Second language learners of Danish as the linguistic *other*

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Abstract

The Danish language is undergoing rapid standardization: traditional dialects are rapidly disappearing, and studies of language attitudes show that Danes strongly favour standard language over non-standard varieties such as regional dialects. This paper looks at the values and attitudes attached to another type of non-standard Danish, namely that spoken by learners of Danish as a second language. It argues that the dynamic whereby social prestige is strongly associated with standard, or "fluent", Danish, can cast immigrant second language speakers as the linguistic *other* on the margins of the standard/non-standard dynamic. The paper gives voice to the immigrants and Danes themselves, letting speakers from both groups assess the social meanings and potential emotional impacts of a certain linguistic culture clash: language switching, where Danish interlocutors switch into English when hearing Danish spoken with a second language accent. The analysis draws on responses to two surveys, administered to first and second language Danish speakers. It finds that both groups of speakers are aware of the switches, and also that both are aware of the negative impact of switches on second language learners. Both groups mention that speaking "perfect Danish" can be essential for membership and belonging to Danish society, and are aware that switching from Danish to English as a response to second language speech can convey a sense of sociolinguistic exclusion and othering.

Keywords: L2 speech; second language learning; code-switching; Danish; indexicality.

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Danes are reportedly fond of normative cultural and linguistic expression (Kirilova, e.g. 2004; Kristiansen 2003, 2009; Normann Jørgensen 2013; Normann Jørgensen & Quist 2001, and references below). For instance, the Danish language has been described as one of the most standardised languages in Europe (Pedersen 2003, 9) and most Danes speak something greatly resembling Copenhagen Danish (Kristiansen et al. 2013; see also Monka 2015, Monka and Hovmark 2016, Maegaard et al. 2019).[1] Ways of speaking that do *not* resemble the Copenhagen standard are often devalued: speakers from all over Denmark have been found to share the same attitudes to Danish dialects as speakers from the linguistic norm centre, devaluing their own traditional dialects in comparison with the "modern" Copenhagen standard (Kristiansen 2009, 2017, 119; see discussions in Maegaard and Quist, 2020). In other words, "[c]ultural variation, and especially linguistic deviation from the norm, is not very well received in Denmark." (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 41, translation by the first author; see also Thomas 1990, 7).

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[1] Spoken Danish is generally thought to vary primarily in its speech melody (Kristiansen 2017, 118; Grønnum 2005, 340).

This situation has led to what Jørgensen and Quist describe as "an unhealthy climate of monolingualism, monodialectalism, and monoculturalism" (2001, 42). Of course, English, as a globalizing language, plays a large role in Danish society, but as Haberland and Preisler note, Danish fulfills the role of a central language in Denmark: it is used in primary, secondary and tertiary education, in newspapers, books, and on TV as well as other media (2014, 15). English is known by large segments of the population: 86% in 2012 (Eurobarometer 2012, 23) and 99% among secondary students in 2018 (Eurobarometer 2018, 1). Yet studies have not found evidence that Danish is suffering domain loss (Preisler 2009; 2010). Furthermore, the language has not yet been vernacularised in Denmark, that is, it has not yet taken up many of the roles of a "naturalised" language in the Danish context, and is instead mainly used for business, higher education and international communication (Haberland and Preisler 2014).

The general mastery of English as an international language, together with the abovementioned attitudes to variation and normative expression, all play a part in the meeting between Dane and immigrant.[2] In this paper, we assess the hypothesis that Danes tend to attach less value to non-standard language, and argue that this dynamic can cast immigrant second language speakers of Danish as the linguistic *other* on the margins of the standard/non-standard dynamic. We do so by giving voice to the immigrants and Danes themselves, letting speakers from both groups assess the social meanings and potential emotional impacts of a certain linguistic culture clash: strategic language switching.

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[2] It is important here to distinguish between different types of immigrants, since these are welcomed into Denmark to different extents. This term may cover refugees, settled immigrants and their families, and guest workers. Here, we use the term for all non-native speakers of Danish in Denmark. See Benediktson (2015, 10-12) for a review of different terms for immigrants in Danish, and Frølund Thomsen (2006) for Danish attitudes to Western and non-Western immigrants.

This paper thus aims to take a sociolinguistic perspective on what happens in the meeting between first and second language speakers. Given Danish native speakers' "fear of variation" (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 43), how do they react when confronted with second language speech? Previous work (Benediktsson 2015) has provided evidence that Danes may simply switch into English when language learners attempt to initiate conversations in Danish. Here, we endeavour to expand on this issue by using two surveys issued to immigrants and native Danes in order to explore whether these switches happen, why native speakers might switch languages, and what the impact of switching on second language speakers might be. In doing so, we use comments from both surveys to attempt to tap into the social forces that push immigrant second language speakers onto the linguistic periphery. We work from the following research questions:

1. How frequently do the switches occur?
2. What do learners of Danish and native-speaking Danes view as the main reasons for the occurrence of switches into English?
3. How are such switches perceived and interpreted by learners and native speakers?

In what follows, learners report that Danish-initiated conversations with native Danes are frequently switched into English by their interlocutors, and that this often results in a negative reaction from the learners. Learners and native speakers disagree as to the exact frequency of these switches, with the learners reporting many more switches than the Danes. The native speaking respondents' reasons for the switches are primarily seen as linked to politeness and communication efficiency in the face of

difficulty of understanding,[3] although their comments on the survey indicate that many are, however, aware that such switches may affect language learners negatively. We discuss the implications of this awareness on the social meanings of the switches, and argue that the phenomenon of native speakers switching away from Danish can contribute to our understanding of the status of non-native speakers and language in Denmark.

1.1 Attitudes to second language Danish learners and their speech

The fondness for a linguistically and culturally homogeneous 'us' noted by e.g. Normann Jørgensen and Quist (2001), Kristiansen (2003, 2009, 2013) and Normann Jørgensen (2013) has been argued to spark xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. For instance, Fernández-Armesto writes that that "[t]he Danes have a not altogether deserved reputation for tolerance" (1997, 33) – since the 1980s, successive political parties have adopted increasingly strong-worded critiques of immigration, especially with regard to non-Western immigrants, with the leader of a recently almost-elected party (Rasmus Paludan of the *Hard Line* party) publicly burning copies of the Quran. The increasingly openly intolerant rhetoric of these hard-right parties, and their large numbers of votes (another right-wing nationalist party, the Danish People's Party, gained 21.1% of the votes at the 2015 national election) speaks to changes in the acceptability of such views in the general public. We illustrate the ongoing discussions of xenophobia in the public sphere with Figure 1, a collection of photographs from Aarhus taken by MH over the course of 3 years.

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[3] The Danish language has been reported to be notoriously difficult to learn, and is frequently mentioned as such by both linguists and laypeople (Skovholm 1996; Basbøll and Bleses 2002; Grønnum 2003, 2008; Koldbye 2009; Normann Jørgensen 2013, 43; Larsen 2016; Mikkelsen 2017; Mellish 2020a, 2020b). Note, however, the counterarguments presented by Schachtenhaufen (2021), and Jespersen and Hejná 2021a.

Figure 1: Top pane on the left: concerns who will save Syria, taken in early 2017. Bottom pane on the left, taken later in 2017, *ikke os* ("not us") is added; Pane on the right: *ikke* ("not") is crossed out and *os* ("us") is circled with a heart, taken in 2020. The sticker appearing at the top of the photo reads *SORT / SART* "black / fragile". All photographed in Aarhus, Denmark, by MH.

Such political developments are not unique to Denmark. However, in combination with an appetite for linguistic homogenisation and the relatively small size of the speech community, Denmark is not necessarily an easy place to integrate for a second language speaker (Benediktsson 2015). Indeed, currents of systemic antipathy towards foreigners and immigrants are thus associated with negative attitudes towards language learners. Holmen (2004) and Gitz-Johansen (2003) describe what they see as a political aversion to a stronger focus on second language Danish teaching, which is viewed as "remedial language instruction reserved for school beginners and newly arrived refugees for a limited amount of time" (Holmen 2006, 2), rather than the sustained and developing effort targeted at learners at all levels, which is needed for immigrants to

successfully learn the language (Jespersen and Hejná 2019; Jespersen and Hejná 2021b).

Politically and publicly expressed attitudes to immigrants thus carry over into attitudes towards their language. Several researchers have criticised the general societal attitude towards spoken second language Danish (see Normann Jørgensen and Quist 2001) as well as the attitude at language centres, where the difficulty of the language is seen as a positive thing, in that it may 'sort the wheat from the chaff', that is, expose second class speakers of Danish (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 43; translation by AJ). The value judgements of second language learners lie to a high degree in their spoken Danish – "and it must be a form of Danish indistinguishable from the native standard language" (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 42). Apart from the reported difficulties of the Danish language (see Footnote 3), learners are thus also faced with value-judgments of their speech. In this way, attitudinal studies consistently find that foreign-accented Danish is often systematically given low ratings on all parameters (H. J. Ladegaard 1992, U. Ladegaard 2002; Maegaard 2005, 73-74). The studies that present a more mixed set of results, e.g. Quist and Jørgensen (2002, 9), also generally report that Danes tend to associate L2 Danish with negative personality traits such as lower intelligence. However, it is worth noting that this general pattern is modified by geographic closeness: while Danes are generally not able to geographically place most L2 accents (Kirilova 2004, 92, 94), voices perceived to belong to German speakers are, at least in Kirilova (2004, 93) judged more positively than those of native speaking Danes.

1.2 Otherness in Denmark

Our interpretation of the abovementioned attitudes to second language speech relies on theories of otherness that explicate the relational social identities claimed by native and non-native speakers: a dominant group ("Us") constructs an out-group ("Them", "the

Other"), by stigmatising a difference that can work as a boundary delimiting the groups (e.g., Fanon 1963; Said 1978; Duncan 1993). As Okolie puts it, "identity has little meaning without the "other". So, by defining itself a group defines others… Power is implicated here… Often notions of superiority and inferiority are embedded in particular identities" (2003, 2). In this way, the non-native *other* is constructed as opposed to a (standard-speaking) norm centre (Giles 2016; Giles and Powesland 1975; Llamas et al. 2009).

In delimiting *linguistic* otherness, we thus argue that speakers draw on sociolinguistic resources (see section 1.3 below). Our analyses are aligned with Bourdieu's thoughts on *legitimate language*:

> [W]e can state the characteristics which legitimate discourse must fulfil, the tacit presupposition of its efficacy: it is uttered by a legitimate speaker, i.e. by the appropriate person, as opposed to the imposter … and addressed to legitimate receivers; it is formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms … except when transgressing these norms is part of the legitimate definition of the legitimate producer. (Bourdieu 1977, 65)

From the viewpoint of the linguistic centre, both levels of legitimacy are violated by second language speakers on the periphery: by being immigrants, and thus outsiders, a fact which is also detectable through their non-adherence to legitimate linguistic norms, second language speakers are not legitimate speakers of Danish. Second language Danish, then, can be argued to be constructed and reproduced as "the linguistic other", different from, and lower in value than, standard Danish, as spoken in the linguistic norm centre of Copenhagen.

1.3 Signalling otherness and sameness through linguistic means

Otherness and sameness, or outgroup and ingroup, are essential reference points as the individual is navigating their social reality. They react to and interact with this reality through a number of semiotic means, of which language is a key example. The speaker signals their belonging to various *speech communities*[4] through employing, perceiving, and manipulating linguistic features. These are chosen from a *feature pool* (Mufwene 2001) of linguistic traits used to signal in-group membership in those communities. As an American in the UK, for instance, they might consciously or unconsciously accommodate some of their speech sounds to those of their British peers (such as producing the "e" in "skated" with their tongue higher and further towards the front of the mouth), but might keep her American "r"-sounds in "car" and "birth" (rather than saying "cah" and "buhth"). Sounds that overtly signal American-ness, and which speakers are consciously aware of using, such as pronouncing an "r" after vowels, are more likely to be kept by speakers in diasporic contexts than sounds they are not aware of pronouncing differently from their new communities, such as "oo" (Labov 1972).

Linguistic features are not born with social meaning. Over time, features such as postvocalic "r" become linked with particular ways of speaking, and thus with particular social groups who speak in those ways, in a process known as *enregisterment* (Agha 2003, Johnstone 2016). The links between linguistic features, social practices and persons who engage in such practices are multiplex and dynamic, and the social meanings of a particular linguistic feature therefore shifts over time, and depending on the contexts and audience of the conversation in which it is produced. Furthermore, these links are not direct: a linguistic feature does not directly signify, or *index* (Ochs 1992, 1993, Eckert 2008), a certain social category (such as "foreigner"), rather the

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[4] A speech community is a group of speakers identified by linguists primarily on the grounds of social coherence, and which is often used as a unit for linguistic analysis – see Patrick (2008) for a discussion of this concept, with definitions on pages 577 and 593.

relationship between language and social categories is mediated by social meanings at a more local level. A linguistic feature may thus index "foreigner" through its association with certain acts or activities which are linked to the concept of "foreigner". In the Danish context, a lack of differentiation between certain vowels which are pronounced with very similar articulatory gestures, such as the vowels in "mile", "mele", "mæle", could be linked with the local meanings of "linguistic clumsiness" and "incompetence", which could index "foreigner".

As hinted at above, some of this identity work is carried out without the speaker consciously knowing it. Our foreigner may be signalling her status as foreigner without meaning to do so, just by mixing up a few vowel sounds. However, some identity work is carried out as strategic social action through creating and managing a *social persona* (Coupland 2001, 2002, 2006; Snell 2010, 631). A central component of this strategic use of language is stance-taking (Ochs 1992). *Stance* refers to the processes by which speakers use language (and other semiotic resources) to position themselves and others, draw social boundaries, and lay claim to particular identities and knowledge during conversations. Stance represents one of the speaker's key ways of signalling her belonging to prestigious speech communities, but also of excluding others from those same communities. While stance-taking can be expressed through the use of certain linguistic features, or combinations of features, it can also be expressed at a more global level by changing speech styles, dialects or languages. This is known as *code-switching* (Giles and Powesland 1975). For instance, Giles has described how when as a young Englishman he would go into a Northern Welsh pub, "the entire gathering there [would] switch to the Welsh language from previously talking in English…" (2016, 1). Code-switching is often done to highlight a shared social identity and in-group membership or, as in Giles' example, to perform antagonism towards an out-group member (Giles and Powesland 1975, 172-73; Llamas et al. 2009, 386).

In other words, language, whether used consciously or unconsciously, is a key resource for signalling and maintaining implicit boundaries between us and the other. In what follows, we draw on such sociolinguistic theories to analyse interactions between first- and second-language Danish speakers.

2 Methodology

We now turn to the two online questionnaires used to investigate what happens when non-Danes attempt to engage native speakers in a Danish-language conversation. One of these surveys was presented to non-native Danish speakers, in English (Survey 1), and the other to native Danes, in Danish (Survey 2). Survey 2 was created after Survey 1, and the questions, response options, language and design were matched as closely to Survey 1 as possible. Both sets of respondents were approached via two methods. Firstly, the links were disseminated through social media, most prominently Facebook. Here, the authors primarily approached groups whose social interaction centres on relevant activities, such as the "Learners of Danish in Denmark" Facebook group (such groups – "communities of practice" – are often approached by linguists). Secondly, we employed an email-based version of the snowball method, that is, dissemination to relevant parties (e.g. students at language centres; acquaintances of the authors), who then pass the survey link on to other potentially interested parties, and so on.

In what follows, we describe the questionnaires and the individuals who filled them in, and present the statistical methods we use to analyse their responses.

2.1 Survey 1

We analysed 409 responses to the first survey, which was intended for non-native Danish speakers. Respondents who did not report learning Danish in Denmark (9) were left out of the analyses. The remaining respondents were aged between 16 and 62 (mean

= 29.7, median = 28). Of these, 76.5% self-classified as women and 22.2% as men. Their mother tongues were varied, but as some of them were marginally represented, the individual answers were grouped based on the structural properties of these languages (Scandinavian, English, West Germanic other than English, Slavic, Romance, Baltic, Indo-Aryan, Finno-Ugric, non-Indo-European spoken primarily in Asia). We also asked participants about their highest-level Danish exam, the length of their language acquisition in months, and the range of contexts in which they use Danish on a day-to-day basis. The responses to these questions were investigated as part of initial analyses of the dataset, but the results will not be addressed here due to space constraints. We refer the interested reader to the datasets which contain all responses included in this paper, and which we provide links to below.

The survey was presented to the participants in English. A pre-completed version can be viewed here: https://tinyurl.com/34efv754. The full dataset can be viewed here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1E8qoubDD6yCwIEvRJiPvjt8L2k9YrMp4B BtRlDzee6Q/edit?usp=sharing. Questions of special interest for this paper include the following:

- Has it happened to you that you started speaking Danish but the Dane(s) switched into English? (Multiple choice)
- Why do you think they switched? (Multiple choice, multiple answers possible)
- How did these switches into English make you feel? (Open ended)

In order to quantify the participants' reaction to the switches from Danish to English, open-ended responses to the question 'How did these switches make you feel?' were classified in grouped categories (positive, negative, and mixed). This classification relied on our own assessment of the overall emotive theme of each response. In the vast

majority of cases, this was relatively straightforward. However, these classifications nonetheless reflect the authors' subjective readings of the comments, and need to be borne in mind when discussing the data.

2.2 Survey 2

We analysed 134 responses to the second survey, which is aimed at native-speaking Danes. This number excludes two respondents who did not complete the form, and three respondents who report not being able to speak English at all. In Survey 2, our participants are highly comparable with those of Survey 1: they are aged between 16 and 63 years of age (mean =33.04 median = 30), and 73.1% are women, while 26.9% are men. The participants report speaking between 1 and 4 languages in addition to Danish (mean =2.1, median = 2).

A pre-completed version of the questionnaire for Survey 2 can be found via this link: https://tinyurl.com/c59a6m9u. The responses to survey 2 can be viewed here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ynQz6psWEK_c2oQXHvHnlyMAjO1VkXl J6IgAejNzADM/edit?usp=sharing. Questions of interest to this paper include the following:

- Have you experienced being approached by a non-Dane speaking Danish, where you have switched languages to English during the conversation? (one answer possible)
- If so, why did you switch languages? (multiple choice)
- How do you think non-Danes might feel if the conversational language is switched to English? (open-ended)

We also asked the participants where in the country they were located and asked them to assess their ability to speak English in day-to-day interactions. Data collection and

calculations of average scores for multiple option answers were completed in ways similar to Survey 1; and the questions in Survey 2 were based on the results from this survey in order to allow us to explore various aspects of the responses in the original survey.

2.3 Statistical analysis

In order to locate and analyse potential patterns in the learners' reactions to the switches, we made use of so-called regression analysis. Linear regression is a statistical method which enables analysis of the relationship between a *dependent* variable, which is the focus of the analysis, and any *independent* variables, which may contribute to any patterns in the behaviour of the dependent variable. Because our analyses rely on survey data, we used an *ordinal* regression model to tap into the ordinal, e.g. numerically ordered, data, which result from a survey of the type employed in this paper. Our analysis did not include random effects (that is, ways of quantifying any variation in the data that does not pertain to the independent variables).

The analysis is performed through building a statistical *model*, which constitutes the researcher's attempt to systematise the variability found in the data, in this case, the survey responses. The model is set up by the researcher, who chooses the maximal set of independent variables that might be able to account for the variability in the dataset. The regression analysis is then performed to test the viability of the independent variables chosen by the analyst, and how well these are able to explain the data. The researcher then removes any independent variables that do not contribute to explaining the patterns found in the analysis, so that they end up with a *final model*, which only includes those variables that are important to the analysis: here, those that have a direct impact on the survey responses. The final models presented in section 3 thus only include some of the independent variables mentioned below.

Our analysis was conducted by selecting the dependent variable, namely the second language learners' REACTION to the switches from Danish to English, and adding all independent variables we think might affect that REACTION: the second language speakers' AGE, GENDER, FIRST LANGUAGE, DANISH LEVEL, and LANGUAGE OF INITIATION. The latter refers to the language chosen by L2 learners to initiate conversations with Danes. All independent variables except participants' first language were kept in the model. For more information on the contribution of individual variables on the respondents' frequency of switching, see Jespersen and Hejná 2021b.

The analysis was conducted through the statistics programmes *R* (R Core Team 2020) and *RStudio* (R Studio Team 2020), and we employed the package *MASS* (Ripley et al. 2020). Model selection, that is, the choice of the model that best describes the data, was carried out with the *aov()* and *compare_performance()* functions, and checked with *stepAIC()*. We used *ggplot2* (Wickham et al. 2020) and the *viridis* colour palettes (Garnier et al. 2018) to present the results graphically.

3 Results

We first present the self-reported results from the survey distributed amongst non-native learners of Danish. We then show the results from the survey distributed amongst Danes. The results from the two studies are contrasted and interpreted in the discussion, where we also suggest the sociolinguistic reasons why Danes may be switching languages, and what social meanings such switches might index.

3.1 Study 1 - Second-language learners of Danish

3.1.1 Have the learners experienced code-switching?

We begin by taking a look at whether the learners actually attempt to use Danish in their daily interactions with Danes, thus addressing Research Question 1. When asked whether they ever initiated conversations with Danes in Danish, rather than in English, 34.6% of the learners of Danish report always initiating conversations with native speakers in Danish. In addition, 11.5% report doing so often and 18.2% sometimes (total = 258, or 64.3%). On the other hand, none of the learners respond that they never attempt to start conversations with Danes in Danish. We can therefore safely say that all the learners who responded to our survey have had experienced situations in which a Danish interlocutor might have switched into English – in fact, the majority of the learners describe actively seeking out interactions in Danish in their everyday life.

We then ask the learners whether they have experienced trying to initiate conversation with a Dane in Danish but having the Dane switch the conversation into English. More than half of the learners have encountered this phenomenon frequently. 24.2% of respondents think this happens to them fairly often, 40.2% often, and 35.6% always (total = 219, or 54.6% of responses). Only 13.2% report that this has never happened to them. We can therefore see not only that such switches happen, but that they are perceived by our participants to happen rather frequently.[5] Furthermore, when the interlocutor has switched languages into English, our participants report that they mostly accepted the switch: in 74.3% of cases, respondents write that Dane-initiated switches into English result in the conversation continuing in English.

3.1.2 What is the impact of the switches on learners?
In addition, we are interested in exploring the participants' reactions to the switches from Danish into English, thus addressing Research Question 2. Here, we approached

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[5] For more detail on the factors that might influence the frequency of switches, see Jespersen and Hejná 2021b).

the topic by asking our participants an open-ended question ('How did these switches make you feel?'). We then categorised their responses as "positive", "negative" and "mixed". Note that we are not only interested in how many of our participants describe feeling positively or negatively about these switches, but also in whether there is a relationship between those feelings and the frequency with which the switching is perceived to occur. If the frequency of switches were to have an effect on the participants' response, that would suggest that switching languages may be a causal factor in that response. In order to be able to investigate such a correlation, we built a statistical model which examined the statistical relationship between the frequency of switches and the participants' responses to how switches made them feel. We also took the speakers' background, such as their age and gender, into account. The details of this model can be found in the section *Statistical analysis* above.

Our statistical model is found to account for a large amount of the variance found in the data (R^2 =.42, χ^2(42) =420.2, $p<.0001$). In other words, our chosen combination of independent variables consisting of the frequency of switches and the participants' background has a strong and statistically significant effect on their reported reactions to the code-switching. We then look into what part of our combined model had the strongest effect on the participants' emotional response, and find that the strongest predictor of this response is how frequently they had encountered switching (χ^2(18)=322.86, $p<.0001$). The relationship between these two variables is such that the more frequent the switches, the greater the odds for a negative response: participants are more than twice as likely to recount a negative reaction when they report that Danes "always" switched into English than when their answer is "not often" (log odds = 2.36, *SE* = 0.48, $p>.0001$). We illustrate the gradient nature of this relationship in Figure 2.
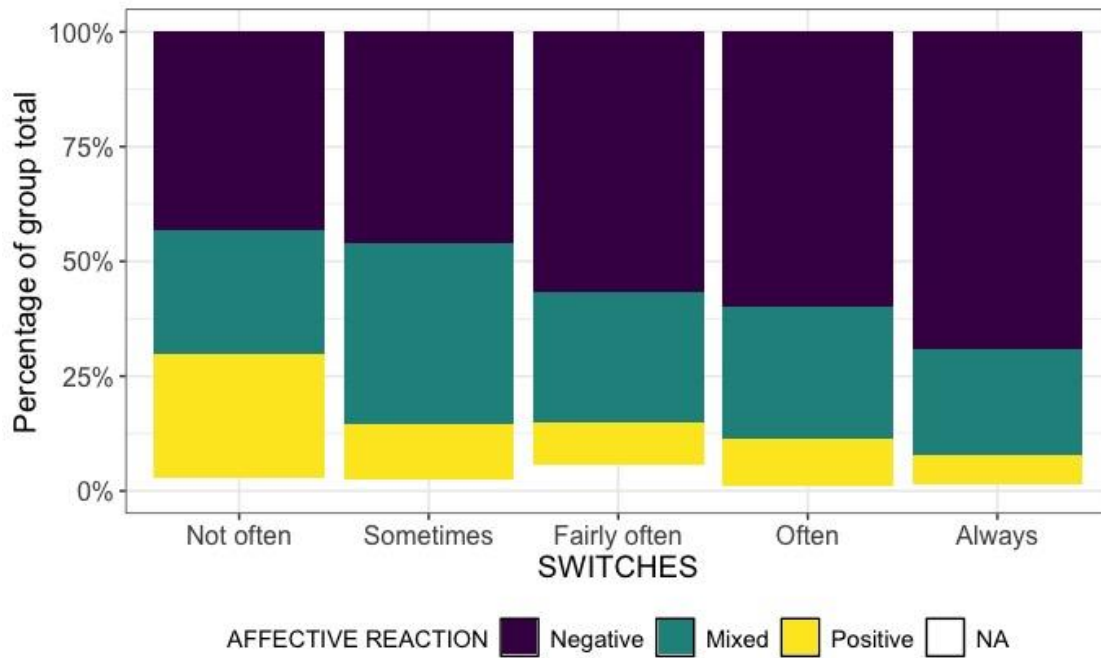
Figure 2: An illustration of the relationship between participants' reactions to their interlocutor switching languages (represented by coloured blocks) and the frequency with which those switches occur (represented on the x-axis). The y-axis indicated the percentage of respondents conveying each reaction. "NA" indicates missing answers: not all respondents answered all questions.

Here, we see how an increasing frequency of switches leads to a gradual increase in negative reactions (represented by purple blocks). In this way, the participants who do not encounter switching often report a more varied set of emotional responses to Danes switching the conversational language to English, whereas more than 65% of respondents who always encounter switches describe having negative reactions. Overall, 57.9 % of the learners express negative reactions to the switches. Most of the remaining reactions are "mixed" rather than positive.

3.1.3 How is switching interpreted by learners?

We have seen that the phenomenon of Danes switching into English when approached by a learner of Danish is perceived by the learners to happen rather frequently. We have also seen that such switches engender negative reactions in many of these learners, and that their reactions become markedly more negative the more switches they encounter. In this section, we delve deeper into the learners' comments, treated in the section above as "positive", "negative" or "mixed", to see if we can tap into how learners interpret the switches. This analysis helps us tap into the social meaning of switching as experienced and perceived by learners, and thus addresses Research Question 3. We also look into why learners think Danes might switch the conversation into English, which provides us with insights into which social strategies the learners think their interlocutors are employing.

First, we turn to the learners' reactions. While some of the positive responses were fairly minimalist ('Fine'; 'Good'), many others expressed relief at the greater ease of conversation arising from speaking English rather than Danish. Examples include the following:

- 'Happy because they made it easier for me'
- 'Sometimes.. as a relief. There's always a point when it feels intimating that you can't follow the conversation. So it is nice when someone notices you can't follow and speaks to you in English.' [sic]

The other main theme of the positive comments was the perception that Danes switching languages were doing so to be helpful, for instance

- 'I feel they very kind and would like to help more with understandable languages'
- 'Like they wanted to help'

The latter set of comments links the switches to a set of social meanings: Danes switch in order to convey helpfulness and a sense of accommodation to the perceived taxing conversational situation experienced by a learner struggling with the Danish language.

The mixed/neutral comments also fell into two main categories. Firstly, there were those that did not express a preference for either language, or did not associate any specific feelings with the switches, for instance:

- 'I didn't really care which language they spoke'
- 'No particular feelings about it'
- 'It doesn't bother me at all, I continue speaking Danish'

The other camp consisted of those comments that were truly "mixed": these conveyed mixed feelings, and more consisted of multi-layered emotional reactions that did not fall neatly within our binary "positive"/"negative" categories.

- 'Depends very much on context, sometimes relieved because it is easier, sometimes disappointed because I thought I was fluent enough'
- 'Acceptable. Nothing new.'

The negative group of responses includes a wider range of reactions, and we will therefore focus on these responses in greater detail. We categorised them into four main themes, described below. Two of these were reactive and did not seem to assume that the switches were connected with social meanings. The first of these two consisted of a group of responses that conveyed the respondent's frustration and anger with the switches and with their Danish interlocutor. Examples include the following:

- 'I find this really impolite and annoying.'
- 'Pissed'
- 'Angry and confused as Danes does not often speak English better than I speak Danish' [sic]

A few of these comments became downright unpleasant, with one participant describing Danish as a '[g]arbage language for garbage people'.

Another set of reactive responses turned the reactions inward rather than outward, and indicated the learners' feelings of shame, sadness and a diminished confidence in their Danish-speaking abilities. These learners felt

- 'Ashamed of my language skills'
- 'Sad because I was trying very hard'
- 'Like I am incapable to say even the simpliest things in Danish' [sic]
- 'Like I'm imposing on the Danes' patience. Demotivated to actually learn Danish.'

However, many learners also seemed to perceive a motive behind the switches. These motives again centred on two key themes. The first of these was the conveyance of the learner's lack of worth (linguistic, presumably), and a sense of an underlying power dynamic between the learner and native speaker, who would feel

- 'Stupid and not good enough'
- 'humiliated. I have been putting sooo much effort into learning Danish and the culture of Denmark and I feel unappreciated. feels like my efforts are not reciprocated.'
- 'Irritated, undervalued, like i was told "you're not good enough, please do not even try"'

The second set of perceived meanings build on this sense of the societal power dynamic to make the learner feel a sense of otherness. Such responses include:

- 'Annoyed and discriminated'
- 'Impotent og afvist' [powerless and rejected]
- 'Like an outsider'

- 'I feel a bit sad that they assumed already that I can't understand nor speak danish just by my looks…'

It is clear that the intensity of feeling in those learners who convey negative responses to the switches is often not negligible, and that these feelings may have implications for their motivation to seek out and maintain conversations in Danish with native speakers, and thereby for their continued learning trajectory.[6] It is also clear that many of these learners associate the switches with certain social meanings, including the signalling of a power hierarchy between language learner and native speaker.

Seeing as many learners seem to perceive such connections, it is interesting to examine the learners' responses to the question "Why do you think they [the native speaker] switched?". In the survey, this question was multiple choice with multiple answers possible, with the additional option of learners coming up with their own reasons. From our prearranged set of 10 answers, the most frequently selected option (48.6% of respondents) was "Because they were being polite and keen to help", with the rest of the top five reasons being "Because they thought I didn't understand" (43.8%), "Because they thought of my Danish as not good enough" (37.5%), "Because of my Danish accent" (37.5%) and "Because speaking Danish to me seemed to inconvenience them" (27%). Most of the rest of the prearranged options centred on making the conversation flow, although one of the lesser-chosen answers (4%) was "Because I look different".

Apart from the second most frequently chosen option, the rest of the top five hinged on switching as a reaction to the learner, rather than as a facilitator of communication. Learners again interpret the switches as either politeness or rejection

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[6] One learner indicated that their emotional response had developed with their improved linguistic skills: 'In the first year in Denmark I perceived [switching] as considerate because my Danish was still bad. Now, with my Danish skills being quite allright, I tend to feel offended - it makes me feel insufficient and inadequate' [sic].

on the part of the native speaker. This again links in well with our analyses above, as well as answers to open comments sections not analysed here. Both of the prearranged answers to do with native speakers' evaluation of the learner's language skills and pronunciation are also in the top five responses, and in the open comments sections eight learners chose to elaborate on this theme, for instance:

- 'they refuse to speak Danish when they hear it's not perfect'
- 'If they dont seem friendly or if they seem uncomfortable because my Danish isnt perfect' [sic]
- 'They are rude, whenever you try to speak Danish with them they tell you you shouldn't do it until you don't have an accent anymore'.

It is clear that many learners think the switches occur based on characteristics of their spoken language (and, to a much lesser degree, on their exterior[7]). In order to explore why native speakers switch, and whether they attach similar social meanings to the switches, we will examine the responses to our second survey.

3.2 Study 2 – Native speakers of Danish

3.2.1 Are the native speakers conscious of switching languages?

In order to hear the native speakers' side of the story, we need to first make sure our native speaker respondents actually interact with non-native speakers on a fairly regular basis. Luckily, it seems they do: none of the Danish respondents report that they "never" interact with non-Danes, and the majority (54%) answer that they interact with them "every day" or "fairly often", with a further 23.7% "sometimes" interacting with language learners. We also need to know if our Danes can actually speak English. Three

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[7] Most of the answers provided by the learners themselves referred to specific contexts or persons, and were not easily generalisable.

of our Danes report not being able to speak English at all, and these have been excluded from the analyses. The rest of the Danes speak an average of 2.14 second languages (English included; median = 2, SD = 0.86), and all but 7 have taken English at elementary school level or above, with most having completed high school level English exams (67.4%). Overall, they can therefore be said to be relatively proficient.

We can now look into how often our Danish respondents describe switching from Danish to English when interacting with a non-Dane who initiates conversation in Danish. Their responses differ from those of the learners: the Danes most frequently reply that they "never" (21.2%), "very rarely" (27.3%), or "not often" (14.4%) switch into English (total = 62.9%). 37.1% chose the options "sometimes" and "fairly often". None of the respondents have chosen the "almost always" or "always" options. This contrasts with the learners' experience, of which more than half chose the group of options ranging from "fairly often" onwards, with 35.6% reporting this "always" happened to them.

3.2.2 How is switching interpreted by the native speakers?

While Danish native speaking respondents may not perceive switching to occur as frequently as the language learners, it is nonetheless possible that the two groups attach similar social meanings to the switches. We now attempt to tap into the indexical links between switching and social meanings by describing the Danes' responses to the question "Why did you switch languages?" This question was set up in the survey as a checkbox with multiple answers possible, similarly to the corresponding question in Survey 1. Our Danish speakers generally choose responses which hinged on maintaining good communication: 52% give as one of their responses that they were not able to follow the conversation, and 28.4% of respondents report that their interlocutor could not follow. 11.8% indicate that they switch to avoid a conversational

breakdown, and 43.1% respond that they switch to keep the conversational pace up. Participants are less likely to report their own language skills or habits, or the characteristics of their interlocutor, as reasons for the switches. Indeed, only 2.9% of the Danes respond that they switched because of their interlocutor's language or accent. This contrasts starkly with the experience of the language learners as described above. Compared to the perceptions of the language learners, the Danes also rarely report switching to be polite or signal willingness to help (18.6%).

We also ask the native speakers to assess the impact of switching languages on language learners: "How do you think non-Danes might feel if the conversational language is switched to English?". This question is, as was its equivalent in Survey 1, open-ended. Of the 79% of participants who volunteer a response, 59.9% anticipate that switching into English will affect the non-Danish interlocutor negatively. Words used to describe the imagined feelings of the learners include "frustrated", "irritated", "dejected", "demotivated", "attacked", "disrespected", "patronised", and "rejected". 2% of the native speakers' comments indicate that the learners might feel discriminated against, either on the basis of their language or exterior. Both their perceptions of the proportion and to some extent the types of negative reactions are thus very similar to the learners' actual reported reactions: 57.9% of learners describe having negative reactions, and 59.9% of native speakers think switching languages might cause the learners to have such a reaction. It is interesting to note that 3.5% of the Danes give the reason for anticipating negative reactions that they have experienced being non-native speakers in a foreign country themselves and remember the frustrations arising from trying to communicate with native speakers. A further 4.4% indicate that non-native speakers in their social networks have explicitly discussed switches into English with them, and let them know that such switches are frustrating to learners.

We also have 20.8% mixed responses, primarily conveying the message that context and individuality are important: switching might be perceived as more negative in some contexts, and "…[s]ome people might be offended that you give up on [communication in] Danish". A few (4.5%) mention that they "don't know" or "don't care", or think their second language speaking interlocutor would not care, about the switches into English. Several Danes (8.9%), on the other hand, anticipate learners to feel positively, e.g. "relief", "increased ease of conversation", and "being treated politely", in response to the switches. Given the fact that when asked why they switch languages in a previous question, the Danes themselves indicate in 19% of responses that one of their reasons for switching is to be polite, it is interesting that only 1 response to the question of potential emotional impact mentions that non-native speakers might feel it is the polite thing to do. It seems that Danes are aware that these switches are likely to be perceived negatively by the learners, even if they are performed by Danes wholly or in part as a means of conveying politeness.

4 Discussion and conclusion

We began this paper by presenting the reader with previous reports that Danes are, as a society, seen as sceptical of cultural and linguistic variation, and by speculating that this might have consequences for learners of Danish as a second language. Specifically, we argued that the Danish awareness of linguistic norms and standards, and the homogenised speaking patterns found by researchers across the country (e.g. Monka 2015, Monka and Hovmark 2016, Maegaard et al. 2019), could have the effect of casting non-native speakers as the linguistic other. We have examined this hypothesis through the lens of a previously reported phenomenon (Benediktson 2015), whereby Danes, when approached by non-native speakers initiating conversation in Danish, switch the conversational language to English.

Our first Research Question was directed at investigating how frequently the respondents think the switches happen. We found that both learners and native speakers were aware that these switches happen though there was some disagreement between the two groups as to how often switching occurs. It is important here to note that the surveys represent self-reported data, and that it is possible that the Danes are under-reporting, or the learners over-reporting, the phenomenon. More interesting for our purposes is the answer to Research Question 3 (How are such switches perceived and interpreted by learners and native speakers?). Firstly, the two groups are in relative agreement as to the potential reactions of learners to the switches: the majority of learners report negative reaction to this particular form of code-switching. Furthermore, a very similar proportion of the Danish respondents imagine this reaction from the learners. Furthermore, the specific types of feelings engendered by switches are also reported in very similar words and proportions, suggesting many Danes might be aware of the emotional impact of switches on non-native speakers. This awareness, especially awareness of specific reactions, suggests the existence of indexical links between the action of switching languages and a specific set of social meanings. Both participant groups explicitly mention the switches eliciting reactions that are linked to a Danish interlocutor's negative evaluation of a learners' spoken language, and their highlighting of the immigrant-native power dynamic. But why might such social meanings be connected to the switches? One explanation could lie in the connection between non-standard language as produced by non-natives and linguistic stereotypes of "linguistically incompetent" immigrant speakers. Not speaking "perfect Danish" – a frequently mentioned phrase in both groups – thus seems to index out-group membership: you do not speak like us, you are not like us.

The switches into English, then, seem to be *available* as a resource to index social antipathy through the associations between non-standardness, linguistic

incompetence and societal power dynamics. However, this availability does not necessarily mean such switches are actually employed as strategic social action. In other words, we do not know whether some Danes *consciously* switch into English to convey this particular set of social meanings. Attempting to grapple with this problem, our Research Question 2 asked why the switches happen. Here, the water gets murkier. It is, however, worth noting that though many Danes seem to be aware of the potential negative impacts of switching on learners, and though they themselves list many of the same types of negative impacts of the switches described by the learners, most nonetheless still report performing such switches themselves. Furthermore, though many Danes list politeness as a potential reason for switching, only one Dane thought learners might interpret switching as a display of politeness. Taken together, this combination of an awareness of the negative impact and meanings likely to be perceived by learners and the fact that many Danes nonetheless (self)report switching languages, and are thus aware of switching themselves, suggest a potential for strategic motives. This is not to say that all our Danish respondents consciously switch strategically, or even that the majority does. A certain proportion of the switches must be caused by genuine communication difficulty. Given the majority of responses from both groups that highlight other reasons for the switches, this can, however, not be the whole story. However, it does indicate that switching might in some cases result from stance-taking behaviours from the native speakers, effectively pushing the learner out of the Danish speech community and into "foreign", English-speaking territory.

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