

Eskilstuna revisited: Variation, stability and change in real time – Experiences from collection and analysis of data

Eva Sundgren, Reykjavik, November 9, 2023



Research into sociolinguistic variation in the 1960s

Large-scale surveys of language use

- William Labov in New York
- Peter Trudgill in Norwich
- Bengt Nordberg in Eskilstuna

Eskilstuna is a medium-sized Swedish town.

Recordings of 83 individuals (born 1876–1951) were made in 1967.

Sweden




Continuity and Change in Present-Day Swedish: Eskilstuna Revisited

An early study of language variation and change in real time, which made comparisons to Bengt Nordberg's study a generation before.

The new study comprised

a panel study with 13 rerecorded informants from the 1967 study (born 1913–1950): intraindividual change over time

a trend study with 72 new informants compared with all 83 informants from 1967: generational differences and community change. The selection of informants was mainly a result of systematic sampling of population registers (60 000 names, looked at every 30th name, and if they were born in Eskilstuna and had lived there for the most part of their lives I added them to my list. Thus, I got 500 names and started phoning them to fill 32 cells defined by 4 social groups, 4 age groups and gender.)

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- Both the 1967 and the 1996 studies consist of conversation-like informal interviews, in 1967 between Nordberg and an informant, and in 1996 between me and an informant, resulting in fairly casual speech. I recorded at least 45 minutes with each informant, on average 55 minutes.
 - The traditional social categories: socioeconomic group, age and gender.
 - In the trend study, the figures are based on cell averages calculated on the informants' percentage of standard forms.
 - In 1967: 30 cells defined by gender, 3 social classes, and 5 age groups.
 - In 1996: 32 cells defined by gender, 4 social groups, and 4 age groups.
 - This quantitative approach was combined with more qualitative explanations, especially concerning the individuals in the panel study, and I also used the concepts of social mobility and integration.

The socioeconomic classification system SEI

Instead of the traditional but obsolete classification in 3 social classes.

SEI is primarily based on occupation and number of years of education that are normally required for the occupation in question.

Nordberg, Bengt & Sundgren, Eva, 1996: *Från tillväxt till stagnation. Demografisk, social och ekonomisk utveckling i Eskilstuna från 1960-talet till 1995* (From growth to stagnation. The demographic, social and economic development of Eskilstuna from the 1960's to 1995). SoLiD nr 4 (=FUMS Rapport nr 177). Uppsala University, Uppsala.

In 1967, Eskilstuna was a marked industrial town with a concentration on cutlery and steel industry. In 1995, the social and economic situation in Eskilstuna was gloomy.

Integration index

An index was constructed in order to measure the individual's relationship to the local community.

All informants answered questions relevant to assessing their degree of social integration in Eskilstuna.

The factors that made up this index were:

1. Place of birth/childhood/adolescence of spouse
2. Place of birth/childhood/adolescence of parents
3. Place of birth/childhood/adolescence of spouse's parents
4. Siblings, grown up in Eskilstuna whom you see regularly
5. Spouse's siblings, grown up in Eskilstuna whom you see regularly
6. Number of children
7. Number of native workmates
8. Number of native close friends
9. Number of local associations or organizations in which you are active
10. Willingness to move from Eskilstuna
11. Tendency to feel at home
12. Location of work

These 12 factors were given equal weight in the index, which ranged from 0 to 200.

Seven morphological and morphophonological variables

- the definite singular suffix of neuter nouns (DefSingNeuter) hus-et ~ hus-e (the house)
- the definite plural suffix of neuter nouns (DefPlurNeuter) hus-en ~ hus-ena (the houses)
- the plural suffix of the nouns of the first declension (Decl1Plur) flick-or ~ flick-er (girls)
- the past participle suffix of the verbs of the first and the fourth conjugations (PastPart1&4)
dansa-t ~ dansa-Ø, sjung-it ~ sjung-i (I have *danced*, I have *sung*)
- the past participle suffix of the verbs of the second conjugation (PastPart2) köp-t ~ köp-i
(I have *bought*) the geographically most limited variable
- the preterite suffix of the verbs of the first conjugation (Pret1) dansa-de ~ dansa-Ø
(I *danced* yesterday) The dropping of *de* is widespread in Swedish dialects.
- the verb form *became* (Become) which in Swedish has the two variants *blev* and *vart*, the preterite forms of two different verbs *bli(va)* and *varda*, both with the meaning ‘become’ and, as passive-forming auxiliary, ‘be’.

RapidFile: The 26 first of 1K41's 96 instances of DefSingNeutr.

DefSingNeutr: 3564. All variables: 15 530

E-tuna: B.neutr.sg.							E-tuna: B.neutr.sg.				
Hlöp	Talare	Tlöp	Räkn	Lexho	Lexs	Mt E G V1 V2	Kontext	Bet	E-kon	Stil	Hlöp
3171	1K41	1	2	Smörtorget	torg	a 1 0 1	på lilla SMÖ`RTORGET trivs ja vä`ldit bra	1	K	H	3171
3172	1K41	2	7	Smörtorget	torg	a 1 0 1	Även sen ja på i SMÖ`RTORGET va väl / ja	1	K	H	3172
3173	1K41	3	8	Smörtorget	torg	a 1 0 1	just på SMÖ`RTORGET / så eh å hade mycke gre`jer	1	P	H	3173
3174	1K41	4	45	liv	liv	a 0 0 1	kåka då här hela LI`VET sa han men då ka'n växa	1	K	H	3174
3175	1K41	5	49	ansikte	ansikte	h 0 0 1	bort / va ja ju grö'n i A`NSIKTET å spydde /	1	V	H	3175
3176	1K41	6	64	barn	barn	a 0 0 1	/ ja' va tredje BA`RNET ja / [I:hade dom dött /	1	K	H	3176
3177	1K41	7	106	världskrig	krig	a 0 0 1	/ eh innan / andra VÄ`RLDSKRIGET så va då på Ve	1	K	H	3177
3178	1K41	8	120	maskineri	maskineri	f 0 0 3 1	ekojournalen liksom bara // ja MASKINERI`ET slutade fungera	1	K	F	3178
3179	1K41	9	121	år	år	a 0 0 1	/ men hon si`sta Å`RET särskilt	1	K	H	3179
3180	1K41	10	125	torg	torg	a 0 0 1	har ja köpt på TO`RGET den / gjorde ja nog i vä`	1	K	H	3180
3181	1K41	11	149	lasarett	lasarett	a 0 0 1	ras // åck eh / che'f på / eh LASARE`TTET på / ta`nd	1	K	F	3181
3182	1K41	12	161	hörnhus	hus	a 0 0 1	kliniken bo`dde vi i då här HÖ`RNHuset vi Smö`rparken	1	K	H	3182
3183	1K41	13	163	hus	hus	a 0 0 1	/ bodde vi i de' HU`SET / där / i hö`rnhuset	1	P	H	3183
3184	1K41	14	163	hörnhus	hus	a 0 0 1	/ i HÖ`RNHuset där v-	1	K	H	3184
3185	1K41	15	164	hörn	hörn	a 0 0 1	/ just de i HÖ`RNET där [I:ja] precis vi pa'rken	1	K	H	3185
3186	1K41	16	166	Rådhuset	torg	a 1 0 1	alldeles ny`byggt då RÅ`DHUSTORGET fe'm /	1	K	H	3186
3187	1K41	17	168	hus	hus	a 0 0 1	å så å rå HU`SET på vänster ha'nd	1	K	H	3187
3188	1K41	18	169	hus	hus	a 0 0 1	fy`ra våningar på då HU`SET tror ja //	1	K	H	3188
3189	1K41	19	171	hus	hus	a 0 0 1	[I:gjorde han] i då HU`SET ja ja tror de	1	K	H	3189
3190	1K41	20	177	Rådhuset	torg	a 1 0 1	vi hy`rde vi RÅ`DHUSTORGET då va ju prakti'k /	1	K	H	3190
3191	1K41	21	185	slut	slut	a 0 0 0	om lä`genheter då i SLUTE på tre`ttitalet	0	K	H	3191
3192	1K41	22	185	trettiotal	tal	a 0 0 1	i slute på TRE`TTITALET för då va ju	1	K	H	3192
3193	1K41	23	187	Fristadstorget	torg	a 1 0 1	kom vi då ti FRI`STASTORGET här / [I:jaha	1	K	H	3193
3194	1K41	24	193	Fristadstorget	torg	a 1 0 1	/ [I:va'r hä'r] FRI`STASTORGET. / [I:också]	1	P	H	3194
3195	1K41	25	207	lasarett	lasarett	a 0 0 1	ry`ggkliniken / [I:mm] på LASARE`TTET / avdelnin	1	P	F	3195
3196	1K41	26	211	lasarett	lasarett	a 0 0 1	g se'x å hälsa på på LASARE`TTET ån å [I:jaa] ta mej ut	1	V	F	3196

DefSingNeutr

The 72 trend speakers: speaker averages

	SEI 1		SEI 2		SEI 3		SEI 4	
	M	K	M	K	M	K	M	K
16 - 30	1M11 22 18 4 92% 18%	1K11 125 95 30 76% 24%	2M11 75 50 25 67% 33%	2K11 21 12 9 57% 43%	3M11 44 25 19 57% 43%	3K11 14 3 11 21% 79%	4M11 17 10 7 59% 41%	4K11 26 21 5 81% 19%
	1M12 27 10 17 37% 63%	1K12 22 15 7 68% 32%	2M12 48 45 3 94% 6%	2K12 35 16 19 46% 54%	3M12 37 8 29 22% 78%	3K12 29 15 14 52% 48%	4M12 35 32 3 91% 9%	4K12 27 21 6 78% 22%
31 - 45	1M21 49 34 15 69% 31%	1K21 24 22 2 92% 8%	2M21 31 23 8 74% 26%	2K21 80 69 11 86% 14%	3M21 15 6 9 40% 60%	3K21 24 21 3 88% 13%	4M21 21 1 20 5% 95%	4K21 44 17 27 39% 61%
	1M22 23 18 5 78% 22%	1K22 31 24 7 77% 23%	2M22 52 13 39 25% 75%	2K22 63 57 6 90% 10%	3M22 40 12 28 30% 70%	3K22 26 23 3 88% 12%	4M22 30 5 25 17% 83%	4K22 19 11 8 58% 42%
46 - 60	1M31 70 54 16 77% 23%	1K31 36 31 5 86% 14%	2M31 31 26 5 84% 16%	2K31 43 25 18 58% 42%	3M31 37 19 18 51% 49%	3K31 19 18 1 95% 5%	4M31 47 4 43 9% 91%	4K31 16 1 15 6% 94%
	1M32 59 47 12 80% 20%	1K32 42 37 5 88% 12%	2M32 95 46 49 48% 52%	2K32 46 31 15 67% 33%	3M32 37 12 25 32% 68%	3K32 28 12 16 43% 57%	4M32 34 10 24 23% 77%	4K32 25 13 12 52% 48%
60<	1M41 87 78 9 90% 10%	1K41 96 90 6 94% 6%	2M41 28 16 12 57% 43%	2K41 28 14 14 50% 50%	3M41 87 21 66 24% 76%	3K41 87 55 32 63% 37%	4M41 61 7 54 11% 89%	4K41 53 12 41 23% 77%
	1M42 29 16 13 55% 45%	1K42 43 33 4 91% 9%	2M42 39 29 10 74% 26%	2K42 12 10 2 83% 17%	3M42 35 20 15 57% 43%	3K42 35 29 6 83% 17%	4M42 54 34 20 63% 37%	4K42 32 29 3 91% 9%
			2K43 47 38 9 81% 19%		3M43 33 17 16 52% 48%	3K43 33 22 11 85% 15%	4M43 35 14 61 19% 81%	

BNeutr Sing %-t	SEI 1		SEI 2		SEI 3		SEI 4		MEDELVÄRDET AV CELLERNA : CELLGEMSNITT		
	M	K	M	K	M	K	M	K	M	K	Totalt
16 - 30	60	72	81	52	40	29	75	80	64	58	61
	$\overline{66}$		$\overline{67}$		$\overline{35}$		$\overline{78}$				
31 - 45	74	85	49	88	35	88	7	48	41	77	59
	$\overline{80}$		$\overline{69}$		$\overline{62}$		$\overline{28}$				
46 - 60	79	87	51	63	42	69	19	29	48	62	55
	$\overline{83}$		$\overline{57}$		$\overline{56}$		$\overline{24}$				
60<	73	93	65	71	44	81	31	57	53	76	64
	$\overline{83}$		$\overline{68}$		$\overline{63}$		$\overline{44}$				
	72	84	62	69	40	67	33	54			
	$\overline{78}$		$\overline{65}$		$\overline{54}$		$\overline{43}$				

Snittet av alla 32 cellerna:
60
M (16 celler) K (16 celler)
52 68


DefSingNeutr
Cell averages

- The expectation was that all the variables were in the process of rapid change from the regional dialect towards the spoken standard.
- But: The rate of change at the community had been low, with the exception of one variable, DefPlurNeuter. Social class- and age-conditioned differences had decreased (although still statistically significant), whereas gender-conditioned differences had increased.
- Sundgren, Eva. 2002. *Återbesök i Eskilstuna. En undersökning av morfologisk variation och förändring i nutida talspråk.* (Eskilstuna revisited. An investigation of morphological variation and change in present-day spoken Swedish.) Uppsala University.

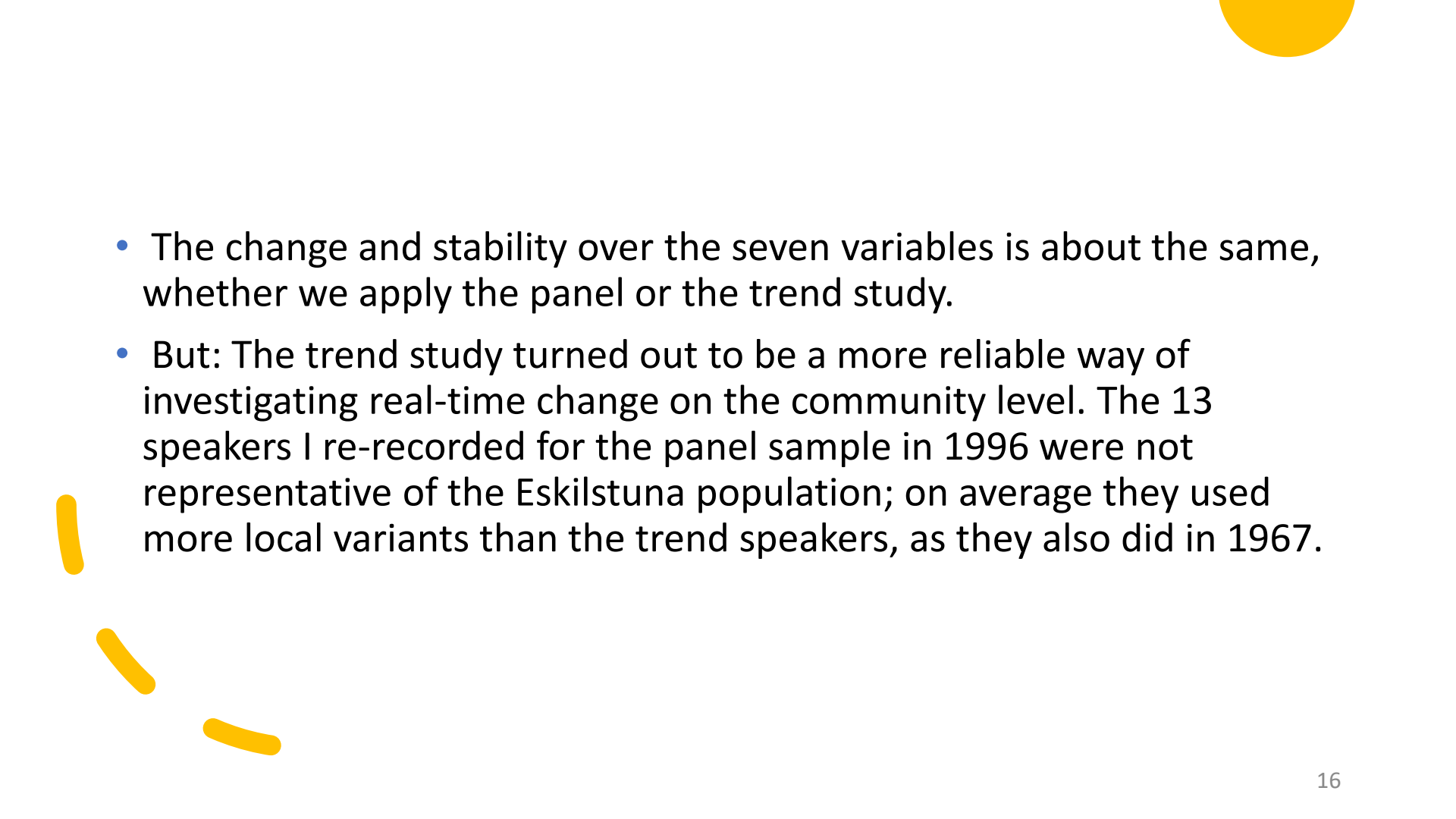
Sundgren, Eva, 2001: Men and women in language change. A Swedish case study. I: NORA. Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research 9(2). S. 113–123.

- The trend study: Variable rule analysis (Varbrul: the programme IVARB) of the 1996 data: comparisons between the influence of extralinguistic factors and linguistic factors, e.g. stress and following element (Sundgren, 2009). Extralinguistic factors had a great influence on the variation in all the variables, but linguistic factors also contributed to the variation.

Sundgren, Eva, 2009: The varying influence of social and linguistic factors on language stability and change: The case of Eskilstuna. *Language Variation and Change* 21: 97–133.



The integration index revealed that men in 1996 had much more to gain by demonstrating their local identity linguistically than women. Many men who advanced socially in Eskilstuna had a high integration index. This social integration supported them both in their social mobility and keeping their local way of speaking.


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- The change and stability over the seven variables is about the same, whether we apply the panel or the trend study.
 - But: The trend study turned out to be a more reliable way of investigating real-time change on the community level. The 13 speakers I re-recorded for the panel sample in 1996 were not representative of the Eskilstuna population; on average they used more local variants than the trend speakers, as they also did in 1967.

Individual change manifested in the panel study between 1967 and 1996

- The change was strongest in the youngest age group and strongest before the age of 50. But there were informants older than 50 who had changed, too, either in the direction of more standard or more local speech.
- People continue to change their way of speaking after 17, the age of phonological stabilization, according to Labov (2001:448).
- Later panel studies have confirmed that individuals' language practices can change over the lifespan past critical age, also regarding phonological variables and changes from below.
- Buchstaller (2016:200): "adults' linguistic tendencies are less fixed than previously assumed".

Sundgren, Eva, Buchstaller, Isabelle & Beaman, Karen, 2021: [The Beginnings of Panel Research: Individual Language Variation, Change, and Stability in Eskilstuna](#). In: Beaman, K. & Buchstaller, I. (eds.), *Language Variation and Language Change Across the Lifespan: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives from Panel Studies*, Taylor and Francis Inc.: 17–55.

- The variables investigated are differentiated by their frequency of occurrence in the data, which makes it difficult to get significant results concerning the change in the panel study (calculated as the rate of occurrence of the standard variant over the total number of variants for each variable).
- Three ongoing changes in the trend study reach significance (DefPlurNeutr, DefSingNeutr and PastPart2), but only the change in DefSingNeutr reaches significance across the panel sample. The panel speakers produced many instances of the variables DefSingNeutr, PastPart1&4 and Pret1, but the other four variables were much less frequent in the dataset, especially the DefPlur Neutr.
- Bengt Nordberg told me to ...



In 2018, 6 of the 13 panel speakers were recorded for the third time (born 1928–1950).

- Sundgren, Eva, 2020: Individuell språklig variation och förändring – sex informanter inspelade 1967, 1996 och 2018. (Individual language variation and change – six informants recorded in 1967, 1996 and 2018.) *Svenska landsmål och svenskt folkliv*, 2019:141–169.
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Ways of looking more at the individual and his or her life situation to explain linguistic behaviour

- There are many, partly conflicting factors, that govern how an individual varies and changes his or her language across their life-span, and different factors influence individuals in different ways.
- The tendency is that individuals change their language the most towards the standard between youth and middle age and that they become more local-speaking when they get older.
"Retrograde change" (Wagner & Sankoff 2011): People revert to more conservative linguistic patterns as they age.
- Linguistic behaviour is influenced by intersecting social factors: socio-demographic position, gender and age, but also by other aspects: their level of formal education, type of occupation, social mobility, integration in the local community and attitudes to the local language.

Challenges

I collected and analysed rich data, using different methods. The series with three investigations was innovative and has contributed to much knowledge about variation and change.

Some challenges:

- to find the informants for the panel study after 29 and 50 years
- to get enough instances of some variables in the panel study
- time-consuming

Many thanks!

