Authentic Language
Övdlalsk, metapragmatic exchange and the margins of Sweden’s linguistic market

David Karlander

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Abstract
This compilation thesis engages with practices that in some way place stakes in the social existence of Övdlalsk (also älvödalska, Elfödalska, Övdlalian, a marginal form of Scandinavian used mainly in Sweden’s Älvdalen municipality. The practices at hand range from early 20th century descriptive dialectology and contemporary lay-linguistics to language advocacy and language political debate. The four studies focus on the logic by which such practices operate, on the historically produced visions that they bring into play, as well as on the symbolic effects that they have produced. Study I provides a zoomed-out account of the ordering of Övdlalsk in Sweden’s linguistic market. Focusing on a relatively recent debate over the institutionalization of Övdlalsk, it analyses the forms of agreement upon which the exchange in question has come to rest. The contention has mainly developed over the classification of Övdlalsk, percolating in the question of whether Övdlalsk is a ‘language’ or a ‘dialect’. Analysing this debate, the study takes interest in the relationship between state power and metapragmatic exchange. Study II deals with the history of linguistic thought and research on Övdlalsk. It analyses the genesis of some durable visions of the relationship between Övdlalsk and linguistic authenticity, focusing on the research practice of the Swedish dialectologist Lars Levander (1883–1950), whose work on Övdlalsk commands representative authority to this day. By engaging with Levander’s techniques of scholarly objectivation, as well as with their language theoretical fundamentals, the study seeks to create some perspectives on, and distance to, the canonical representations of Övdlalsk that have precipitated from Levander’s research. Study III looks into the reuse and reordering of such representations. It provides an ethnographic account of a metapragmatically saturated exchange over Övdlalsk grammar, in which descriptivist artefacts play an important part. Through an analysis of texts, in situ interaction, and interviews, the study seeks to grasp the ways in which textual renditions of grammar interrelate with practically sustained, socially recognized models of language and language use (i.e. registers). Study IV tracks the ways in which such visions of authenticity have been drawn into institutionally and politically invested metapragmatic exchanges. It looks into a process of naming of roads in Älvdalen, in which ideas about the contrast between Swedish and Övdlalsk played a central part. In all studies, various visions of Övdlalsk authenticity and authentic Övdlalsk constitute a central theme. The thesis maintains that such visions must be understood in relation to the practices in which they hold currency. Following Silverstein, this epistemological stance entails an engagement with the dialectic between historical formations and situated exchange. Through this analytical orientation, the studies seek to account for the visions of authenticity that have been at the forefront of various symbolic struggles over Övdlalsk. Thus, in addition to their respective analytical accounts, the separate studies seek to add shifting temporal horizons to the superordinate heuristic, combining a deep historical backdrop with accounts of protracted institutional processes and analyses of situated linguistic interaction. Ultimately, this mode of analysis provides an in-depth understanding of the object of inquiry.

Keywords: authenticity, history of linguistic thought, indexicality, linguistic anthropology, linguistic minorities, metalanguage, metapragmatics, philosophical anthropology, Övdlalsk.

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Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism

Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm
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David Karlander

Centre for Research on Bilingualism
Stockholm University
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Studies included in this thesis:


II. Karlander, D. forth. The linguistic prerequisites for cultural analysis: Lars Levander’s reocentric ethnographies of peasant life and language. *Submitted*.


1. Introduction

In May 2015, The Guardian published an article titled *The prince, the glamour model and the Vikings’ lost language* (The Guardian, 24 May 2015). It dealt with Övdalsk, a Scandinavian ‘local’ or ‘vernacular’ language used mainly by some of the Swedes residing in Sweden’s peripheral and sparsely populated Älvdalen municipality. The narrative was as tangled as the title suggested it would be. The very first sentence announced that ‘[t]he impending marriage of Sweden’s Prince Carl Philip to a former glamour model has generated rare excitement among Scandinavian professors of archaic Germanic languages’. ‘Linguists’, the article stated, were ‘enthusiastic about the social elevation’ of the future Princess and Duchess of Värmland Sofia Hellqvist, a commoner hailing from Älvdalen. The academic enthusiasm was not in any way based in deep-seated royalist sentiments, but rather in a purportedly strategic concern of ‘the academics’ for Övdalsk. According to the article, a number of ‘linguists’ nourished a ‘hope that this endangered language [would] benefit from a little royal stardust, and that Sweden [would] upgrade it from the lowly status of “dialect” to enable it to revive and prosper’. The stakes were apparently high. Övdalsk was presented to the readers as a linguistic rarity, ‘a treasure trove’ for anyone interested in linguistic form and structure. Citing various scholars of language, the article characterized Övdalsk as ‘something you are more likely to encounter in Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings rather than in a remote Swedish forest’, and Älvdalen as ‘one of the last strongholds of an ancient tongue that preserves much of Old Norse, the language of the Vikings’. The article also commented on Övdalsk language structure, maintaining that ‘[s]ome of the cases of [Övdalsk] nasal vowels go back to before the birth of Christ’, and that Övdalsk was ‘the only language to preserve those nasal vowels’. The article added a threat of disruption as a counterpoint to these continuities. It stressed that Övdalsk was spoken only by a small number of people, few of whom were young, and that the

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1 Also known as Övdalian or Elfalian (English), and as älvdalska or älvdalsmål (Swedish). Övdalsk, which is used throughout this thesis, is an Övdalsk designation.
language, accordingly, was facing an uncertain future. Despite local efforts to ‘revive’ Övdalsk, the Princess in spe did not, as the article epitomically concluded, speak the archaic language herself.

As eccentric, and occasionally strange, as the content of The Guardian article may appear, it nevertheless conforms to a well-established pattern of representing marginal forms of language. The first, and perhaps most conspicuous, of these metapragmatic enunciations is the interlacing of Övdalsk with various notions of authenticity. As reiterated in the above vignette, such representations of the nature and existence of Övdalsk occur in hyperboles. They are sketched as a crude meshwork of indexical breaks and continuities, connecting and dissociating various configurations of space and time with certain forms of language (see Silverstein, 1985, 1998a, 2003a, 2003b, 2014a, 2014b; Hanks, 1996: 285–305, 2010; Schieffelin, 2002; Bauman and Briggs, 2003; Irvine, 2004, 2008; Woolard, 2004, 2016). They articulate what Williams (1973: 43) calls a ‘persistent and particular version of the Golden Age, a myth functioning as a memory’. Övdalsk is conceived of as an eminently authentic entity. It is tied to a remote, ungraspable past, which is simultaneously construed as persisting in a secluded yet thoroughly contemporaneous space. It is presented as spatially and temporally distant, yet distinctively present.

Secondly, the multitude of voices in the vignette indicates that such notions of authenticity are bound up with multiple articulations and interests. The Guardian’s article on Övdalsk cites not only academic linguists, but also Övdalsk language advocates, Swedish state functionaries and European Council language policy experts, who all comment on what Övdalsk authentically ‘is’. Yet, as Adorno (1973: 123) writes, ‘the distinction between essential and inessential, between authentic and inauthentic, lies with the arbitrariness of definition’. Bounded, at most, by the history of the practices in which it circulates, authenticity can become recognized in and ascribed to virtually any phenomenon. Contingently, notions of authenticity are often located in struggles that unfold ‘endlessly and inconclusively’ (Cameron and Kulick, 2003: 104) over the limits of authenticity, that is, over randomly set standards of genuineness, primordiality and pureness, and of the power to legitimately envisage and define such standards. Various agents, all occupying different positions in social space, engage willingly or unwillingly in such struggles.

Thirdly, a dominant vision of authenticity is, for these reasons, coterminous with the power to define and with the capacity to speak authoritatively about definitions and about the work of defining. Some particular idea of authenticity, which issue out of such struggles over classification, may override and effectively erase other ways of thinking and speaking about such matters (Irvine and Gal, 2000; Gal, 2011, 2013, 2016,
In this vein, such a vision of authenticity may even castigate ‘[the] “simple folk” in whom all conservative traditions seek the model of “authentic” existence’ for their being ‘inauthentic’ (Bourdieu, 2008: 199), resorting to the ‘well-known habit of using the past, the “good-old-days”, as a stick to beat the present’ (Williams, 1973: 12). Such tendencies are likewise discernible in The Guardian’s article. The author tacitly asks whether the Princess, as a member of the Älvdalen folk, is fully authentic, or whether she has drifted into an inauthentic way of being. For what does it say that she lacks knowledge in the authentic language with which the article is concerned?

Thus, fourthly, as far as linguistic authenticity is concerned, a strong metapragmatic dimension is implicated in the visions and divisions that make people recognize – or disqualify – some form of language precisely as ‘authentic’ language. Linguistic authenticity is closely linked to practices of speaking about and, thus, recognizing and ordering some form of language as authentic. Such practices are, in turn, symbiotic with various systematic and socially positioned ideas about language and social life. As such, they may be bound up with various interests and agendas, as well as with differentiated capacities of speaking about and felicitously realizing such agendas.

It follows – fifthly and finally – that a given representation of authenticity is inherently partial, insofar as it offers only a fraction of the understandings of authenticity that circulate in social space. While The Guardian’s article on Övdalsk encompasses a number of enunciations produced by different agents, it conveys a disciplined image of the authenticity of Övdalsk, and of the threats that it is deemed to face. It conforms generically to articles on endangered languages that regularly appear in The Guardian and other journalistic sources. Needless to say, the jumbled narrative of the article, replete with literary references, glamour models, and specialized academic sentiments, is a far cry from a range of other, more quotidian, exchanges over Övdalsk.

Taken together, these remarks gesture at an important point. In relation to Övdalsk, invoking Silverstein, it often appears as if ‘everyone has an interest in “the real thing”’ (Silverstein, 2016a: 2). This holds not only for the agents whose voices are fragmentarily reiterated in the above vignette, but for a number of other agents as well. This thesis takes interest in this circumstance. It seeks to provide a deepened account of some of these interests in Övdalsk, and of the practices in which they have been articulated and sustained. In broad terms, the thesis engages with the relationship between Övdalsk and the multifarious notions of authenticity that have surged around it. It cares little, however, for the conspicuously over-the-top
type of representations that *The Guardian* article exemplifies. Rather, the thesis attends to a number of more durable ways of engaging with Övdalsk.

In addition to the present introductory chapter, this thesis consists of four separate studies. Each study explores a metapragmatically saturated practice that in some way has made Övdalsk its object. Prying into the mass of metapragmatic exchange in which Övdalsk is implicated, the studies scrutinize the political regimentation of Övdalsk (Studies I and IV), the intellectual history of linguistic research on Övdalsk (Study II), as well as more quotidian – lay linguistic (Harris, 1980, 1990a; Taylor, 1993, 2016, 2017; Hutton, 1995) – engagements with Övdalsk (Studies III and IV). Through these studies, the thesis seeks to cast light on some of the multiple articulations and interests that are bound up with visions of authentic Övdalsk and Övdalsk authenticity. As such, the thesis engages with the metapragmatic element in such socially recognized forms of authenticity. It analyses some of the manifold enunciations, exchanges and practices that have sought to define and speak authoritatively about Övdalsk and its relationship with this cluster of indexicalities. By targeting a number of diverse ‘departures from ordinary language’, as Quine (2013[1960]: 143) would call such metapragmatic interventions, the thesis seeks to capture some of the visions and interests that are inherent in any metapragmatic discourse. In this vein, the studies of the thesis seek to treat with depth and rigour a topic that has often afforded lax, unprincipled and fantastical representations.

all other tongues to patois’. Lacking the semblance of universality and officiality that stem from state consecration, such ‘relegated’ languages, are, at most, bespoken with regard to some particular aspect of their purported particularity, historicity, situatedness, genuineness, and so on. However, while the universality of the standard and the particularity of the non-standard are co-constituted indexical values, the situated manifestations of these values are, recalling Jakobson (1971[1961]: 574), never monolithic (see also Silverstein, 1976a, 1981a, 1984a, 1985, 2003a, 2014a). Enunciations about linguistic authenticity and authentic language are inherently partial. They are always socially positioned, and not necessarily agreed upon.

Each of the four studies included in this thesis interrogates a specific set of tensions that are bound up with these conditions. While each study is intended to stand on its own, and accordingly clarify its own premises, aims and arguments, all studies share some common epistemological ground. In addition to their joint interest in various engagements with Övdalsk, the studies draw on a joint vision of language and communication. They align with a linguistic anthropological interest in the linguistic properties of social practice. In particular, relative to its aspiration to grasp notions of linguistic authenticity and authentic language that encapsulate Övdalsk, the thesis draws on Michael Silverstein’s work on indexicality (e.g. Silverstein, 1976a, 1977, 1979, 1981a, 1993, 2003a, 2006, 2010a, 2014a). It takes seriously the Silversteinian invitation to investigate indexicality as a ‘dialectical’ phenomenon, forged and recognized in the practical interplay between durable ways of envisioning and ordering language, on the one hand, and situated acts of linguistic production, on the other. Such a move requires a certain degree of historicization: both of the social structures in relation to which an exchange unfolds (e.g. the linguistic market) and of the symbolic structures that are crucial to the exchange (e.g. language). To this end, the work in the thesis draws in various ways on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990, 1991a, 1996, 2014), as well as critical approaches to the history of linguistic thought (Harris, 1980, 1981, 1987, 1990b, 2003; Irvine, 1993, 1995, 2008; Bauman and Briggs, 2003; Silverstein, 2012, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b).

The present introductory chapter serves to discuss some aspects of this aspiration, relating them to the investigations at hand, and thereby further contextualizing the studies included in the thesis. In doing so, the introductory chapter outlines the objects, and clarifies the motives and analytical orientation, of the studies, and ties together some of their themes and arguments. This epistemological clarification begins with an introductory sociolinguistic orientation on Övdalsk (section 2). This section is followed by a presentation of the rationales and broader aims of the thesis.
(section 3). Subsequently, some instrumental notions, which to a varying extent are treated in the studies – indexicality, metapragmatics and authenticity – are discussed (section 4). Against this backdrop, the four studies are presented and discussed (section 5). Finally, some concluding remarks are provided (section 6).

2. On the regimentation of Övdalsk

In the reasonably unified linguistic market of Sweden, Övdalsk is a minor affair. It is mostly used in the Älvda len district and parish, located in the southern part of the much vaster Älvdalen municipality, which is in the northwest of Sweden’s historical province of Dalarna. Slightly fewer than 5,000 people live in the area (SCB, 2016), and far from all of them speak Övdalsk. Rather, standard Swedish is widespread and used almost universally in Älvdalen. A commonly held view, in Älvdalen and elsewhere, is that Övdalsk is in decline. As the Action plan for preserving and promoting the Övdalsk language of the Älvdalen municipality (2016) maintains:

Övdalsk is currently endangered. A reason for this is that there are increasingly fewer people who speak genuine Övdalsk. The old people who have a command of the language are passing away, and the regeneration of speakers is relatively limited.


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2 It should be noted that reliable up-to-date statistics are lacking. Attempts at quantification range from more or less thorough surveys by language advocates (e.g. Larsson, 2008) and linguists (Helgander, 1996: 106), to estimates, which often make use of such surveys (e.g. Parkvall, 2009: 29–30) or questionnaire-based guesswork (Melterska, 2011a: 9, 21ff.). In the most recent of such accounts, the number of Övdalsk speakers in the Älvdalen district tends to vary. Different accounts report 1,700 speakers in the district and ‘approximately’ 700 speakers residing elsewhere (for 2008; Larsson, 2008), or a total of between ‘approximately’ 2,000 to 2,500 speakers (Parkvall, 2009), or occasionally as many as 4,000 speakers (for 1985; Steensland, 2003: 361). I refrain from commenting further on this matter.

3 All translations are my own, unless stated otherwise.

4 Originally: Älvdalskan är idag hotad genom att allt färre talar en genuin älvdalska i takt med att många äldre som behärskar språket går bort samt att rekryteringen av nya talare är relativt begränsad (Älvdalen municipality, 2016).
someone who is acquainted with such scenarios, the tone of the above excerpt will appear familiar. Similar enunciations have occupied a privileged position in both linguistics and language politics over the last 25 or so years (see Hill, 2002; Heller and Duchêne, 2007; Orman, 2013a). What is somewhat noteworthy about the excerpt, however, is that its formulations are sanctioned and endorsed by an agent bound up with Sweden’s bureaucratic and political fields. Through its semblance of officialization and institutional concern, the Action plan symbolically breaks with a longstanding exclusion of Övdalsk from Sweden’s state-backed regime of language. At the same time, this semblance is limited. While the Action plan stresses that the municipal authorities of Älvdalen hold a responsibility to ‘preserve and save Övdalsk’, comparable institutional endorsements of Övdalsk are rare in Sweden’s language political exchange.

Älvdalen is a peripheral rural area, and things that happen there rarely transcend the local scale. While the municipal authorities of Älvdalen have declared their ‘support’ for the language (Älvdalen municipality, 2005, 2016), comparable efforts to promote Övdalsk have rarely surfaced on the scale of Sweden’s national language political exchange. Insofar as they have occurred, they have always fallen short of official consecration. Seen from a contemporary viewpoint, Övdalsk lingers rather as an unresolved question in Sweden’s language politics. It is not explicitly named or categorized, and thus not officialized, by the Language Act (SFS 2009:600) nor by any other universalized law or policy that uphold Sweden’s unifying legislation on language (see Hult, 2004; Hyltetamst and Milani, 2012; Salō, 2014, 2016: 9–11; Salō et al., forth.). Among the officialized categories of principal language (i.e. standard Swedish; see Milani and Johnson, 2008; Boyd, 2011; Salō, 2014, 2016; see also Hult, 2005; Oakes, 2005; Milani, 2007), national minority languages (i.e. Sámi, Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani and Yiddish; see Lainio, 1997, 2000, 2015; Wingstedt, 1998; Hult, 2004; Nordblad, 2015) and mother tongues (i.e. the residual category of minoritized languages used by immigrants and their descendants; see Lainio, 2000; Hyltetamst, 2005; Salō et al., forth.). Övdalsk has no consecrated place. Being officially bespoken as a ‘dialect’ (e.g. State periodical report, 2013: 18), Övdalsk remains a non-entity and non-category under Sweden’s regime of language.

This mode of regimentation is closely linked to the Swedish ratification and implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (CETS 148/SÖ 2000:3; henceforth ECRML). Importantly, the ECRML assigns categorical weight to a generally formulated language–dialect distinction, stating in its article 1a that the ECRML does not apply to ‘either dialects of the official language(s) of the [signatory] State or the languages of migrants’ (ECRML: 1a). In excluding such linguistic formations, the ECRML is construed as exclusively applicable to ‘regional
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or minority languages’ that are ‘traditionally used within a given territory’. These classes of ‘languages’ must, in turn, be ‘different from the official language(s) of the State’ (ECRML: 1a). When talking about what something really is, one ‘is always liable to say what it should be in order to be really what it is’ (Bourdieu, 2000: 122). Such enunciations, which seek to impose themselves on the world as a factual representation of the world, may consequently ‘slide from the descriptive to the normative, from “is” to “ought-to-be”’ (Bourdieu, ibid.). Tellingly, the text of the ECRML leaves to each signing state the metapragmatic business of teasing apart ‘languages’ from ‘dialects’, and officialized ‘minority languages’ from the languages of minorities in general (Explanatory report to the ECRML: 6). On a national scale, Swedish authorities have excluded it from any form of affirmative regimentation (State periodical report, 2010, 2013; Committee of Experts of the ECRML, 2008, 2011, 2014).

Traditionally, a large number of indexically ‘local’ ways of speaking have been contrastively defined in relation to standard Swedish. With an engrained terminology (see Lundell, 1880; Wessén, 1935; Dahlstedt and Teleman, 1975; Dahl, 2015), this heterogeneous group of non-standards, which historically have been spoken in Sweden’s rural peripheries, has variably been referred to as ‘vernaculars’ (Swe. folkmål, landsmål) and ‘(genuine) dialects’ (Swe. [genuina] dialekter). Whereas these non-standards have been subjected to an intricate ordering, which often has followed geographical lines of divisions,5 they have always been seen as antipodes of the standard. ‘Vernaculars’ have traditionally been bespoken in terms of their linguistic – phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical – ‘difference’ or ‘distance’ from standard Swedish. On this axis of differentiation (see Irvine and Gal, 2000; Gal, 2016), Övdalsk, together with the other Dalmål of Upper Dalarna (see also Study II), along with the Westrobothnian vernaculars (Swe. bondska) and Gutnish (Swe. gutniska), have long been regarded by students of language as extreme outliers, markedly distinct from the standard through their ‘retention’ of case marking and verb agreement, as well by their numerous ‘innovations’ (Lundell, 1881; Wessén, 1935; Dahl, 2015). Such symbolic differentiation can, of course, be recursively imposed (Irvine and Gal, 2000). Tellingly, some scholars (Noreen, 1881, 1903; Levander 1925a, 1928; Y. Sapir, 2005) have gone so far as to argue that Övdalsk is an extreme among these extremes.

Despite this metapragmatics of difference, speakers of Övdalsk have long been regarded as archetypical Swedes. Largely as an outcome of the 19th

5 Such as provinces (e.g. the Dalmål [egentliga dalmål] of Dalarna), sub-regions (Dalmål of Upper Dalarna [ovansiljanmål]), parishes (e.g. Övdalsk in Älvdalen, Össmyr in Orsa), and even villages (e.g. Åsemål in Åsen, Älvdalen; Levander, 1909a, 1909b); but also supra-regions (e.g. Northern Sweden, Southern Sweden; see Wessén, 1935; Dahl, 2015).
century consolidation of the Swedish nation-state imaginary, the peasantry of Älvdalen and other parishes of the Dalarna province came to concretize the modern polity’s desire for historical depth and organic emergence (Crang, 1999; Löfgren, 2008, 2017; Klein, 2006, 2013). However, while the highly idealized peasantry of the province was deemed to embody and rheumatize ‘eternal’ ‘national values’ – such as a strong work ethic, patriotism and Lutheranism (e.g. papers in Schenström, 1903) – the vernacular language(s) of Dalarna was erased from this ideological template. Supported by ethnological and dialectological research (see also Study II), such ways of speaking were regarded as being destined for disuse, as they were generally deemed unfit for use in the linguistic exchange of a ‘modernized’ society. Arguably, this vision has, to some extent, outlived the ideological shifts that ripped through Sweden’s regime of language in the post-war era (see Oakes, 2005; Milani, 2007; Salö et al., forth.).

During Sweden’s language policy overhauls of the late 1990s and early 2000s (see also Study I), Övardsk and other non-standard Scandinavian ways of speaking were bespoken and regimented as something fundamentally Swedish.6 Widely regarded as being spoken by Swedes, as well as being iconic of Swedish peasant culture, these ‘vernaculars’ or ‘dialects’ were seen as part and parcel of the internally diversified and variable Swedish language, and by this token of a shared Swedish ‘identity’ and ‘cultural heritage’. In this vein, as I argue in Study I, so-called ‘dialects’ and ‘vernaculars’ were presented as “linguistically different” from standard Swedish, but were at the same time symbolically tied to the standard’. As a consequence, on the one hand, they were symbolically differentiated from the ‘minority languages’ regulated under the Swedish commitment ECRML, and from the institutional endorsement that had been directed towards them. On the other, ‘dialects’ and ‘ vernaculars’ were not subjected to any other form of explicit language political intervention.

The contemporary political category of ‘linguistic minority’ is contingent upon certain forms of officialization, upheld under the auspices of the state. Linguistic minorities, who are collectively granted distinct symbolic and material entitlements from a particular state, are, as Heller (2006: 7) puts it, ‘created by the nationalisms that exclude them’ (see also Jaffe, 2007a). This is an appropriate characterization of the visions and divisions that underpin Sweden’s regime of language. Under this regime, the category of minority language is rather strictly bound up with notions of ‘ethnically’ categorized minorities.7 Whereas standard Swedish is regimented as the universal –

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6 In this phase of the debate, Övardsk was rarely separated from other ‘vernaculars’. See Study I for a more detailed discussion.

Authentic Language

‘principal’ – language (SFS 2009:600), and named as ‘the common language in society that everyone resident in Sweden is to have access to and that is to be usable in all areas of society’ (SFS 2009:600), the officialized ‘national minority languages’ and ‘mother tongues’ are particularized as group-specific resources. In relation to such imposed visions and divisions, Övdalsk is consequentially seen as being spoken by a segment of the majority population. However, to the extent that this linguistic difference is recognized, it is acknowledged as a single difference. While speakers of Övdalsk only make up a small fraction of the entire Swedish majority population, they are routinely construed as Swedes in the most emblematic sense of the concept.

Contingently, Övdalsk has ended up in a political limbo. While Sweden’s state-backed vision of language espouses and promotes the ‘bilingualism’ of its officialized minorities – endorsing, in various ways, the five languages of its ‘national minorities’ as well as the ‘mother tongues’ of immigrants and their descendants – the same regime remains uncompromising on the necessity for its unambiguously Swedish majority to unilaterally embrace the national standard language (i.e. Swedish). In relation to the fundamental visions and divisions of Sweden’s regime of language, the relationship between standard Swedish and vernacular non-standards in general, and Övdalsk in particular, seems to encompass an irreconcilable opposition. Following to this logic, however, it clearly appears that Swedes cannot be made a linguistic minority in their own nation-state.

The social world is ‘accumulated history’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 241), and must, as such, be understood in relation to the permanence of this history. The indexical relation between Övdalsk and standard Swedish cannot, accordingly, be teased apart from the social conditions under which it has been produced and reproduced. The un-officialized position that Övdalsk occupies in Sweden’s linguistic market is closely linked to a durable set of visions and divisions that, by and large, are coterminous with the existence of the Swedish state. The linguistic unification of Sweden, forcefully manifested in the universal imposition of standard Swedish as the legitimate language, is certainly a longue durée, stretching back to the dissolution of the pan-Scandinavian Kalmar Union, the Lutheran reformation and the incipient centralization of government, all occurring in the early 16th century (see Dahlstedt, 1976; Thelander, 2011; see also Pred, 1990). From this time and on, a gradually materializing Swedish standard language, symbolically modelled on the language of the dominant agents residing in Stockholm and the region surrounding the capital, increasingly gained ascendancy in various forms of political, economic and religious exchange. The standard slowly became intertwined with the institutions of the nascent nation-state. The incremental dominance of the legitimate Swedish speakers, and by
contingency their language, simultaneously construed the lower classes of Swedes as being more or less linguistically illegitimate (see Dahlstedt and Teleman, 1974; Pred, 1990).

However, being construed as authentic Swedes in the state vision of ethnolinguistic divisions, speakers of ‘vernaculars’ and ‘dialects’ were required to accept standard Swedish as the legitimate language. Nonetheless, this requirement came with more promises than what was offered in the exclusionary and assimilatory policies that target minoritized groups. For Swedes, the linguistic unification came with a tacit assurance of inclusion in the budding nation-state, whereas the state’s ethnolinguistic others – the Sámi, Finns, and the Roma – were long denied such promises, lest actual inclusion (see Wingstedt, 1998; Lantto, 2000, 2012; Elenius, 2001; Lainio, 2015; Nordblad, 2015). For Swedes, the abandonment of vernaculars was symbolically rewarded with an assurance of full inclusion in the modern state and of full access to its institutions (educational, political, economic, communicative, etc.). From the late 19th century, paralleling the incremental modernization of Swedish society, the actuality of such forms of symbolic exchange appeared to intensify. The existence of Sweden’s ‘vernaculars’, as the Swedish historical linguist Wessén wrote in his widely circulated primer on the subject (Wessén, 1935: 11), was widely perceived as ‘closely linked to the old peasant culture, sharing its contemporary destiny’. During the first half of the 20th century (see Study II), ‘the existence of the vernaculars’ was perceived as ‘threatened by standard Swedish’, which increasingly gained a foothold in the peripheries through the expansion of ‘[Swedish medium] education, print media, radio, increased mobility between different rural areas’ (Wessen, 1935: 11; see also Study II). While some Swedish linguists deplored the imminent cessation of vernacular use in terms of a cultural ‘loss’, no prominent Swedish student of language in the late 19th and early 20th century – to the best of my knowledge – questioned the necessity and greater good of the modern project, and the forms of linguistic unification that were coterminous with it. Just as ‘pre-modern’ society, in their view, had been homologous with a ‘disunited’ linguistic market, ‘modern’ Swedish society was predicted to become linguistically unified. The expansion and eventual dominance of standard Swedish was seen as the linguistic destiny of modern-day Swedes.

Thus, although the unification of the Swedish linguistic market unfolded along a separate temporal trajectory and was linked to distinct political and

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8 Originally: De svenska folkmålen hänga nära tillsammans med den gamla allmoge-kulturen och dela i vår tid dess öde (Wessen, 1935: 11).

9 Originally: [folkmålen] är till sin existens hotade av riksspråket, som tränger in på olika vägar, genom skolan, genom tidskröktläsning, genom radio, genom de livliga förbindelserna bygderna emellan (Wessén, ibid.).
economic conditions, it resembled metapragmatic, sociolinguistic processes observable in other European states. The symbolic differentiation of *français* and *patois* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991a: 46–49, 2008; Joseph, 1987; Grillo, 1989; see also Jaffe, 1999, 2001, 2007a) and of *italiano* and *dialetto* (Cavanaugh, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008, 2012a, 2012b, 2017) are apt cases of comparison, in which, just as in the Swedish case, a vision of culturally unified, yet linguistically differentiated, nations was brought into play. The larger goal of this classification was, nevertheless, linguistic unification through an imposition of the legitimate language. Such forms of imposition also impose indexical contrasts. The unification of a linguistic market creates ‘dialect, bad accents, dominated languages’ (Bourdieu, 2014: 222; see also Joseph 1987; Bourdieu 1991a; Silverstein 1996a, 2015a; Blommaert, 2014). Commenting on the sociolinguistic life of Älvdalen in the early 20th century, Levander (1925a: 29) noted that the ‘Swedish’ spoken by most of the people of Älvdalen was ‘learnt as a foreign language, at school and elsewhere’. At this point in time, the opposition between the standard and non-standards was a tangible feature in the range of symbolically violent exchanges, such as those unfolding in bureaucratic, educational, clerical and legal practices.

In relation to such remarks, it must be remembered that opposition between the standard and the non-standard cannot, at any historical conjunction, be reduced to some observable ‘functional’ difference of situated language use, or to some set of structural discrepancies. Rather, the symbolic separation and counterpoising of such recognized ways of speaking are regimented in the actuality of practice (Silverstein, 1985, 1996a, 1998b, 2003a, 2014b; Duranti, 1994; Irvine and Gal, 2000; Rampton, 2006, 2011, 2013; Woolard 2008, 2013, 2016; Gal, 2016). The social recognition of ‘formal’ or ‘systemic’ linguistic difference as being linked to some other kind of difference – social, spatial, temporal or the like – presupposes some activity, through which some set of language ideological visions and divisions are brought to bear on sociolinguistic life. Recognizable linguistic similarity and dissimilarity alone do not ‘mean’ anything, but are rather drawn on in rationalizations or justifications of certain types of actions, practices or beliefs. Language, in this vein, mediates social processes, and is concomitantly mediated by social processes.

As the ample and partially canonical work on Övdalsk of the Swedish dialectologist Lars Levander illustrates (e.g. Levander, 1909b, 1914, 1953; see also Study II), standard Swedish has a longstanding presence in Älvdalen, coterminous with the rise of the centralized Lutheran Swedish state. The general inculcation of standard Swedish, as well as the symbolic order of which the standard formed part, was harnessed to various forms of compulsory education, initially conducted under the auspices of the Church of Sweden and eventually separated from the Church through the
introduction of universal state-sponsored education in the mid-19th century. As education was formalized and centralized, the linguistic regime gradually tightened and an inculcation of standard Swedish was more strictly imposed. ‘The school’, as Bourdieu (2014: 229) writes, ‘is to the cultural field what the church is to the religious field’. Tellingly, both institutions are holders of a state-sanctioned monopoly on defining, producing and inculcating legitimate knowledge. With regard to language, this mandate is manifested in the power to constitute some forms of language as legitimate and some as illegitimate (see Bourdieu, 1977, 1991a, 1993: 60–71, 78–89, 2014: passim). Övdalsk, as well as all other non-standards, have long been at the illegitimate side of such acts of constitution. A telling example of this state-backed vision is found in a 1932 draft of an upper secondary school curriculum for Swedish (SOU 1932:31), which made clear that:

The treatment of disturbing dialectal traits and other pronunciation idiosyncrasies require special attention. Peculiarities, which digress from the pronunciation of the educated inhabitants of the area, should be done away with already in primary school. Depending on the degree of dialectal inference in a given area, this part of the course requires a larger or a smaller amount of effort from teachers and students. (SOU 1932:31: 70)\(^{10}\)

The excerpt does not mention Övdalsk specifically. However, at the time the draft was completed, Övdalsk had no given place in the classrooms of the schools of Älvdalen, where standard Swedish reigned supreme as the medium of instruction. In some village schools, as some older Övdalsk speakers\(^{11}\) recall, this regime was imposed light-handedly, insofar as Övdalsk was widely used between Övdalsk-speaking students, in class and during the breaks. In other village schools, the regimentation of Övdalsk was stricter, as one informant recalled being subjected to corporeal punishment in the late 1930s for speaking Övdalsk in class.

Perhaps tellingly, Levander claimed in several early accounts of socio-linguistic life in Älvdalen (e.g. Levander, 1909a, 1909b, 1921) that he had observed the first indications of linguistic ‘erosion’ of Övdalsk among the schoolchildren of the parish already before the 1920s. With reference to this observation, which is critically discussed in Study II, he predicted the children born in that decade to be the last generation of Övdalsk speakers.

\(^{10}\) Originally: Särskild uppmärksamhet kräver behandlingen av störande dialektala inslag och andra egenheter i uttalet. Egendomligheter, som avvika från uttalet hos de bildade på respektive orter, bör redan på lägstadiet bortarbetas. Allt efter dialentinflytandets olika styrka på olika orter kräver detta kursmoment ett större eller mindre arbete av lärare och lärjungar (SOU 1932:31: 70).

\(^{11}\) This passage draws on eight interviews with Övdalsk language advocates (2014).
However, Levander did not consider the introduction of Swedish medium primary education as causal to his claim that Övdalsk, already in the first decade of the 20th century, ‘had lost its resilience against the standard [Swedish] language’ (Levander, 1909b: 42). Rather, his prediction was congruent with a more widespread academic vision of vernacular language change and shift as fundamentally teleological processes, which were inseparable from the general ‘modernization’ of Sweden (see Lundell, 1881; Noreen, 1881, 1903; Levander, 1921, 1925a, 1925b, 1950). It was commonly believed – not least among students of language and culture – that the prevalence of such relative linguistic difference was a transitory phase. To Levander and his peers, it was widely accepted that Övdalsk, just as all non-standards of Sweden’s peripheries, had entered into a state of structural, lexical and social decay. Modernity offered no way back. Övdalsk, as well as every other vernacular in Sweden, was destined to be lost to ‘oblivion’ (Swe. glömskan, e.g. Levander, 1914, 1921, 1925b, 1950).

In Älvdalen, such claims were not unknown. Levander published digestions of his research in broadly circulated publications linked to the nationwide network of local cultural heritage associations that was established during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Levander, 1929, 1932–1950). Some of the research in which Levander prophesized the imminent death of the Älvdalen peasant culture and of Övdalsk was published under the auspices of the local heritage association of Älvdalen (e.g. Levander, 1914). Sometimes, the teleological assumptions supporting Levander’s claims were met with counterarguments. An elaborate example of such scepticism was produced by social democratic MP Johannes Back (1946), who himself hailed from Älvdalen and spoke Övdalsk. Addressing the people of Älvdalen, Back argued that it ‘unquestionably’ was ‘worthwhile’ to ‘preserve’ Övdalsk. In Back’s case, ‘preservation’ did not only refer to the artefactual modes of preservation of which Levander made use, but rather to a continued use of Övdalsk. Presenting a number of arguments, Back argued that ‘a bilingual from Älvdalen’ had several advantages over any ‘monolingual’ Swede. He also insisted that a command of Övdalsk ‘did not in any way hamper the comprehension and learning of standard Swedish’, but that it, rather, facilitated a good, or even ‘an artistic’, command of standard Swedish, especially in writing. Back also underscored the lexical ‘richness’ of Övdalsk, noting that it had ‘more words’ for certain things and phenomena than what could be found in the standard language.

12 That is, the so-called Hembygdsrörelse. An approximate, yet indexically lucid, translation of the name could be the Heimat movement, with hembygd and Heimat sharing some indexical presuppositions (see also Crang, 1999, 2005; Klein, 2006, 2013).
While these words were presented as a ‘linguistic treasure’ in their own right, Back also argued that Övdalsk words could be integrated or borrowed into the national standard and thereby contribute to ‘a good and strengthened Swedish [language]’. Furthermore, Back urged his compatriots to leave behind their linguistic inhibitions, admonishing them for their being ‘ruthlessly critical’ against each other’s ways of speaking. On the one hand, Back maintained that Övdalsk speakers were sometimes too strict in their evaluations of each other’s command of standard Swedish, keenly pointing out errors and disparaging them as *Bocksvenska* (‘Buck Swedish’, indexing Övdalsk sounding, ‘mixed up’ or ‘accented’ Swedish). On the other, he argued that a similar disapproval also was levelled at Övdalsk speakers who did not speak the Övdalsk ‘perfectly’, such as those who had lived outside Älvdalen and subsequently moved back to the parish. Given these concerns, Back encouraged the people of Älvdalen to ‘embrace’ and ‘accept’ their own ‘bilingualism’, stressing that Övdalsk and standard Swedish could ‘coexist’. At the same time, he underscored the imperative nature of maintaining the use of Övdalsk in Älvdalen. Back required that ‘each and everyone’ would take ‘responsibility for the future’ and for the future existence of Övdalsk (Back, 1946: 5–7).

Back’s reflections and directives were published in the annals of the local cultural heritage association of Älvdalen. A number of similar calls to ‘preserve’ Övdalsk are found in this publication (e.g. *Skansvakter*, 1944, 1949, 1982, 1983). From 1984 and on, such summons started to multiply, cropping up in other forums, such as in local media. In that year, the Övdalsk language advocacy association *Ulum Dalska* (Övd. *We will speak Övdalsk*) was founded in Älvdalen. As stated in its constituting charter, the ‘primary aim’ of the association was ‘to preserve the unique tongues that are still widely spoken in the villages of the Älvdalen parish’ as well as, secondarily, ‘to work to promote the local culture’ of Älvdalen (Ulum Dalska, 1984). Since its foundation, Ulum Dalska has been the foremost agent of Övdalsk language advocacy in Älvdalen. Preservation (Swe. *bevarande*) is an intrinsically indeterminate term. It may denote both artefactually oriented practices, such as linguistic description and documentation, and politically sensitized attempts to affect patterns of everyday language use, language socialization, as well as language policy more generally. In the case of Övdalsk, both senses are valid, although each has its own temporal trajectory.

Soon after its constituent meeting in 1984, Ulum Dalska printed a new edition of Levander’s grammatical sketch of Övdalsk (Levander, 1909a) as well as a newly produced Övdalsk–Swedish dictionary (Steensland, 1986). Following the publication of these two descriptivist text products, the association supported the production and distribution of a number of
children’s books written in Övdalsk, the first of which was published in 1987. It has also supported several locally organized translation projects, which have resulted in a number of full-length translations of literary fiction into Övdalsk that the association published. To this day, Ulum Dalska publishes and distributes Övdalsk original literature, as well as translations into Övdalsk. In the mid-1990s, the association initiated a project of creating an updated version of Levander’s Övdalsk grammar (Levander, 1909a), whose use of the Swedish Dialect Alphabet (SDA) phonetic annotation was to be replaced with a graphemic, entirely Latin-based orthography. Work on the project, which stretched over more than a decade, resulted in a revised and thoroughly expanded 600-page grammar of Övdalsk (Åkerberg, 2012; abbreviated ÅG [Ålvdalsk grammatik; i.e. Övdalsk Grammar] in Study III). The new descriptive grammar developed in parallel with the practice of the Grammar group, whose practice is discussed in Study III.

In the mid-1990s, Ulum Dalska also initiated so-called speaking evenings (Övd. glåmåkwelder) in Älvdalen, welcoming local people to meet and speak Övdalsk to each other for a few hours. At times, the meetings, which are still held at roughly a monthly interval, have served as sites for producing audio or textual records of Övdalsk. Such activities – literary translation, publishing, language documentation and investments in academic undertakings – have been continuous in the practice of the association, harkening back to the first years of its existence. Activities aimed at influencing the institutional language politics of Övdalsk are mostly of a later date. As Study I accentuates, such practices intensified around the time of Sweden’s language policy overhauls of the mid-1990s. Parallel to the exchange that has unfolded over the state-backed regimentation of Övdalsk, language advocates have made a move to promote Övdalsk children and adolescents in Älvdalen. Since 2009, members of the association hand out a bursary to third-, sixth- and ninth-year students who are able to demonstrate that they can speak and understand, as well as read and write Övdalsk. In 2016, following years of pressure from Ulum Dalska and academic linguists, the Älvdalen municipality adapted its Action plan to preserve and promote Övdalsk and, likewise, made a push to promote Övdalsk in one municipal preschool.

Requests to promote Övdalsk through various institutional regimes, such as municipal language committees and language instruction in the lower tiers of the educational system, were already articulated by Ulum Dalska in the mid-1980s. However, such articulations have intensified since the second

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14 The earliest articulation of such demands that I have been able to pinpoint originates in October 1986 (Mora Tidning, 6 October 1986). Slavicist and Övdalsk advocate prof. Lars Steensland propagated for Övdalsk language instruction already in 1984 (Mora Tidning, 6 February 1984).
half of the 1990s, originating in the ECRML policy deliberations that eventually led up to the Swedish ratification of the ECRML in 2000. During this period, and increasingly so after the ratification (see Study I), the debate over the official regulation of Övdalsk has been dominated by academics and politicians, rather than by Övdalsk language advocates with limited holdings of the type of symbolic capital recognized in the language political field (e.g. academic credentials, involvement in state-sponsored committees, institutions and organizations, political mandates). Notably, these engagements have anchored Övdalsk as virtually a standing issue on the national language political agenda. While such conspicuous investments in the politics of Övdalsk, at least on a national scale, offer a better position to legitimately formulate demands and partake in the political exchange, such legitimacy does not necessarily presume upon the voiced participation of symbolically less well-off agents. Non-academic speakers of Övdalsk seem to have little voice in these exchanges. From a language political vantage point, however, the investments made by academics and policy makers in Övdalsk have significantly bolstered the permanence of Övdalsk in language political debate on the national scale. The by-proxy advocacy performed mainly by academic linguists (see Study I) has undoubtedly provided a voice without which the concerns of the association most likely would have remained unheard. The question of official recognition, which is so closely linked to the language–dialect dilemma, is virtually the only frame within which Övdalsk has been discussed on a national scale. The attention given to this issue has, arguably, erased other questions, language political and otherwise, which potentially hold relevance in relation to the present situation of Övdalsk. Nevertheless, it has endowed Övdalsk with a degree of visibility greater than that, which is attached to many of Sweden’s other marginal ways of speaking.

Much of the engagement with Övdalsk is underwritten by a durable vision of sociolinguistic, demographic decline, poignantly articulated in the early 20th century (see Study II), and reiterated ever since. Övdalsk is, thus, often bespoken in such terms as ‘language shift’, ‘language endangerment’, ‘language death’, or by other similar terms, which seek to model the gradual recession and ultimate abandonment of a language in a, usually, dominated population of speakers (see Martin-Jones, 1989; Woolard, 1989b; Williams, 1992: 106–122; Hill, 2002; Orman, 2013a; for such accounts of Övdalsk, see Hultgren, 1983; Helgander, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2012; Rosenkvist, 2008; Melerska, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). This is a widely circulated vision, which the present thesis, in some sense, seeks to grasp. In this regard, the thesis adds to a longstanding interest of various strands of linguistics in such sociolinguistic processes. Yet, there are several things that are routinely associated with this area of research, with which the thesis does not engage.
It does not define whether, or to what degree, someone is a speaker of Övdalsk. It does not engage with demographics. As such, it does not attempt to determine how such schematizations of ‘speakerhood’ or ‘competence’ are distributed in the population of Älvdalen, or in some other demographic group. At the same time, it does not seek to suggest some purportedly ‘new’ or ‘unmoored’ alternative to such notions (see Orman 2013a; Orman and Pablé, 2014; Jaspers and Madsen, 2016; Pennycook, 2016). Likewise, the thesis does not deliver predictions about the future of Övdalsk. It refrains entirely from commenting on whether Övdalsk will ‘persevere’ or ‘perish’ in some near or distant future. Similarly, it does not evaluate its objects of investigation in accordance with some theoretically motivated idea of an ‘effectively’ or ‘successfully’ executed attempt at ‘preservation’, ‘maintenance’, or ‘revitalization’ (cf. Fishman, 1991). Furthermore, the thesis hardly comments on the reality and cause of Övdalsk language shift.

Now, this does not mean that the thesis considers such questions unimportant. On the contrary, the work in this thesis would have not been conceptually feasible without the precedence of several landmark studies of precisely some of these issues (Gal, 1978, 1979; Hill, 1985; Hill and Hill, 1986; Kulick, 1990). Just as such research has done, the studies included in the thesis take interest in ways of thinking and speaking about such notions as ‘change’ and ‘shift’. Accordingly, the present studies do not ‘evoke macro-sociological changes as a “cause” of shift’ (Kulick, 1990: 8), or of any other sociolinguistic process or event, but strive, rather, to account for the contingent practices in which such ‘large-scale’ processes are envisioned and acted upon. Recalling Kulick (1990), the point is rather to inquire the ways in which such processes are envisioned and ‘interpreted in a way that dramatically affects everyday language use’ (Kulick, 1990: 8; see also Gal, 1979: 3; Woolard, 1989b). The interest of the present thesis in such forms of interpretation is, nevertheless, geared towards a specific form of language use, that is, to metapragmatic articulations, representations and exchanges. The studies attend to practices that, in one way or another, have sought to absolve or contravene some of the purported causes and effects that are bound up with visions of Övdalsk language shift, endangerment, or the like. As the studies indicate, notions of Övdalsk authenticity are often at the forefront of such practices. Unpicking these key notions, as well as the exchanges in which they are implicated, thus, offers a good starting point for grasping the logic and rationales of the practices at hand. As such, it also serves as an incentive for engaging with the ways in which such practices are positioned and regimented.
3. Motives and rationales

In rather general terms, the studies included in this thesis are concerned with various forms of metapragmatic exchange over Övdalsk. More specifically, the thesis strives to give an exhaustive account of the social and historical conditions of possibility for such forms of exchange. The analyses do not, in an empiricist sense, only account for spoken or written propositions about language, but strive to analytically relate such enunciations to symbolic and social structures that exist beyond and independently of the speech event. The thesis attempts to trace the historical formation of the metapragmatic exchange over Övdalsk, as well as locate it, together with the visions and interests that it encompasses, in social space. To do so, the thesis addresses the formation of visions and ideas of Övdalsk authenticity, as well as their inflections in various practices (Studies II, III and IV). It also discusses the regimentation of Övdalsk that has unfolded in Sweden’s linguistic market (Studies I and IV). A major point, as stated already at the outset of this introductory chapter, is to account for authenticity as a predictable yet varied notion. In this section, I expound on this epistemological orientation, and on some of the analytical concepts that it involves.

Arguably, the social existence of Övdalsk is closely linked to certain indexical presuppositions and to certain, partially foreseeable, indexical effects. There are several reasons for this state of affairs. As noted in the previous sections, the marginal position that Övdalsk occupies in Sweden’s linguistic market should be seen as one determining factor (Silverstein, 1996a, 1998b; Jaffe, 1999; Heller, 2006). The linguistic market, following Bourdieu (1977, 1991a, 1993: 60–71, 78–89; 2014: 119–121) can be seen as a field of struggle over the regulation of the value of language. In broad terms, such struggles are waged over the right to endow or deprive language of various forms of legitimacy. Relative of this stake, linguistic exchanges tend to become oriented toward some set of distinctive ‘features endowed with value in the field’s own economy’ (Bourdieu, 1985: 19; see also Bourdieu, 1977, 1991a, 1993; Grenfell, 1993, 2011: 51ff., 2013). In the linguistic market, recalling Vološinov (1973: 10), ‘wherever a sign is present, ideology is present’. Yet, some language-related visions and divisions might be more persistent than others. Processes of linguistic unification imply an institution of a symbolic order, of a regime of language. The imposition of such an order does not only amount to an institution of explicit linguistic difference, in the sense that ‘different’ ways of speaking become increasingly reified as being ‘different’ from each other in an ontological sense. Rather, such processes of metapragmatic differentiation are concurrent with an increasing regulation of the value ascribed to the increasingly differentiated linguistic formations that exist in the market and,
hence, are implicated in such processes (Irvine and Gal, 2000). To speak of market unification, then, means to speak about the symbolically powerful processes whereby language and language use become regimented, that is, about processes that necessarily involve some indexical, metapragmatic dimension.

Indeed, the unification of the linguistic market is coterminous with the imposition of certain sets of indexical value, which, importantly, have some predictable qualities. While the unification of the linguistic market produces more meanings for each linguistic sign (Bourdieu, 1991a: 46ff., 1993: 60–71, 78–89, 2008: 193–200), some meanings, which are forged in such processes of valorization, can be anticipated. Legitimate language enjoys universal, although at times tacit, recognition. The dominant language often remains unrecognized as dominant by those who place a stake in it. As such, it is endowed with robust indexicalities of placeless-ness, appearing disembodied and devoid of interest. Such legitimate language is widely misrecognized as the basis of ‘rational discourse’, liberated from ‘the constraints of a socially specific perspective’, which endows it with a sense of ‘a superior, aperspectival form of objectivity’ (Woolard, 2016: 25). It is, as Bourdieu (1993: 70) notes, ‘a language that produces the essential part of its effects by seeming not to be what it is’. Such forms of recognized universality are established by a dichotomizing logic, by which ‘all other tongues become errant and delinquent’, negatively revalorized as inferior to, or as inferior forms of, the legitimate language (Bourdieu, 2014: 98).

As an effect of this demoting mode of constitution, ways of speaking that are ordered as antipodal to the legitimate language are predisposed to become linked to indexicalities of authenticity. The marginal position, to which such forms of demoted language are assigned, tends to become homological with indexical effects of temporal and spatial distance (Silverstein; 1996a, 1998b, 2015a; Woolard, 2008, 2013, 2016; see also Bourdieu 1991a: 233, n. 4; Cavanaugh, 2005b, 2012a; Urla, 2012). The historical production of legitimate language confines other ways of speaking to the predicament of authenticity. The unification of the linguistic market involves an entrenchment of certain indexical presuppositions of authenticity, which then become closely tied to the dominated sections of the market, and to the indexical effects that are enacted in these spaces. Unlike the legitimate language, which felicitously can be spoken of in terms of atemporality, omnipresence and universality, any demoted language is assigned the onus of spatial and temporal boundedness. Authenticity, as Woolard (2016: 16) argues, becomes the ‘special preserve’ of these sidelined ways of speaking, as well as of those who speak them or place interest in them. However, such forms of authenticity are not uniform indexical phenomena, which are mechanically produced by some invariant causality.
Rather, such indexicalities are forged in the actuality of metapragmatic exchange, where they are bound by practically constrained logics, interests and ends. While metapragmatic exchange over authenticity is expected in certain segments of the linguistic market, it is also, recalling Cameron (1995: 212), ‘diverse and fragmentary, and its concerns do not stand still’ (see also Silverstein, 1981a, 1993, 2003a; Lucy, 1993; Taylor, 1993, 2000, 2016, 2017; Cameron, 2004; Coupland and Jaworski, 2004; Pablé and Hutton, 2015). Authenticity is as multifarious as it is predictable.

As previously noted, the thesis is concerned with this tension. On the one hand, the placing of interest in linguistic form over propositional content seems to be an engrained orientation in the exchange over marginalized ways of speaking (see Woolard, 2016: 22ff.). On the other hand, there is no pre-given fixed standard of authenticity by which this exchange is guided. Whereas the predicament of authenticity is a structural effect of the imposition of the legitimate language, there exists no precisely defined limen for linguistic authenticity. In metapragmatic exchange, differently formed notions of authenticity may clash and compete. These practice-grounded constraints, and the multiplication of the object that they bespeak, are the main interest in the studies presented in this thesis.

In the study of language, as Saussure points out in the Cours, ‘the object is not given in advance of the viewpoint’ but is coterminous with the viewpoint. In order to study language, one must accept that ‘it is the viewpoint that creates the object’ (Saussure, 1983[1916]: 23). Furthermore, as Saussure (1983[1916]: 23) goes on to state, ‘there is nothing to tell us in advance whether one way of looking is prior to or superior to any of the others’. If these suggestions should be of any relevance for grasping language as a fundamentally social phenomenon, it is necessary to eschew commonplace interpretations of the Saussurean viewpoint, as it were, which tend to reduce language to a symbolic object with an objective structure (see Harris, 1987, 1990b, 1990c, 2003; Bourdieu, 1991a: 43–57, 163–170). Such embryotic appeals for a reflexive epistemology are rare in the Cours, and have little general currency in most of the scholarly traditions that the Saussurean legacy engendered (see Harris, 1987, 1990c, 2003; Gregersen, 1991; Hutton, 1995; Taylor, 2000; Joseph, 2012; Silverstein, 2016a). Rather, this suggestion should entail a sensitization to language as an ‘object of a plurality of representations that are socially recognized but partially irreducible to each other – like the points of view socially instituted in the fields of which they are the product’ (Bourdieu, 2000: 99).

In its engagement with practically sustained representations of Övdalsk and Övdalsk authenticity, the thesis attempts to put this ambition to work. In broad terms, it follows Silverstein’s suggestion that any understanding of indexicality must be grounded in an account of the dialectic between what is
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historically given and what is practically produced (see Silverstein, 1979, 1981a, 1985, 1993, 2003a, 2010a, 2014a). More precisely, any understanding of a linguistic authenticity, just as of any other socially recognized form of language, must account for the fact that authenticity, first and foremost, is metapragmatically regimented. Secondly, it must also take into account that such regimentation is a dialectical process, couched in practices of (reflexive) language use, and that this condition is formative of the value of (most) indexical signs. Thirdly, it must also account for the fact that such practices of metapragmatic regimentation relate closely to historically produced systems of ideas about language and things linguistic. Authenticity, just as any indexical value, is ordered. It is ordered in the course of history and in the actuality of linguistic exchange, that is, in any dialectical interplay between robust historical presuppositions and creative interactional entailments. As Silverstein (2003a: 195ff.) formulates it, indexicality exists in the interface between ‘what is already established’ and what is ‘brought into being’ in the unfolding of linguistic exchange (see also Vološinov, 1973: 106ff.; Silverstein, 1977, 1981a, 1985, 1993, 2005, 2014a).

Exploring such dialectical processes, the studies of the thesis jointly seek to account for the relationship between historical processes of regimentation and the effectuation of metapragmatic exchange over Övdalsk in the actuality of practice. In epistemological terms, its interest in the dialectical production of socially recognized – indexical – qualities of Övdalsk materializes in a concurrent interest in temporally extended processes of regimentation (Studies I and IV), an interest in situated and contingent events of regimentation that dialectically form part of, or unfold in relation to, such processes (Studies I, III, IV), as well as in the historical origins of some visions that have been pertinent in these exchanges (Study II). The point here of this orientation, quoting Heller (2011: 44), is ‘to capture both the ways in which things unfold in real time, and the ways in which they sediment into constraints that go far beyond the time and place of specific interactions’. The studies of the thesis seek to make sense of the slow production of metapragmatic visions and divisions, that is, of ways of seeing and ordering Övdalsk. As such, it aligns with the linguistic anthropological – and more recently, the sociolinguistic – interest in language ideology (see Hymes, 1971[1964]; Silverstein, 1979, 1981a, 1985, 1998b, 2003a, 2014a; Woolard, 1985, 1998, 2016; Irvine, 1989; Blommaert 1999, 2014; Kroskrity, 2000, 2010), that is, in practically sustained ‘system[s] of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interest’ (Irvine, 1989: 255). Importantly, however, the studies in the thesis insist on investigating such systems of ideas in the actuality of linguistic exchange and, by contingency, in the trajectories that begot such exchange. It seeks not only to account for the most ostentatious manifestations of the
practical logics by which systems of ideas are manifested, but also for the collective history that has produced such categories of thought, as well as the histories through which they have been inculcated in the agents caught up in metapragmatic exchange (see Bourdieu, 2000: 9ff.). In the dialectical course of linguistic practice, as Silverstein (2014a: 150) argues, the ‘indexical presuppositions’ that have accumulated throughout history ‘are transduced into indexical entailment’ (see also Silverstein, 1979: 207ff., 1981a, 1985, 1993, 2003a, 2014a, n.d.). Authenticity, as any indexical effect, is simultaneously constrained and enabled by the historically produced logic that runs through metapragmatic exchange.

The greater point of analytically engaging with this dialectic, rather than with some presumably fixed object, is to steer clear of an excessively reductive account. Above all, the dual focus on historical process, on the one hand, and on more bounded metapragmatic exchange, on the other, attempts to make impossible a unilateral, isolationistic focus on merely one of the token objects of social, linguistic inquiry. While the studies of the thesis scrutinize the micro-drama of metapragmatically invested linguistic exchanges, the inclusion in the analysis of event-transcending processes (e.g. entextualization; see Studies III and IV), of large-scale symbolic formations (i.e. ideologies of language; see Studies I–IV), and various social structures (i.e. state institutions, markets of symbolic goods; Studies I, II and IV), negates the prospect of a purely ‘interactional’ analysis of interaction. Similarly, the thoroughgoing focus on metapragmatic exchange, as well as on the time-transcending prevalence of the output of some exchanges, negates the prospect of engaging with symbolic structures (i.e. discourses, ideologies) as if they were located outside the social world and as if they existed independently of the agents who populate it. Below, I expand on these points of orientation.

4. The metapragmatics of authenticity, or: what does it imply to say that authenticity is an indexical value?

‘To describe and analyse the specific character which space and time assume in human experience’ as Cassirer (1944: 63) maintains, ‘is one of the most appealing and important tasks of an anthropological philosophy’. Ways of perceiving space and time, in Cassirer’s view (e.g. Cassirer, 1955[1923]: 93ff.), are closely linked to language, and vice versa. This philosophical outlook, which is recognizable in the work of Sapir (e.g. Sapir, 1916) and in some schools of linguistic thought that it has engendered (see Silverstein, 1979, 1991; Hymes, 1983[1962]), has been further elaborated in linguistic
anthropology, where the analytical task of grasping notions of time and space has been construed as inseparable from analyses of language and language use. Here, the interest in the interfaces of time, space and language has often been realized as an analytical interest in indexicality, and in the social processes in which indexicality is embedded. This is also a pivotal analytical raster of much of the work presented in this thesis. It is recurrently brought to bear on notions of Övdalsk authenticity and authentic Övdalsk, and on the practices and exchanges in which such notions are made to matter.

As indicated in the studies included in the thesis (mainly in Studies II, III and IV), ideas and enunciations of Övdalsk authenticity often involve a temporal dimension. The presented analyses repeatedly note that the metapragmatic elaboration of indexically authentic Övdalsk often encompasses articulations and visions of time and temporal divisions. As the studies suggest, Övdalsk authenticity is often envisioned, pronounced and experienced as a distinctly temporal phenomenon. Furthermore, through concurrent metapragmatic activities, such temporal contrasts often come blended with various spatial contrasts and configurations. Arguably, such forms of exchange are not only united by their metapragmatic character, but also by their capacity to produce and order indexicality. Some of these concepts could warrant some explanatory work. This section, accordingly, provides a somewhat extensive account of the concept of indexicality, of its relationship to metapragmatic exchange (and reflexive language more generally), and of its relevance to the analytical discussions of authenticity that are presented in the studies. Following these clarifications, the discussion will move on to a few comments on some notions of time, temporality and language, which hold relevance for some of the analyses.

In a rather general sense, as Levinson (2004: 110) points out, indexical signs are signs that ‘draw attention’ to some particular ‘feature of the spatiotemporal environment’ in which an utterance occurs (see also Hanks, 2011; Silverstein, 1976a, 2003a, 2014a). Such semiotic realizations of space and time have, in this view, a rather broad scope; spanning from relatively fixed classes of temporal and spatial markers (e.g. tense, direction, location, proximity; see Fillmore, 1975; Levinson, 1979, 1996, 2004; Hanks, 1990, 2011; Silverstein 1976a, 1976b, 1981c, 2014a) to schematized distances in social space (e.g. T/V markers, honorifics; see Brown and Gilman, 1960; Silverstein, 1981b, 1985, 2013b; Irvine, 1992), and onward to more complex discursive phenomena that in one way or another interrelate with spatial and temporal structures (e.g. registers, language ideologies; see Hymes, 1971[1964]; Silverstein, 1979, 1981d, 2006, 2013b, 2014b; Hanks, 2005). While indexicality, in this fashioning, may resemble a continuum, spanning from linguistic form to explicit metapragmatic practice, the extreme points
of this continuum are typically taken up in different types of investigations. Whereas more strictly linguistic inquiries are concerned with the structural encoding of physical space and consecutive time, linguistic anthropological research typically concentrates on the relationship between indexicality and some aspect of social, linguistic practice. This discrepancy also implies a conceptual opposition. While the former outlook tends to remain fairly confident about the primacy of linguistic structure, the latter is often sceptical about such claims. Seen from this point of view, claims about linguistic structure are effectively claims about second-order objects, feeding into the regimentation of the objects that they metapragmatically invoke.

In several ways, the studies included in this thesis expand on the latter approach to the indexical character of authenticity, and to its deep relationship to space and time. As noted, Studies II and III engage with two separate practices, both of which were deeply interested in the relationship between time and Övdalsk. Studies I and IV analyse two exchanges invested in notions of space. Study I looks into the regimentation of Övdalsk in Sweden’s linguistic market, and Study IV analyses a set of articulations of the perceived relationship between physical space and Övdalsk names. In the latter studies, furthermore, notions of time are also co-present in the exchange. In Studies II, III and IV, the metapragmatic interface of time, space and language, which is the main object of investigation, is analysed as a dialectical recognition and effectuation of linguistic authenticity. The point of departure for all these analyses is, thus, that such forms of authenticity must be approached as a set of sufficiently ordered indexical values. However, such construal is in itself void of explanatory force. To merely point out that authenticity is an indexical value is, as Coupland (2014: 25) rightly notes, close to a tautology. Such characterization succeeds at most in relativizing authenticity, but offers no means for grasping it. The notion of indexicality needs to be unpacked, and properly understood, should such a suggestion make sense. The following discussion attempts to do so, both at a general level as well as in relation to the studies of this thesis. As such, it expounds on the concept of indexicality, as well as several other concepts that are tied into it, which all hold relevance to the studies of the thesis.

In very broad terms, the notion of indexicality denotes a semiotic relation, commonly derived from Peirce's typology of signs (CP. 1.369–1.372, 2.230–2.308). Peircean semiology has afforded far more interpretations than the mainly linguistic anthropological works that are discussed here (for some useful perspectives, see Sebeok, 1990; Segerdahl, 1993; Sonesson, 1995, 2010, 2013). A basic agreement between such diverse conceptualizations of indexicality, following Peirce (e.g. CP. 1.372), would be the understanding of the indexical sign as possessing no semiotic generality. It is denotationally obscure, in the sense that it lacks a fixed denotational value; a conventionally
upheld *signified*. Rather than symbolically denoting more or less invariantly, the indexical sign maintains a provisional relationship with that, to which it indexically *points*, thus co-producing a variable value in relation to its immediate use. Furthermore, an indexical sign invokes and creates certain contextual properties of the situation where it is brought to use. As Silverstein (2014a: 139) puts it, a message is indexical if it signals one or more of the ‘aspects of what, at least conceptually, “surrounds” or frames it’. Much to the dismay of linguists who construe language as a fundamentally decontextualized system, the meaning of an indexical sign ‘is’ inseparable from its immediate conditions of use.

From this vantage point, at least superficially, indexicality seems to rub backs with deixis. As Levinson (2004: 97–98) observes, the two terms have, to a certain degree, become coextensive (see also Silverstein, 2005: n. 1; Hanks, 2011; Koyama, 2011; cf. Silverstein, 1993). While the terminological discrepancy points back to a polygenesis of sorts, with the term *indexicality* stemming from Peirce (e.g. CP. 2.305–2.306; see Levinson, 2004; Sebeok, 1990; Silverstein, 1977: 146ff., 2004) and *deixis* from Bühler (e.g. Bühler, 1982[1934]; see Hanks, 1996, 2005, 2011; Levinson, 2004), such scholastic distinctions have become less clear in more syncretic engagements with language and social life. In Levinson’s view (e.g. Levinson, 1979, 2004), the term *indexicality* indexes ‘broader phenomena of contextual dependency’ whereas the term *deixis* indexes ‘narrower linguistically relevant aspects of indexicality’. From such a vantage point, deixis is more clearly associated with systemic facets of language, conceptualized as ‘points of intersection between linguistic structure and the social settings in which speech takes places’ (Hanks, 2011: 311), and thus with classes of signs that are ‘semantically insufficient to achieve reference without contextual support’ (Levinson, 2004: 103). Conversely, indexicality, in this view, does not necessarily presuppose formal fixity. In relation to such concerns, it must be underscored that such taxonomical distinctions are not universally accepted, but tend to be defended by scholars who place interest in the study of such classes of signs, that is, in deixis.

It should nonetheless be asked to what extent such oppositions are but metapragmatically sustained. Disregarding any scholastic fragmentation of indexicality, Silverstein’s work offers a somewhat different standpoint on the matter. To be sure, Silverstein does not propose a taxonomical hierarchy between *indexical* and *deictic* phenomena, but has long also used the term indexicality in his work on more ‘systemic’ facets of language (Silverstein, 1976a, 1979, 1981a, 1985, 1993, 2003a, 2010a, 2014a; but see Silverstein, 1978, for a counterexample). Rather, the Silversteinian programme, quoting Levinson (2004: 101), has operated on the insight that ‘the property of indexicality is not exhausted by the study of inherently indexical
expressions’, that is, by investigations of relatively ‘closed’ classes of spatial and temporal indexes, such as tense systems, pronouns, spatial markers, and the like. In Silverstein’s view, indexicality is bound up with typifiable linguistic practices, as well as the socially recognized and recognizable linguistic formations that they engender (Silverstein, 1981b, 2003a, 2004, 2006, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a). Likewise, Silverstein links indexicality closely to habituated forms of self-presentation (Silverstein, 1981b, 1985, 1988, 1998a, 2006, 2013a, 2013b, 2014b), and, more generally, to socially positioned ways of thinking about and valorizing language (i.e. language ideologies, ideologies of language; see Silverstein, 1977, 1979, 1985, 1996a, 1996b, 1998a, 2003b, 2010b, 2016b; see also Woolard, 1998; Kroskrity, 2000, 2010). This multi-layered understanding of indexicality grants that just about any expression can function as an indexical sign. In any enunciation, indexicality is ‘always already immanent as a competing structure of values’ (Silverstein, 2003a: 194), and lingers consequently as a potential for recognizing any linguistic sign – simplex or complex – as something other than the ‘message’ it presumably seeks to convey. Accordingly, ‘any linguistic configuration is potentially indexical’ (Silverstein, 1979: 206).

The work presented in this thesis aligns more with the work of Silverstein, and its uptake in linguistic anthropology, than with more structure-oriented takes on indexicality. Central to the Silversteinian outlook is the understanding that indexicality is determined by something more than merely the ‘use’ of an inherently indexical or indexicality-laden sign in some particular ‘context’. The capacity of such a sign to operate indexically is, rather, relative of some durable, socially upheld vision of language and ways of using language. A bearing point in Silverstein’s work is, thus, that ‘an index must “point” to something interpretable within a definable framework’ (Silverstein, 2014a: 146). Indexicality is, hence, a dialectical semiotic phenomenon. It is not merely achieved by the ‘felicitous’ use of a certain ‘type’ of sign (Silverstein, 2003a, 2010a, 2014a). It is neither determined by some pre-existing or autonomous – ‘objective’ – linguistic structure, nor by the capacity of agents to subjectively agree upon a perpetually provisional meaning in the immediacy of face-to-face interaction. Indexicality can neither be separated from the continuous flow of discursive exchange, nor be reduced to it. Rather than being primarily transcendent or primarily emergent, indexicality, in Silverstein’s view, both presupposes and entails (Silverstein, 1981a, 1985, 1993, 2003a, 2014a). Indexicality is informed by durable visions of language, as well as contingent upon the immediate conditions of production under which an indexical sign is produced and recognized (Silverstein, 1979, 1981a, 1985, 2003a, 2014a). ‘All indexicality’, as Silverstein (2010a: 347) maintains, ‘is metapragmatically regimented’. An effect of indexicality is not just randomly manifested in
evanescent acts of perception, but ‘must be constrained or “regimented” by some meta-indexical – we say “metapragmatic” – functionality’ (Silverstein, 2014a: 146).

Metapragmatics, having afforded several ‘different’ meanings and uses (see Silverstein, 1979, 1993, 2014a; Lucy, 1993; Caffi, 2006; Hübler, 2011; Koyama, 2011), may not be an entirely transparent term. Such differences notwithstanding, the linguistic anthropological understanding of the term is bound up with an interest in linguistic practices, in the beliefs and stakes that motivate such practices, and in the effects that they jointly bring about (see Silverstein, 1981a: 383, 1993, 2003a, 2014a; cf. Agha, 2007: 28; Wilce, 2009: 177; Rampton, 2011, 2013). Terms like metapragmatic discourse, metapragmatic practice, metapragmatic exchange and similar terms seek to highlight the ways in which people think and speak about language and language use; about what language and communication is or ought to be; and what the reasons for this might be. Analyses of metapragmatic exchange, thus, seek to tap into the practices and visions that in some significant way make language their object (Silverstein, 1978: 247, 1979, 1981b: 3–4, 1993, 2003, 2014a; Lucy, 1993; see also Woolard, 1985, 1998; Irvine, 1989; Kroskrity, 2000, 2010). Significantly shaping this line of research, Silverstein presents this tripartite interest – simultaneously placed in linguistic form, in social practice, and in ideologies of language – as ‘the datum for a science of language’ (Silverstein, 1985: 220; see also Silverstein, 1979, 1981a, 2003a, 2). To speak about metapragmatics, then, is to speak about linguistically interested exchanges, in which numerous socially positioned visions of language and social life grapple with each other. It means, likewise, to grasp the fact that statements about language and language use may operate as ‘regimenting principles’, which more or less explicitly, and with a varying degree of success, shape and bias linguistic behaviour (Silverstein, 2003a: 197; see also Silverstein, 1985, 1992, 1993, 2004, 2014a).

By shifting focus from language structure to linguistic practice, this gaze has effectively reworked the ‘original’ conceptualization of metalanguage from which metapragmatics traces its lineage. The most widely circulated notion of metalanguage corresponds, more or less, to the conceptualization proposed by Tarski (1956[1931]), which states that ‘we must always distinguish clearly between the language about which we speak and the language in which speak’ (Tarski, 1956[1931]: 167). This proposition is mainly concerned with a rigorous formal logic, caring little about less-specialized languages. Jakobson, effectively expanding the use of this notion of metalanguage, states that ‘metalanguage is not only a necessary scientific tool utilized to logicians and linguists; it plays also an important role in our everyday life’ (Jakobson, 1960: 356). While expanding its scope and
reframing its relevance, Jakobson reiterates on a theoretical plane Tarski’s separation of language and metalanguage, defining metalanguage as ‘talk about language’ (Jakobson, 1985[1972]: 90), as ‘messages referring to the code’ (Jakobson, 1985[1969]: 96), and the like (see Jakobson, 1985[1956], 1960). At the same time, Jakobson grants that the use of ‘ordinary’ language – as opposed to the specialized language of formal logic – precludes a clear separation of ‘object language’ and ‘metalanguage’, with metalanguage being construed as a ‘function’ of ‘language’ rather than as a discrete and logically self-contained propositional system. In ordinary language, metalinguistic statements, according to Jakobson, are performed in the object language. ‘English (as metalanguage)’ may be used to speak about ‘English (as object language)’ (Jakobson, 1985[1956]: 117), and the same relationship between ‘system’ and ‘function’, as the general implication of Jacobson’s view goes, can be assumed to hold true for any language. Metalanguage is not merely a theoretical configuration of a specialized, strictly defined language of logic, but rather a universal condition of human language. It is simply an integral ‘part of language’ (Jakobson, 1985[1972]: 91). Or as Silverstein (n.d.: 7) puts it, metapragmatic exchange involves ‘a functional leakage with duplex surface forms, doubly functioning as “language” and “metalanguage”’ (see also Silverstein, 1976a: 24). Thus, Jakobson holds that ‘we practice metalanguage without realizing the metalingual character of our statements’ (Jakobson, 1985[1956]: 117; see also Jakobson, 1960: 356). Nevertheless, his research hardly ventured into any ethnographic investigation of the production and reception of such statements in the actuality of linguistic exchange. To Jakobson, metalanguage is a functional affordance in linguistic structure and remains, by and large, a theoretical ‘problem’ (e.g. Jakobson, 1985[1959], 1971[1961], 1985[1972]). However, in Silverstein’s work, as well as in linguistic anthropology more generally, notions of metalanguage are seen as epistemologically pointless unless they are brought into relation with their practical manifestations. As Cameron (2004: 311) points out, language-about-language is by no means a specialized and restricted ‘function’ of language. The ‘meta’ is not merely an analytical category corresponding to some autonomous structural property of language, but is rather, as Lucy (1993: 18) writes, something that ‘takes place all the time’ – in all linguistic exchange – and thereby contributes ‘to structure ongoing linguistic activity’ (see also Silverstein, 1979, 1981a, 1985, 1993, 2003a, 2014a).

In line with this viewpoint, Silverstein construes indexicality as a dialectical condition (Silverstein, 1979, 1985, 2003a, 2014a, 2014b; see also Silverstein, 1976a: 33–35). A certain indexical value, in the Silversteinian view, is contingent upon the ‘give-and-take of actual interaction’ (Silverstein, 1979: 207) in which it appears as an ‘(indexical) effect’ or an
‘indexical entailment’ (Silverstein, 1979, 1998b, 2003, 2014a). As such, indexicality is not, however, entirely random, but its ‘effectiveness’ is formed in relation to a set of more durable conditions, which linger beyond the control of agents involved in a given linguistic exchange. Such ‘indexical presuppositions’ – presuppositions for indexicality – ‘shape potential performability and interpretability’ of some part of discourse as being indexical (Silverstein, 2014a: 150). To quote Silverstein (1998b: 129), ‘indexicality is possible only in a dialectical process mediated by ideological formations’. An ‘(indexical) effect’ or ‘indexical entailment’ can neither be independent of the immediate exchange in which it gains its efficacy, nor from the historical production of the conditions of that particular exchange. With Bourdieu (1996: 29), it can be said the Silversteinian position asserts ‘that social agents construct social reality, both individually and collectively’, while it rests assured that the same agents ‘have not constructed the categories that they implement in this construction’. This dialectical interaction between the given and the effectuated – between history and situated practice – is particularly pertinent in relation to linguistic exchange about language, about linguistic forms, language use, and the like. Yet, the creative practices of language use can never entirely free themselves of their history. With language, something is always given in advance.

As an indexical value, then, linguistic authenticity is situated in the dialectic between some historically produced understanding of language and the mutable here-and-now of linguistic exchange. It is, to a certain extent, contingent upon certain durable preconditions of linguistic exchange, but is, on the other hand, calibrated in the actuality of practice. Accordingly, authenticity is far from a unitary concept. As I have pointed out (e.g. Study III), authenticity often appears as an ‘underspecified category’. It comes with more or less explicit claims on transcendence and fundamentality, but is at once inherently indeterminate, elusive and imprecise. As Adorno (1973: 123) writes:

In many cases the distinction between essential and inessential, between authentic and inauthentic, lies with the arbitrariness of definition, without in the least implying the relativity of truth. The reason for this situation lies in language. Language uses the term "authentic" in a floating manner. The word also wavers according to its weightiness, in the same way as occasional expressions.

The arbitrariness of definition is, of course, bound up with practices of defining and denoting, that is, with some historically produced and socially situated form of linguistic exchange. The discursive practices targeted by Adorno’s critique are those of German existentialism, of Heidegger, Jaspers, and others, and their relationship with 19th century continental philosophy.
The main critical thrust in Adorno’s study is directed at the notions of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*; see Lukács, 1980[1952]; Friedman, 2000; Gordon, 2010), which, in various guises, have precipitated in the work of a number of German thinkers. In comments on the conceptual universe of this intellectual tradition, the products of which have come to circulate beyond its original sites of production, *authentic* (*Eigentlich*), is commonly defined as relating to some transcendent way of being, as well as striving towards and possibly arriving at such a genuine, and contingently enhanced, existence. As emphasized in the above quote, Adorno conceives of his critique of the notion of authenticity as a critique of language, assigning importance to dissecting and ultimately undoing the ‘jargon of authenticity’ that marked and gave substance to the thinking of the ‘authentics’ (*die Eigentlichen*) against whom he directs his polemic. This jargon, or rather this specialized philosophical register (see Bourdieu 1991b), does not only command a particular set of terms, but, at the same time, specific ideas about the nature of language. The ‘jargon of authenticity’ rests on ‘a crude conception of the archaic in language’ and, accordingly strives to ‘ennoble the antiquity of language’ (Adorno, 1973: 42). In metapragmatic terms, such language ideological position-takings are manifest as a register of philosophical expertise with which Adorno critically engages. In the history of Western linguistic thought, comparable views have come in plenty.

In Plato’s *Cratylus* (418a–419a), linguistic authenticity is mentioned in passing as an example of a prevalent theory of reference and referential stability. This position, which Plato eventually repudiates (Plato, 436b ff.), closely links a notion of ‘true’ lexical sense to a notion of authentic words, which harken back to the dawn of language. In *Cratylus* his theory is said to rest on the conviction that the ‘ancient word’ is ‘more likely to be right than the present one’ (Plato, 419a). Not only does such an authentic word refer clearly and unambiguously to some facet of the world, but likewise ‘discloses the intention of the name-giver’ (Plato, 418c), that is, of the hypothetical beings that instituted the word in question. By the same logic, ‘modern language’ often appears a deviation from ‘ancient language’, which owes inauthentic form to human interference. Refuting this view, as well as the reliability of language as an epistemological device more generally (Plato, 436b–440e), Plato argues that words, whether authentic or inauthentic, tell us little about the actual properties of the world.

So why go ‘back’ to Plato? There are some traits in the Platonic discourse reiterated above that are of general interest for grasping any temporality-laden metapragmatic discourse. Just as Plato’s scepticism against the study of natural language has had little impact on subsequent projects of linguistic inquiry (see Hacking, 1975; Harris, 1980, 1981, 1996), the retrospective logic that it touches upon, and ultimately dismisses, retains
its currency in such projects. Often, a temporally sensitized metapragmatics seems to unite various notions of linguistic authenticity. In Western linguistic thought, authentic language, conceptualized as ‘old’, ‘pristine’, ‘primordial’ or in some other sense originary has been a longstanding concern (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Woolard, 2004; Irvine, 2005). Since early modern scholastic endeavours in the field of language, as Bauman and Briggs (2003) argue, Western linguistic thought has been utterly invested in various, albeit closely related, notions of linguistic authenticity. Such notions are not trivial, but have been assigned theoretical importance in various areas of academic expertise, being put to work by different thinkers, in different historical eras, and in relation to various societal ends. Underlying all such appraisals of linguistic authenticity, as Bauman and Briggs (2003) contend, is a shared vision of specific temporal structure in which language is implicated. In their view (Bauman and Briggs, 2003: 13–18, 120–127, 299–321), temporizing references to authentic language and linguistic authenticity rely, crucially, on the reassertion of a symbolic opposition – a ‘Great Divide’ as they put it (e.g. Bauman and Briggs 2003: 14) – between the present and the past. A passage from Herder (2002[1767–8]), whose work Bauman and Briggs (2003: 163–196) discuss at length, can serve to illustrate this point. Herder (2002[1767–8]: 61) maintains that
the oldest languages had much living expression, as the remains of ancient and original languages, though each according to its country, bear witness. These languages, formed immediately according to living nature, and not like more modern languages according to arbitrary, dead ideas

Analysing the works of a number of thinkers whose theories of time and language intersect that of Herder, Bauman and Briggs (2003) seek to bring home the point that any interest in the ‘ancient and original’ language of bygone times is bound up with the discursive production of a clear ‘disjunction between a historical past and the modern present’ (Bauman and Briggs, 2003: 121). The past becomes past by virtue of being contrasted with the present, which only is present as a negation of the past. Having established such a contrast, a certain theory of language, culture, society, politics, and so on, Bauman and Briggs (2003) argue, draws on the established contrast in relation to some specific aim or claim. In the philosophy of Herder, for instance, it is woven into a more general preoccupation with a ‘concrete, relativizing aesthetic particularism’ (Bauman and Briggs, 2003: 190), manifested in relation to language as an interest in genred forms of language use, such as poetry, songs and oratory. In Herder’s view, the historical distinctiveness of such genres offers privileged insights into the organization of a specific society at a specific
historical conjuncture. Furthermore, the oldest language, ‘right down to stubborn idiosyncrasy, ignorance, errors, and poverty’, as Herder (2002[1767–8]: 59) argues, is deemed to effectively function as ‘a mirror of the nation and of the historical age’. Authentic language, as a consequence, is seen as fulfilling a number of epistemological ends, being imperatively linked to a specific society in a specific era. ‘[L]et one investigate the nature of the latter’ (i.e. ‘the nation’ and ‘the historical age’), Herder 2002[1767–8]: 59) postulates, and ‘then one has the nature of the former, of the language in its childhood’.

Stressing the temporal contradictions inherent in such philosophical investigations, Bauman and Briggs (2003) repeatedly point out that any attempt to establish a discursive connection to a distinctively preterite past reasserts the textual permanence of such temporal configuration in the present. In their view, any reference to the past simultaneously invokes a contrasting image of contemporary times. While such an aspiration, at a metadiscursive level, seeks to create an effect of temporal distance, they entextualize the past in the present, rendering it part and parcel of some distinctively ‘modern’ genre of authoritative text. The greater purchase of this vision, Bauman and Briggs (2003: 315) argue, is ‘to show how metadiscursive forms and practices associated with pre- or anti-modernity mingled intimately with markedly modern forms, even within single texts’. The analysis is not only applied to the philosophy of Herder but also, notably, to the works of Locke, the brothers Grimm, and Boas, which are jointly characterized as ‘modernist metadiscursive practices’ that have successfully produced ‘links and gaps, recontextualizing heterogeneous discursive forms in ways that create powerful senses of presence and absence’ (Bauman and Briggs, 2003: 314; see also Briggs, 1993, 2008; Irvine and Gal, 2000; Irvine, 2005).

In their analysis, Bauman and Briggs (2003) draw on scrupulous and exceedingly detailed readings of a large number of original texts, illustrating the ways in which various notions of temporally rationalized linguistic authenticity have been construed by a number of forerunners to contemporary approaches to language and social life. The purported permanence of such visions in academic linguistics, particularly in sociolinguistics, has recently drawn flak from critical sociolinguists. In a widely cited, though concise, critique of the epistemic foundations of sociolinguistics, Bucholtz (2003) argues that the social study of language suffers from ‘nostalgia’, insofar as it frequently has been preoccupied with ‘the past’ and with ‘communities viewed as preserving the past’ (p. 410). This orientation, Bucholtz claims, is inseparable from a set of disciplinary anchored beliefs in the superiority of the principled study of purportedly pure, naturally occurring and unreflexively produced language (Bucholtz,
Bucholtz (2003), as well as a number of other scholars (e.g. Handler, 1986; Bendix, 1997; Moore, 2006; Eckert, 2014), is critical of this gaze, which is seen as the guiding and motivating principle for research in a number of linguistic sub-disciplines. Drawing a straight line from the Romantic interest in historical philology and vernacular language, as discussed by Bauman and Briggs (2003), to late 20th century social linguistic research, Bucholtz (2003: 399) argues that the latter practice consists of a ‘concerted effort to valorize via scholarship an earlier epoch imagined as being directly tied to – yet irrevocably sundered from – the present day’. In this regard, the temporal gaps and links that the latter modus operandi has digressed little from that preferred in the former. Both scholarly endeavours are seen as bound up with strong forms of ‘essentialism’ (Bucholtz, 2003: 400; see also Bendix, 1997).

Such suggestions attempt to take on the ‘appearance of a radical break’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 154) with some purported historical tendency in the language sciences. As such, they align with a quite longstanding urge in contemporary sociolinguistics to break with engrained models and paradigms (for overviews, see Orman, 2012, 2013b; Pennycook, 2016; Jaspers and Madsen, 2016). As of late, research on language and social life – and perhaps European sociolinguistics in particular – is inclined to underscore their distance to and disconnection from a nostalgic ‘modernist’ linguistics. However, while such critiques are well versed in the ‘ignorance of the past’, as Bauman and Briggs (2003: 126) call it, they typically fail to relate their insights about this ignorant past to the state of ignorance, as it were, of the immediate present. In such critiques, past research is simply positioned as deterring examples of erred and faulty epistemologies (see Bendix, 1997; Bucholtz, 2003; Moore, 2006). Such a rhetorical move offers at most a negative delineation of acceptable linguistic inquiry, but little more. The work in this thesis doubts the epistemological promises of any suggestion to simply disregard earlier traditions of research on vaguely realist grounds. Not least in the case of Övdalsk, as Studies III and IV demonstrate in particular, ‘nostalgic’ or even ‘Romantic’ or ‘Herderian’ representations of Övdalsk authenticity seem to hold fairly wide currency.

As the studies illustrate, interests in Övdalsk and in the authenticity of Övdalsk are not merely entrenched in the academic field. While academic students of language, as Studies I and II accentuate, have certainly invested in the authenticity that they see contained in Övdalsk linguistic forms and patterns, such interests transcend the academic field. As all the studies of this thesis indicate, there exist no autonomous boundaries between ‘academic’ and ‘non-academic’ or between ‘scientific’ and ‘lay’ notions of Övdalsk authenticity. As Coupland (2007: 26) writes, authenticity is not merely ‘a
condition of a research design’ but a ‘social’ – that is, indexical – quality. Authentic Övdalsk and Övdalsk authenticity are not clearly defined scholastic representations, but multiply inflected notions that engage people beyond the confines of academic specialism.

The symbolic power vested in some particular way of thinking and talking about language is not inherent in the view nor in the enunciation. Rather, as Irvine (2008: 338) maintains, ‘linguists need to investigate – not just to assume – what kinds of influences their representations of languages may have on people’s ways of using them’. Recognizing that a single representation is never the sole determining factor of some set of such effects, the studies of this thesis make the point that interests in notions of authentic Övdalsk are sustained in a range of metapragmatic activities, differently positioned in time and in social space. This modus operandi breaks with nihilistically deconstructive critiques that attack ‘academic’ visions of linguistic authenticity as isolated, quasi-literary representations. While agents who engage in various metapragmatic exchanges speak from different positions, there may exist an identity between their differentially positioned enunciations. Different indexical presuppositions and effects enjoy different forms of recognition, and are differently integrated into different practices of metapragmatic production. Some of these indexical formations may be spatially and temporally localized, whereas others may be expansive (Silverstein 1979, 1981b, 1985, 1998a, 2013b, 2014b).

In relation to socially recognized visions and divisions of Övdalsk linguistic authenticity, a temporal axis appears to be significant. Notions of Övdalsk authenticity, as repeatedly noted above, seem closely linked to visions and divisions of time. As Woolard (2016: 32) succinctly puts it, ‘a temporal criterion is key’ in recurrent formulations of authenticity, in the sense that origins and beginnings often define socially recognized essences of language and linguistic communication. This ‘temporal criterion’, mostly manifested as a retrospective logic, is pertinent in the empirical content of the studies included in this thesis. The investigative engagement with the metapragmatics of authenticity, recalling Cassirer (1944), readily move into analyses of the specific character that time assumes in linguistic exchange. As such, it touches upon inherent tensions between flows of time (real and apprehended), the ways in which such flows are recognized and brought into relation with language, and the new temporal structures that this integration creates. With Bakhtin (1981: 342), it could be said that indexically authentic Övdalsk appears in the guise of ‘prior discourse’ (Studies II–IV) and that it is indexically ‘connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher’ than the present. Such a relationship, as Husserl (1991[1893–1917]) originally argues, cannot be reduced to some configuration in ‘objective time’ (cf. Duranti, 2010). It cannot merely be construed as a pure
relationship between a purportedly invariant linguistic formation and temporal continuity. As in any linguistic practice that places interest in the language of the past, the ‘past’ appears in union with the ‘now’, insofar as a distinctively ‘present’ linguistic exchange may have the potential capacity to produce language that is recognized as belonging to the past. As Heller (2011: 171) aptly notes, ‘the use of certain forms of language guarantees authenticity’ – not least in a temporal sense – ‘but these forms are necessarily bound up in new practices’ (see also Silverstein, 1985, 1998a, 2014b; Williams, 1992; Schieffelin, 2002; Irvine, 2004).

As Williams (1973: 35) puts it, ‘backward reference has its own logic’. In order to understand the ways in which this logic interrelates with, and is brought to bear on, language, it is necessary to attend to indexicality, and to the forms of metapragmatic exchange that regiment the relationship of indexicality with time and space. In the work included in this thesis, Övdalsk authenticity appears as a temporal object – as an indexical value grounded in a metapragmatic exchange through which the very differences belonging to time are constituted. Thus, in relation to such experiences of having and using language, the studies seek to account for the temporally ‘knotty nature’ (Irvine, 2005: 72) of the authenticity, that is, for the historically formed and, hence, particular and perspectival ways of apprehending, speaking about, and, not least, experiencing the spatial and temporal entrenchments of language.

As the studies in this thesis indicate, linguistic authenticity is closely related to historically produced visions and divisions, and to the work of practically imposing such visions and divisions on language. Indexical effects of authenticity linger in the metapragmatic exchange as potential values, which at times become explicit in the course of practice. As such, they are not confined to a specific temporal configuration, but are ‘spread across time’ (Husserl, 1991[1893–1917]: § 7, 29, 35), insofar as their instantaneous practical existence is tied to, or dissociated from, other temporal configurations. By treating authenticity as a mutable indexical value, which is shaped in the course of practice, through the dialectic between the historically produced logics that such a practice imposes and a situated linguistic exchange, it is, I maintain, possible to begin to properly grasp the specific character of linguistic authenticity. When approached in this way, through the dialectical unfolding of metapragmatic exchange, any ‘crude conception of the archaic in language’ (Adorno, 1973: 42) will appear anything but crude. The ‘ennoblement’ of ‘the antiquity in language’ will most likely come across as a rather intricate metapragmatic achievement.
5. Studies

5.1 Overview

On the face of things, it may appear as if the included studies are preoccupied with discrepant areas of inquiry – with language politics, the history of linguistic thought, interactional sociolinguistics, and even with onomastics. Such categorical discrepancies are, however, only superficial. A narrow ‘disciplinary’ classification of the studies will say very little about their common interests and conceptual foundations, such as those that are outlined above. Most evidently, the studies are united by their shared focus on engagements with Övdalsk. Their objects are tied together by a shared sensitization to metapragmatic exchanges interested in the social existence of Övdalsk. Importantly, all studies attend to practices in which language bespeaks language, and in which Övdalsk, in one way or another, is the central stake. As such, the studies seek to unravel the logic by which these practices operate, and the – mostly – symbolic effects that said practices have produced. In this regard, the variance of the empirical themes should be seen as an attempt to construe the object from a number of mutually reinforcing vantage points. In addition to their respective analyses, the separate studies seek to add shifting temporal horizons to the superordinate heuristic, thus juxtaposing a deep historical backdrop (Study II) with accounts of protracted institutional processes (Studies I and IV) and analyses of situated linguistic interaction (Study III). As clarified in the succeeding subsections, the thesis takes a look at metapragmatic exchange over Övdalsk through historical as well as ethnographic lenses (see also Hanks, 1990, 2010; Heller, 2006, 2011; Woolard, 2016).

**Study I** seeks to provide a zoomed-out account of the ordering of Övdalsk in Sweden’s linguistic market. Focusing on a relatively recent language political debate over the institutional regulation of Övdalsk, it analyses the forms of agreement upon which the exchange in question has come to rest. More broadly, it takes interest in the relationship between the imposition of state power and the regulation of metapragmatic exchange. **Study II** seeks to provide an analysis of the genesis of some durable visions of the relationship between Övdalsk and linguistic authenticity. It discusses the work of the Swedish dialectologist Lars Levander (1883–1950), whose study of Övdalsk commands representative authority to this day. By engaging with Levander’s techniques of scholarly objectivation, as well as with their language theoretical fundaments, the study seeks to create some perspectives on, and distance from, the canonical representations of Övdalsk that have precipitated from Levander’s research. **Study III** seeks to account for the afterlives of such artefacts. It provides an ethnographic account of a
metapragmatically saturated exchange over Övdalsk grammar, in which descriptivist accounts play an important part. Through an analysis of texts, interviews, and in situ interaction, the study seeks to account for the ways in which textual renditions of grammar interrelate with practically sustained, socially recognized models of language and language use (i.e. registers). Study IV seeks to track the ways in which visions of authenticity are drawn into an institutionally and politically invested metapragmatic exchange. Discussing the social nature and practical efficacy of names and naming, it analyses the processes of naming roads in Ålvdalen. With this analysis, the study seeks to account for the notions of authenticity that were at the forefront of this symbolic struggle. The studies are presented and discussed in the following subsections.

5.2 State categories, state vision and vernacular woes in Sweden’s language politics (Study I)

Study I discusses a drawn-out exchange over the (lack of) political and institutional regimentation of Övdalsk, which seemingly has unfolded in relation to a set of well-known metapragmatic categories. Following the Swedish ratification of the ECRML in 2000, the mundane, yet obscure, distinction between ‘language’ and ‘dialect’, which is consecrated in the ECRML, has increasingly seeped into Sweden’s regime of language. This seemingly taxonomical issue had already been extensively discussed in the reports that preceded the Swedish ratification of the ECRML (SOU 1997:192: 59, 69–70, 92–96; Hyltenstam, 1997). In this exchange, the central concern was to determine whether the Finnish spoken in Sweden’s northern Torne Valley region could and should be classified as a ‘language’, distinct from other varieties of Finnish. Eventually, as the differentiation of Meänkieli (Tornedalian Finnish) from Finnish was affirmed in the Swedish ratification of the ECRML (see Winsa, 2000; Elenius, 2008; Pietikäinen et al., 2011), the language–dialect distinction has remained relevant in Sweden’s language politics. The persistence and legitimacy of this distinction has been particularly conspicuous in relation to Övdalsk.

In relation to Övdalsk, this categorical dichotomy has become vested with symbolic force and institutional relevance, as manifested in the nature of the struggles over the ordering of Övdalsk. Throughout this contentious exchange, one faction of agents has argued that Övdalsk is a ‘language’ and another faction has argued that Övdalsk is a ‘dialect’. In relation to the Sweden’s institutional language political frameworks, such taxonomic claims are understood as entailing different institutional sanctions. By virtue of being a ‘language’ – as the former group of Övdalsk advocates has argued – Övdalsk should be subjected to some form of officialized recognition. The
latter agents – mainly state functionaries of various kinds – have tended to oppose such claims. Thus, the former agents, a group dominated by linguists speaking on behalf of Övdalsk advocates in Älvdalen, seek to challenge the incumbent order in which Övdalsk lacks official consecration. The latter agents seek to defend status quo.

In its analysis of the debate, Study I engages with the body of texts – policy documents, expert committee reports, official statements, parliamentary motions, opinion pieces and academic papers – commenting on, and thereby contributing to, the contentious exchange. The study has a two-pronged aim. Firstly, it seeks to provide an exhaustive, chronological account of the contemporary history of Övdalsk as a contentious ‘issue’ in Sweden’s language politics. The language political ‘problematic’ of Övdalsk, as I write, has become intimately tied to ‘the question of what Övdalsk ultimately “is” – a “language”, a “(Swedish) dialect”, or something else.’ This question is, of course, objectively unanswerable. An answer can, at most, satisfy some arbitrary definitional criteria, but little more. At the same time, an exchange that attempts to produce an answer to the language–dialect question contributes to the construal of this question as valid and factually accurate. Relative to this point of departure, Study I attempts to grasp the process of imposition and the forms of acceptance that it has engendered. Rather than accepting the descriptive accuracy of the dichotomy upon which the question rests, the study asks why the language–dialect question has commanded so much attention in relation to Övdalsk. Doing so, it seeks to account for the tacit forms of agreements that the agents involved in this exchange have created, reiterated and imposed, on themselves as well as on others. Drawing on Bourdieu’s programme for a sociology of the state (e.g. Bourdieu, 1994, 1996, 2014), the study takes particular interest in the forms of concord that have been established through the exchange over Övdalsk. It argues that the contention over the regimentation of Övdalsk has partaken in establishing an unspoken agreement on the rules of engagement – on their worth, validity and relevance – as well as on the reality of the objects over which the battle has been fought. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the language political order is fundamentally based in such forms of misrecognized concord, that is, in the continuous defence of the visions and division on which even the most vehement antagonists seem to agree.

Study I underscores that enunciations about the ontology of Övdalsk must be construed as part and parcel of this ‘spectacle of universality’, that is, of the theatrical staging of the official and the universal that unfold in the presence of the state (Bourdieu, 2014: 28). Thus, although the dialect-or-language question is ‘mythical’ (Harris, 1990d; see also Harris, 1981), as neither of its objects can be located anywhere but in the metapragmatic practices that bespeak them (see also Silverstein 1993, 1998b, 2003a, 2010a,
2014a), it is far from a meaningless question. However, its meaning lies not in the categories that it brings into play, but in the practical activities that bring these categories into play, universalizing and officializing them. Tellingly, the question of whether Övdalsk is a ‘language’ or a ‘dialect’ has commanded steadily increasing attention from linguists, politicians and policymakers. These agents have continuously reiterated the importance of the language–dialect distinction in the language political exchange over Övdalsk. By implicitly stressing the political relevance of a scholastic taxonomic distinction, they have increasingly made the language–dialect distinction an object with political relevance and expediency. Thus, investigating the pervasiveness of this strategy, Study I seeks to account for how and why officialized ways of seeing and ordering – that is, state ‘principles of vision and division’ (Bourdieu 2014: 164) – become accepted and implemented, and are thereby rendered symbolically effective, in a space where symbolic struggles unfold.

What is interesting about the language political exchange over Övdalsk, Study I argues, is that it has spent little time on questions other than the ‘language-versus-dialect’ riddle. The notion of a ‘Swedish consensus’ (see Kulick and Rydström, 2015: 233–239) seems to be a paradoxically apt descriptor for the, at times, heated debate over Övdalsk. Although the exchange has certainly encompassed contention, this contention has mainly surged in relation to the metapragmatic classification of Övdalsk. To the extent that other aspects of Sweden’s regime of language have been discussed, they have mostly been addressed by proxy of the question of classification, or as being secondary to it. However, contentions over a taxonomical opposition have a latent potential to produce and maintain a greater number of symbolic effects than those that fit into the narrow space of linguistic taxonomies. The looming reward in a struggle over classification is the power to consecrate an arbitrary boundary; to impose it in a specific situation and thereby endow the schema of classification with increased legitimacy. Participation in the struggle comes at the price of ceaselessly ‘fostering a misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of the limit and encourage a recognition of it as legitimate’ (Bourdieu, 1991a: 118).

Consequently, the imposition of categories imposes more than categories, and commands symbolic power over more things than merely over categorized objects.

In the case at hand, the imposition of categories is firmly linked to state power, and must consequently be treated in relation to the workings of the state. Bourdieu (2014: 114) maintains that the state is ‘established by way of the very symbolic order it establishes’. As such, the state exists both ‘objectively, in things’, such as in the divisions into groups and institutions, and ‘subjectively – in mental structures in the form of principles of division,
principles of viewing things, systems of classifications’ (Bourdieu, ibid.). The state, in Bourdieu’s work, is not theorized as self-regulating machinery; not as an institutional automaton nor as an ideological apparatus (see Bourdieu, 1994, 1996, 2005, 2014; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 114–115; Wacquant, 1993, 1996). It is not a monolithic entity with a single ‘will’, but rather an ‘ensemble of fields that are the site of struggles [over] the power to constitute and to impose as universal and universally applicable’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 112; see also Wacquant, 1993, 1996; Bourdieu 1996, 2014). In this space, holders of various forms of capital – economic, political, legal, academic, and so on – struggle for positions that allow them to produce and accumulate more material and symbolic wealth. In this sense, the state ‘is a battleground for agents from different fields, who compete for the power to exercise legitimate control over fields and markets’ (see Bourdieu, 1994, 2005: 33ff, 2014; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 111–115). It affords battles between antagonistic agents who, embodying conflicting interests and agendas, engage in battles for the authority to consecrate through the state (Bourdieu, 2014: 99–101).

Such forms of competition, however, tend to pay tribute to the symbolic order upheld by the state. Just as the double – simultaneously objective and subjective – imposition of the symbolic order ‘tends to make a large number of practices and institutions appear self-evident and needing no explanation’ (Bourdieu 2014: 114), such practices and institutions conversely legitimize the symbolic order. State power is manifest in the conditioning of innumerable ‘obsequious acts’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 67ff., 292, n. 1; 2014: 3–4), that is, acts that ‘display a pure respect for the symbolic order’ and thereby assert the competitors’ ‘compliance of the fundamental presuppositions of the field’ (Bourdieu 1990: 68).

Seen through this lens, a language political struggle asserts the reality of the symbolic profits that the state’s language political regime is said to be offering. At the same time, the course of struggle contributes to reasserting and rendering effective categories of political perception that often are prior to the struggle itself. Agents who are involved in a language political struggle are bound to encounter tacit demands to accept and reiterate the principles of vision and division that organize the game in which they participate. In relation to their social position and dispositions, these agents are not only more or less likely to become imbued with these principles of vision and division, but also to likely reiterate and put these principles to work in the reality of practice. Through such processes of imposition and inculcation, these principles – ideas, systems of belief, categories, and so on – will serve to ‘harmonize and orchestrate agents’ with a varying degree of effectiveness (Bourdieu, 2014: 168ff.).
Thus, Study I argues that the exchange over categories and categorization has primarily served to further entrench and legitimize the principles of vision and division upon which Sweden’s state-backed regime of language rests. This conclusion may sound bleak. It could appear as if I am suggesting that even the most apparent forms of dissent do nothing but reinforce the dominant order. So, am I suggesting that Sweden’s language politics operates in line with the totalitarian motto of *everything within the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state*? No, I do not suggest such a thing. What I do suggest is that the Swedish state vision of language has become entrenched in virtually all agents who have partaken in the language political struggle over Övdalsk. Through the universal acceptance and use of the stately consecrated categories and divisions, the state vision has, accordingly, become omnipresent. By repeatedly venerating the political relevance of the language–dialect distinction, social agents (mostly linguists) have increasingly legitimized the political order that excluded Övdalsk in the first place. The misrecognition of this effect, which is upheld through a realist vision of the relationship between the indeterminate categories ‘language’ and ‘dialect’, has, thus, a very real political effect. Rather than furthering the obsequious validation of these arbitrary categories, which has been the guiding logic of the debate, Study I investigates what the exchange, together with the logic that propels it, has achieved.

As for legitimizing and imposing the consecrated language political logic on a new object, the exchange has done a great deal. In speaking about Övdalsk, a number of agents, who command an authoritative voice on language and language political matters, have above all validated the principles of vision and division upon which the Swedish regime of language is based. Nevertheless, their respect for the incumbent order has been less effective for changing the actual regimentation of Övdalsk. In May 2017, telling the six parliamentary motions, which suggested an officialisation of Övdalsk as ‘language’, as a ‘minority language’ or as a ‘regional language’, were dismissed by the members of the Swedish parliament 272 votes to 33. The previous regimentation of Övdalsk remained unaltered.

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15 In Study I, only three of these parliamentary motions are discussed. The additional three motions (i.e. Stenkvist et al., 2016; Emilsson, 2016; Helander, 2016) were filed with the Riksdag in the autumn of 2016, either immediately before the submission of Study I to *Language Policy* or during the review process. Lightly revising the study (mainly in February 2017), I decided not to expand the discussion to treat the new motions. The reason was mainly that none of the motions – as Study I predicts – made any new move in the exchange. By suggesting that Övdalsk ought to ‘be made an official minority language’ (Stenkvist, et al., 2016), ‘be recognised as a regional language’ (Emilsson, 2016) or ‘be recognised as a minority or regional language in accordance with the ECRML’ (Helander, 2016), the MPs further validated the language political obsequium.
Through the parliamentary decision, Övdalsk was left at the aegis of its speakers, and continued to be barred from state-backed institutional interventions. It has continued to be excluded from Sweden’s explicit – affirmative and positively formed, if one will – language political sanctions. While it would be presumptuous to suggest alternative strategies or even full-fledged solutions, as research in language politics is often quick to do, it should nevertheless be asked what could be achieved by a debate that moves beyond an obsequious agreement on the reality and political relevance of the language–dialect distinction. Study I clarifies the effects of not making this move. Furthermore, and importantly so, it also clarifies some of the reasons why this move has not yet been made.

5.3 The linguistic prerequisites for cultural analysis: Lars Levander’s reocentric ethnographies of peasant life and language (Study II)

Study II engages with the intellectual history of research on Övdalsk. It discusses the research of the Swedish linguist Lars Levander (1883–1950), who produced a number of canonical accounts of the life and language of the Dalarna peasantry. Levander is an inevitable encounter in any engagement with Övdalsk. For more than forty years, he worked on the vernacular languages of Upper Dalarna – the Dalmål – among which he regarded Övdalsk as the most interesting object of inquiry. A Nordic philologist by training, Levander came to combine comparative dialectological research with ethnological studies. His practice produced grammatical and ethnological treatises of Övdalsk and Älvdalen (Levander, 1909a, 1914, 1953), as well as of the peasantry of Upper Dalarna (Levander, 1943, 1944, 1947) and the Dalmål (Levander, 1925a, 1928) more generally. In broad terms, Study II seeks to account for some of the foundational motives and rationales underpinning Levander’s research. It explores the notions of authenticity that lay at the root of Levander’s linguistic and ethnological research. Already in the 1910s, Levander firmly believed that the vernacular language of Älvdalen, just as with all the vernaculars of the other twenty Upper Dalarna parishes, was bound to ‘disappear’ within a foreseeable period of time. In line with this vision, he set out to document, and thereby ‘salvage’, some crucial fragments of the ‘vanishing’ peasant language and way of life.

Importantly, Study II argues that a reocentric – ‘thing-centred’ – theory of language and social life was foundational to Levander’s mode of objectivation. The term reocentric is adapted from Harris, who maintains that reocentrism or reocentric surrogationalism is a foundational idea in
Western linguistic thinking (Harris, 1980: 33ff., 1981, 2005; see also Harris and Hutton, 2007; Hutton, 2011; Pablé and Hutton, 2015). Harris defines a reocentric theory of language as one that postulates the basis of denotation as words standing for things, and that ‘the things words stand for’, following this logic, ‘are to be located “out there” in the world external to the language-user’ (Harris, 1980: 44). While this vision has been privileged at various conjectures in the history of (Western) linguistic thinking — from St Augustine to Schuchardt — it was largely displaced during 20th century, and decisively so through the breakthrough of Saussurean semiology (Harris, 1983, 1987, 1990b, 2003; Irvine, 1989; Keane, 2003, 2008; Joseph, 2012: 542). While Levander was not oblivious to these continental developments in linguistic theory of the early 20th century, he remained unaffected by them. His research made extensive use of a reocentric model, inspired by the Wörter und Sachen programme (see Malkiel, 1993: 24–34, 60–95), as well as by comparative German and French dialectology (see Levander, 1936a, 1936b, 1950). As Study II argues, the reocentric vision endowed Levander’s work with conceptual and methodological rigidity. While Levander construed the authentic past of the peasantry as crumbling through the expansion of a vaguely defined ‘modernity’, he simultaneously argued that the distinctive content of this temporality could be accessed and ‘salvaged’ through certain lexicographic and textual techniques. By ‘collecting’ and ordering words — most notably words that denoted ‘things’ — Levander deemed it possible to overcome the apparent ‘erosion’ of peasant life and language that he saw unfolding in Ålvdalen and throughout Upper Dalarna. The peasant universe that Levander depicted was construed as a distinctly material space, populated by myriad things. The inhabitants of this universe often seem sidelined by the material things they had at their

16 Harris (1980: 63ff.) argues that the Western linguistic notion of ‘reocentric surrogationalism’ is counterbalanced by a ‘psychocentric surrogationalism’, which, in various guises, has postulated an identity between ‘words’ and ‘ideas’ (as opposed to material ‘things’). In Harris’s view, both of these positions are equally ‘mythical’, insofar as they are unable to escape their chronic misconstrual of the ‘integrational’ nature of communicative processes. However, the Harrisian view of reocentrism shares its critical basis with Saussure, Wittgenstein, and others (see Harris, 1990b).

17 Saussure criticizes the ‘nomenclaturist’ (i.e. reocentric) fallacy in the Cours (e.g. Saussure, 1922: 34), arguing that le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom, mais un concept et une image acoustique (Saussure, 1922: 98), which Harris (1980: 43) aptly translates as ‘the linguistic sign unites not a thing and a word, but a concept and an acoustic image’; (see also Harris 1980, 1981, 1987, 1990b).

18 In relation to the work of Levander, it should be noted that the Saussurean breakthrough in Sweden was, by all means, a delayed event (e.g. Malmberg 1959; see also Bruce, 1995; Sigurd, 1995) For a contrasting view on the early 20th century proliferation of Saussurean intellectual goods in another Nordic country (Denmark), where the field of linguistics was more receptive to international impulses, see Gregersen (1991).
disposal. From a contemporary horizon, this reocentric orientation might appear narrow and idiosyncratic, and perhaps even defective. Levander’s materially oriented accounts of ‘folklife’ often lack a clear presence of a ‘folk’.

As the analysis of Levander’s reocentric modus operandi illustrates, Levander’s work was heavily invested in notions of authenticity. Levander applied strict criteria for delineating authentic language, favouring older speakers as informants and disregarding, and even denouncing, the ‘conflation’, ‘misuse’ and ‘loss’ of words and grammatical forms that he observed in the language of younger speakers (Levander, 1909b, 1921, 1925b). This is not a trivial point, as Levander’s research on Övdalsk has maintained its relevance until this day. Although his work had precedents (e.g. Säve, 1855; Noreen, 1881), it is unparalleled in terms of the authority it carries for subsequent research on Övdalsk. Levander’s grammatical description of Övdalsk (Levander 1909a) is routinely drawn upon in linguistic studies as the ‘standard work on Övdalsk grammar’ (Steensland, 2015: 167; also by Platzack, 1995; Garbacz, 2010; papers in Bentzen, et al., 2015) and as a fixed point of reference for variationist, historical and typological comparison (Helgander, 1996, 2000; Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2006; Dahl, 2009; Garbacz and Johanessen, 2015). Like many other early or initial practices of objectivation, the relevance of Levander’s work, as well as of the artefacts that it begot, remains tangible. The authority of Levander’s descriptions spans across protracted stretches of time, remaining in the transcendental unconscious of the field, guiding the gaze and actions of subsequent agents (see Bourdieu, 2004: 71–84). As Irvine (2008) argues, a thorough understanding of the durable authority of a linguistic description must account for the practice in which the description originated.

Indeed, in the language sciences, as Saussure (1922: 153) already points out, agents often work unwittingly with ‘des concepts forgés par les grammariens’, that is, with unquestioned conceptual tools passed down through generations of scholars (Harris, 1980, 1981, 1987, 2003, 1990b, 1990c; see also Silverstein, 1977, 1979, 1986, 1996b, 2015b, 2016, 2017a; Bourdieu, 1991a, 2004; Irvine, 1993, 2008). Such linguistic notions, as well as the scholarly objects that they continuously produce, feed into the transcendental unconscious of the field. Not least in the case of language, early practices of objectivation tend to command considerable authority across long stretches of time. Thus, if ‘the frameworks and precedents laid down in the early days remain detectable and influential’ (Irvine, 2008: 325)

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19 During his first periods of fieldwork in Älvdalen (1904 to 1908), Levander worked with Övdalsk speakers born in the 1840s and 1850s. In his subsequent research, he continued to use his initial descriptions and observations as a comparative standard of linguistic authenticity.
long after the early days are over, the early days must be revisited. In order to break with the afterlife of precedent work, historicization is a necessary measure. As Irvine (2008: 325) notes:

the ‘state of (linguistic) things’ is part of history along with the people who study those things. Hindsight is not clearer if it does not recognize that it is not innocent of earlier viewings, and that the ‘true’ state of affairs may have been affected by those who have observed it in the past, and acted on their observations.

The objectivation of linguistic forms and patterns, and the ordering of such forms and patterns as ‘languages’, ‘varieties’ or the like, tend to produce highly normalized linguistic objects; implicit standards with an immanent normative force (see Joseph, 1987; Bourdieu, 1991a: 46–57; Irvine 1993, 2008; Silverstein, 1996a, 2015b). The main epistemological problem of such continuous reuse of pre-constructed objects – the objects of the grammarians – is not primarily, as Saussure holds, that these heirlooms significantly misconceive or misconstrue some crucial aspect of the nature of language. Rather, such unreflexive adaptions of a pre-constructed object are destined to overlook the social nature of the object, obscuring the way in which the object was shaped by its social genesis, and by the historically produced beliefs and interests that held currency in the initial practice of objectivation (Bourdieu, 1991a: 44ff; see also Bourdieu, 1990a, 2003, 2004). Unless one engages with how and why the object was first construed and created, as Bourdieu (1990b: 145ff., 2004) maintains, discourse about the object will say more about the author's relation to the object, than about the actual object.

By engaging with the work of Levander, thus, Study II seeks to introduce this mode of epistemic caution into the present work. Unpicking the work of Levander, and thereby creating distance from it, the study seeks to understand the notions of authenticity upon which it rested. As such, it attempts neither to eulogize nor to decry – as biographies are wont to do – the fundamental conceptions of language and social life that are embodied in Levander’s work. Rather, it aims to capture the assumptions, rationales and aims woven into this influential body of linguistic research. In doing so, the study also seeks to produce a vantage point for grasping some of the intellectual products that Levander’s research has come to engender.
5.4 Register and artefact: Enregistering authenticity in an engagement with Övdalsk descriptivist texts (Study III)

Study III looks into a more recent engagement with Övdalsk grammar. The study discusses the metapragmatic exchange in the Grammar group, an informally organized study group preoccupied with the intricacies of Övdalsk grammar. Starting in the mid-1990s, the group met in Stockholm on a biweekly basis until 2015. Its meetings brought together five regularly attending participants, who all hailed from Övdalsk-speaking families in Älvdalen and placed claims on Övdalsk speakerhood. As the name of the group implies, Övdalsk grammar was the given topic of discussion at the meetings of the group. This topic was continuously treated in relation to notions of linguistic authenticity. The meeting practice was tangibly geared towards speaking about and thus delineating authentic Övdalsk, tying it down with such labels as ‘systematic Övdalsk’ (Swe. Regelbunden älvdalska), ‘correct’ or ‘real Övdalsk’ (Swe. Riktig älvdalska) or ‘old Övdalsk’ (Swe. gammal älvdalska). The study seeks to account for the period I was present at the meetings of the group, that is, from August 2012 to December 2013. The analysis draws on recordings of 17 of 25 the meetings that I attended (amounting to ca. 35 hours of audio material), fieldnotes, as well as 10 interviews with the five members of the group who attended the meetings regularly. It also seeks to account for some of the text artefacts – mainly grammatical descriptions of Övdalsk – that were extensively read and discussed on these occasions. As its title indicates, Study III takes interest in the interaction between a socially recognized way of speaking (i.e. a register) and entextualized collections of linguistic forms and patterns (i.e. artefacts). Notably, the interest of the grammar group in authentic Övdalsk was articulated in relation to a set of textual artefacts, such as Övdalsk grammatical descriptions and glossaries. The study seeks to grasp the interactional intricacies of this interest.

Reiterating a quintessential Harrisian standpoint (e.g. Harris, 1981: 54–85), Blommaert (2008) notes that highly abstract, decontextualized linguistic systems tend to exist in the guise of material objects. The recognition of something as a real ‘language’ is not only aided by specific textual genres (e.g. descriptive or prescriptive grammars, dictionaries) but also by the material properties that these genres assume. Thus, a ‘language’, ideally, ‘can be carried in one’s back pocket or briefcase; it can be stored on the shelves of a library and it can be passed around and traded as an object.’ (Blommaert, 2008: 292). A language becomes contained in a book or a paper, or in a collection of such artefacts. Through such material processes of entextualization, language is packaged as grammar and lexicon (see Harris, 1981: 54–85; Irvine, 2008; Silverstein, 2015b). To be able to
properly use and appreciate such artefacts, as Blommaert (2008: 292) goes on to state, is a criterion of “interest” and “knowledgeability” in language matters. As such, grammars come with some degree of inherent authority. They have the capacity both to stir up and authoritatively settle disputes over language. Their use can be a cause of joy and pain, of relief and frustration, of triumph and defeat (see Cameron, 1995; Suslak, 2011; Swinehart, 2012; Jaffe, 2013, 2015). They permeate a wide range of activities, in which they are read, spoken about, contested and referred to for arbitration.

Study III characterizes the exchange that took place at the meetings as a dialectical process, an ‘oscillation’ between ‘immediate’ interaction and the ‘regimented’ text of an Övdalsk grammar book. The grammar – a 600-page tome – was coextensive with the practice of the group. It had been compiled by Mr Bengt Åkerberg, the organizer and teacher of the group. Initially, in the mid-1990s, the group used Levander’s grammatical sketch of Övdalsk (i.e. Levander, 1909a). Since all Övdalsk examples in Levander (1909a) are set in the Swedish Dialect Alphabet, a largely disused and increasingly unknown phonetic transcription standard of classical Swedish dialectology (see Lundell, 1928), Mr Åkerberg set out to devise a more transparent way of writing Övdalsk, eventually settling on an expanded version of the Swedish alphabet. Expanding the material in Levander (1909a) Mr Åkerberg added more material to the descriptions. He consulted other descriptive sources, such as Levander’s work on Dalmål (such as Levander 1925, 1928), as well as archived texts and recordings. Furthermore, he cooperated with other speakers of Övdalsk, mostly those born in the early 20th century, whom he deemed to have an excellent command of Övdalsk. He posed questions, took notes, received corrections and compiled the material in text. From this practice precipitated a number of minor works on Övdalsk grammar, which functioned as points of departure for the final grammar (Åkerberg, 2012). At the meetings of the Grammar group, this artefact was a given point of orientation. The text artefact was employed as an authoritative repository of the Övdalsk language form and form patterns in the linguistic exchange within the group.

In a rather broad sense, Study III engages with the some late-day facets of Levander’s intellectual legacy, insofar as the practice of the group had entered into dialogue with the material produced by Levander. However, in the Grammar group, this legacy was filtered through new texts and enunciations. At the meetings of the Grammar group, the explication of Övdalsk authenticity encompassed textually fixed renditions of Övdalsk language structure, as well as a range of other articulations of authenticity.

20 With the exception of Mr Åkerberg, who agreed to his name being publicly used, all names of informants occurring in Study III are pseudonyms.
The exchange of the group was mainly grounded in translation tasks, which were dealt with in relation to the content of the grammar. Recurrently, these exchanges ventured into narrations of past and potential occurrences of situated language use. The group spoke about authentic grammatical form and structure, but this exchange was animated through repeated references to authentic ways of speaking. The participants in the group did not only talk about grammar, but also about their own experiences and recollections of authentic language form and use. The exchange, as Bakhtin (1986: 52) would have it, was ‘saturated with time’. It explicated and animated Övdalsk authenticity, by navigating backwards towards the language of a past temporal configuration. Yet, the indexical effects of authenticity were not reducible to the indexical presuppositions presented by the grammatical artefacts. However, since these effects surged in the practically sustained dialectic between the durable texts and the situated exchange, authenticity could not be achieved without the artefact.

Following the lead of Silverstein (2003a, 2004, 2006) and Agha (2003, 2005, 2007), I analyse this group’s engagement with the grammar as a form of enregisterment; that is, as comprising a set of ‘processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized’ (Agha, 2005: 38; see also Agha, 2003, 2007). In this view, enregisterment is closely linked to the notion of register, that is to say, to certain socially recognized ways of using language associated with certain situations, practices and social personae. The existence of registers has, relatedly, been described as ‘an aspect of the dialectical process of indexical order’ (Silverstein, 2003a: 212), that is, as a variable outcome of enregisterment. Opposed to the Hallidayan use of the term register, which is confident in the first-order existence of lect-like structural variability (see Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Halliday, 1978), enregisterment seeks to capture a socially recognizable, albeit unmoored, second-order formation. In this view, registers are best understood as a way of setting, perceiving and speaking about linguistic boundaries. Accordingly, the study seeks to tap into the metapragmatic activities whereby certain chunks of language become linked to certain, more or less durable, semiotic values (Agha, 2003, 2007; Silverstein, 2004, 2006, 2013a, 2013b). Through such exchanges, certain forms of language may come to typify, and reinforce the typification of certain social personae, social groups, stances, genred practices, moral or aesthetical qualities, and so on (see Agha 2003, 2005, 2007; Silverstein, 2006, 2013a, 2013b; 2014b; Irvine, 2011; Goebel, 2012; Karrebaek, 2012, 2014). These values ‘are neither abstract, nor socially disembodied’ (Agha, 2007: 189), but practiced, lived and felt by the people who engage in the metapragmatic exchange that brings registers into being.

Thus, the relative stability of such recognized formations must not licence a lack of attention to the processes and visions that produce and project
such stability. Indeed, the notion of reified, structurally delineable registers recurrently crops up in sociolinguistic research (Orman, 2013b: 95; see also Orman 2012, 2013a). Study III makes a principled attempt to avoid this pitfall, rejecting the notion of registers as fragmentary ‘subsystems’ that jointly make up a language. Rather, it focuses on linguistic exchange rather than on some transcendent entity. The shorthand reference to ‘authentic Òvdalsk’ is not matched with any attempt to delineate some purported structural boundaries of this symbolic formation. In Study III, authenticity is not treated as a property inherent in, or emanating from, some transcendent form of Òvdalsk. As an essentially indexical value, authenticity was located in the actuality of a metapragmatically intense practice, emerging in the interplay of its presuppositions and its effects. A study of indexicality must account for the ways in which such orders come into being, are upheld, maintained and, possibly, reordered.

In the Grammar group, as Study III illustrates, authentic Òvdalsk was dialectically achieved at the metapragmatic interplay between pre-given text and immediate, open-ended speech. It emerged at the interface between ordered linguistic form entextualized in the grammar and meticulous metapragmatic dissections of such pre-given discourse. At these, essentially metapragmatic, points of convergence, linguistic authenticity was made explicit, reflected upon, calibrated, provided with discursive texture, and, hence, enregistered. On the one hand, the authentic Òvdalsk register was brought about by being spoken about, that is, in the here-and-now of the practice of the group. On the other, the practical activities that called the register into being were significantly guided by the authoritative text(s) of which the group made use. The register was at once bound by constraints imposed by past practices and conditioned in the course of metapragmatic exchange. Study III seeks to provide a detailed account of this dialectic.

5.5 Roads to regimentation: Place, authenticity and the metapragmatics of naming (Study IV)

Study IV explores the relationship between place, language and notions of authenticity. Departing from the observation that language and place seem to be indexically connected with each other, it investigates why and how such forms of interconnectedness arise. To this end, the study discusses the metapragmatics of naming. It focuses on a proverbial space for battles over language, namely the imposition and regimentation of place names in an indexically local language (see also Basso, 1996; Rose-Redwood et al., 2010; Rose-Redwood and Alderman, 2011). More specifically, it analyses the naming of roads in Älvdalen; a process that took place between the years 2001 and 2010. During this period, the municipal authorities of Älvdalen set
out to name several hundred local roads, which previously had lacked any officially sanctioned names. The residents of the municipality were invited to submit suggestions. Such suggestions were submitted for close to all unnamed roads in the Älvdalen parish. Roughly half of these, it turned out, were in Övdalsk. A drawn out and, at times, contentious exchange between the municipal authorities and a number of residents ensued. In this exchange, the point of contention was the question of whether roads could and should officially be named in Övdalsk. Some residents insisted that Övdalsk names constituted the most authentic way of denoting the roads. The municipal authorities were initially adverse to such claims. They remained reluctant to put Övdalsk names on equal footing with names in (standard) Swedish, citing potential ‘difficulties in comprehensibility’ as well as the lack of official institutional ‘status’ for Övdalsk as the main reasons for their stance. In the end, the roads were officially given Swedish names, but street signs with both Swedish and Övdalsk names were installed along the roads in question (see Study IV: fig. 1).

Study IV accounts for this exchange, and the forms of regimentation in which it eventually ended. The analysis is based on a detailed reading of all available documents that were produced throughout the road naming process. The study draws on philosopher Saul Kripke’s theory of names and naming (Kripke, 1980). The work of Kripke, being firmly located in an analytical philosophical tradition, is concerned with the purported generalities of linguistic meaning rather than with the messiness of linguistic practice. Its interests are, at least superficially, quite different from those of many linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists. However, Kripke’s ideas have exerted a tangible influence over certain theoretical developments in these fields (see Silverstein 1981b, 1984b, 2013b; Agha, 2007: 65–68). In its linguistic anthropological uptake, the Kripkean causal theory of names and naming precipitates in various notions of discursive concatenation (see Silverstein, 1981c, 2003c, 2005), hailed with such terms as ‘speech chains’, ‘interdiscursive chains’, and the like (Agha, 2003, 2005, 2007: 65ff.; see also Wilce, 2009; Goebel 2012; Swinehart 2012), that is, in the idea that a situated linguistic exchange concatenates into a precedent as well as a subsequent sequence of interconnected exchanges. The denotational effectiveness of a name is wholly dependent upon acts of knowing and enunciating, and thus is inseparable from the practices in which the name is spread. The historically produced link between a name and the individual referent that it indexes depends on the social recognition of the relation between the referent and the name. Recalling Peirce, whom Kripke (1980) does not discuss, it can be said that the denotational effectiveness of a name ‘lies in the fact that it will be interpreted’ (CP. 2.308) as the proper name of a single referent.
Framed as a critical comment on theories of names proposed by thinkers like Frege and Russell (Kripke, 1980: 5, 27–31, 58–61, 127–135), Kripke’s theory of names and naming proposes that the relationality of any name encompasses more relations than merely a semiological connection between ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’. Kripke argues that the semiotics of names can only be grasped as a function of the communicative practices where a name occurs (e.g. Kripke, 1980: 91ff.; see also Putnam, 1975; Silverstein, 1981b, 1981c: n. 15, 2003c, 91–92, 2013b, Bourdieu, 1991a: 107–116; Harris, 2009). In his view, a name is a ‘relation of calling’ established between social agents. Such mutable relations, which comprise acts of enunciating and recognizing names, is ‘really what determines the reference of a name’ (Kripke, 1980: 70).

Kripke (1980: 91) writes:

someone, let’s say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain.

Kripke maintains that the denotational efficacy of names is only possible to apprehend through the multiparty work of ‘fixing references’ (Kripke, 1980: 104), that is to say, through the myriad exchanges that endow a name with a social existence. This socialization, so to speak, of the analytical philosophical interest in reference (see Hacking, 1975; Harris, 1996; Silverstein, 2014a), also allows for an understanding of the forms of metapragmatic regimentation that are intertwined with this existence. Furthering the Kripkean insight, Study IV makes the point that names are not simply linearly disseminated through social space but may spread by means of a contentious exchange. An element of conflict is, if not inherent, at least potential in the process. Agreement on denotational relations is not a necessary condition for the denotational effectiveness of names. Rather, as the study shows, numerous interests may clash in the course of making a name known, accepted, and eventually ‘fixed’. These insights must be coupled with an insight that such struggles unfold under unequal conditions of power, with different social agents not commanding the same recognized capacity to legitimately fix a name (Bourdieu, 1991a: 107–126; cf. Austin, 1962: 116–132). Relative to such insights, Study IV stresses that metapragmatic exchange may serve as a means for reiterating and remaking the strains and tensions that permeate the social life of names.

In a wider perspective, place names and their material instantiations often emerge as objects of symbolic struggle (see Doherty, 2007; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010; Jaworski and Yeung, 2010; Rose-Redwood et al., 2010). Under such conditions, language is by no means a neutral medium. The
The contextualization of a name in a way that establishes connectivities with a certain language is a symbolically sublime act, potentially surrounded by conflicting interests. It might be preceded by various efforts to affect the durable outcomes of the naming, and followed by various re-contextualizations of the name. A certain name may be legitimately or subversively changed. In a given piece of signage, a given name might be crossed out or another one might be added. Such essentially metapragmatic practices have attracted a good deal of attention in spatially interested social sciences and humanities. Perhaps because of the institutional nature of the object of inquiry, it is common that many such studies nourish a strictly hierarchical understanding of symbolic power. In such accounts, official acts of naming are typically analysed as supreme exercises of symbolic power that, through the efficacy vested in a legitimate performative, shape the world in line with some particular ideology, interest or goal. Study IV points to a slightly different state of affairs. As its discussion of the temporal extension of the naming process shows, the imposition of names may involve a larger number of agents than merely those who have the mandate to perform the naming. The hierarchical ordering of names may, in fact, only constitute one phase of a drawn-out process of metapragmatic exchange.

By tapping into one such process, Study IV seeks to make at least three major points. Firstly, the study shows that the effectiveness of an act of naming is neither self-contained, nor determined by some independently defined set of invariant felicity conditions, but depends on less predictable social conditions that encapsulate the metapragmatic exchange. Secondly, it shows that such forms of exchange do not only impose – or ‘fix’ – names, but that such forms of imposition, simultaneously, may be concurrent with the imposition or reassertion of indexical values and contrasts. Also in the case at hand, visions of linguistic authenticity proved to be a main axis of differentiation. As the presented analysis indicates, the naming of the roads in Älvdalen did not only involve a countering of Övdalsk and Swedish names, but simultaneously of the oppositional sets of indexical values attached to each language, which reinforced any perceived linguistic contrast between the names. Throughout the naming process, Övdalsk road names became caught up in articulations of authenticity. Övdalsk was bespoken with regard to its professedly deep relationship with time and space. Such articulations stressed that an authentic relationship between time, space and language was condensed in Övdalsk names. Arguments in favour of imposing and making visible Övdalsk names tended to present this class of linguistic signs as a temporal continuity of the authenticity of various places.
in Älvdalen. As the analysis indicates, this vision was taken up in a range of articulations. Under the conditions presented by the road naming process, these articulations eventually fed into a metapragmatic regimentation of a range of places in Älvdalen. In this process of ordering, the separation of Swedish and Övdalsk, and their respective and often contrasting indexicalities, was central. Thirdly, the analysis also shows that such articulations were not always effective. Although Övdalsk names were eventually included in the road signs, the roads were officially named in standard Swedish only. Whereas the champions of Övdalsk names managed to create a breach in the previous erasure of Övdalsk, their engagement did not affect other aspects of Älvdalen’s toponymic regime. Their authenticity-based appeals, it can be argued, were only effective to this particular end. Thus, by showing that different agents have different possibilities to influence a given regime of language, Study IV also sheds light on the forms of symbolic power that are inherent in naming and in the imposition of names. Taken together, these insights can provide a deeper understanding of the social conditions of possibility that underwrite articulations of authenticity. They also tap into the possible outcomes of such articulations, as well as into the reasons why such outcomes to arise.

5.6 Commentary: some notes on the circulation and reception of metapragmatic discourse

Each of the four studies deals with one more or less situated practice or exchange in which Övdalsk is a main stake. As elucidated above, the objects investigated in the studies tie into each other in various fashions. It goes without saying that some of these connectivities extend beyond the scope of the studies, with metapragmatically pronounced visions of Övdalsk circulating in a range of other exchanges. However, such forms of circulation and uptake are not unlikely to tie into the content of the thesis in one way or another. Below, I discuss some of the manifestations, effects and implications of the capacity of metadiscourse to move across, and linger in, social space.

As Bachelard (1947[1938]: 7) maintains, ‘even in a clear spirit there are dark areas, caverns still haunted by shades. Even in the new human vestiges the old human remains’.21 Not least, Levander’s descriptions of Övdalsk still command significant authority over more recent scientific linguistic work. Echoing Levander (1909b, 1921, 1925), Y. Sapir (2005: 5) argues that Övdalsk is Dalmål ‘par excellence’, given ‘its archaically Dalecarlian [i.e. Dalmål-ian], distinctive and highly independent character’. Such appraisals,

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21 My translation; see also Bachelard (2002[1938]: 19).
which inevitably draw on some reading of the objectivations of Övdalsk that precipitated from Levander’s research, are commonplace (e.g. Platzack, 1995; Steensland, 2015). Producing an effect of atemporality, they separate language from the flow of time, reasserting an engrained theoretical prerequisite for, and a representational consequence of, most traditional approaches to grammar writing (see Harris 1981: 54–85; Irvine 1993, 2008; Blommaert, 2008, 2013). While such uses of grammatical descriptions are ignorant of the practices through which grammar is produced, insofar as they lack epistemic reflexivity toward the forms of linguistic reflexivity implicated in such work, this deficit of perspective is in itself, for the most part, rather innocuous. At times, however, the shades from the past appear in a considerably more distressing form. More extremely, Melerska (2011a: 13, 133–135; see also Melerska, 2010: 130), citing Levander (1925: 48), who in turn draws on Noreen (1903), maintains that the linguistic ‘originality’ of Övdalsk can partially be explained by the relative ‘psychological primitivity’ of the population of Älvdalen. Such forms of unsubstantiated acceptance of old prejudices effectively reiterate equally unsubstantiated and bigoted stances in present research. Recalling Bachelard (2002[1938]: 19ff.), past epistemologies may ‘secretly live within us and may – alas – return’. We should be attentive to such forms of longevity, and to the effects they may come to enact.

Put in a wider perspective, the construal of authenticity as a first-order structural property is, of course, a double-edged sword. As a number of scholars have noted (Briggs, 1996, 2012; Coupland, 2003, 2014; Heller, 2006, 2011; Bourdieu, 2008: 193–200; Jaffe, 1993, 2013; Muehlmann, 2008, 2009, 2013: 55–82; Woolard, 2016: 211–297), the authority vested in canonical accounts of authenticity can easily be integrated into different, and sometimes opposing, agendas. The relative degree of indeterminacy that is bound up with any articulation of linguistic authenticity can certainly be exploited for different ends. In the case at hand, the categories, representations, and linguistic inventories and paradigms that Levander originally produced are readily drawn upon as metaindexes of Övdalsk authenticity. However, the ends that these metaindexes are made to serve may vary. At times, they may just as easily be used to authenticate as to inauthenticate. This two-faced nature of authenticity is particularly salient in the language political exchange over Övdalsk.

As seen in Study I, virtually all agents supporting an officialization of Övdalsk have underscored the ‘linguistic distance’ (i.e. lexical and grammatical dissimilarity) or the lack of ‘mutual intelligibility’ between Övdalsk and standard Swedish. Such arguments readily invoke, either implicitly or explicitly, some of Levander’s representations of authentic Övdalsk and Övdalsk authenticity as objective proofs of their claim.
However, such claims, which are based in a first-order construal of authenticity, may be dismissed as non-factual by anyone who believes that the original representation does not correspond to the reality that language politics is meant to regiment. Speaking on behalf of the state, Swedish language policy and planning functionaries have at times argued that contemporary Övdalsk digresses from the linguistic descriptions that have been inherited from Levander, and which accordingly are construed as matrices of authenticity. Drawing implicitly on studies of intergenerational Övdalsk language variation (e.g. Helgander, 2000, 2005), these agents have maintained, for example, that ‘many of the most characteristic features [of Övdals] are receding or absent today’ (Westerberg, 2015: 2; see also Isof, 2017). Just as in any ‘subversive’ extollation of Övdalsk authenticity, these state-backed enunciations recognize the authority of Levander’s research but use it for opposite ends. While they position Levander’s description of Övdalsk as a transcendental standard of authenticity, they apprehend any deviance from the language that Levander described as a negation of the authenticity contained in these ‘original’ forms. In either case, Levander’s work lingers in the present: either as an icon of the transcendent authenticity of Övdalsk, or as an implicit standard that few speakers currently meet. Regardless of which, the metapragmatic mark of comparison is set high. Contemporary speakers of Övdalsk, contingently, run the risk of being portrayed either as museum pieces or as substandard copies of such objects.

The work in this thesis embarks on a different path. By construing authenticity as an indexical fact – as a second-order quality located in an ever-expanding dialectical process – it seeks to unearth some of the social conditions of possibility for speaking about authenticity. Rather than picking a side in the ‘endless and inconclusive wrangling’ over authenticity where many exchanges over language seem to end up (see Cameron and, Kulick 2003: 104, 2005: 112–118), this approach, as I have repeatedly noted, seeks to understand the actual wrangling. Yet, such a disavowal of participation in such contentious exchanges does by no means guarantee that one is excluded from the site of struggle. Academic linguistics, as Hill (2002: 119) succinctly points out, has ‘multiple audiences’ who are eager to engage with the work emanating from various strands of linguistic research. The interplay between heteronomous linguistics and (language) politics may be particularly prone to produce this type of attention. Language political practice, as a supreme manifestation of scholarly heteronomy, tends to territorialize all discourses that bespeak an object that is deemed to hold language political relevance. While I would like this work to be exempt from such forms of selective reuses, no guarantees can, of course, be provided. However, given the likelihood of such readings and recontextualizations (see Briggs, 1996, 2012), a few caveats are nevertheless warranted.
The point of the present work is not to undermine or ‘debunk’ some particular claim about Övdalsk. The thesis does not seek to gauge some particular contemporary linguistic practice, which in some way makes use of or places stakes in Övdalsk, against some authoritative rendition of ‘authentic’ or ‘real’ Övdalsk. Likewise, it does not seek to dissect such authoritative representations – Levander’s work being a case in point – for the purpose of exposing some purported inconsistency or deficiency in their theoretical or empirical groundwork. It does not, by the same token, take up a stance on the accuracy of some other metapragmatic enunciation, categorical distinction or claim about Övdalsk. Rather, it seeks to make sense of how and why such practically sustained visions of language and social life are produced and proliferated. However, while the thesis aims to analytically grasp various interested ways of thinking and speaking about Övdalsk, it does not simply suggest that all such metapragmatic accounts are on an equal footing. As Briggs has repeatedly argued (Briggs, 1993, 1996, 2008, 2012), ‘the reification game’ (Briggs, 2012: 106), in which such vision and articulations are brought into play, is an unequal game. Metapragmatic exchange is not simply a cacophony of talking heads. Rather, it is constrained by conditions that exist not only in the moment of articulation, but also beyond it, in the linguistic market. Under such conditions, some resources and metapragmatic enunciations are accordingly deemed to be worth more than others. Some agents command the power to speak authoritatively on language and linguistic matters, while others do not. Some enunciations are listened to, whereas others remain unheard or void of effects. Some agents are disadvantaged insofar as they are ‘incapable of applying to the linguistic products offered, either by themselves or others, the criteria that are most favourable to their own products’ (Bourdieu, 1991a: 69).

In the case of Övdalsk, as the work presented in the thesis indicates, such forms of regimentation favour accounts by holders of various forms of symbolic capital, such as linguists, language policy bureaucrats, politicians and journalists. Accordingly, the genetic and multi-perspectival account presented in this thesis provides some clues as to why certain questions have surged as legitimate topics of discussion. It also provides some insights into the workings of some practices that usually remain invisible in such accounts. Thus, while the thesis comments on a language politically sensitive matter (e.g. in Studies I and IV), it offers few solutions to the purported problems that it analyses. The studies could be read as an incentive to think more thoroughly about which issues are construed and discussed as legitimate language political problems, as well as about the issues that, concomitantly, remain invisible or construed as unimportant (see Irvine and Gal, 2000; Stroud, 2010, 2015; Gal, 2016). Posing such questions
about the given questions could subsequently engender questions about why, for whom, and for what ends various metapragmatic enunciations about Övdalsk are produced. At any rate, the studies presented here ask such questions, stressing the human interests and experiences that tend to be erased in linguocentric discourse.

On the face of linguocentric exchange, such as that afforded by language politics, there nevertheless exists a real risk that these contributions may be misunderstood. This risk is by no means reduced in relation to widely circulated representations of ‘language shift’, ‘language endangerment’, ‘language death’, and the like. As already noted in the introductory discussion of The Guardian’s fantastical account of the social life of Övdalsk – a life reportedly frequented by royalty, glamour models and linguists – the content of such representations can be quite miscellaneous. As Hill (2002: 123ff.) has prominently pointed out, they also have a proclivity for hyperboles. This holds not only for the most exaggerated accounts, such as The Guardian article, but also for various scholarly commentaries on the topic of language ‘endangerment’, ‘shift’, ‘loss’, and so on. Following Hill’s critical appraisal of the legitimation of linguistic research on these topics (Hill, 2002), critical sociolinguists – mainly – have repeatedly drawn attention to what they see as the ideological and rhetorical underpinnings of the linguistics and politics of this field of study. Such critiques (Cameron, 2002, 2007; Errington, 2003; Mühlhäusler, 2003; Heller and Duchêne, 2007; Block, 2008; Moore et al., 2010; Muehlmann, 2012, 2015) have often targeted the cataclysmic register that, purportedly, often is drawn on in the fields of language documentation, descriptive linguistics and the applied linguistic subfield of language revitalization (or maintenance, regeneration, reversing language shift, and the like).

Articulated in this way, the deep-seated interests of socially invested linguistics concerned with peripheral populations and their ‘endangered’ ways of speaking (of which Study II presents a case in point) become infused with new rhetorical oomph. However, as critics claim, the fundamental theoretical assumptions, which often address the authentic relationship between language, culture/society and personhood, remain intact (Cameron, 2002, 2007; Errington, 2003). This revamping of old ideas, it is sometimes argued (Errington, 2003: Heller and Duchêne, 2007), has served to attract symbolic and material resources to such scholarly undertakings. Regardless of the precision of such claims (cf. Hill, 2002: 120), linguists who in one way or another conduct research on ‘small’ or ‘endangered’ languages tend to support, albeit to a varying degree, the construal of language ‘endangerment’, ‘shift’, ‘loss’ and ‘death’ as a ‘worrying’, an ‘alarming’ or even a ‘catastrophic’ phenomenon (see Fishman, 1991; Hale et al., 1992; Dorian, 1993; Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Hagège 2009; Austin
and Sallabank, 2014). To the extent that scholars who subscribe to such visions have replied to the critical readings of their work, their arguments tend to focus on whether critics have correctly grasped the nature of the object (Sallabank, 2009). In this view, the critique is simply seen as missing the point, and at worst, coming close to the ‘defeatism’ in the face of the ‘real’ problem, which Fishman (1991: 14) decried.

Much of this debate has focused on the ways linguists and other professional students of language think and act, on the nature of their practices and on their ideological proclivities. This is by no means an unimportant matter to discuss, not least with regard to the historical depth of the topic and the concerned academic interest that has accompanied it. Yet, the aim of the thesis is not to add to this debate. Rather, if anything, the studies investigate the unfolding and inflection of a metapragmatic exchange that certainly encompasses notions of ‘loss’ and ‘preservation’, but extends beyond academic sites of enunciation. On the one hand, it certainly seems to be the case that some phases and instantiations of metapragmatic exchange may be highly specialized concerns, from which non-specialists are barred. Studies I and II each present a case in point. On the other hand, such forms of exclusion do not micromanage the contents of the metapragmatic exchange that takes place among those excluded.

An ordinary speaker, as Bourdieu (1990a: 31) writes, ‘uses language for practical purposes, just enough for the needs of practice and within the limits allowed by the urgency of practice’. Yet, the needs and demands of practice may be eminently metapragmatic. As Harris has long insisted – and most linguistic anthropologists would agree to his insistence – ‘language is, for most of us, part of the familiar talked-about world of everyday experience’ (Harris, 1981: 2; see also Harris 1980, 1990a; Hutton, 1995, Taylor, 1993, 2016, 2017). As such, as the work of Silverstein underscores (Silverstein 1979, 1981a, 1993, 2003a, 2010b, 2014a), metapragmatic discourse readily transgresses partitions in social space. What may have originated as a set of specialized metapragmatic concepts and categories may abscond the linguists who created them and integrate with more profane dispositions (see Harris, 1980: 18–22). In a similar way, ‘scientific’ linguistic views may be adapted from or modelled upon ‘our own’ – that is, the linguists’ own – ‘European folk ideology of language’ (Silverstein, 1979: 204). The capacity of language to turn upon itself has strong bearing on such patterns of circulation, as it also allows formally similar metapragmatic enunciations to be produced with apparent ease by different agents.

As Studies III and IV indicate, metapragmatic exchange over iconically academic linguistic objects – grammar and toponomastica – may transcend the academic practices in which they occupy centre stage. Taken together, the four studies tap into the intricate conditions of production, dissemination
and uptake of metapragmatic articulations. The point is not, as Harris (1993: 464) puts it, to again start off ‘the merry-go-round’ of imposing second-order distinctions ‘by distinguishing between a folk theory and a scientific theory’. Such distinctions cannot be accurately extrapolated from the content or structure of some replicable metapragmatic articulation, but must rather be searched for among the positions in social space that agents, who partake in some metapragmatic exchange, occupy. This holds as much for visions of authenticity as it does for visions of ‘loss’ and ‘preservation’.

6. Concluding remarks

Each of the four studies of the thesis is intended to stand on its own. Each discusses a specific instance of research and makes an independent point. Yet, as this introductory chapter has sought to illuminate, they do share some common ground. The studies come together in their joint interest in the ways in which Övdalsk has been perceived, spoken about and regimented. They engage with various enunciations and exchanges that have made Övdalsk their object. In relation to Övdalsk, such metapragmatic activities are plentiful. It does not seem farfetched to suggest that any attempt to grasp the social existence of Övdalsk, or even to simply speak about some aspect of this existence, is bound to encounter a range of symbolically and historically connected practices invested in the social existence of Övdalsk. This is not unexpected. Language is, after all, a social phenomenon, and a central concern of this thesis is to treat it as such. Accordingly, the studies attempt to analyse the conditions under which such forms of metapragmatic production unfold, as well as some of the preconditions of such practices. They attend to various historically produced visions of Övdalsk, to the ways in which such visions become integrated into the actuality of practice, as well as to the indexical effects that surge in this dialectic.

In the studies – most palpably in Studies II, III and IV – a number of interested visions, articulations and effectuations of Övdalsk authenticity and authentic Övdalsk occupy centre stage. A good deal of this introductory chapter has set out to explain how this notion ought to be construed and apprehended. The outline of the conceptual synthesis is as much grounded in the empirical material on which the analyses draw as on the literature that it discusses. It objectivates authenticity as an indexical value and thereby stresses, just as the studies do, its dual and dialectical nature. Notions of authentic Övdalsk, in this view, exist as a presupposition for metapragmatic exchange, that is, as a relatively durable – language ideological – vision that transcends situated exchanges. However, the social and symbolic – that is, indexical – efficacy of this vision depends, to a variable extent, on the exchanges in which it is articulated, calibrated and adapted to some
particular set of circumstances. Being sustained in practice, it is closely linked to the dispositions and experience of the agents who partake in the exchange in which indexical effects – of authenticity, or of some other socially recognized metapragmatic property – are generated. The effectuation of such effects is not entirely unconstrained, but is socially positioned and, hence, socially conditioned. Not every agent possesses the same recognized capacity to produce such effects, and not every symbolic formation – such as a given language – is preconditioned for the same kind of indexical values. In this vein, the work of the thesis seeks to break with conceptualizations of linguistic authenticity as a first-order phenomenon, a construal that has been prominent in certain – indeed influential – historical variationist investigations of cases that share some similarities with the one at hand (e.g. Dorian, 1981; Schmidt, 1985). Unlike some critiques of this stance, the thesis refrains from reductively treating notions of authenticity within some belligerent idea of academic misconceptions. It is certainly true that much work on language and society has developed within an expansive intellectual tradition that has long crafted its own legitimacy with reference to such notions of authenticity (see Koerner, 1991, 2001; Bauman and Briggs, 2003; Bucholtz, 2003, 2014; Silverstein, 1996b, 2015b, 2017; Irvine, 2004). However, authenticity cannot simply be construed and dismissed as an ‘academic’ notion, with scant relevance outside academic exchanges. On the contrary, notions of Övdalsk authenticity and authentic Övdalsk, as well as symbolic investments in such notions, seem to enjoy a rather expansive distribution, which often transcend ‘strictly’ academic interests. They are bespoken from a number of positions and come together with a number of ideas, aims and experiences.

The limits of linguistic authenticity – of what counts as authentic language – may consequently fluctuate from time to time. However, they are not completely random. Widely accepted symbolic divisions between linguistic formations (between named ‘languages’, ‘dialects’, ‘vernaculars’, ‘registers’, and so on), together with the historically produced indexical values that appear self-evidently attached to them, are not reducible to single acts of metapragmatic creativity. There exist certain durable indexical values that seem difficult to transgress or escape. The dialectical existence of authenticity, just as of any indexicality, is not completely random. As an indexical value, authenticity tends to attach to languages that occupy certain positions in the linguistic market, and not to others.

As frequently pointed out above, authenticity is a predicament, as it were, of any language that is denied the highest rewards of legitimacy in the linguistic market. Such forms of regimentation are coextensive with the state, being ‘made by the state as it makes itself’ (Bourdieu, 2014: 120). As the studies – I and IV in particular – stress, such forms of state-sanctioned
imposition do by no means constitute a mechanical process. The state is neither self-regulating machinery, nor a single agent-like entity who rules over a given territory. It is not monolithic and equipped with a single ‘will’, but is, rather, made up of a number of agents who struggle over ‘the power to constitute and to impose as universal and universally applicable’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 112).

As far as language is concerned, such indexicalities of universality and universal applicability are socially restricted. The robust indexicalities of universality and authority, which are coextensive with the legitimate language, do not attach with ease to other ways of speaking, and especially not to the kind of language that has been socially demoted through the imposition of the legitimate language. Conversely, the socially recognized particularity and situatedness of the antipodes of the legitimate language are not easily transduced to the legitimate language (even organicist models of national standard languages, emphasizing the rootedness of such linguistic formations, tend to construe the standard as the language of the whole nation; see Joseph, 1987; Hutton, 1999). Legitimacy implies universality, and universality implies universal legitimacy. However, what these indexical values are – how they are construed, recognized, felt and bespoken – cannot be straightforwardly inferred from the division itself. In the case at hand, the continuous institutional counterpoising of Swedish and Övdalsk is not the cause of the manifold metapragmatic exchanges that unravel over Övdalsk, and in which notions of authenticity are a main concern. Likewise, such forms of regimentation do not determine what the indexicalities of authenticity ‘are’ at a particular temporal conjuncture. As Studies II, III and IV indicate, the regimentation of indexical value is not independent of various collective visions and representation. Yet, as it is calibrated in the course of some form of metapragmatic exchange, indexicality may, to a varying extent, be rejigged or reasserted.

This dual gaze, which takes into account situated exchanges as well as event-transcending visions, as well as the dialectical relationship between them, offers some instruments for unpacking enunciations about authentic Övdalsk and Övdalsk authenticity. It is, in many ways, an incentive for prying into the various historically produced visions, interests and dispositions that refract in some statement about the authenticity of Övdalsk. When such enunciations are approached from this vantage point, it becomes crucial to explore and analyse the social conditions of possibility for metapragmatic enunciations about, say, ‘old Övdalsk’ (Study III), ‘original Övdalsk names’ (Study IV), ‘authentic vernacular words’ (Study II), or even for such mundane designations as ‘language’ and ‘dialect’ (Study I).

Such an inquiry will encounter a range of positioned viewpoints, which are bound up with different investments, rationales and agendas. In
attempting to create a viewpoint on such viewpoints, thus, the studies included in this thesis treat Övdalsk as a distinctly social object, replete with human engagement, interest and concern. They engage accordingly with a number of such interested engagements. Thus, seeking to account for the dialectic between the micro-drama of linguistic exchanges and the historical trajectories in which such exchanges are embedded, the studies intend to analytically capture the metapragmatic facets of a set of interested practices in which Övdalsk is a central stake.

Sammanfattning på svenska (Swedish summary)

Studie I undersöker den språkpolitiska debatt som förts kring den svenska regleringen av älvdalska. Denna debatt har kommit att handla om Sveriges minoritetsspråkspolitik, särskilt om dennes relation till den Europeiska stadgan om landsdels- eller minoritetsspråk (ECRML; SÖ 2000:3) och om hur älvdalskans institutionella och juridiska ställning i Sverige bör regleras i relation till detta mellanstatliga avtal. I dagsläget omfattas inte älvdalskan av någon uttalad språkpolitisk regim. Snarast har den kommit att falla utanför de kategorier varmed den svenska språkpolitiken gör sig gällande. Denna de facto-reglering av älvdalskan har föranlett debatt. Studien analyserar de texter (myndighetsrapporter, vetenskapliga publikationer, riksdagsmotioner, debattartiklar mm.) som utgjort stommen i debatten. Den behandlar således


Reocentrism kan kortfattat beskrivas som en språklig referenteori, det vill säga en systematisk föreställning om vad ett språkligt tecken är och i vad dess betydelse består. Reocentrism diskuteras utförligt av Harris (1980: 44ff.), som hävdar att reocentriska referenteorier varit centrala i en överväldigande del av all västerländsk språkteori, från antiken till den saussureska lingvistikens genombrott. Hos Harris presenteras reocentrism som en slags ”surrogationalism”, det vill säga en referenteori som menar att ord ”står för” något, och definieras i enlighet med denna analys som föreställningen om att ord står för saker och att dessa saker står att finna i den fysiska världen. Reocentrism framstår sålunda som en rimlig spontanteori, vilken möjliga tillämpas helt allmänt i vardagliga funderingar kring ord, betydelser och mening. Inte minst av denna orsak bör det påpekas att detta antagande gjordes till föremål för omfattande kritik under det tidiga


komponent. Denna grammatik fungerade som det huvudsakliga hjälpmedlet vid översättningsövningarna. Dessutom användes bokens paradigem och uppställningar ofta som en utgångspunkt för detaljerade diskussioner om grammatik i allmänhet och om älvdalsk grammatik i synnerhet.

Som transkripten i artikeln indikerar (t.ex. excerpt 1 och 2) ägnade kursledaren en hel del tid till att förklara olika grammatiska fenomen för kursdeltagarna. En tydlig målsättning för dessa metapragmatiska förtydliganden var att skilja autentisk ”regelbunden” älvdalska från de former och mönster som på ett eller annat sätt avvek från denna form av älvdalska. Koncepten autenticitet och regelbundenhet innefattade en tydlig tidsdimension, såtillvida att de pekade tillbaka mot förfluten tid. Den grammatikbok som användes på kursen var grundad på Levanders skiss över älvdalskan i Åsens by i Älvdalen (Levander, 1909a) men hade utökats med en långt större mängd egna analyser av inspelat och nedtecknat material samt intervjuer och avstämningar med äldre älvdalsktalare (se Åkerberg, 2012: 27–29)22. Denna temporala orientering förstärktes på kursträffarna, då diskussionen om älvdalsk grammatik ofta kom att innefatta exemplifierande hågkomster av älvdalsktalare och deras språk (se intervjuer på s. 16 samt excerpt 3, båda i artikeln). Studie III menar att denna praktik, vilken innefattade grammatiska beskrivningar, diskussioner om grammatik och om människor som använde sig av denna grammatik, inte bara explicitgjorde ”regelbunden” och ”autentisk” älvdalska som ett formellt system (dvs. en artefakt) utan också som instans av ett talat språk med en tydlig temporal förankring (dvs. ett register). Detta explicitgörande var således beroende av sampelet mellan grammatikbokens innehåll och den metapragmatiska praktik som utvecklats kring denna text.


22 Medan Levanders grammatik är 129 sidor lång omfattar Åkerbergs närmare 600 sidor.
framför allt tog sig uttryck i kritiskt hållna brev till byggnadsnämnden, pågick under ett flertal år. Till följd av dessa protester beslutade sig kommunen för att sätta upp tvåspråkiga vägskyltar, där både svenska och älvdalska namn stod utskrivna (se Studie IV, fig. 1). Dock ändrades inte den tidigare, officiella namngivningen. I exempelvis lägenhetsregister, telefonkataloger och på officiella kartor förekommer endast de svenska namnen.


I Kripkes resonemang tenderar namnets successiva spridning dock att framstå som en relativt harmonisk process, som ”ren” kommunikation, fri från andra intressen än rent kommunikativa. I verkligheten inbegriper namnens sociala liv ofta fler faktorer än denna. Även om Kripke inte utesluter att spridningen av ett namn innefattar metakommunikativa dimensioner, så diskuterar han inte explicit dessa dimensioner. Att spridningen av namn kan vara nära förbunden med kommentarer om relationen mellan namn och referent tydliggörs emellertid i Studie IV. I de brev som boende i Älvdalen skickade till kommunen presenterades en rad argument rörande varför de älvdalska namnen borde ha inkluderats i den officiella namngivningen. Dessa argument framhövde ofta indexikala kontraster mellan älvdalska och svenska. I flertalet protestskrivelser presenterades standardsvenska namn som förvrängningar av de autentiska älvdalska namnen. Medan vissa av de senare namnen ansågs ha en långvarig historisk koppling till platser längs de vägar som de benämnde, menade många brevkirvare att ”översättningarna” av dessa namn till standardsvenska grumlade eller utraderade denna temporala koppling. Utifrån detta synsätt fungerade älvdalska i allmänhet, och älvdalska namn i synnerhet, som den autentiska länken mellan platser och deras historia.

Det är vikt att notera att dessa argument aldrig var i närheten av att övertyga den kommunala byggnadsnämndens ledamöter om att överge eller
ens frångå införandet av svenska vägnamn. De älvdalska vägnamnen förblev lokala ”tillägg” till de officiella svenska namnen. Samtidigt måste det betonas att den argumentation, som med ihärdighet bedrevs under ett flertal år, faktiskt resulterade i att tvåspråkiga vägskyltar till slut sattes upp. I alla hänseenden var införandet av vägnamn i Älvdalen nära sammankopplat med en utdragen diskussion om dessa namn. Studie IV diskuterar således denna diskussion.

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