28 having Norwegian Major and 84 having Norwegian Minor.

We received answers from 43 students, representing around 33% of all the students in the third year. From the 43 respondents, 58.1% have Norwegian Minor and 49.1 % have Norwegian Major.

Data analysis

The closed questions with pre-coded answers (multiple choice, checkboxes, Likert scale) were analysed in a quantitative manner using the functions provided by Google forms. The open-ended questions were investigated by using a coding process that identified within respondents' answers several clusters that developed into concepts.

As far as the students' language background is concerned, the data gathered indicated that they study Swedish as a third or fourth foreign language, since they already have studied several other languages (English, French, German, Finnish, Romanian, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Hungarian, Danish or Portuguese) and they have Romanian or Hungarian as their mother tongues. Such a diverse linguistic mapping offers them the possibility to make connections (vocabulary, morphology, syntax, etc.) between the languages they already know.

In order to establish students' motivation to improve their level of Swedish, it was relevant to find out if they already had any connection to Swedish language prior to the beginning of the course. Out of the 43 respondents, 90.7% began their Swedish studies in their third year, first semester, thus leaving 9.3 % of the students that have either studied it individually, outside the class, or in the optional courses offered by the Department of Scandinavian language and literature (2 students studied one semester, 4 students studied 2 semesters of Swedish and 1 student studied 4 semesters).

Due to the similarities between the two languages, it was relevant to ask students to self-evaluate their reading and writing skills in Norwegian, respectively in Swedish.

In regard to their reading skills in Norwegian, the results indicated that most of them (76.7 %) evaluated themselves as having a B1-B2 level, while some of them (14 %) also mentioned a C1 level.

When asked to assess their reading skills in Swedish, the data gathered indicated that 37.2% of the respondents self-evaluated themselves at an A1 level and 44.2% of the students mentioned an A2 level. 14 % said they have a B1 level in reading in Swedish and 4.7% answered B2 level. Nobody indicated C1 and C2 levels. We believe it is interesting to see that most of them evaluate their reading skills in Norwegian at a B1 level and in Swedish at an A2 level. This fact shows in our opinion that mastering another Scandinavian language has helped them acquire a better proficiency in Swedish, as it is common to evaluate one's competences in another language, after just one semester, at an A1 level.

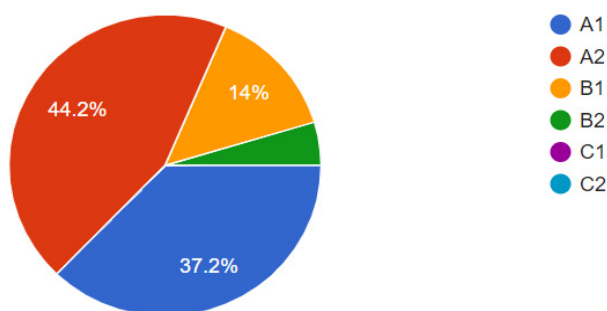


Figure 1. How do you evaluate your reading competence in Swedish?

The fact that many of the students self-evaluate as having a B1-B2 level represents a solid basis for understanding Swedish and for mastering Swedish reading and writing skills.

Another relevant element for our research, tackled the self-evaluation of writing skills in Norwegian. Again, nobody mentioned level C2, but most of the students (46.5%) said they have B1 level.

If we are to compare the reading and writing competences in Norwegian according to the data we gathered, we observe that while 39.5% say they read at B1 level, 46.5% mention they gained B1 level in writing. We tried to understand why writing seems easier to students than reading. One argument could be that writing implies having the time to think and elaborate one's answer, while reading, especially in class, is often spontaneous, an individual task and not so much developed in an online teaching context. Most often the tasks they receive at home are in written form and therefore they are used to develop their writing skills.

We wanted to see if the mechanism is the same for Swedish, a language they started learning only a few months ago. The numbers indicate the following: 55.8% said they have an A1 level in writing Swedish, 37.2% mentioned A2 level and 7% level B1. Nobody chose B2, C1, C2 level. We observe that they evaluate themselves as having between A1 and B1 for writing in Swedish and between A1-B2 for reading in Swedish.

Summing up the data, 81.4% consider they have A1 and A2 level in reading Swedish, while 93% believe they have level A1 and A2 in writing. This means that the students evaluate their writing skills for Swedish at a higher level than their reading skills. It is often largely assumed that the ability to write well is higher with learners that master at least another language from the same north Germanic branch. That is also the case for our students who learn primarily Norwegian. If a student is capable of writing reasonably well in Norwegian, he will also most likely acquire a higher proficiency in Swedish. Let's remember that the students' self-evaluation of Norwegian skills indicated that most of the reading and writing competences are situated between B1 and B2 level.

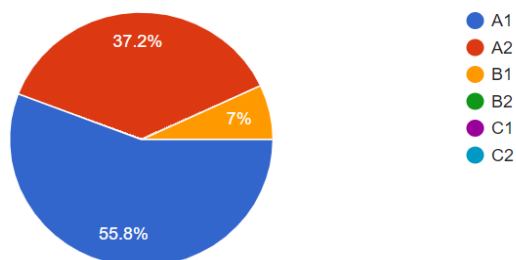


Figure 2. How do you evaluate your writing competence in Swedish?

After questioning their reading and writing levels in Swedish, we required respondents to indicate several directions they believe are relevant for developing their language competences. 90.7% of the respondents answered by mentioning writing as their primary interest. 83.7% indicated speaking, 79.1% listening and 74.4% reading. This data is proof that they performed the self-evaluation in a correct manner, in terms of writing skills in Swedish. Therefore, their biggest interest (90.7%) is to develop their writing skills. Our study shows that some students are more motivated to write a text in Swedish if they know that the assignment will count for the final result of the examination and thus give them the possibility to have a better grade.

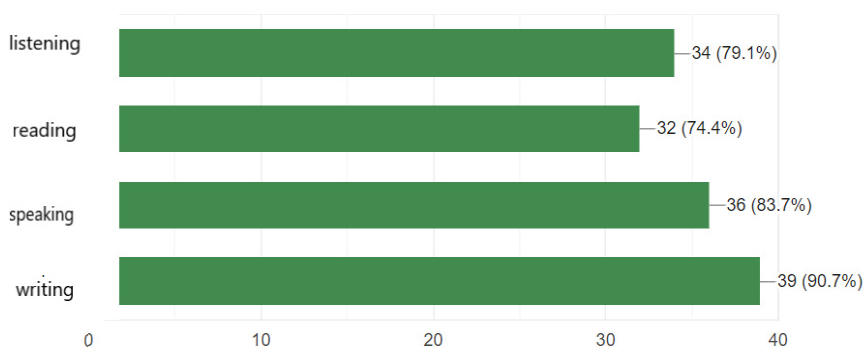


Figure 3. What skills would you like to improve in order to have a higher level of Swedish?

However, they are also motivated and interested in improving all of their four skills. Particularly, in order to develop their competences in writing and reading in Swedish, they are willing to spend more hours on a weekly basis (16.3% said 10 hours, 14 % mentioned 8 hours, 11.6% answered 4 hours, 7 % indicated 3 hours, 7 % said 5 hours, 7% mentioned 6 hours and 4.7% answered 3-4 hours).

When asked what aspects they consider challenging while learning Swedish, most of the students mentioned speaking skills (76.7%), followed by grammar, syntax, morphology (69.8%), listening skills (65.1%), vocabulary (62.8%), writing skills (44.2%), the agreement between nouns and adjectives (34.9%), prepositions (25.6%), inversion (25.6%), reading skills (23.3%), the order of words in a sentence (16.3%), the understanding of cultural aspects (9.3%).

It is our belief that grammar, syntax, morphology, vocabulary, the agreement between nouns and adjectives, prepositions, inversion or the order of words in a sentence are important aspects that one can relate not only to

writing skills, but also to speaking, reading or listening skills as well (Dreve 167-178). That is why, the data obtained, respectively 44.2% for writing and 23.3% for reading, could actually be higher than what the survey shows. Some of the challenges are normal for any beginner studying a new language, while some others - prepositions, inversions, the order of words in a sentence- are particularly important for Scandinavian Languages.

Norwegian is often perceived by students as a rare language (Tomescu *et al.*, *Understanding the factors* 258) that extends their career opportunities. In the same line, we inquired respondents to consider if competence in two Scandinavian languages would enlarge their possibilities of getting a job. On a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 5 was the highest degree, 53.5% of the respondents answered 5, 27.9 % answered 4, 9.3% said 3 and 9.3% answered 2. We observe that the vast majority is aware of the positive impact of learning Swedish, since 81.4% of them said they believe they could have higher chances of getting a job if they have competence both in Swedish and Norwegian.

Students' types of motivation were evaluated through an open-ended question. The answers provided a blend of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

From the 43 answers we received, 17 mentioned career perspectives, the idea of finding a job, the fact that this language is rare and knowing it represents an advantage that could help them on the job market (2 respondents indicated the fact that they intend to translate from or to Swedish and this course is very helpful).

Other 23 answers showed that they are motivated by the similarities between the two languages, by the fact that knowing another Scandinavian language could enlarge their horizon and contribute to improving their knowledge of social and cultural aspects (some of the films shown on Norwegian TV have actually actors from Sweden or Denmark), by the fact that they can understand some words in Finnish while learning Swedish. This is a statement received from one respondent:

I really like how Swedish sounds, I really like to observe to what extent the Nordic languages are similar and different, both in terms of pronunciation rules and vocabulary. I wish I could understand Swedish as well as possible, even if I would not speak or write at an advanced level; given the relationship between the Nordic Germanic languages, knowing Swedish would help me add another piece to the puzzle⁴.

⁴ Our translation. "Îmi place mult cum sună limba suedeză, îmi place foarte mult să observ în ce măsură se aseamănă și diferă limbile nordice, atât din punct de vedere al regulilor de pronunție, cât și al vocabularului, mi-aș dori să pot înțelege cât mai bine suedeză, chiar dacă nu aș vorbi sau scrie la un nivel avansat; dată fiind relația dintre limbile nordice germanice, cunoașterea limbii suedeze m-ar ajuta să mai adaug o piesă în puzzle".

In addition, 2 respondents mentioned the fact that they have relatives in Sweden or want to teach there and 3 said that they learn Swedish because it is a mandatory class and they want to pass their exams.

Even if the answers provided both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, the elements of extrinsic motivation (43 instances related to the fact that they like to study another language, that it can be helpful to learn Swedish, that they have many job and educational opportunities, the need to pass an examination etc.) outnumbered the intrinsic ones (5 instances related to seeking social integration, being interested in this language or studying it in order to develop the general background). Thus, by learning Swedish, respondents aim to extend their educational and job opportunities, to pass their exams or they find Swedish as relevant and useful if they already have previous language competence in Norwegian. Their answers were often connected to the similarities between Norwegian and Swedish and the extent to which this constitutes an advantage in terms of easiness to study Swedish and to broaden one's perspective of Scandinavian languages.

The learning of Swedish is an ongoing process that extends the formal online classroom environment and it is relevant for students to develop learning autonomy. Therefore, we questioned respondents regarding the different situations in which they use Swedish outside the course. Even if 79.1% of the respondents do not use Swedish in contexts that are not related to the elective course taught at BA level, 20,9% of the students practice voluntarily Swedish outside the class when they listen to music or when they read authentic materials in Swedish. When learning a foreign language, one needs exposure to the target language and to authentic resources more than what is covered during the lectures. When asked if they search for other resources to develop their language competence in Swedish, some of the respondents reported that they do it on a weekly basis (14%) or on a monthly basis (46,5%).

As a feedback for us as teachers, and in order to organize better the courses, it was relevant to find out what kind of additional resources students prefer outside the class. Respondents answered that they prefer resources that are rendered through texts (60.5%), audio-video (44.2%) or only audio (9.3%). 4.6% answered that they prefer all types of resources and have no preference for text, audio or audio-video resources.

When listening to audio resources in Swedish students are also provided with a text in order to visualize the vocabulary and the grammar encountered in the resource. In addition, because respondents have an A1-A2 level in Swedish, textual resources are still relevant and useful for them. Because as indicated, the language distance between Norwegian and Swedish is quite small, students find it easier to read texts than maybe listen or watch a video. When they have the text in front of them, they observe the differences between the two languages. Therefore, they might consider the text as a suitable resource.

The reason why students search for additional resources resided in developing several skills: listening (55.8%), speaking (44.2%), reading (62.8%), writing skills (55.8%), vocabulary (88.4%) and grammar (46%).

Reading and vocabulary are connected. The more one reads, the more one improves vocabulary. Respondents are aware that they need exposure to Swedish and they engage in extended reading activities outside the classroom, in order to encounter vocabulary in a certain context. A text provides students with the written form of a word, which is relevant for the students in order to compare this with their previous knowledge of Norwegian.

In an online teaching context students' digital competence is salient. Teachers use various learning apps and multimodal resources in order to organize the lectures. Consequently, it was justifiable to ask respondents to self-evaluate their digital competence. The majority of the students have a good (39.5%) or satisfactory (46.5%) level of digital competence which allows them to take part in the online course in Swedish and be able to manage the multimodal resources (videos, graphs, images etc.) presented to them.

Respondents indicated that they use learning apps (e.g. Duolingo - 12 instances), social media (Instagram and Facebook - 2 instances), various websites that focus on teaching Swedish as a foreign language (learningswedish.com, 8sidor.se, swedish-for-all.se, digitalasporet.se - 18 instances), they use online dictionaries to search for words in Swedish (4 instances) or google translate (2 instances), they read online newspapers in Swedish (2 instances) or they watch and listen to various audio-video resources (Youtube and Spotify - 9 instances).

When asked if it would be useful if the teacher would use more digital resources that target the development of writing, reading or other skills, a high percentage of the respondents (i.e., 79.1%) stated that they would like to develop their writing skills by using various digital resources. The remaining larger part of the respondents (41.9%) indicated that they would like more emphasis placed on enhancing their reading skills. Low percentages were rendered for developing listening skills (6.9%), speaking skills (4.6%) while 4.6% indicated that they would not change anything related to how the course was intended and planned.

The learning of language and culture are intertwined when studying a foreign language. Therefore, when learning Swedish, students also are presented with bits of culture and civilization of the target culture. We asked students what kind of authentic resources they use in order to broaden their knowledge of Swedish culture and civilization. The examples provided by respondents ranged from Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, to webinars, podcasts, blogs and newspapers which indicates that they manage to access various digital resources in order to further develop their language competence and understanding of the

Swedish culture. The coding for this item of the questionnaire was performed in terms of frequency. Therefore, the answers provided were grouped into audio, audio-video, textual resources and social media communication. The data gathered suggests that respondents prefer textual resources (20 instances) as opposed to audio-video resources (18 instances) or audio resources (11 instances). A considerable amount of the answers targeted social media (Instagram and Facebook - 25 instances) as means of searching for items of information about Sweden.

Respondents indicated in 3 instances that they use Google in order to broaden their knowledge of Swedish culture and civilization but they did not provide further details. In one case, a respondent answered that he/she doesn't use any authentic resource in order to gain a deeper understanding of Swedish culture.

Limitations and discussions

The findings of this paper are based on the analysis of the 43 answers we received to our survey. Therefore, the information is mainly descriptive and generalization cannot be inferred for the entire year of study, respectively 132 students enrolled in *Swedish as a foreign language in a Scandinavian context* semester course. However, the data gathered from the 43 respondents were sufficient enough to conclude that they begin to study Swedish both for extrinsic and intrinsic reasons, that they search for authentic materials in order to improve their languages skills and that most of them are willing to develop their writing and reading competences.

Most of the third-year students are preoccupied with writing their BA paper and thus have limited amount of time to spend searching for Swedish resources outside the class, even if they believe Swedish is an interesting language. That might be the reason why 39.5% of the students said they only search for additional material very rarely and 14% said they never do it. Given the right circumstances, we believe the data could be very different.

While it is true that foreign language context shapes the students' implication and motivation, the fact that the learners have only one semester of Swedish and that some of them have already studied it as an optional course for one, two or four semesters, might also be perceived as a limitation. Even if we have a solid survey, well supported by close-ended and open-ended questions, it would be advisable to investigate the research questions with other research instruments.

In addition, social media represents a salient source for gaining access to information as young adults are in a constant search for global culture. They

are “eager consumers of social media and of the entertainment industry” (Muresan and Pop 126) and the considerable number of answers targeting this area supports the idea that this is an essential part of their daily lives, but also as students of a foreign language.

Conclusions

This paper provided a glimpse into the types of motivation that third year BA students in Norwegian exhibited when studying *Swedish as a foreign language* for one semester. Both extrinsic and intrinsic elements have been found, while the former elements were more dominant. Moreover, we discovered that by developing competences in two Scandinavian languages students consider that they increase their academic and professional opportunities. The data gathered indicated that respondents prefer to further develop their language competence in Swedish by reading textual resources that allow them to manage the rate of information they receive, the speed of reading, thus having time for making sense of what they read. Most of the respondents evaluated their reading skills in Swedish at A2 level. This fact shows in our opinion that mastering another Scandinavian language (i.e., Norwegian) constituted an advantage in terms of easiness to develop reading skills in Swedish. However, respondents need to improve their writing skills as the similarities between Norwegian and Swedish (e.g., grammar, lexic, phonology) might, in some cases, mislead them and generate developmental errors in both languages. As Swedish has been studied only for one semester it is reasonable to understand respondents’ difficulties regarding speaking skills, listening skills or grammar. The fact that students have already gained language competence in Norwegian is responsible for some of the linguistic (e.g., prepositions, inversion etc.) and sociolinguistic elements (e.g., understanding cultural aspects, language uttered in different sociocultural contexts) that were not so difficult to grasp in Swedish.

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