

Entering national ideological horizons through Swedish media

DRAFT: Paper presented at ECREA, Utrecht 2009
Not to be quoted without author permission

Ingegerd Rydin and Ulrika Sjöberg
Halmstad University, Sweden

Ingegerd.Rydin@hh.se
Ulrika.Sjoberg@hh.se

People visiting industrialized countries, often have their first contacts with a new culture through the media. The television set has, for example, such a central role in people's everyday life that it often is the first "furniture" you encounter when you come to a new place. Hotels, whatever standard they have, are at least equipped with a television set in most rooms. And who has not grabbed the remote control immediately and starting to zap through national as well as international channels like *CNN* and *BBC*. We have all experiences of how we form our opinions and attitudes about a culture through the media, because the media is normally perceived as a "window to the world", a widely used metaphor. As media scholars we are aware of media's misrepresentations and false pictures, but when entering a new community, we still often rely on the media representations, before we "climb out" in the reality and learn about it in more depth.

If we briefly look back and refer to the huge migration waves in the beginning of the twentieth century to North America, it was advocated that English-language media were a source of knowledge for immigrants about their new surroundings and enabled them to internalize new values and codes of behavior (Cooley, 1909; Dewey, 1916 quotes from Elias, 2008:2). For example, according to a review by Elias (2008:2), one of the most popular media was the silent motion picture that offered America's new immigrants an inexpensive and accessible form of entertainment, that provided glimpses into the new homeland and taught them the proper codes, manners and behaviors. It was the "the melting pot ideology" that was predominant during that time. However, not all migrants wanted to be assimilated as "Americans". In the Swedish novels about poor Swedish peasants migrating to North America at the end of the nineteenth century written by the novelist Vilhelm Moberg, we find a vivid portrayal of the tough life as settlers and how to overcome cultural barriers. We follow one family, in particular, where the husband really strives to become a real "American" and to learn English whereas his wife never adapts to the new life style and often looks back to her former homeland. Eventually she does not survive the harsh life in the new country and her too early death symbolizes her distress as a migrant. This fictional description illustrates how people within the same family struggle with cultural barriers, adaptation and finding new identities.

Today, the melting pot ideology has fade-out (Elias, 2008). It actually resulted in its opposite, namely that ethnic groups strengthened their ties and formed their own communities, e.g. in the U.S. (Hylland Eriksen, 1993). Today, we rather use the concept of “integration”. In its broadest sense it still is of high relevance for both decision makers and for researchers in many modern societies (Westin, 2003). In this chapter, we will focus on the media’s role for getting acquainted with the new culture. We will not specifically deal with the media’s role for promoting nationalism and nationalistic norms and values, as these matters are explored and discussed more in detail in another context (Sjöberg and Rydin, in press). Instead, we will concentrate on conversations with migrants that circled around how to understand and approach the new culture and the key issue of language learning.

“In order to understand the process of globalisation, we have to understand the linguistic and cultural dimensions – for example the development of languages on a global level as well as the globalized culture consumption. It is impossible to understand issues of assimilation/integration, citizenship, minority rights and multiculturalism without relating them to language and culture.” (our translation).

<http://www.mah.se/fakulteter-och-omraden/Kultur-och-samhalle/Institutioner-och-centrum/Internationell-migration-och-etniska-relationer-IMER/Forskning/Sprak--och-kulturstudier-vid-IMER/>

We will first discuss the role of language, which is an obvious obstacle for many people, since Swedish is a small language that people seldom are familiar with before they visit Sweden and it is also conceived as difficult to learn, especially for people coming from areas not speaking the Indo-European languages (referens??). We will highlight how the media, especially television, is used for “struggling” with the Swedish language. Finally, we direct our attention towards the media as a “window” to learn about the new culture, a process that implies a negotiation of values of both acceptance and resistance.

Thus, this chapter devotes attention towards how the media, not least Swedish channels (origin: Sweden) as well as channels broadcasting in Swedish, i.e. subtitled programs, are used to be kept informed about the Swedish society and the Swedish language. Television, in particular, was considered as crucial for language learning in the first period of time in Sweden. Various studies on media access and use among Swedes clearly show that television and the Internet are the most prominent media (Mediebarometern, 2008 check!!) Also international studies (e.g. Gillespie 1995; Hargreaves & Mahdjoub 1997; Karim 2003) indicate that these two media have an important role in the lives of migrant families. When visiting migrant families in this project, the television set was often on when we arrived and most families had more than one television. It is almost a truism to say that television is a family medium in most homes. There are many reasons for the centrality of television in people’s everyday lives and it is in this sense unique as compared to other media. However, as we shall see, also other Swedish media were used such as radio, newspapers and mail shots in order to learn the new culture and its language.

However, several processes are at work in the complex interrelation between media and culture. Experiences of racism, discrimination, being an outsider of society etc may make migrants more inclined to make use of minority and transnational media such as satellite television. The increased access through Internet also facilitates information seeking in

other languages. Or, the Swedish media might be not be appealing to migrants by a number of reasons, for example lack of trust in news representations, not considering migrant issues, presenting skewed pictures of migrants and promoting racism, or reporting in nationalistic overtones e t c. Instead migrants may turn away from national broadcasting. Here we touch upon a kind of resistance. Morley (2000: 150), for example, claims that satellite television symbolizes and represents a form of “desirable freedom of viewing, by contradistinction to the constraints of the old national broadcasting institutions such as the BBC”. But as will be seen it may also be the case that Swedish media becomes a highly appreciated “window” to the Swedish society while living a segregated life, separated from the majority group.

The issues raised above are sensitive, since the Swedish official policy of migration is aimed towards integration and can be condensed in three slogans: equality, freedom of choice and partnership (Westin, 2003: 47). In other words, in official policy the idea of assimilation is rejected. Instead the word “integration” is used, because it is assumed to represent an open society, where immigrants and minority groups are regarded as partners in developing their new homeland together with the majority group. In contrast, France advocates the idea of assimilation as this quotation illustrates:

During the 1990s, the mushrooming of satellite receivers fixed to the homes of minority ethnic families has become a symbol of elite and popular perceptions of immigrants as an alien cultural presence threatening the integrity of French national identity (Hargreaves & Mahdjoub, 1997:460).

This excerpt has an ironic tone about satellite dishes threatening the “integrity of French national identity”. Many nation states, not only the French, find it problematic that migrants tend to exclude themselves from the mainstream national media, which is an apparatus for socializing newcomers to be a “real citizen” in the new country.

The satellite receivers on windows and balconies have been a topic in the Swedish debate on migration as in many other places. Therefore, segregation in terms of condensed settlements of migrants in major cities has been seen as a failure of the integration politics. Carlbom (2003:191), an anthropologist, who lived in the neighborhood of Rosengård in Malmö, with a population where about 75 percent is of foreign origin, discusses that the media contributes to the enclavisation of Muslims, in particular: “The real problem, if we are talking about integration into Sweden, is that the Muslims already live segregated in an enclavized social structure; the satellite dishes are among the most evident symptoms of this enclavization”. In the news media, one can read articles about tenants who have to make a choice between the satellite receiver or to move away. This discussion also came up in our interviews with migrant families in our study. However, we found that the picture is quite complex and requires a more nuanced analysis. We found, for example, that type of medium played a role. The Internet has to some extent replaced the satellite receiver and is used for a variety of purposes such as watching television and communicating with friends and relatives by MSN, web cam and e-mail.

Theoretical framework on nationalism and language Started, but not finished

Methodology:

A constructive perspective: discourse

Research on the complex interplay between text, context and reception has often been inspired by Stuart Hall's influential work on interpretative frameworks (1980). While the ideological meaning of a media text is accepted in a so-called dominant-hegemonic position, it is questioned in an oppositional code, whereas in a negotiated reading of a text, some views are accepted and others are questioned. By bringing semiotics into the study of communication processes, the model suggests that media meanings are produced in social and cultural contexts, which include everything from the broader ideological discourses in a specific society to a person's unique personal histories, experiences and knowledge.

A gradual shift has taken place from an interest in those mental processes through which media content is perceived and interpreted, and its effects, to the social embeddedness of the media user, belonging to a community with his or her interpersonal networks, all interwoven into the process of meaning-making of media and their content. Thus, applying a discourse approach in audience research makes us direct our attention on how for example categorizations are actually used and their consequences rather than focussing on cognitive processes (Potter and Wetherell, 1996). The social construction of reality makes us acknowledge that even if the makings of meaning involve conscious, intentional, and mental processing, social and cultural frames make people share certain set of norms, values, and behaviors (Barlebo Wenneberg, 2001). One can in this context talk about the formation of so called interpretive repertoires (cf. Potter and Wetherell, 1996).

Given its (social) constructive perspective, a central concept in the present analysis is discourse with a general emphasis on context; linking meaning-making processes and media readings to issues related to ideology, power and knowledge production in society. The concept of discourse has been given various meanings and definitions, but a common feature is to describe discourse as a '[...] a certain way to talk about and understand the world' (our translation) (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000: 7). In Stuart Hall's interpretation of Foucault, it is stated how a discourse '[...] governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others' (Hall, 1997: 44). A dominating discourse is advocated by various dominating institutions and actors in society and in his fieldwork in segregated Southall in London, Baumann (1996:192) stated that this discourse 'For so-called immigrants and ethnic minorities, it represents the currency within which they must deal with the political and media establishments on both the national and the local level. [...].' Thus, various prominent discourses float between various spheres on both the macro and micro level (Fairclough, 1989). Another aspect that has relevance to the presented analysis is what Foucault labels 'regime of truth'. To Foucault, it is of less value to prove the truth of a discourse; instead the focus should be on exploring whether a discourse is perceived as true and its actual consequences. 'Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements [...]' (Foucault, 1980: 131).

With the aim of exploring the meanings people with migrant backgrounds attach to

various media, and with a special focus on Swedish media and their possible consequences, the present study is inspired by the thoughts and ideas of social constructionism and discourse. The article at hand takes its point of departure in what Alasuutari (1999a: 6) called the third generation of reception studies: a constructive view: '[...] the objective is to get a grasp of our contemporary 'media culture', particularly as it can be seen in the role of the media in everyday life, both as a topic and as an activity structured by and structuring the discourses within which it is discussed'.

From the body of data, i.e. the verbatim transcribed interviews, we have categorized salient statements, reflections and arguments related to issues of how to be familiar with Swedish culture, language and "Swedishness".

"Being a deaf person on a big, big party"

Language is the fundament as well as the instrument for socially created reality. It is through the language that individual experiences are becoming objective. This is also a means for socialization. Immigrants are aware of that, and most of them start to learn from the very beginning, taking language as a key to the society and the self (Bron, 2000:131).

The expression "Being a deaf person on a big, big party" was used by a Lebanese woman and her husband when they described their experiences of the first years in Sweden. The woman narrates: "Sometimes when I shall pay 10 crowns, I instead pay them 100 crowns, which is really embarrassing. I was well educated in my homeland, but now I understand nothing. Very problematic". A man from Vietnam, develops his thoughts about how difficult it is to take part of the Swedish society due to his poor Swedish: "As I said, very difficult language. If you are not able to speak the language, you are an empty person, cannot speak".

Some researchers (Bron, 2000; Bourgeois, 2000) stress the importance of language knowledge for participation in a society, as language incorporates culture. Dahlgren (2000:321) relates to this and in turn emphasizes the importance of general knowledge of culture and citizenship for participation such as understanding of different discourses in the public sphere as well as the ability to express ideas and thoughts.

Taking a Bakhtinian approach, language is intertwined with a person's and a society's history (XXX)xxx utveckla. An anecdote from a previous ethnographic study of young people from Kosovo (e.g. Christopoulou and Rydin, 2004), illustrates this. When fieldwork moved from an institutional setting (e.g school) to a kitchen for cooking a meal, these youngsters switched their language code from Swedish to Albanian small talk, because the social act of cooking was so intimately intertwined with their roots in Albanian language and culture. Berger and Luckmann in their famous book on social constructionism also stress that " The common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification. Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen. And understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life" (1966:51). Much research are devoted to these issues, not least the interaction between language and identity formation and can clearly be seen in some of the utterances by the informants in

Comment [H1]: The idea of language in practice will be discussed in more detail, probably as part of the theoretical framework.

our study, such as the feeling of having no value as human being. Bourgeois (2000:171) claims that “If language plays such a key role in the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity, it can be expected that the identity issue will be at the core of the learning process when it comes to learning the language of another ethnic group”. Moreover, Dahllöf (2000:202) stresses the relationship between language and culture: “Language is culture and without a mother-tongue you are crippled. This, however, does not contradict the fact that we should learn the language of the new country properly”.

Talks on language were a natural part of the discussions **in our project** since many of the adult informants had difficulties with the Swedish language (both oral and written) and they often apologized for that. Even if we offered an interpreter when conducting the interviews, most informants declined this offer. Most of the adults emphasized the importance of learning Swedish, but it was perceived as difficult (not least for those who felt as outsiders due to unemployment or persons with little contact with Swedes). They admired their children who knew the language so much better. This was often expressed by the women in the study (note: there were more women than men participating in the study). Poor language proficiency was often mentioned as a reason for not using Swedish media and the children often got the role as translators of e.g. TV news:

-Jo, det är som med mamma, mamma kan ju inte så mycket svenska, men hon har ju bott här ganska länge, så hon förstår vad vi säger men hon kan inte prata. Men när hon går till affärer och så, tycker hon att det är lite svårt med priserna [...]. Sen ibland teckenspråk, ”hur mycket är det här”, så förstår hon ju det med teckenspråk, så hon klarar ju sig ändå. Eller så hänger vi med henne ibland, så går det ju. (17-årig tjej om sin mamma)

The importance of good Swedish knowledge was stressed and was regarded as a prerequisite for being a member of the society:

-Jag tycker bra, att dom kan prata båda två eller flera språk. Det är helt okey, va. För att man ska anpassa sig, så man förstår mer svenska. Ju mer man kan svenska, ju lättare man kan anpassa sig när man blir större, när man blir vuxen. (Man from Vietnam).

But there were also examples of children who were born in Sweden or came as infants and who wanted to improve their Swedish since they mainly spoke their parents’ mother language at home. For example, a fifteen-year-old girl from Vietnam told that she had started reading books in Swedish on purpose in order to improve her language proficiency:

Det sa du också, att du tycker du är bättre på vietnamesiska än svenska. Stämmer det?
- Det är sant.
Varför tror du att det är så?
Alltså jag snackar språket hemma och jag tillbringar mig mer hemma än i skolan eller så.

On the other hand, children who were born in a foreign country were of course in the same situation as their parents, but in contrast to their parents, the children found it easy to learn Swedish. Even if they felt excluded when newly arrived, they soon found friends who could help them improving their Swedish:

Först var det lite svårt jag kände ingen, sen lärde jag känna Dimitra, hon var ju också grek så det var ju lite enklare för hon kunde svenska, lite bättre svenska än mig så hon hjälpte mig lite och så. (16-årig tjej från Grekland. Kom till Sverige 1999.)

As mentioned initially, it is not only about learning a new language but also learning a new culture and its traditions, norms, codes and values as well as understanding subtle matters such as expression of emotions. A man from Vietnam who had lived in Sweden for two years expressed his situation like this.

Och så vande man sig med dom reglerna i hemlandet, alltså lite lättare man kan regler så det betyder när jag kommer hit, det blir lite begränsat med kontakter.

Kan du ge något exempel från det dagliga, något minne?

-De är svårt att säga exakt vilken därför om man säger när jag kommer hit det var vinter och man känner inte nån och jag bara var hemma hela tiden och så man är rädd och orolig, ibland man inte vet om det är rätt att göra så här eller inte, vilka regler här som gäller.

Even if just a few examples have been presented, they demonstrate a situation of exclusion and the feeling of being an outsider, and kind of disliking of oneself for not being able to express oneself properly, an identity crisis involving self-searching and where the feeling of ontological security, to use the term of Giddens (1991), is broken in pieces. Nothing is taken for granted anymore, as your previous experiences and knowledge might not be relevant. In this emotional and social turbulence media might serve as a substitute for personal contacts and for playing a crucial role for entering the new society or culture, a matter we will turn our attention to in the next section.

Television and other media as a tool for language learning

In this study, it appeared that most of the adults had some language training, such as “Swedish for immigrants” (SFI) and “Swedish as second language”. However, there was a group of mainly women who had learnt Swedish on their own accord. They tended to mention the role of the media, especially television and radio. Others mentioned that they consulted their husbands (except in one case, see below). These women explained that they avoided being enrolled in formal courses because of child care or that they were on the sick-list. One way to handle the situation was to start communicating in English instead of Swedish:

Men det här att lära sig språket, det måste ju ha varit...

-Det var svårt för att jag fick ju barn efter tre månader när jag flyttade in till Sverige och då bodde vi på sånt camp, som var från olika länder. [...]

Då gick din man på svenska för invandrare?

-Ja, det gjorde han redan därifrån. Det gjorde han men inte jag, jag var hemma med min äldsta pojke, nästan ett och ett halvt år. [...] Men vi hade sånt lägenheten var väldigt nära till öppna förskolan så jag gick dit med, det var någon som rekommenderade att det finns ett sånt här ställe som du kan ta barnet med dig och ha kontakt, och det var öppna förskolan så jag lärde mig mycket svenska där. (Kvinna från Iran)

-Det första steget för mig var att läsa svenska men jag blev gravid ungefär två veckor efter, efter vi gifter oss va så det blev lite jobbigt för mig för att jag mådde illa och vi hade det jätte svårt de fyra första månaderna. Men ändå jag började på skolan så skulle jag läsa svenska SFI [...].

Men hur kändes det, att lära sig svenska för det är ju helt annorlunda än...

-Jag har läst svenska hemma faktiskt. Jag har aldrig varit på nån skola, jag läste hemma själv. Jag lånade böcker från biblioteket, sitter och arbetade lite. Men de första fem åren pratade jag engelska med alla.

(Woman from Syria)

This woman expresses how various family circumstances such as pregnancy and child care led to isolation from the Swedish society. She expressed herself in English for five years before she started to learn Swedish. But eventually she found out that visits to the library could be an eye-opener. She also points out that visiting the open nursery school (öppna förskolan) became a place for learning Swedes.

A woman from Lebanon continues and describes how she learnt Swedish from television, especially when she has access to subtitles in Swedish:

-[...] men han, min man, han går ut till sin skola, så jag stannar hemma och min son började på dagis, men inte jag (skrattar) så jag satte framför TV:n, jag har lexikon hemma, okej, du vet i kanal 1 dom läser eller pratar och samtidigt dom skriver under.

This woman from Lebanon was on sick-list and felt isolated since she had very little contacts with Swedes and the Swedish society. For her, television was a link to the world outside her domestic space of home. This was not least important because her children mastered Swedish better than the parents' mother tongue, which was Arabic. However, her understanding of the meaning of some Swedish words could sometimes be better than her children's. In the excerpt below, she explains the meaning of the word "förmedlingen" [she presumably means jobcentre] in Arabic to her daughter. She also realized the necessity to know Swedish as it is a link between her and the children:

- Jag är sjukskriven, tyvärr jag hamnade med lite problem med hälsan så jag går inte så ofta ute och jag vill inte tappa språket så måste jag lära mig så alltid.

Då har du TV:n

- Ja, inte bara det. Om jag tittar varje dag eller jag hör henne när hon pratar svenska till exempel finns alltid nya ord som man hör inte innan. Det är det som är viktigt att man lära sig. Till exempel min dotter hon frågade mig "vad betyder förmedlingen?" Jaa, det fick jag förklara för henne vad betyder det på arabiska. Till exempel om jag inte hörde det eller jag lärde inte det ordet, hur ska jag förklara för henne.

Så det är viktigt för dig för språket?

- Javisst, det är kontakt mellan jag och barnen

The excerpt illustrates the complexity of the language issue. We have a situation where two languages are used, but as one of the languages is not mastered properly – Arabic in the case of the child and Swedish in case of the mother- there is risk for misunderstandings. The importance of having a mutual understanding of language was stressed by the mother as "it is contact between me and my children".

Even if the informants participated in various language courses, they mentioned difficulties in getting into the Swedish society and to learning Swedes. It has to be said that Sweden was appreciated by the families for being a democracy; a country where they felt socially and economically safe. But some complained about difficulties to get to know Swedes, even with people in their close neighborhood. They meant that Swedes do not talk to strangers, especially not to immigrants. Especially informants of Muslim background pointed out that Swedes were afraid of them, probably because they lacked knowledge about their culture and religion, which adds to the process of 'othering'.

A man from Lebanon expressed it like this: "How could I speak Swedish if I have no contact. I can read a book, but I just learn the grammar. I would like to know the language more in practise". A similar example is given from a man from Somalia, who had been living in Sweden for ten years, but still preferred to speak English with Swedes.

- Yes, yes. The problems is with what you call muntligt (orally), because I don't...Muntligt you can learn from the people, but I didn't mix with the Swedish people...it is..hm...sometimes you don't know the person nextd...next...neighbor.

In general, the informants stressed that participation in Swedish social life was a key to knowing the language as the good example presented above, when the open nursery becomes a natural spot for breaking cultural borders. A woman from Bosnia said that she was tired of courses and SFI. She wanted to have a real job not only for getting into the society properly but also in order to learn Swedish "in practice".

Television appeared to be a substitute for real life contacts with the Swedish society, especially during the initial period of residence. Also persons, who participated in SFI preferred television because they heard "real Swedish" on television. On the SFI courses they only speak with other migrants as hardly anybody has Swedish as their first language. Several types of TV-programs were mentioned for learning Swedish and to be acquainted with the Swedish society. It could be everything from foreign soaps to movies with Swedish text till news programs like *Rapport*, *Aktuellt* and *TV 4 Nyheterna* as well as documentaries and talk shows (debattprogram). And children's programs were mentioned, in particular.

- Nä, jag var ändå intresserad men det var när man hade babisen liksom hemma man hade inte mycket tid men jag la ändå ner mycket tid för min man gick på sån svenska. Dom böckerna som han hade så satt jag på kvällarna när jag hade tid och kunna översätta det på engelska och sen från engelska till mitt språk liksom för att kunna lära mig. Så jag började och lära mig med verb liksom så här och så satt jag nä det hjälpte faktiskt mycket TV också när man hör mycket TV va. I början kunde jag inte texten, läsa hela texten men man hörde mycket. (Woman, Iran)

- När jag kommer här, jag har en, min morbror, varit här i 20 år men han sa till mig "du måste titta på TV och barnprogram", och jag blir så "varför barn" och han säger "det var jätte lätt, man kan lära sig snabbt", så det var lite konstigt först men det hjälpte jätte mycket.

Men kan du beskriva, såg du då barnprogrammen, skrev du ner någonting eller?

- Ja, jag har lexikon framför mig, tittar på lexikon "vad betyder det ordet" därför ibland dom pratar engelska och jag kan engelska sen jag måste titta på lexikon "vad betyder det på svenska" och såna viktiga ord jag skriver i häftet sen. Jag repeterar men det hjälpte jätte mycket det, barnprogram.

Var det något speciellt barnprogram?

- Simpsons (småskrattar). Det spelar ingen roll, om jag har tid jag bara, jag tittar på Simpsons. (Woman from Croatia)

As foreign movies are not dubbed, some informants mentioned the importance of subtitles as a means to learning the Swedish language.

- Men jag tittar på många amerikanska filmer också, det finns text, så det är bra. När man tittar och läser texten, det är inte hundra procent bra, för dom lämnar många ord. Men man kan faktiskt se och titta och läsa på den på samma gång. Och man kan veta, hur man skriver nästan bra svenska, så det är ok faktiskt. (Man from U.K.).

A woman from Jordan described how her husband who arrived to Sweden some time after her had to watch Swedish television in order to learn Swedish, before he could join an SFI class.

They often sat together and she had to answer all his questions and make translations: "What does that mean, what does that mean?" She mentioned a variety of genres, such as the soap *Glamour*, news and English movies, all with Swedish subtitles.

- [...] men han min man han går ut till sin skola så jag stannar hemma och min son började på dagis men inte jag (skrattar) så jag satte framför TV:n, jag har lexikon hemma okej du vet i kanal 1 dom läser eller pratar och samtidigt dom skriver under. (Woman from Lebanon)

Besides television programs, newspapers and mailshots, the informants mentioned encounters with pictures of objects in magazines, as in the example below:

- Det var tidningar som jag arbetade mest alltså jag kände saker och namn på saker från tidningar så jag vet att detta heter stol, det här är ett bord, det här är ett sånt va. Och det är jätte svårt med ännu ett ord när jag började läsa svenska. (Woman from Syria)

One woman stressed that you have to manage the situation in a more active way, such as visiting the municipal library:

- Nä, när man har vilja att ”jag måste klara mig själv”, det måste jag så jag fick gå till biblioteket och hämta lite böcker och lite material för småbarn och jobba med språket och tidningen fick jag klippa ur lite grejor och sitta och översätta dom själv. Och jag har börjat bekanta mig med några stycken där och fick ju sitta och prata och där jag sa ”ni får rätta till mig när jag säger något fel”. (Woman from Syria)

The struggle with language was expressed by many examples, such as the woman who said she tried to watch news programs and here she included also programs like crime reality shows (e.g. *Efterlyst*) and that she sometimes had to use her dictionary:

Jag tycker mycket om att titta på nyheter och *Efterlyst*.

Efterlyst?

Ibland jag läsa, träna att läsa. Många ord som jag inte, måste hitta i lexikon. Men mitt språk, det är inte så mycket ord. (Woman from Vietnam)

Comment [H2]: A more detailed analysis is needed, connected to theory

Text-TV was mentioned as a service for navigating among the news. Here, the informants were offered brief news about the most important course of events and can be read in ones own pace, often by means of a dictionary.

Att jag på jobbet läser alla tidningar och har Text-TV alltid för att Text-TV det är lätt att läsa om jag inte kan ett ord jag kan titta bara på....

[...]

Det är klart om man inte kan ett ord så kan man slå upp det.

- Man kan bara slå upp. Jag har dom här tjocka ähh dictionary eller vad det heter. (Man from Somalia)

- När jag läser text-TV jag ibland har lexikon med mig därför jag kan inte förstå alla, alla, det finns så många synonymmer och jaah men jag kan förstå ungefär allt. (Woman from Croatia)

For those parents with little knowledge of Swedish the children appeared to be important resources for translating the news to their parents or they had to turn to newscasts from the homeland in order to get more understanding. The interview with the Vietnamese couple once again:

- Ibland så vi kallar våra barn och ”vad är detta” och sånt eller genom kompis, vietnames kompis som pratar om.

Vad kan det vara om till exempel?

- Det är som att dom håller på att berätta något...

På TV?

- Ja så kallar barnen "vad är detta". Eller man tittar på ett vietnamesiskt program så man kan förstå vad det handlar om eller internet.

A girl says that she automatically translates from television for her mother, as when the mother watches the news and the daughter sits next to her playing games on the computer and listen with a half ear to the news. For the children it seems natural to translate for their parents. The children, in this way have good insight into their parents' viewing habits, not least into various national and international broadcasts. Another girl's story is about how she translates *Rapport* to her mother:

- Ja, det gör hon, *Rapport* klockan sex, klockan nio, det får hon aldrig missa.

Men blir det nån gång då att ni får översätta, för det är en del barn jag träffar...?

- Hon säger "jag behöver din hjälp, du får översätta till mig, det har hänt nåt mord tror jag". Då brukar jag översätta det till henne.

Och en del barn jag har träffat, de säger att det går liksom automatiskt att man översätter.

- Mmm. Det gör vi. För mamma kan inte svenska, så att jag hjälper henne sen.

Personal influence and media

As we have seen, the children played an important role as translators. Furthermore, personal networks of friends in the neighbourhood and elsewhere were important. But often, the informants stressed that they were more informed about international news events and news from their home countries as compared to domestic Swedish news. Already at 1950'ies, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) coined the concept of two-way-hypothesis and the effects of personal impact through opinion leaders. These persons choose and interpret different media and its content in order to convey this information further through social contacts to a wider group of people. These intermediaries were trusted by the informants:

Okej, om vad som händer. Men kan ni läsa själv Helsingborgs Dagblad eller blir det för svårt?

- Det finns dom som kan vietnameser dom läser dagens tidning så dom berättar för oss.

Så det är vännerna som är viktiga?

- Ja.

- Om man säger på helgerna så vi träffar några familjer så sitter där och tittar på filmer samtidigt som vi pratar om vad som har hänt. (Husband and wife from Vietnam)

Så det är mest genom TV:n som du får veta vad som händer?

- Ja men någonting jag förstår inte då får jag fråga mina kamrater i jobbet.

Vad kan det vara då, att du...

- Förklara.

Om det är någonting du har sett eller?

- Ja, jag förstår inte dom kan hjälpa förklara. (Woman from Vietnam)

Another example comes from a man from Somalia who came to Sweden in 1999. In the conversation, conducted in English, he himself stressed the importance of oral traditions for conveying important information:

Are you at all interested in Swedish politics or anything?

- The Somali people, they can discuss among them, because somebody is coming (??ohörbart) and he will tell you everything of what is going on

Oh, I see

- We still have that system

You still have that system that you go from mouth to mouth even if!

- (skratt) Yeah,

[...]

- Mostly, I buy this XX [local newspaper] so I read.

Yes, XX.

- All the other news are coming from my friends.

Are there many friends who are telling you or is it one person?

- No, many many.

And they know everything about...

- Everything in Sweden.

About Swedish politics and about Göran Persson?

- Somebody was telling me yesterday that Göran Persson wants to resign.

[...]

That's interesting. Did you believe him?

- Yes, yes, because he told me he had heard from the television and from newspapers. He is perfect in the Swedish language. (Man from Somalia)

Also contacts outside the local networks of friends and neighbors were mentioned such as workmates:

Först måste man lära sig språket och sen måste man veta vad som händer i staden där man bor, sen ska man veta vad som händer i Sverige.

- Ja, precis. Men det tog tid faktiskt, det gjorde det. Men jag var nyfiken hela tiden och frågade och man undrade och sen kom jag in till arbete väldigt tidigt också. [...] Både för att jag skulle ha kontakt med människor och se om jag är intresserad av jobbet och så. Så jag lärde mig väldigt mycket av barnen på förskolan.

Och det kanske egentligen är så genom då vänner och kollegor att man får veta mer om hur svenska samhället fungerar?

- Jo, det gör man. (Woman from Iran)

Personal networks might be a decisive source of information at elections and affect what party one is voting for. A woman from Vietnam thought politics was very hard to understand because her Swedish was poor. Although she had voting rights since she was a Swedish citizen, she turned to her friend to be advised and her final decision seemed to be governed by her friend's:

- Ja, jag har min kompis som sa. Eller dom som pratar om vem är bäst, vad är bäst.

Och då säger du, då tar jag den också....

- Mmm (skrattar).

To summarize,XXXXX

Mediated images of Swedes and Sweden

The metaphor of television as a window to the world has frequently been elaborated by media scholars, e.g. Morley (1999) and exemplifies how direct experiences are extended

and fused with mediated and indirect experiences (cf. Giddens, 1991; Thompson, 1995; Sjöberg, 2002). This “window” embraces everything from news- and discussion programs to soaps and drama series. The latter types of genres are often mentioned by young people as sources to cultural knowledge about Swedes and the Swedish society (cf. Sjöberg, 2002). Television, especially public service channels, plays an important role for building national self images and to convey “cultural images” (Alasuutari, 1999 b) such as a society’s symbols for maintaining the concept of a nation.. In some genres, more than others, values related to national identities are fostered, for example sports, where nations fight against nations, not to mention war movies, a genre elaborated in Michael Billig’s analysis of “banal nationalism” (1995). Billig (1995:93) claims that:

“Banal nationalism operates with prosaic, routine words, which take nations for granted, and which, in so doing, inhabit them. Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases, offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making ‘our’ national identity unforgettable”.

Thus, viewers get a kind of picture of Sweden and Swedes through television. It is the Swedish imaginations of the “homeland” that is portrayed on television, in the news and in drama series. For example, in many countries, series appealing to nostalgic visions of the homeland have been produced for television. In Germany a series called “Heimat” was extremely popular. And in U.K. the BBC series Emmerdale (In Swedish: “Back to the farm”, from 1972) got cult status and was also exported worldwide. In Sweden a series with an almost identical title “Hem till byn” (Back to the village, from 1971) broadcasted at the same time, collected huge amounts of viewers. This type of nostalgic images of everyday life in the countryside, do appeal to viewers in broad groups of viewers. One can assume that they contribute to maintain and cultivate common norms and values (has to be developed further). Some of these series are still on air, once in a while, and are nowadays supported by websites on Internet.

One informant explained how she learnt about Sweden and Swedes:

Hur får man veta saker om Sverige?

- Först när man kommer hit så man kanske ska veta lite till exempel Mostafa har varit här och han berättade lite om det. När jag var i skolan, läraren tyckte alltid att vi ska titta på TV och lyssna på radio så det gjorde jag faktiskt. När jag födde mitt barn och var hemma länge två år, jag lärde mig allt från TV, jag tycker det är viktigt.

Du sa att du lärde dig allt från TV, vilka program tittade man då på, vad fick man veta?

- Det var Vita lögner (småskrattar). Jag brukade också kolla på det. Det var mycket populärt.

Och du tyckte att genom Vita lögner fick man veta vad svenskar tycker och tänker?

- Jaah, nästan så. (Woman from Kurdistan)

This woman stressed the Swedish soap “Vita lögner” (White lies), a series based on “life” at a hospital. “White lies” is but one of the many series representing everyday or professional life of Sweden. Even if the narrative is informed by humour and irony, people still form some kind of ideas of life in Sweden. It could, for example, be about Swedish health care as well as morals and standards in such things as sex and love.

None of the informants said that they never looked at Swedish television and in the conversations, they pointed out the importance of being up-dated on Swedish news, e.g. *Rapport, Aktuellt, TV4* as well as local news. However, news reporting was not always considered objective and critical voices were heard about how the Swedish media, not

least television, were portraying migrants and their home countries (discussed in Sjöberg and Rydin, in press).

Vilka kanaler, det här som vi var inne på, vilka arabiska kanaler tittar ni på?

- Från min sida till exempel som jag libanesiska kanaler, jag har nio kanaler, fem stycken det är som från Libanon men jag ska säga till dig okej jag har digital hemma nu men till och med idag är jag intresserad mig att titta på svenska kanaler. Jo, det gör jag först varje dag när mina barn går ut till skolan till skolan så jag tar kaffe i köket, vi har en liten TV i köket så måste jag lyssna på nyheter, svenska nyheter inte arabiska kanaler i alla fall. Det är på kanal 4 klockan åtta eller halv åtta ibland. (Woman from Lebanon)

This woman says that she is not only interested in channels from her home country, Lebanon, but also Swedish news. She is for example “listening” to television news, because they have a small television set in the kitchen. And she is especially mentioning the news on Channel 4 (a commercial channel with a public service commission). It can also be noted that she thinks that Channel 4’s news sometimes are at 7.30 PM, which is always the start time for Channel 1’s news (Swedish Television, SVT). Thus, she does not seem to make a difference between Channel 1 and 4.

In general, except from television, also radio and newspapers were mentioned as a way to be kept informed about national (Swedish) news. As for radio, it could be from discussion programs, news on easy Swedish to informative and news programs aimed to migrants on their mother tongue. *I sändningstillståndet för Sveriges Radio AB står det (§ 16) ”SR skall beakta språkliga och etniska minoritetens intressen. Verksamheten skall vara ett prioriterat område. Tillgängligheten ska förbättras.” Vad nyheter beträffar (§ 11) skall SR ”[...] meddela nyheter, stimulera till debatt, kommentera och belysa händelser och skeenden och därvid ge den allsidiga information som medborgarna behöver för att vara orienterade och ta ställning i samhälls- och kulturfrågor” (Sändningstillståndet 2007-2009 Will be translated).*

- Ibland, jag lyssnar mycket på radio på svenska.

Vad kan det vara som du lyssnar på?

- På morgonen till exempel på bra program, nu kommer jag inte ihåg vad dom heter men folk ringer och pratar och tjugo över nio, det är bra, det är Täppas som ibland det är han ibland det är nån annan men det är bra program folk ringer och säger sin mening. (Woman from Greece)

The need for minority media as a link to the Swedish society was highlighted by the informants. Camauër (2003: 69) defines these media as “[...] an overall concept for deigning the media produced by, addressed to, and /or a special interest for, ethnic minorities”. Within this definition there are variations concerning issues such as media producer (whether commercial or public service producers as well as NGO’s) as well as language, genre and content (e.g. entertaining-informative, about homeland- new country or international). For a review on minority media and minority politic in Sweden, see Camauër (2005). The same woman who spoke warmly on the Greek program *Simera* (Today) that was broadcasted on Swedish television when she arrived to Sweden at the end of the sixties. The program was broadcasted very Saturday became something to look forward to: “all waited for it”. In this program, everything was discussed, from simple things such as shopping to information from public sources. Also through the Greek immigrant association they got the similar kinds of information. Another informant with Kurdish background mentioned that he and his wife used to listen to a radio program called *Pejvak* on the Persian language. They felt that few Kurds were familiar with this program and asked for better marketing of it. Some informants asked for better adjusted broadcasting for certain groups of migrants.

- Vi har många kurder, dom förstår inte svenska, man måste ha nån kanal för att minst förklara några speciella lagar här i Sverige för dom. Kurderna brukar inte, brukar inte att leta mycket om samhället, kunskap och sånt.

[...]

Men då är en sån här radiokanal på P1 viktig för att informera sig om svenska samhället.

- Jätte viktig. Tyvärr TV-kanalerna eller svenska kanalerna har inte försökt för att presentera dom radiokanalerna till invandrare, kurder. Nu det är mycket mindre folk som hör på till exempel P1 på kurdiska.

Man vet alltså inte om det?

- Dom vet inte så mycket om det.

[...]

Den här kurdiska kanalen som ni lyssnar på vad pratar man där om, senast ni lyssnade det var igår.

- Ja det var igår.

Vad tog dom upp där, vad kan det vara för innehåll?

- Till exempel den hade ett reportage om en sydafrikansk kvinna som hade blivit arbetslös och hennes arbetsförmedlare hade sagt att hon inte kunde få arbete

[...]

Det är alltså svenska nyheter som dom översätter på kurdiska?

- Ja. Vad som händer i Sverige, vilka lagar till exempel har kommit, nytt från Migrationsverket till exempel angående om dom som har inte, dom har inte fått uppehållstillstånd här i Sverige, vilka lagar till exempel eller vilken ekonomisk situation som ska hända i framtiden i Sverige såna saker det är jätte bra jag tror. Det är jätte viktigt. (Husband and wife from Kurdistan)

Some informants mastered Swedish quite well and therefore used local newspapers and the daily tabloids (e.g. *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*). Also dailies like *Metro* were mentioned in positive terms, because the articles generally are brief and very readable as well as free of charge. These observations are confirmed in other studies as well (Sjöberg, 2006). People appreciate summaries of the most important news and presented in easy language.

Adult informants sometimes expressed a kind alienation, because they were disappointed of how their life in Sweden had developed. They therefore also lost interest in informing themselves about the Swedish society through the media. A woman from Greece expressed her thoughts and feelings like this:

- Jo det är klart att men inte så mycket som vi gjorde innan. Innan jag var mera jag läste mycket och lärde mig mycket nu när det är val jag säger "jag vet ingenting om valet, varför ska jag gå och rösta" man tappar lusten ibland va. Ibland jag har valt mina bästa år, våra bästa år men man tappar intresset ibland, ibland man blir besviken, man blir besviken av läkaren, man blir besviken av myndigheterna. Man tar inte ens ansvar.

She concludes her reflections by saying: "One is not taking responsibility". This excerpt clearly demonstrates the connections between structural factors on the macro level and actions and behaviours on the micro level.

Other informants stressed the importance of the duty to keep informed about the Swedish society. A woman said: "We live here and we follow the developments of Sweden instead". A man from Syria agrees:

För min del jag lyssnar bara på nyheterna, om det finns särskilt program om någonting alltså. När det blir val eller när det blir diskussion om det här landet alltså, om det blir någonting aktuellt alltså då man ska engagera sig och lyssna och läsa, vad det handlar om eftersom vi bor inte i andra världar alltså.

A couple from Vietnam had both very difficult to understand Swedish, but they tried to watch *Rapport* (daily news on public service channel 1) and *Sydneytt* (a regional news

program), but they requested subtitles. They stressed the importance of both Swedish and Vietnamese news.

- Jag brukar tittar på svenska nyheter och idrott. Därför när man läst så man förstår mer.

Okej, när det är text...

- Mmm. Om man ska prata eller lyssna då är det svårt.

Vad för nyheter tittar ni på?

- Rapport.

Och det förstår ni eller tycker ni ändå att det är svårt med nyheterna?

- När det hörs kan vi inte förstå hela men om man läser texten man så man kan förstå. Då får man läsa vad det betyder.

Comment [H3]: Has to be commented and analysed.

Discussion

Work in progress XXXXXX

Footnotes

¹ The present analysis is based on interview data collected in the project 'Media practices in the New Country', which involves migrant families from countries such as Greece, Bosnia, Kurdistan, Iran, Lebanon, Somalia, Syria, Turkey and Vietnam. The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council (2004-2006).

References

Aksoy, A., & Robins, K. (2003) 'Banal transnationalism. The difference that television makes'. In: K.H. Karim (ed.), *The media of diaspora* (pp. 89-104). London: Routledge.

Alasuutari, P. (1999a) 'Introduction. Three phases of reception studies', in P. Alasuutari (ed) *Rethinking the media audience*, pp.1-21. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Barlebo Wenneberg, S. (2001) *Socialkonstruktivism – positioner, problem och perspektiv*. Malmö: Liber.

Baumann (1996) *Contesting culture. Discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966) *The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.

Billig, M. (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications.

Bourgeois, E. (2000). Sociocultural mobility. Language learning and identity. I: A. Bron & M. Schemmann (red.), *Language – Mobility – Identity* (pp. 163-184). Munster: LIT Verlag.

Bron, A. (2000) 'Floating as an analytical category in the narratives of Polish immigrants to Sweden'. In: E. Szejnowska-Olson and M. Bron Jr (eds.), *Allvarlig debatt och rolig lek. En festskrift tillägnad Andrzej Nils Uggla* (s. 119-132). Uppsala University: Uppsala Multiethnic Papers 43.

Camauër, L (2003). Ethnic minorities and their media in Sweden. An overview of the media landscape and state minority media policy. *Nordic research on media and communication review*, 24 (2), 69-88.

Camauër, L. (2005). *En kartläggning. Minoritetsmedier och minoritetsmediopolitik i Sverige*. Stockholm: Styrelsen för psykologiskt försvar.

Carlbon, J. (2003). *The imagined versus the real other. Multiculturalism and the representation of Muslims in Sweden* (Ph.D. thesis). Lund: Lund University, Dept. of Sociology.

Christopoulou, N. and Rydin, I. (2004)

Dahllöf, T. (2000) 'Exchanging a word or two...Meeting between people as cross-cultural encounters'. In: A. Bron and M. Schemmann (eds.), *Language – Mobility – Identity* (pp. 200-213). Munster: LIT Verlag.

Dahlgren, P. (2000). Media, citizenship and civic culture. In J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds.), *Mass media and society* (3rd ed.) (pp. 310-328). London: Arnold.

Elias, N. (2008)

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and self-identity. Self and society in late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gillespie, M. (1995) *Television, ethnicity and cultural change*. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1980) 'Encoding/decoding', in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Low and P. Willis (eds) *Culture, Media, Language. Working papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, pp. 128-138. London: Routledge and Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. University of Birmingham.

Hargreaves, A. G. and D. Mahdjoub (1997) 'Satellite Television Viewing among Ethnic Minorities in France', *European Journal of Communication* 14(4): 459-477.

Hylland Eriksen, T. (1993) *Etnicitet and nationalism*. Nora: Nya Doxa.

Karim, K.H. (ed.) (2003) *The media of diaspora*. London: Routledge.

Madianou, M. (2005) 'Contested Communicative Spaces: rethinking identities, boundaries and the role of the media among Turkish speakers in Greece', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(3): 521-541.

Mediebarometern 2008 [The Media Barometer 2008] (2009) Göteborgs universitet, Nordicom-Sverige.

Morley, D. (1999) 'Finding about the world from television news: some difficulties'. In J. Gripsrud (ed.) *Television and common knowledge* (pp. 136-158). London: Routledge.

Morely, D. (2000)

Potter, J. and M. Wetherell (1996) *Discourse and social psychology. Beyond attitudes and behaviour* (4th ed). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Sjöberg, U. (2002) *Screen rites: A study of Swedish young people's use and meaning-making of screen-based media in everyday life* (published ph.d. thesis). Lund: Lund university, Department of Sociology, Media and Communication Studies.

Sjöberg, U. (2006) 'It took time to understand Greek newspapers' – The media experience of Swedish women in Greece. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, 31, 173-192. Walter de Gruyter.

Sreberny, A. (2005) 'Not only, but also': mixedness and media', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31 (3): 443-459.

Sändningstillståndet 2007-2009

Thompson, J.B. (1995) *The media and modernity. A social theory of the media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Westin, 2003: 47

Winther Jørgensen, M. and L. Phillips (2000) *Diskursanalys som teori och metod*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.