



LOTTA WECKSTRÖM

# Representations of Finnishness in Sweden

**Studia Fennica**  
Linguistica

**Studia Fennica**  
Linguistica 16



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Finnish Literature Society • Helsinki





Studia Fennica Linguistica 16

The publication has undergone a peer review.



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PEER-REVIEWED  
[www.tsv.fi/tunnus](http://www.tsv.fi/tunnus)

The open access publication of this volume has received part funding via a Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation grant.

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A digital edition of a printed book first published in 2011 by the Finnish Literature Society.  
Cover Design: Timo Numminen  
EPUB: Tero Salmén

ISBN 978-952-222-326-5 (Print)  
ISBN 978-952-222-408-8 (PDF)  
ISBN 978-952-222-759-1 (EPUB)

ISSN 0085-6835 (Studia Fennica)  
ISSN 1235-1946 (Studia Fennica Linguistica)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21435/sflin.16>

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## Transcription key

,	pause, less than a second, not necessarily between clauses
.	pause more than a second, not necessarily the end of a sentence
...	significantly longer pause
<b>word</b>	emphasis
!	louder than the surrounding
?	question, rising pitch
//	overlapping speech
[word]	minimal response
word	code switching (Arial, point size 9)
[...]	words missing
(explanation)	explanation of the situation





# Foreword

The research process and the writing of this book took place between 2001–2011, and during these years I have had the great pleasure to work with fantastic people both in Europe and in the United States. I especially want to thank my mentor and friend, Professor of History and Ethnology Hanna Snellman at Jyväskylän University, for her can-do approach to life, academic and beyond; and my thesis supervisor, Senior Researcher Sari Pöyhönen, at the Centre for Applied Language Study at Jyväskylän University for encouraging and inspiring conversations. Furthermore, I thank everyone at the Department of Scandinavian at the University of California, Berkeley where I worked on this book as a visiting scholar.

Interviews with young people with Finnish background in Sweden form the core of this book. I am in deeply grateful to everyone in Sweden who participated as an interviewee and provided me with such wonderful data. I hope to have captured some glimpses of your realities and your thoughts in this book. My heartfelt thanks to my host family in Köping, and to everyone else who took me in during the fieldwork periods over the years. Thank you for your hospitality, friendliness and great conversations.

Several foundations have supported this research over the years. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) financed the first year of my research and the Nordeuropa Institut at Humboldt Universität in Berlin hosted me; Helsingin Sanomain 100-vuotissäätiö enabled my postgraduate studies in Amsterdam; Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth's Foundation participated by financing one year of the research; the Finnish Migration Institute has backed me up at several occasions by providing office space and practical help, as well as financing the first fieldwork period. The Finnish-Swedish Cultural Foundation co-funded the fieldwork periods in 2004, 2005, and 2006. The Department of Rhetoric and Study of Argumentation at the University of Amsterdam hosted me as a visiting scholar, and trusted me with teaching; for these opportunities I especially thank Professor Frans van Eemeren. Jyväskylän University employed me during 2006 and 2007 to finish my dissertation. I am grateful to each and every source for the opportunity to explore the world of scholarly work. Every department with its group of researchers and other staff, starting in Berlin and ending in Berkeley, have given me a warm welcome and made me feel at home, and I salute you all.

Warm thanks to Sonia Wichmann for proofreading the manuscript and providing careful comments, and to Erika Weckström for her irreplaceable help in the home stretch. I thank Markku Haakana at Helsinki University for insightful editorial revisions. Whatever errors remain, are, of course, my own. Many thanks to publishing secretary Pauliina Rihto at the Finnish Literature Society, for the dexterity and care with which she handled the publication process.



I'm grateful to my parents, Eira and Anders, for living out their belief in the importance of loving and nurturing your languages, in whatever combinations they might come. And, finally, I thank my wonderful family, Gilad, Thea and Dean, for filling my life with (multilingual) joy and love. You are my home in the world.

I dedicate this study to its participants.

In Albany, California

October 2011

*Lotta Weckström*

More than half a million Swedes – one in twenty – is of Finnish descent. This book explores Finnishness, multilingualism and identities of young people with Finnish background in Sweden. What does it mean to grow up in a Finnish family in Sweden? Who are ‘real Finns’ and what does it take to be(come) one? Is a shared minority language essential for the survival of the minority, or can a minority culture stay viable without it? What is Finnishness and who, in the end, can define ethnicity? How to make sense of, and how to present interviews that are rich with imitations of accents, jokes and laughter?

*Representations of Finnishness in Sweden* is an ethnographic interview study in the domain of applied language studies. This book is aimed at readers interested in sociolinguistics, linguistic ethnography, and the study of identities. Interviewees’ voices take a central position in this book and interview excerpts are used not only as illustrations, but also serve as starting points for discussing broader theoretical concepts.

The author, Dr. Lotta Weckström, grew up bilingual – Finnish and Swedish – in Finland. She studied linguistics and migration studies in Germany and the Netherlands, and in this longitudinal study encompasses her expertise.



STUDIA FENNICA  
LINGUISTICA 16  
ISBN 978-952-222-326-5  
88.2: 32.21  
[www.finlit.fi/kirjat](http://www.finlit.fi/kirjat)