Negation of existential predications in Swedish
A corpus study

Heidi Valentine Bordal
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Abstract

The aim of this corpus study is to provide an adequate description of negation strategies in existential predications in Swedish. In Swedish, existential predications may be negated by a standard negative marker. Another possibility to negate existence is by using a negative indefinite pronoun. In negation of existential predications in Swedish, the choice between standard negation and indefinite pronouns, whether negative or not, has not been previously described in any descriptive or theoretical work. It is therefore the purpose of the current study to describe what factors determine the choice of negative marker in existential predications. The results of this study show that there is a strong preference to negate existential predications with a negative indefinite pronoun. Further, it is shown that the negative indefinite pronoun is frequently used as a modifier to the pivot, and thus states an unconditional absence.

Keywords

Existential predications, negation, non-verbal negation, indefinite pronouns.
Negation av existentiella predikat i Svenska

En korpusstudie

Heidi Valentine Bordal

Sammanfattning


Nyckelord

Negation, existentiella predikat, icke-verbal negation, pronomen.
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# Abbreviations

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1. Introduction

In typological studies of negation, the focus has mainly been on what is referred to as Standard Negation. Negation of existential predications are excluded from the domain of standard negation because in many languages they are negated with a special strategy. In Swedish, standard and non-standard sentences are negated with the standard negative marker inte. However, another possibility to negate existential predications is by using a negative indefinite pronoun. The factors that determine the choice of negation marker in such predications in Swedish have not yet been described in any descriptive or theoretical work. This study aims to examine how existential predications are negated in Swedish. This study provides additional information on negation in Swedish and provides further information on how negation of non-verbal sentences varies.

2. Background

The main purpose of the background section in this thesis is to introduce operational notions and working definitions to be used throughout the study, i.e. what in typology is referred to as standard and non-standard negation; to provide an overview of sentential negation in Swedish and to provide an outline of existential constructions. The background section is organized as follows. The first and second sub-sections are devoted to standard and non-standard negation respectively; previous literature, research and theoretical issues on the topics are discussed. The third sub-section provides a brief overview of sentential negation in Swedish. Sub-section 4 is devoted to the notion of existential constructions. Finally, sub-section 5 deals with negation of existential predications, with a focus on negation of such predications in Swedish. To situate the present thesis in current research, each of the sections contains some illustrative examples of cross-linguistic features relevant to the study.

2.1 Standard Negation

Typology of negation has had a strong tendency to focus on what has been considered as the basic negation constructions in languages. For the past three decades, focus has mainly been that of Standard Negation. This sub-section aims at proposing a working definition of standard negation to be used throughout this study.

The term Standard Negation (SN) was introduced by Payne (1985: 198) as “the type of negation which has as one function the negation of the most minimal and basic sentence”. Standard negation is today a term with various definitions. Miestamo (2005: 42) defines SN as “the way (or ways) a language has for negating declarative verbal main clauses”. Dahl (1979: 79) focuses on negation from a similar perspective; “negation of simple indicative sentences with a verbal predicate”. In typological literature, standard negation is a well-established notion. However, in traditions devoted to the study of specific language families, standard negation is often equal to the notion verbal negation. Standard Negation refers to the basic clausal negation construction(s) in a language. Dahl (2010:11) argues that the term Standard Negation is not wholly satisfactory since it implies that anything but negation of declarative verbal clauses should be considered “non-standard”. SN is tacitly associated with finite constructions, but it is unclear why declarative clauses should be considered any more basic than, say, imperative ones. Nevertheless, Dahl (2010) states that it is hard to come up with a better term than that of SN (2010: 2). Miestamo (2005) proposes the distinction between symmetric and asymmetric negation in verbal clause negation. When negative sentences differ from the affirmative sentence in no other way than by the adding of one or more negative marker(s), the structural difference is symmetric. If the structural
difference goes beyond the adding of negative markers, i.e. involving asymmetry in the verbal finiteness; marking of the negative clause as nonrealized (irrealis), or changes in grammatical categories such as tense/aspect, mood and person, then the structural difference is asymmetric. Clausal negation is a morphosyntactic construction whose function is to negate a clause (Miestamo 2005: 3). Standard negation is sometimes also referred to as sentential negation.

The shared focus of Dahl (1979), Payne (1985) and Miestamo (2005) is the status of the negative marker used to express standard negation in the languages under study. Three major types of negation markers are according to Dahl (2010) “identified by them all, although the terminology varies to some extent” (Dahl 2010: 12). The major types of standard negation markers are i) morphological or affixal negation, ii) negative particles and iii) negative verbs. Some illustrative examples of each negation strategy are provided below. All language affiliations in this work follows Glottolog ¹.

In morphological negation, negation is expressed by an affix. As illustrated in (1), in sentential negation in Turkish, the standard negator is a suffix –mV- (the vowel varies due to vowel harmony).

(1) Turkish (Turkic, Oghuz-Kipshak-Uyghur)

   a. Oku-yor-um
      Read-PROG-1sg
      ‘I am reading’ (Dahl 2010: 13)

   b. Oku-mu-yor-um
      Read-NEG-PRG-1sg
      ‘I am not reading’ (Dahl 2010: 13)

The most common type of standard negation in the languages of the world is negative particles (Dahl 2010). Most negative particles fall under symmetric negation according to Miestamo’s (2005) classification. In Swedish, as illustrated below (2), the negative particle inte is the standard negator.

(2) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

   a. Anna är lärare
      Anna is teacher
      ‘Anna is a teacher’ (own)

   b. Anna är inte lärare
      Anna is NEG teacher
      ‘Anna is not a teacher’ (own data)

Negative verbs are elements which takes over all or some of the inflectional categories characterizing finite verbs (Dahl 2010: 10). The standard example is Finnish (3).

(3) Finnish (Uralic-Finnish)

   a. Pekka lukee
      Pekka read.PRS.3sg
      ‘Pekka is reading’ (Dahl 2010: 18)

   b. Pekka ei lue
      Pekka NEG.3sg read
      ‘Pekka is not reading’ (Dahl 2010: 18)

¹ http://glottolog.org/
As mentioned above, cross-linguistic studies of negation are commonly studies of verbal negation. Non-verbal sentences, existential sentences and imperative sentences are typically most prone to use special types of negation. Therefore, negation of such predications is traditionally left out from definitions of standard negation (Eriksen 2011: 275). Non-verbal negation is further discussed below (sub-section 2.2). Negation of existential predications will be discussed in sub-section 2.4. Negation of imperative sentences will not be discussed in this work, as it is outside the scope of the study.

2.2 Negation of non-verbal predications

Negation of e.g. nominal predications such as the one in (4) or an existential sentence such as (5), is excluded from the domain of standard negation because in many languages, they are negated by a strategy different from SN (Veselinova 2014: 1387).

(4) John is not a teacher
(5) There are no blue tomatoes

Existential predications and negation of existential sentences is further discussed below (section 2.4). The ways to negate non-verbal sentences vary among the languages of the world. Some languages negate non-verbal sentences with the same strategy as with standard negation, while other languages use a different strategy. The aim of this thesis is not to cover a typological survey of SN or non-standard negation. However, for clarification of the subject, some illustrative examples of negation of non-verbal predications, and how they differ from SN in a language, will be given in this section.

For instance, in standard written French, the negative markers ne … pas are used in both standard negation and negation of non-verbal predications, as illustrated in (6).

(6) French (Indo-European, Romance)

a. Je ne sais pas
   1sg NEG know NEG
   ‘I do not know’ (own data)

b. Ceci n’est pas un pipe
   this NEG is NEG a pipe
   ‘This is not a pipe’ (own data)

Languages differ in terms of whether they use copulas or not with non-verbal constructions. Dahl (2010: 28) puts forth the claim that copula-less constructions often use special negators. An example of a language employing different strategies to negate non-verbal predications and sentences with a lexical verb is Indonesian. Verbs are negated with the negative marker tidak (7a) and non-verbal predications of identity are negated with the negative marker bukan (7b).

(7) Indonesian (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian)

a. Mereka tidak menolong kami
   3PL NEG help 1PL.EXCL
   ‘They didn’t help us’ (Sneddon, 1996, cited in Eriksen 2011:267)

b. Itu bukan jeruk
   this NEG orange
   ‘This is not an orange’ (Dahl 2010: 29)

Strategies to negate non-verbal predicates may also vary depending on type of non-verbal predication. In Turkish, the strategy in standard negation is different from the strategy of non-verbal negation. Standard negation is expressed by a suffix \( -mV \) on the finite verb in declarative clauses, whereas the
nominal predicator *değil* is a non-verbal negator. It is used to negate locative predications. This is illustrated in (8).

(8) Turkish (Turkic, Oghuz-Kipshak-Uyghur)

a. *Gel-*me-yecək
come-NEG-FUT

‘(She) will not come’ (Van Schaaik 1994, cited in Veselinova 2013:112)

b. *Ev-*de *değil-*di-k
house-LOC NEG-PST-1PL

‘We were not at home’ (Van Shaaiak 1994)

Eriksen (2011) suggests that the strategy of non-verbal negation differs from the one used to express standard negation by means of *Direct Negation Avoidance* (DNA). DNA can be defined as the negation strategy different from SN of non-verbal predicates with the purpose to avoid that the non-verbal predicate is the focus of negation (Eriksen 2011: 277). One strategy closely connected to DNA is *The negated existence strategy*, in which the existence of an event or state depicted by the predicate is negated, instead of the predicate itself (2011: 281). For a further discussion on negation of non-verbal predications and the strategies connected to DNA, see Eriksen (2011). Further discussion on existential predications, and their negation is given below in sub-sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

### 2.3 Sentential negation in Swedish

As was demonstrated in 2.1, sentential negation in Swedish is expressed by a negative particle. The standard negative particle is *inte* ‘not’. Swedish has, however, an unusual feature of negation; it has in theory, three different negative particles, rather than one. The use of the particles is the topic of the following sub-section.

#### 2.3.1 Negative particle(s)

The standard negative marker in Swedish, *inte* is an independent word; it is an adverb which is not inflected. As mentioned above, Swedish has one particular feature which is less common among the languages of the world: it has in theory, three different negative particles, rather than one. The negative particles are *inte*, *icke* and *ej*, and they may, according to what is stated in Swedish grammars, be used interchangeably. Some illustrative examples follow below. A declarative verbal clause in Swedish is illustrated in (9a). The corresponding negated clauses, with the possible interchangeable use of these negative particles is illustrated in (9b-d). As indicated by the examples, the negative sentences show no further formal structural differences to the corresponding affirmative, other than the addition of a negative particle. Hence, the negation is symmetric, according to Miestamo’s classification (Miestamo 2011: 7).

(9) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

a. *Anna är lärrare*

Anna is teacher

‘Anna is a teacher’ (own data)

b. *Anna är inte doktor*

Anna is NEG doctor

‘Anna is not a doctor’ (own data)

c. *Jag spring-es icke fort*

1sg run-PRS NEG fast

‘I do not run fast’ (own data)
In Swedish grammar (cf. Teleman 1999, Holmes and Hinchliffe 2003) it is stated that all three negative particles are possible negators, and that they may be used interchangeably, albeit without further discussion. It should be noted, however, that the use of *icke* or *ej* is not considered natural in most contexts to most speakers of Swedish. This will be further discussed below.

The interchangeable use of the negative particles *inte*, *icke*, and *ej*, has not yet been the subject matter in any research. Olsson (2013) presents in his unpublished manuscript some conclusions from previous literature. The negative particle *ej* is typically used in the written or formal language, as in *Ej godtagbart* (‘not acceptable’). The negator *icke* is typically used in compounds, as in *icke-rökare* (‘non-smoker’) (Holmes and Hinchliffe 2003: 320). Hird (1980) states that the negative particle *inte* is the most common particle that preferably should be used. He further suggests that *ej* or *icke* may be used in formal language or when emphasis is needed. Pettersson (2005) states that *inte* is stylistically neutral to use, but that a hundred years ago, *icke* and *ej* were more common. Before the 1950’s, *icke* was the most commonly used negative particle, but it has since obtained a more strict and formal tone. Before the 1950’s, the negator *inte* was considered informal and hence less common (Molde 1970). A shift in usage is said to have occurred somewhere around the 1960’s. From 1965 and onwards, the negators *icke* and *ej* typically occur in set phrases or when space is restricted, e.g. signs “Rör ej” (‘Do not touch’) or when emphasis is needed (Molde 1970). *Icke* is today most commonly used in compounds such as *icke-binär* (‘non-binary’) or in other instances where the negative prefix “o-” cannot be used. The negators are today considered as formal and outdated in both informal and formal language. The negator *inte* became the more common negative particle around the 1960’s and has since increased in usage. It is nowadays the standard negative particle, in both written and spoken language.

It is outside the scope of this study to conduct any diachronic study on the treatment of the three individual negative particles in the Swedish language. Despite the amount of literature on typology of negation, no exhaustive study is dedicated to this unusual feature of Swedish.

As explained above, declarative verbal clauses in Swedish are negated with the SN marker *inte* (or *icke/ej*). The strategy to negate non-verbal sentences follow the same principle. That is, predications without a lexical verb, such as possessive sentences and existential predications, are negated by SN. However, non-verbal predications in Swedish can also be negated with a negative indefinite pronoun. An illustration of a possessive clause negated with the standard negative marker *inte* is shown in (10a). The same sentence is negated with a negative indefinite pronoun in (10b). An existential predicate negated with *inte* and with a negative indefinite pronoun is illustrated in (10c/d).

(10) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

a. *Jag har inte några barn*  
   1sg have NEG any children  
   ‘I don’t have any children’ (own data)

b. *Jag har inga barn*  
   1sg have NEG children  
   ‘I don’t have children’ (own data)

c. *Det finns inte vatten i kran-en*  
   there exists NEG water in tap-DET  
   ‘There is no water in the tap’ (own data)

d. *Det finns inget vatten i kran-en*  
   there exists NEG water in tap-DET  
   ‘There is no water in the tap’ (own data)

The strategies to negate existential predications with either the standard negative marker or a negative indefinite pronoun will be further discussed in 2.4.2, below.
2.4 Existential constructions

The purpose of this section is to identify existential constructions in a cross-linguistic sense, and to explain the form and function of such predications. In the first sub-section, I present operational notions used to identify existential predications. In the second sub-section, I discuss negation of existential predications. The focus of both sub-sections will be (negative) existential predications in Swedish. My aim is not to discuss existence as any philosophical domain, since it is outside the scope of the current thesis. Rather, my aim is to employ a discourse-pragmatic definition to be used as a working definition throughout the study.

2.4.1 Existential predications

Existential sentences are a common type of non-verbal predications; in many languages, existential clauses are a distinct clause category. An existential sentence explicitly refers to a semantic property; a sentence whose meaning is to predicate the (non-)existence of something (Moro 2006: 210). From a discourse point of view, the primary function of an existential clause is to introduce a participant in the discourse that is new to the hearer (Dryer 2007).

The term ‘existential sentence’ refers to sentences that state the plain existence of an entity. They typically show characteristics such as having a non-referential subject, usually with a non-prototypical subject marking and special agreement or no agreement between subject and predicate (Veselinova 2013). The term existential sentence further refers to a sentence which expresses a proposition about the existence or the presence of someone or something. Sentence (11) is considered existential, since it entails nothing other than the existence of lions in Africa.

(11) There are lions in Africa

Structurally, existential sentences typically show one or all of the following features: first, an expletive subject is required (the English there, or Swedish det); in languages without expletives, no such subject appears. Second, if the existential sentence contains a verb, it is often homophonous with a verb meaning ‘to be’ (McNally 2011: 1831). Third, in all existential sentences, there is a ‘pivot’ nominal. Fourth, a ‘coda’ phrase, external to the pivot noun phrase, may appear. The coda is in such cases considered to be a modifier, or an adjunct to the pivot (McNally 2011). Fifth and final, in many languages, a locative expression may appear. In some languages, the locative expression is obligatory but “bleached from content” (McNally 2011:1832). The features listed are exemplified in the Swedish existential predicate in (12). In this work, I will also refer to nominal phrases such as lions, as content nominals, to refer to noun phrases with a referential meaning, e.g. as opposed to pronominal phrases.

(12) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

\[
\text{Det finns lejon som dödar människor i Afrika}
\]

there exist lions that kill people in Africa

‘There are lions that kill people in Africa’ (own data)

In the Swedish existential construction above, det is the expletive subject, finns is a grammaticalized verb that expresses existence, lejon is the pivot, the phrase som dödar människor (‘that kill people’) is the coda phrase, which is external to the pivot. Lastly, the locative expression is i Afrika (‘in Africa’). How these elements in an existential sentence are related syntactically and semantically has caused “disagreement among linguists” (McNally 2011: 1831). Existential sentences are sometimes considered equivalents to copular sentences ascribing property or location, which in turn has led analyses of existential sentences to treat the pivot nominal as argument to the coda phrase, which in turn effectively serves as the main predicate for the sentence (McNally 2011: 1832). Other analyses treat the similarity between existential sentences and copular sentences as accidental, and, thus, treat the pivot as “the only complement to the existential predicate” (McNally 2011: 1832). The coda, in such an analysis, is treated as modifier to the predicate. In this work, the noun phrase whose existence is stated will hereafter be referred to as the pivot, and it will be treated as the main predicate; the coda phrase as a modifier. The expletive subject in an existential sentence is considered a place holder.
Creissels (2014), in his typological study of 256 languages, finds that 120 languages have a dedicated existential predicative construction, none of which are evenly distributed across language families and areas. It should be noted that Creissels’ language sample is a convenience sample; it is not stratified according to genealogical and geographical affiliation.

Semantically, existential sentences have certain properties that are cross-linguistically common. First and foremost, they serve to introduce novel referents into the discourse. Therefore, there is a restrictedness in definiteness. In (13a), the pivot nominal is an indefinite NP but carries a specific reference. In (13b), the pivot nominal is indefinite but has a generic reference. Definite nominal phrases are impossible, as shown in (13c).

(13) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

a. *Det finns en hund i trädgård-en
‘There is a dog in the garden’ (own data)

b. Det finns hund-ar i trädgård-en
‘There are dogs in the garden’ (own data)

c. *det finns hund-en i trädgård-en
‘There is the dog in the garden’ (own data)

Existential constructions are, in the sense of Hengeveld (1992), considered to form a subtype of locative constructions. The form and function of an existential clause commonly overlap with locative-presentative constructions, but in addition to stating existence, locative-presentative sentences also specify the location of an entity, as in (14). A locative predication is a phrase with a definite subject, such as (15). For a detailed discussion on this matter, see Hengeveld (1992). For a discussion on existential predication as inverse locational predication, see Creissels (2014).

(14) There are cars at the parking lot
(15) The car is at the parking lot

Existence may, in Swedish, also be expressed with position verbs, i.e. det sitter (‘it sits’), det ligger (‘it lays’), det står (‘it stands’), or with verbs of coming into view, such as det dök upp (‘it emerged’). Some illustrative examples of such constructions follow below (16a-d).

(16) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

a. Det sitter fem patient-er i våntrumm-et
   it sits five patient-PL in waitroom-DET
   ‘There are five patients in the waitroom’ (Herriman, 2012: 168)

b. Det ligger en bok på bord-et
   it lays one book on table-DET
   ‘There is a book on the table’ (constructed example)

c. Det står en steg i garage-t
   it stands a ladder in garage-DET
   ‘There is a ladder in the garage’ (constructed example)

d. Det dök upp många gäst-er på fest-en
   it dive up many guest-PL at party-DET
   ‘There were many guests at the party’ (constructed example)
Sentences stating the existence of an entity with positional verbs, though closely related to the construction of an existential sentence, differ from existential sentences “in their syntactic detail, its use in discourse and that it entails something more than mere existence or presence because of its verb” (McNally 2011: 1830). A complete study of existential constructions in Swedish should take into account all expressions of existence, including position verbs and verbs of coming into view. This study is limited in its time-frame, and I have therefore chosen to focus on the most frequent construction, namely existential predications expressed with an expletive subject, the verb *finns* and a pivot nominal. It is safe to say that existential predications where *finns* is the verb of existence is the most common way to express existence in Swedish, cf. raw frequencies listed in the appendix.

### 2.4.2 Negation of existence

The aim of the current sub-section is first to give an overview on how existential predications are negated in comparison to verbal predications, in a cross-linguistic sense. Second, since my focus is negation of existential predications in Swedish, special attention is paid to such predications.

The function of a negative existential sentence is to state the non-existence of an entity. A negative existential sentence refers to a sentence such as (17). ‘Existential negation’ refers to the negation strategy used in sentence (17) (Veselinova 2013).

(17) There is no milk in the fridge.

There is cross-linguistic variation in existential negation. Some languages use their standard negation strategy in negation of existential predications. In other languages, there is a complete formal and constructional difference between the expressions used for existential negation and those used for SN (Veselinova 2013). A stock-example of this is Turkish. Existence is expressed by the word *var* (‘exist’). Existential predications are negated with the semi-verb *yok* (‘not exist’). This is illustrated in (18).

(18) Turkish (Turkic, Oghuz-Kipshak-Uyghur)

   a. *Su var-di*  
      water exist-PST  
      ‘There was water’ (Van Schaaik 1994, cited in Veselinova 2013:113)

   b. *Su yok-tu*  
      water NEG.EX-PST  
      ‘There was no water’ (Van Schaaik 1994, cited in Veselinova 2013:113)

The use of a special strategy to negate existential sentences is cross-linguistically extremely common (Veselinova 2013: 107). Veselinova (2013) identifies in her genealogically balanced 95-language sample, that negative existentials represent a linguistic construction of its own and a separate conceptual domain. The ‘special negative existentials’ occur in about 63 % of the languages, widely spread geographically (Veselinova 2013: 117). The functions of negative existentials span from "negating very general notions, such as existence, possession and location, to more specific lexical meanings such as ‘dead’, ‘destroy’ and ‘disappear’” (Veselinova 2013: 119). Morphologically, in the languages with special negative existentials, such negative existentials generally form a word class of their own (2013: 139). Semantically, the negative existentials predicate the absence of an entity, rather than negate its existence. Thus, Veselinova treats them as a separate domain rather than just a special negator.

The difference between the standard negation and the negative existential in a language may be morphological. In Kannada, standard negation and the negative existential are formally the same. However, the former is in bound form; the latter in free form (Veselinova 2013: 113). Standard negation is expressed with the suffix –illa. The negator *illa* in a free-standing form negates existential, locative and possessive predications, in a predicate position. This is illustrated in (19).
(19) Kannada (Dravidian, South-Dravidian)

a. Anil kaːle:jige hoːgu-vud.illa
Anil collage.DAT go-NONPST.GER-NEG
‘Anil won’t/doesn’t go to college’ (Sridhar 1990, cited in Veselinova 2013: 113)

b. Khaja:neyalli hana illa
treasury.LOC money NEG.EX
‘There is no money in the treasury’ (Sridhar 1990, cited in Veselinova 2013: 113)

The difference in standard negation and negative existentials in Kannada is morphological and thus represents an intermediate case in difference.

Another case of an intermediate difference between standard negation and negation of existential predications is represented by Swedish. As discussed above (section 2.3), simple declarative sentences are typically negated with the standard negative marker inte. As also discussed above, another possibility for negating non-verbal predications is using a negative indefinite pronoun ingen (‘not any’), in relevant forms. Example (20) provides an illustration.

(20) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

a. Det finns inte ost i kylskåp-et
there exists NEG cheese in fridge-DET
‘There is no cheese in the fridge’ (own data)

b. Det finns ingen ost i kylskåp-et
there exists not any cheese in fridge-DET
‘There is no cheese in the fridge’ (own data)

According to Veselinova (2013), the choice between the standard negative marker and the negative indefinite pronoun is “contingent on a complex interplay of factors relating to polarity, quantification and scope (2013: 115, citing Dahl, pc.) Pragmatically, negation of existence with an indefinite pronoun in (20b) is the unmarked choice. The difference between standard negation and the negation strategy in existential predications is neither constructional, as in Turkish, nor morphological, as in Kannada. But because the choice of negation strategy in existential predications is contingent on pragmatic differences, Swedish rather represents an intermediate situation “which has to be allowed its own structural type” (Veselinova 2013: 115).

Swedish has an inventory of three series of indefinite pronouns; i) the någon-series, used in all non-emphatic functions and in the negative functions, ii) the negative ingen-series, used in direct negation, and iii) the free-choice som helst-series (Haspelmath 1997: 249). The distribution of the three series is shown in the semantic map adopted by Haspelmath, in figure 1. The någon-series and ingen-series are discussed in this section. For a discussion on the som helst-series, see Haspelmath (1997).
As illustrated by Haspelmath’s semantic map in figure 1, *ingen* attains only direct negation. However, in direct-negation, there is a competition between *någon* (which co-occurs with verbal negation) and *ingen* (which does not occur with verbal negation) (Haspelmath 1997: 250). This is demonstrated in (21).

(21) Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic)

a. *Ingen har sett mig*
   none has seen me
   ‘Nobody has seen me’ (Haspelmath, 1997: 250)

b. *Jag har inte hört någon opera*
   1sg have never heard any opera
   ‘I have never heard any opera’ (own data)

Negative indefinites are a combination of non-existence and indefiniteness. The “indefinite reference is established when the referent is not known to the addressee” (van Alsenoy 2014: 22). When negating existence with a negative indefinite pronoun, the scope of negation is narrower than the sentence or the clause; the scope of negation is over a constituent (2014: 91).

In Swedish, the negative indefinite pronoun *ingen* varies with *inte någon* (‘not any’). Thelander (1980) states that the choice between the negative indefinite pronoun and an indefinite pronoun preceded by negation is determined by the following conditions: first, a negative indefinite pronoun is used, rather than an indefinite pronoun preceded by negation, in main clauses with a predicate verb with present time reference (Thelander 1980: 229, citing Thorell 1973). *Inte någon* is preferred when negating an object. Holm & Nylund Lindgren (1977, in Thelander 1980) states that the negative indefinite pronoun functions, just as *inte någon*, functions as a subject in main and subordinate clauses in both present and perfect tense. However, the negative indefinite pronoun is avoided for negation in subordinate clauses and for negation in main clauses with a verb in perfect tense (Thelander 1980, citing Amnell & Saari 1978). In clauses with present time reference, the negative indefinite pronoun may be placed in an object position. However, the semantic durability does not always hold between *någon* preceded by a negative marker, and *ingenting*; the negation may jeopardize *någon* (‘any’) to be interpreted as ‘*någon viss*’ (‘some’) (Thelander 1980: 325).

Thelander (1980) examines the variation in use between the negative indefinite pronoun and *inte någon* (‘not one’) in spoken Swedish, and yields the result that the constructions are most prone to function as notional subjects. In his study, Thelander examine a proposed difference between speakers living in the north and south of Sweden. In his material based on 120 interviews, there are 262 occurrences of the negative indefinite pronoun and *inte någon*, of which 64 % are negative indefinite pronouns. The constructions are further divided into three categories, depending on their syntactic function; notional subject, predicative and object. The most frequent syntactic function among the constructions is notional subject; the negative indefinite pronoun functions as such in 86 %. In this category, the predicate verb is *finnas* (‘exist’) (Thelander 1980: 331).
When using a negative indefinite pronoun to negate in Swedish, the presence of a sentential negative marker is ungrammatical, i.e. the indefinite pronoun expresses negativity independently. If the presence of a sentential negative marker is acquired despite the presence of a negative indefinite pronoun in a sentence in a language X, but the sentence is interpreted to have been negated only once, that language is a negative concord language (van Alsenoy 2014). For a further discussion on (negative) indefinite pronouns, see Haspelmath (1997).

2.5 Conclusion of background

To summarize, the background section in this thesis has introduced some working definitions and operational notions to be used throughout the study.

Standard Negation (SN) can be defined as the strategy to negate declarative sentences with a lexical verb predicate. Negation of sentences with no lexical verb, e.g. nominal predications, locative or existential predications, is consequently referred to as non-verbal negation.

Existential sentences refer to sentences which state the plain existence of an entity. They typically show features such as an expletive pronoun, a verb and a nominal pivot. Existential negation refers to the negation strategy used in existential sentences. Cross-linguistically, existential negation tends to be expressed by a lexical item, distinct from SN. Swedish represents a case in which the difference between a special strategy to negate existential sentences and the one used in SN must be allowed its own structural type, since it is neither constructional nor morphological.

3. Aims and purposes

As already stated, the choice between standard negation and indefinite pronouns, whether negative or not, for negation of existential predications, have not been discussed in any descriptive or theoretical work devoted to Swedish. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide an adequate description of the use of various negation strategies in existential predications. The aim of the current study is to describe what factors determine the choice of negative marker.

4. Method

This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section (4.1) is devoted to the source material used to collect the material of the study. The collection and analysis of the data is described in the second part (4.2).

4.1 Source material

All data used to examine negation of existential predications in Swedish was collected through Korp, a concordance search tool from Språkbanken (The Swedish Language Bank).² The corpora in Språkbanken contains material of different text types and time periods. The corpora and their number of sentences are listed in table 1. As presented in in the table, the corpus Sociala Medier (‘Social Media’) contains a much higher number of sentences than the other corpora. When the study was performed, the

² https://spraakbanken.gu.se/korp/
corpora contained a total of 150,273,992 sentences. For the copyright of the authors not to be violated, sentences in each corpus are disarranged.

Table 1. Corpora and their number of included corpora with number of sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Number of included corpora</th>
<th>Number of sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August Strindberg (August Strinberg)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>461,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish-Swedish texts (Finlandssvenska texter)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5,386,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government texts (Myndighetstexter)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>391,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction (Skön litteratur)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,265,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media (Sociala medier)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>74,913,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal texts (Tidningstexter)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38,049,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals (Tidskrifter)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29,806,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>127</strong></td>
<td><strong>150,273,992</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Data collection

The first step in the data collection was to do a corpus search for each regular expression listed below, in order to obtain general frequencies in the corpora selected for this study. The tense categories of the existential predications were present and past for sentences with a negative indefinite pronoun and sentences with a negative particle. For sentences with the negative particle, I also collected sentences with perfect time reference. To negate sentences with a negative indefinite pronoun with perfect time reference is not possible in Swedish. Future time reference was excluded, because future time reference may also include modal implications, and this would in turn make the study more complicated. Existential predications negated with time adverbials were also excluded from the data collection. This was because I consider modification with time adverbials such as aldrig (‘never’) or sållan (‘seldom’) to be outside the scope of this study. First, I collected frequencies with search strings in which the negator followed the verb. The search strings used for data collection are presented in (22).

\[(22)\]

a. Query for a negative existential predicate with present time reference negated with the negative marker inte:
   \[
   \text{[word = "Det|det"] [word = "finns"] [word = "inte"]}
   \]

b. Query for a negative existential predicate negated with the negative marker inte, with past time (preterit) reference:
   \[
   \text{[word = "Det|det"] [word = "fanns"] [word = "inte"]}
   \]

c. Query for a negative existential predicate negated with the negative marker inte, with perfect time reference:
   \[
   \text{[word = "Det|det"] [word = "har"] [word = "inte"] [word = "funnits"]}
   \]

The same search strings were used for data collection of existential predications negated with icke and ej.

d. Query for a negative existential predicate negated with a negative indefinite pronoun with present time reference: [word = “Det|det”] [word = “finns”] [word = “ingenting|inget|ingen|inga”]

e. Query for a negative existential predicate negated with an indefinite pronoun with past time reference (preterite): [word = “Det|det”] [word = “fanns”] [word = “ingenting|inget|ingen|inga”]
Second, I collected frequencies with search strings in which an adverb, such as *typ* (‘like’), *nämligen* (‘namely’) or *faktiskt* (‘actually’) was intervened between the existential verb *finns* and the negator. The search string is presented in (23), in which the negator is a negative indefinite pronoun.

(23) [word = “Det[det]” [word = “finns”] [word] [word = “ingenting|inget|ingen|inga”]]

The second step in the data collection was to select sentences for a more detailed analysis. The search strings presented in (22) and (23) resulted in a total of 240 548 sentences, of which 1000 sentences were selected randomly for analysis. The selection was random in the sense that each sentence had a chance to be selected, and the sentences were chosen according to the proportion of the negative marker in them. The table below presents the number of frequencies of each negative existential predicate, the percentile proportion of the predications, and number of sentences excerpted for a more detailed analysis. The left-hand column shows the search strings, in which PRS stands for present tense, PRT for preterite (simple past) and [ADV] for adverbial marker.

The proportion of the 1000 excerpted sentences are listed in table 2 below. The selection was as follows. 768 sentences negated with a negative indefinite pronoun in present tense, 47 sentences negated with a negative indefinite pronoun in past tense. 62 sentences negated with a negative indefinite pronoun in present time reference containing an adverbial marker, and 8 sentences negated with a negative indefinite pronoun containing an adverbial marker.

For existential predicates negated with the standard negative marker *inte*; there were 73 sentences with present time reference, 17 sentences in past tense, 5 sentences in perfect tense, 16 sentences in present tense containing an adverbial, 3 sentences in past tense with an adverbial and 1 sentence in perfect tense with an adverbial. After the data collection was completed, any aspect of time reference was not considered.

Table 2. The search strings of sentences with the negative markers ‘inte’, ‘icke’ and ‘ej’; their number of frequencies, the proportions of the total amount and number of sentences excerpted for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search string</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Excerpted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS ingenting</td>
<td>inget</td>
<td>ingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT ingenting</td>
<td>inget</td>
<td>ingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS [ADV] ingenting</td>
<td>inget</td>
<td>ingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT [ADV] ingenting</td>
<td>inget</td>
<td>ingen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS inte</td>
<td>17 500</td>
<td>0,73 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT inte</td>
<td>4150</td>
<td>0,17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRF inte</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>0,04 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS [ADV] inte</td>
<td>3742</td>
<td>0,15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT [ADV] inte</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>0,03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRF [ADV] inte</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>0,008 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS ej</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT ej</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRF ej</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS [ADV] ej</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT [ADV] ej</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS icke</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT icke</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRF icke</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRS [ADV] icke</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det PRT [ADV] icke</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 240 548 | 100 % | 1000 |
4.3 Analysis of the data

Once the proper amount of negative existential predications was collected, the properties of the predications negated with an indefinite pronoun and the standard marker *inte*, respectively, were analyzed. The first step in the analysis of predications negated with a negative indefinite pronoun was to identify the syntactic function of the negative indefinite pronoun. The property was identified as a determining modifier to the nominal pivot, or the head. In the sentences of which the negative indefinite functioned as a modifier, the semantic role of the nominal pivot was analyzed. The properties of the predications negated with the standard negative marker *inte* were identified on the basis of their syntactic function and semantic properties.

5. Results

This section is divided into four parts. In the first sub-section, the total number of frequencies of negative existential predications held from the corpus survey is presented in a general overview. In the second sub-section, I present the syntactic role of the negative indefinite pronoun as a negator, and the semantic properties of the nominal pivots. In the third subsection, the structural and semantic properties of the existential predications negated with the standard negative marker *inte* are presented. Finally, the section ends with some conclusions.

5.1 General overview of results

Frequencies of existential predications negated with each negative marker found in the corpora are listed in table 3. In total, the corpus search generated 240 548 negative existential predications. 89 % of the predications are existential predications negated with a negative indefinite pronoun. 11 % of the existential predications are predications negated with the standard negative marker *inte*. 100 predications negated with *icke* and 93 predications negated with *ej* were generated through the corpus search. From the total amount of 240 548 predications, the proportion of predications negated with *icke* and *ej* were less than 1 %.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negated existential predications</th>
<th>Raw count</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existential predicates negated with an indefinite pronoun</td>
<td>212 918</td>
<td>89 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential predicates negated with <em>inte</em></td>
<td>27 437</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential predicates negated with <em>icke</em></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential predicates negated with <em>ej</em></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240 548</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated above in table 3, a majority of the negative existential predications in the material of this study are negated with a negative indefinite pronoun. There is thus a clear preference to use the negative indefinite pronoun rather than any other negator. I did not select any sentences of predications negated with the archaic negators *icke* or *ej* for the detailed analysis.
5.2 Syntactic role of the negative indefinite pronoun

The negative indefinite pronoun appears in four forms. These and their frequency counts are listed in table 4. The most frequently occurring form is *ingen*.

Table 4. Frequencies of each negative indefinite pronoun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative indefinite pronoun</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ingenting</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inget</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingen</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inga</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 below provides a synopsis of the findings of each form of the negative indefinite pronoun’s syntactic role.

Table 5. The frequencies of the different properties of each individual negative indefinite pronoun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indefinite pronoun</th>
<th>Head (%)</th>
<th>Modifier (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ingenting</td>
<td>54 (100)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>54 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inget</td>
<td>95 (36)</td>
<td>167 (64)</td>
<td>262 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingen</td>
<td>49 (14)</td>
<td>309 (86)</td>
<td>358 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inga</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>211 (100)</td>
<td>211 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>198 (22)</td>
<td>687 (78)</td>
<td>885 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 5, the negative indefinite pronoun *ingenting* occurs in 54 sentences, and always as a head in the pivot. The negative indefinite pronoun *inget* occurs in total 262 times, 95 times as a head, that is 36 %; and in 167 sentences as a modifier to a nominal pivot, that is 64 %. *Ingen* occurs in total in 358 sentences: 309 times as a modifier (86 %) and in 49 sentences (14 %) as a head. The negative indefinite pronoun *inga* occurs in 211 sentences of this study’s material: it functions as a modifier in all those sentences.

From the results of table 5, some conclusions can be drawn. First, there seem to be a strong preference to use a negative indefinite pronoun as a modifier, e.g. a determining attribute, of a content noun in the existential predicate it negates. Second, the results show that two forms of the indefinite pronoun, i.e. *ingenting* and *inga* are used solely as nominal phrases and modifiers, respectively. The word *ingenting* is derived from the generic noun *thing*, and therefore it cannot modify a nominal phrase. The negative indefinite pronoun *inga* may only function as a modifier.

There is a fluctuation in the use of *inget* and *ingen*, respectively. They function as both modifiers and as heads, but most frequently as modifiers.

Last, it is possible to depict from the results listed in table 5 that the most common form of the negative indefinite pronouns is *ingen*. As mentioned above, it appears in 358 sentences of the total 885 sentences, that is 40 %. The least common form of the negative indefinite pronoun is *ingenting*; in the total of 885 sentences, it appears 54 times, that is 6 %.

In table 6 below, the syntactic properties of the negative indefinite pronouns in all forms are listed.

Table 6. Frequencies of occurrences of each property of the negative indefinite pronoun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic property of the negative indefinite pronoun</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modifier</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>78 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>22 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned above, and illustrated in table 6, the negative indefinite pronoun used as a modifier of a content noun is the most frequent; in the total of 885 sentences, it occurs as a modifier in 687 sentences, that is 78 %. An illustration of this is provided below in (24).

(24) *Det finns inget botemedel mot TBE*  
there exist no cure against TBE  
‘There is no cure against TBE’ (8 sidor)

In 198 sentences, the negative indefinite pronoun functions as a head, i.e. as a pivot; in which the coda phrase functions as the modifier. This is illustrated in (25).

(25) *Det finns ingen jag älskar så mycket som honom*  
there exist no one I love that much as him  
‘There is no one I love as much as him’ (Bloggmix, 2006)

### 5.2.1 The semantic properties of the negated pivot

In sentences in which the negative indefinite pronoun functions as a modifier to the pivot, the pivot is a content noun. The semantic properties of the content nouns modified by negative indefinite pronouns are found to almost exclusively reflect the property of an inanimate noun, e.g. *anledning* (‘reason’), *ord* (‘word’), *bevis* (‘evidence’) or *genväg* (‘shortcut’). There are few instances of nouns expressing human qualities or characteristics. Spelling out all content nouns is not possible because of space limits. Instead, content nouns that occur more than 5 times in the material are listed in table 7 below, with illustrative examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content noun</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *anledning*   | 42          | *Det finns ingen anledning till att liuga*  
there is no reason to lie                                                  |
| *ord*         | 11          | *Det finns inga ord som kan förklara min kärlek till den mannen*  
there are no words to describe my love for that man                          |
| *bevis*       | 9           | *Det finns inga bevis att våldsamma spel påverkar människor*  
there is no evidence that violent games affect people                         |
| *garanti*     | 8           | *Det finns ingen garanti för någonting idag*  
there are no guaranties for anything today                                   |
| *genväg*     | 8           | *Det finns ingen genväg till en eftertraktad stil*  
there is no shortcut to a coveted style                                       |
| *pengar*      | 8           | *Det finns inga pengar för den branschen*  
there is no money for that industry                                            |
| *möjlighet*   | 6           | *Det finns ingen möjlighet att inte ha denna som profilbild*  
there was not an opportunity not to have this as a profile picture            |
| *ursäkt*      | 6           | *Det finns ingen ursäkt för att undvika källaren*  
there were no excuses to avoid the basement                                    |

As can be seen in table 7, there are 8 nouns that occur more than 5 times in the material. The noun *anledning* (‘reason’) appears in 42 sentences, that is in about 5 % of the sentences.
5.3 Properties of the predications negated with the standard negative marker *inte*

The properties of the 115 existential predications negated with the negative marker *inte* were found to belong to four different groups. The different properties are listed below in table 8.

**Table 8. The number of occurrences of the properties reflected in the predications negated with *inte*.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties of the predicate</th>
<th>Number of occurrences</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantification</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic noun</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific noun</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite pronoun</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>115</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results in table 8, we can identify a number of properties in the existential predications negated by the standard negator *inte*. First, one has to do with quantification: *inte* occurs with quantification in 41 sentences, i.e. 36 %. Second, the negative marker is used to negate generic nouns in 36 sentences (31 %). Third, in 18 sentences (16 %), *inte* negates a noun with a determiner. Fourth and final, in 20 sentences, that is 17 %, *inte* negates a pivot which is introduced by an indefinite pronoun.

### 5.3.1 Quantification

Most predications negated with *inte* in the material was introduced by a positive quantifier; *mycket* (‘a lot’) or *många* (‘many’). Among the negated predications introduced with a quantifier, the quantifier is most often followed by a nonfinite verb, i.e. *att göra* (‘to do’), *att klaga på* (‘to complain on’) or *att välja på* (‘to choose from’). Nonfinite verbs occur in 21 sentences, that is 51 %.

An illustration of a negative existential predicate in which the nominal pivot is introduced with a quantifier, i.e. *mycket* (‘a lot’) is given in (26).

(26) *Det finns inte mycket tid för bloggande för mig idag*  
     there exists NEG a lot time for blogging for me today  
     ‘There is not much time for blogging for me today’ (Bloggmix 2007)

There are no occurrences of a negative quantifier such as *få* (‘few’) or *lite* (‘little’), following the negator.

### 5.3.2 Generic nouns

One third of the existential predications negated with *inte* in the material are content nouns without specific reference, i.e. the predicate follows the negator immediately. No categories of concrete nouns could be found. However, all content nouns are abstract nouns, i.e. *tid* (‘time’), *ork* (‘energy’) or *plats* (‘room’). I define an abstract noun as a noun referring to a concept or idea, e.g. something with which a human cannot interact. An illustration of a generic, abstract noun negated with *inte* is given in (27).

(27) *Det finns inte tid till att tänka*  
     there exists NEG time for to think  
     ‘There is no time for thinking’ (Bloggmix 2008)
5.3.3 Nouns with a determiner

There are 18 instances (16%) of existential predications negated with the standard marker inte in which the existential predication is a noun introduced with a determiner, such as en (‘one’) or den (‘the’). An example is given in (28).

(28) Det finns inte en chans att detta kommer hålla
there exists NEG one chance that this will hold
‘There is not one chance that this will last (Bloggmix 2009)

5.3.4 Indefinite pronouns

Among the existential predications negated with inte in the material, there are 20 sentences where inte negates a predication in which the pivot is introduced with an indefinite pronoun, such as någon (‘any’) and några (‘some’). Such a negated existential predicate is illustrated in (29).

(29) Det har ju inte funnits någon dag för mitt namn
there has ADV NEG existed any day for my name
‘There has not been any day for my name’ (Göteborgsposten 2001)

5.4 Conclusion of results

Frequency counts on the negative existential predications in the material of the current study show that existential predications are most frequently negated with an indefinite pronoun, which predominantly functions as a modifier to the content noun in the nominal pivot. Among the existential predications negated with the standard negative marker, the negative marker is most frequently used to negate a nominal pivot introduced with a quantifier. The other predications negated reflect the properties of generic nouns, nouns with specific reference and predicates introduced with an indefinite pronoun.

6. Discussion

This section is divided into two parts. The first part of the section provides a result discussion in which I discuss how the findings are important in relation to the research question and how they relate to the earlier studies mentioned in the background. The second part gives a methodological evaluation.

6.3 Result discussion

There is no previous work on negation of existential predications devoted to Swedish. In reference grammars of Swedish, it is stated that for negation, regardless of predication negated, the negative marker inte is to be used. However, the results of this study show that there is a clear preference to negate existential predications with a negative indefinite pronoun, rather than any other negator.

The negative indefinite pronoun negates the existence of an entity in an unconditional way. It express direct negation by itself, inherently. It therefore serves as a suitable negator in existential predications. The existential predications negated with the standard negative marker inte were shown to reflect properties of four different kinds.

The predications negated with inte were predominantly predications introduced with a positive quantifier. This construction does, unlike negation with a negative indefinite pronoun, not negate.
existence in an unconditional way. The presence of a positive quantifier rather entails an uncertain, or conditional absence of the pivot. A sentence such as (30) does not express an absolute non-existence of the pivot nominal offentliga verk (‘creations’), but rather the small amount of it.

(30) Det finns inte många offentliga verk i vårt land
there exists NEG many public creations in our country
‘There are not many public creations in our country’ (Bloggmix 2008)

Among the existential predications negated with inte, in which the pivot nominal was a generic noun, not introduced with a quantifier, determiner or indefinite pronoun, all generic nouns were abstract nouns, expressing intangible entities such as time or space.

Example (31) gives an illustration of an existential predicate negated with the standard negative marker in which the pivot nominal is preceded by a determiner.

(31) Det finns inte en chans i världs-rymden att jag skulle ha kalas hemma
there exists NEG one chance in world-space that I would have party home
‘There is not a chance in space I would have a party at home’ (Bloggmix 2009)

Example (31) above illustrates how negative existential predications serves as idiomatic expressions in Swedish. Among the negative existential predications negated with inte, in this group, the pivot en chans (‘a chance’) occurs frequently. It should be noted here that I chose to analyze these sort of predications as nouns with a determiner, and not as nouns introduced with a quantifier. This is because a pivot introduced with a determiner such as en (‘one’) or den (‘the’), gives an emphatic reference, rather than predicates an amount. This is a result of my intuition as a native speaker.

The final group of existential predicates negated with inte were predicates introduced with an indefinite pronoun; någon (‘some’/ ‘any’), några (‘any’) or något (‘something’). This is illustrated in (32).

(32) Det fanns visst inte något bröd hemma
there existed apparently NEG any bread home
‘There was apparently no bread at home’ (Bloggmix 2006)

Negation expressed by the negative marker inte followed by an indefinite pronoun, have been treated in previous literature to reflect the same semantic properties as an existential predicate negated with a negative indefinite pronoun. It is therefore of interest here that the frequency counts of such constructions are few in the material. However, negation of existence expressed with an indefinite pronoun preceded by a negative marker, i.e. inte någon (‘not any’) might imperil the expression semantically to be interpreted as inte någon viss (‘not any certain’) according to Thelander (1980). There seem to be a competition between inte någon to, on the one hand, be interpreted as inte någon viss (‘not any certain’), and on the other, as inte någon alls (‘not any at all’).

As has been mentioned, Haspelmath (1997) stated that in non-verbal indirect negation, there is a competition between the negative indefinite pronoun and a negated neutral indefinite pronoun. However, I would argue, that a negative indefinite pronoun entails direct negation, since the pivot is immediately preceded by the negator, whereas a negated indefinite pronoun entails indirect negation, since it semantically negates the indefinite pronoun and not the nominal pivot. Thus, the strategies to negate existential predications expressed as such (i.e. by the standard negative marker or by a negative indefinite pronoun) are not interchangeable. Further, there seem to be a preference to introduce the pivot negated by inte, with a quantifier, as in (30) or a determiner as in (31), above. A positive quantifier intervened between the standard negative marker and the pivot weakens or extenuates the negation. In such constructions, the negator does not negate the existence of the pivot as such, but rather negates the amount of the pivot in the negative existential predicate. When a determiner intervenes between the standard negative marker and the nominal pivot, the construction often forms an idiomatic expression.
Thus, the factors that determine the choice of negation marker in Swedish, are these: if a speaker intends to negate existence, a negative indefinite pronoun is used. The standard negative marker is used to negate existential predications when the speaker intends to e.g. narrow the extent of negation or form an idiomatic expression.

6.4 Method discussion

The data used for this study was collected by using corpora. The collection of texts that constitutes a corpus represents ‘natural’ language and may hence serve as an aid for linguistic analysis. A corpus can serve as a valuable resource to test linguistic hypotheses. However, there is a risk of subjectivity; one is restricted to the search string chosen for data collection, and the limited amount of data. There is also a restriction in corpora due to technical specifications and design.

Other data sources for data collection is grammars and/or interviews. For negation of existential predications in Swedish, little to no information have been provided by grammars. Since negation strategy in existential predications is dependent on a complex interplay of various factors, this in turn makes elicitation with native speakers difficult. A corpus survey could be a prerequisite for interviews; a first step to determine what one is looking for. However, much analysis in this study is conducted with my intuition as a native speaker of Swedish, something which in turn is not provided by a corpus. It was not possible within the time-frame of this thesis to conduct an analysis of negation strategies by genre. It is however fully feasible to include such an overview in a revised version of this work.

7. Conclusions

In this thesis, I have examined and described negation of existential predications in Swedish. Standard and non-standard negation in Swedish follow the same principle, i.e. by using the standard negative marker *inte*. Swedish has an unusual feature of negation, that is less common in the languages of the world; Swedish has, in theory, three different negative particles all acceptable to use, rather than one. The negative particles are *inte, icke* and *ej*, and they may be used interchangeably in standard and non-standard negation. However, another possibility to negate non-verbal predications, such as existential predications, is by using a negative indefinite pronoun, or to negate an indefinite pronoun.

The aim and purpose of this study has been to examine negation strategies in existential predications in Swedish, and what factors determine the choice of negation marker. The material to do so was collected through a corpus. The results have provided strong evidence that there is a clear preference to negate existential predications with a negative indefinite pronoun, rather than any other negator. The results also showed that the negative indefinite pronoun predominantly functions as a modifier to the pivot nominal whose existence is negated. Further, the standard negative marker is predominantly used to negate predications introduced with quantification. Thus, the negation is narrow; the pivot as such is not negated, but rather, an uncertain absence of the pivot is predicated. As also demonstrated by the results, a very small number of existential predications are negated with the negative particles *icke* and *ej*. The proportion of occurrences of negative existential predications negated with *icke* or *ej* were too few to be collected for analysis.

The results are in line with what has been previously stated in literature on the topic. First, the negative particles *icke* and *ej* are used in a very small number of negative existential predications. Among the three negative particles, the negative marker *inte* is preferably used for negation (cf. Molde, 1970, Pettersson, 2005). Second, negation with a negative indefinite pronoun express absolute absence. Negation of existence expressed with an indefinite pronoun preceded by a negative marker, i.e. *inte någon* (‘not any’) might jeopardize the expression semantically to be interpreted as *inte någon viss* (‘not
some’) (Thelander, 1980). Hence, the negator predicates an absence rather than negates existence of an entity. Negation of existential predications are therefore preferably, according to the results of this study, negated with a negative indefinite pronoun, rather than a standard negative marker.

This study of negation of existential predications in Swedish is by no means exhaustive. In this thesis, 1000 sentences were analyzed; a potential research topic is to replicate this study and analyze a larger amount of negative existential predications. Another potential research topic is to extend the analysis to cover other predications in the domain of non-verbal predications, e.g. possessive and locative predications, since these cross-linguistically are typically most prone to use special types of negation. Further analysis would also benefit from including an analysis of existential predications negated with the archaic markers icke or ej and time-adverbials, to examine what factors determine the choice of these negators.
References


Appendix

This Appendix provides a list of all frequencies of existential predications constructed with the verb *finnas* (‘exist’) and positional verbs in Swedish. The positional verbs are i) *stå* (‘stand’), ii) *sitta* (‘sit’), and iii) *ligga* (‘lay’).

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det finns inte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det</td>
<td>det finns icke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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